



**Quaresma Children's Library and Nanquinote Library:  
collections addressed to brazilian children in historical perspective<sup>1</sup>**

Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma e Biblioteca de Nanquinote:  
coleções endereçadas às crianças brasileiras em perspectiva histórica

Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma y Biblioteca de Nanquinote:  
colecciones dirigidas a los niños brasileños en una perspectiva histórica

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**Abstract**

In this study, we examine elements related to the creation of Quaresma Children's Library (1894-1897) and Nanquinote Library (1936-1947), collections aimed at Brazilian children. The main objective is to understand how this segment of public mobilized investments by Quaresma & Co. Booksellers-Publishers (Rio de Janeiro) and O Globo Publishing House (Rio Grande do Sul), in order to produce collections aimed at education of this reading public in a broad perspective. The documentary research was carried out in the Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library, focusing on the periodicals *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), *A Razão* (Ceará) and *A Federação* (Rio Grande do Sul). The historiographical operation that enabled the identification of material and content elements registered by editors on the pages of daily newspapers was based, above all, on the establishment of sources or on the redistribution of space, according to Certeau (2002). We observe speeches that, sometimes, recommended books as educational and cultural objects with an edifying approach, and, sometimes, they prescribed the books in view of their fictional and entertainment characteristics.

**Keywords:** Quaresma Children's Library. Nanquinote Library. Collections.

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## Resumo

Neste estudo, examinam-se elementos relativos à composição da Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma (1894-1897) e da Biblioteca de Nanquinote (1936-1947), coleções destinadas às crianças brasileiras. O objetivo principal consiste em se compreender como esse extrato de público mobilizou investimentos por parte das editoras Quaresma & C – Livreiros editores (Rio de Janeiro) e Editora do Globo (Rio Grande do Sul), de modo a produzirem coleções destinadas à educação desse público leitor em uma perspectiva ampla. A pesquisa documental foi realizada na Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, privilegiando-se os periódicos *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), *A Razão* (Ceará) e *A Federação* (Rio Grande do Sul). A operação historiográfica que possibilitou a identificação de elementos materiais e de conteúdo registradas pelos editores nas páginas dos jornais diários baseou-se, sobretudo, no estabelecimento das fontes ou na redistribuição do espaço, conforme Certeau (2002). Observaram-se discursos que ora recomendavam os livros como objetos escolares e culturais de corte edificante; ora prescrevia-os em face de suas características ficcionais e de entretenimento.

**Palavras-chave:** Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma. Biblioteca de Nanquinote. Coleções.

## Resumen

Este estudio examina elementos relacionados con la composición de la Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma (1894-1897) y la Biblioteca de Nanquinote (1936-1947), colecciones destinadas a los niños brasileños. El objetivo principal es comprender cómo este segmento del público movilizó inversiones de las editoriales Quaresma & C – Livreiros editores (Rio de Janeiro) y Editora do Globo (Rio Grande do Sul), con el fin de producir colecciones para la educación de este público lector en una perspectiva amplia. La investigación documental fue realizada en la Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, privilegiando los periódicos *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), *A Razão* (Ceará) y *A Federação* (Rio Grande do Sul). La operación historiográfica que permitió identificar los elementos materiales y de contenido registrados por los editores en las páginas de los diarios se basó, sobre todo, en el establecimiento de fuentes o en la redistribución del espacio, según Certeau (2002). Se observaron discursos que en ocasiones recomendaban los libros como objetos educativos y culturales con un enfoque edificante; a veces los prescribía en vista de sus características ficticias y de entretenimiento.

**Palabras clave:** Bibliotheca Infantil Quaresma. Biblioteca de Nanquinote. Colecciones.

## Introduction

In this study, we examine elements related to the creation of Quaresma Children's Library (1894-1897) and Nanquinote Library (1936-1947). The main objective is to understand how this segment of the public mobilized investment by the publishing houses Quaresma & C – Livreiros editores [Quaresma & Co. Booksellers-Publishers] (Rio de Janeiro) and Editora do Globo [O Globo Publishing House] (Rio Grande do Sul), in order to produce collections aimed at educating a specific reading public in a broad perspective. In the first case, the documentary research was carried out in the Brazilian Digital Library of the National Library Foundation, focusing on the periodical *O Paiz* [The Country] (Rio de Janeiro). This was a widely circulated periodical at the time (Barbosa, 2007), with a recurring page of advertisements, which provided a useful analytical exercise. In the second case, we mainly examined the periodicals *A Razão* [The Reason] (Ceará) and *A Federação* [The Federation] (Rio Grande do Sul), two periodicals that circulated at the time of the launch of the Nanquinote Library and provided space for debates about children's literature. The first presents a negative critical text about the Nanquinote Library and the second, on the other hand, publishes a laudatory article about the books in the collection.

The methodological operation involving newspapers as a documentary source has expanded considerably in historical research. However, how can historical research using newspapers contribute to the work of researchers in the field of the History of Education? It is worth highlighting that access to historical collections has been facilitated by digital platforms with adequate levels of operation. If in periods when access to physical collections was difficult, such as in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which lasted three years in Brazil and around the world<sup>2</sup>, digital collections were the only option for researchers to access sources, in regular periods, this type of access offers some advantages, such as ease of consultation without having to physically travel, access to the sources by a larger group of people, surveying and systematizing the sources more frequently, returning to the sources to verify discrepant information, whenever requires the systematization of the series (Certeau, 2002) within the research groups.

However, we must stress that the gesture of physical contact with this type of source has not been replaced. After all, as Farge (2009) warns, physical archives hold various traces that need to be deciphered from their materiality.

In this way, handling newspapers in physical archives would make it possible to identify the exact size of the different sections, the type of paper and the quality of the printing, the level of conservation or deterioration of the source, which could even characterize the traces of its handling. Folds, erasures, annotations, wear, and tear, all these aspects could provide information about past reading gestures or even about a probable type of reader. As we know, the category of appropriation has proved to be one of the most complex in historiographical operations with printed matter, due to factors that generally refer to imprecision, i.e. the difficulty of finding precise details about real readers. In agreement with Chartier (1996), we note that:

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<sup>2</sup> As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has pointed out, the COVID-19 pandemic began at the end of 2019 and continued with extreme severity until 2022; it was a global phenomenon with dramatic consequences in many areas. A major challenge has been to protect human health and dignity, as well as to respect universal values. This involved combating discriminatory discourse; identifying the most vulnerable social groups in order to define good practices. In addition, as the pandemic cooled down in Latin America and the Caribbean, a great deal of mobilization was required from government bodies and civil society, so that students and education professionals could return to in-person classes little by little and safely. [Available at: [pt.unesco.org/covid19/social-human-response](https://pt.unesco.org/covid19/social-human-response)].

each reader, based on their own individual or social, historical, or existential references, gives a more or less singular, more or less shared meaning to the texts *they appropriate*. Finding this outside-the-text is not an easy task, as ordinary readers rarely confide in each other about their readings (Chartier, 1996, p. 20, emphasis added).

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, the newspaper is a fruitful source for historical research. On the one hand, it provides access to the ideology of a group that ran it in a given period, the networks of sociability among the contributors, and even serves as an observatory of the alignments or distancing of editors and contributors from the State machine. On the other hand, it makes it possible to note the privileged elements of social life and cultural practices that are conveyed there. In this sense, it is necessary to identify with microscopic lenses the sections, columns, contributors, advertisements, among other elements of its constitution. In this interpretative direction, De Luca (2011) argues that the status of the press as an object of historical research has undergone considerable shifts since the 1970s, alongside the history of the press and through the press.

In the field of the History of Education, research has been carried out on book collections. Among these, it is worth highlighting the research carried out by Professor Heloisa Helena Pimenta Rocha for her associate professorship thesis presented to the Faculty of Education at Unicamp, *Regras de Bem Viver para todos: a Bibliotheca Popular de Hygiene do Dr. Sebastião Barroso* [Rules of Good Living for all: Dr. Sebastião Barroso's Popular Hygiene Library], a hygiene collection designed by Dr. Sebastião Barroso and aimed at educating the people; and by Maria Rita Toledo, the research that led to the book *Coleção Atualidades Pedagógicas: do Projeto Político ao Projeto Editorial* (1931-1981) [Pedagogical News Collection: from the Political Project to the Editorial Project], in which she analyzes the collection aimed at training teachers by Companhia Editora Nacional [National Publishing Company], organized in the 1930s by Fernando de Azevedo, and its continuity until the 1980s, under the coordination of Damasco Penna.

### **Quaresma Children's Library<sup>3</sup> (1894-1897)**

In order to identify elements related to the composition of the Quaresma Children's Library (1894-1897), we focused on examining the daily periodical *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro), copies of which could be found in full in the Brazilian Digital Library of the National Library Foundation.

*O Paiz*, published in Rio de Janeiro, was founded on October 1, 1884 by João José Reis Júnior – Count São Salvador de Matosinhos. Its editorial line at the time defined it as an “independent, political, literary and with a news slant” newspaper. In this sense, *O Paiz* emphasized its autonomy from specific groups, an idea that, in the view of the writers, would allow it to be “impartial”. It also defined itself as a republican newspaper, standing out in the last years of the monarchy in the abolitionist campaigns. However, in the name of the good customs of a federal capital that wanted to be civilized, it was quite conservative (Araújo, 1993, p. 307).

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<sup>3</sup> According to Hallewell (2012, p. 305), Pedro da Silva Quaresma was the founder of Livraria do Povo [People's Bookshop] in 1879, located at 65-67 São José St. (later 71-73) and the name Quaresma lasted until the 1960s, focusing on the publication of popular books, such as manuals and little novels, also excelling in the production of books for children.

According to Leal (without year, p. 1), with the proclamation of the Republic, the newspaper “reached its phase of greatest influence in Brazilian political life, becoming one of the best-selling periodicals in the federal capital”. During this period, the newspaper was sold to Francisco de Paula Mayrink, a businessman and politician.

In terms of circulation, in December 1884, the newspaper had 19,000 copies (Castilho, 2013). Between 1900 and 1908, the print run remained at around 15,000 copies, with reports, according to Barbosa (2010), of editions with print runs of between 28,900 and 30,000 copies. In terms of editorial aspects, during the period above mentioned, *O Paiz* published editions of between 6 and 12 pages, with illustrations and photographs, as well as literary texts such as pamphlets and chronicles. The issues were produced in linotype and printed on Marinoni or Walter Scott rotary presses. Although the second machine was considered a modern printer, the newspaper did not publish color editions.

Our initial hypothesis of the historical research was that the constitution of a collection of books for children was a long process. After all, at the end of the 19th century, when the first titles in the Quaresma collection for children were launched, children’s literature needed improvement, as Lourenço Filho (1943)<sup>4</sup> points out in the following excerpt:

The evolution of this literature in the most advanced countries over the last few decades, and the study of the genesis of several famous works, such as certain compositions by Dickens, Mark Twain and Kipling, not to mention those by D’Amicis, Andersen, the Countess of Ségur and others, shows us that, while it is not enough to write with the intention of being read by children, it must also be recognized that is also justified a “literature” intentionally planned, composed and published for them (Lourenço Filho, 1943, p. 150).

The planning and publishing of children’s books by bookseller and publisher Pedro da Silva Quaresma, between 1894 and 1897, suggests an intentional planning. The eight different titles that made up the Quaresma Children’s Library collection are shown in the chart below.

**Chart 1** - Books that made up the Quaresma Children’s Library

<b>Books that made up the Quaresma Children’s Library</b>		
<b>Quaresma &amp; C – Livreiros-editores</b>		
<b>Book</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Author/Organizer</b>
<i>Contos da Carochinha (Fairy Tales)</i>	1894	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>Histórias da Avozinha (Granny’s Stories)</i>	1896	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>Histórias da Baratinha (Baratinha [little cockroach] Stories)</i>	1896	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>Histórias do Arco da Velha (Oldies Goldies Stories)</i>	1896	Annibal Mascarenhas/Viriato Padilha <sup>5</sup>
<i>Os Meus Brinquedos (My Toys)</i>	1896	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>O Castigo de um Anjo (The Punishment of an Angel)</i>	1897	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>Teatrinho Infantil (Children’s Little Theater)</i>	1897	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel
<i>Álbum das Crianças (Children’s Album)</i>	1897	Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel

**Source:** organized by the authors (2023).

<sup>4</sup> This is a report presented by Manoel Bergstrom Lourenço Filho to the president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, in which he discusses the subject and outlines suggestions on how to improve children’s literature (Lourenço Filho, 1943, p. 146-169).

<sup>5</sup> In the year of 1896, the name of Annibal Mascarenhas appears. Annibal de Andrada Mascarenhas (1866-1924) was a short story writer, journalist, and author of children’s literature. He also used the pseudonym Viriato Padilha (Blake, 1883). Later editions include the name of Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel as the organizer of the work.

From a methodological point of view, the treatment of the sources relating to the constitution of the Quaresma Children's Library in *O Paiz* (Rio de Janeiro) was carried out in two phases: one of preliminary identification of the sources and survey, and the other of systematization.

### **The preliminary phase of the general survey of sources and the systematization phase**

The advertisement located on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1894 (ed.04332, p. 2) showed signs of a first single title – *Fairy Tales* – and various traces of targeting children as a specific audience.

The Fairy Tales, which we are now presenting to the public, are those stories that we all heard as children and that all children in all countries know; and it is a chosen collection of forty magnificent folk tales, which all mothers should give to their children to read, in order to guide them on the path of good and virtue, cheering them up and amusing them at the same time. (*O Paiz*, 1894, p. 2).

However, it was not yet possible to consider the constitution of a library aimed at children. A library or collection is made up of various titles and identifying material elements, since it is defined by a set of titles, containing material markers that individualize the collection, such as the size of the book, the collection logo, the identity of the cover, the type of lettering. All these elements are thought of as a critical apparatus, capable of defining the composition of a set of works, providing unity to the library, in the terms pointed out by Olivero (1999)<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, it is these marks, so to speak, that have the potential to retain the reader's loyalty to a particular collection.

It was with Gervais Charpentier that the “Library” collection became a true editorial genre. As such, it has its own rules. A material rule, first and foremost. The production work is determined in advance and is always identical – paper, characters, layout, etc. From this comes this uniformity of the object that leads to what will later be called “standard”, a term that translates the idea of serial production. The choice of color and cover is then aimed at producing a “brand image” that makes each published title immediately identifiable to the public and allows for consumer loyalty (Olivero, 1999, p. 35).

The methodological operation required careful documentary work: the frequent location of the title of a book on the page of advertisements in *O Paiz* alongside other products; the identification of a critical note that did not explicitly highlight the publishing circuit. For this stage, simple cards were drawn up containing title, edition, page, and summary. These notations are important because they allow the researcher to immediately locate the source amidst the volume of information published in the periodical under study.

Still in the preliminary stage, it was necessary to go through the newspaper month by month, since there were two types of entries to be considered: advertisements and critical notes. The use of keywords on the Brazilian Digital Library website does not always work satisfactorily, sometimes requiring us to go through each issue individually. In this methodological direction, one could even consider the need to use a hybrid method: entering keywords and checking issue by issue.

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<sup>6</sup>Gervais Charpentier (Paris-1805; Paris-1871) is a well-known figure in the history of French publishing, notably for having invented a new format and a new publishing genre: the “library” (Olivero, 1999).

From 1894 to 1897, the methodological operation adopted did, however, allow us to identify the launch of other titles aimed at children under the banner of Quaresma & C Livreiros-editores: some announced and, days later, launched; the launch of a title on the date of the edition of the newspaper consulted and critical notes on the reception of the book launched, as can be read below:

The success of the series of children's books published by Mr. Quaresma & Co. is truly unbelievable.

The day before yesterday, when the new book *Histórias da Baratinha* (*Baratinha* [little cockroach] *Stories*) was on sale, a thousand copies were sold by 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the only ones that were ready, i.e. bound.

This means that more than three hundred children who came to *Livraria do Povo* (*People's Bookshop*) were unable to satisfy their curiosity by buying a copy.

Today, however, with a new shipment, young readers will be able to obtain *Histórias da Baratinha* (O Paiz, 1896, ed. 04468, p. 1).

The titles collected in the preliminary stage were: June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1895 (ed. 03905, p. 8), *Oldies Goldies Stories*; November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1896 (ed. 04362, p. 2), *Granny's Stories*; October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1896 (ed. 04411, p. 2), *My Toys*; December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1896 (ed. 04468, p. 1), *Baratinha (little cockroach) Stories*; January 08<sup>th</sup>, 1897 (ed. 04480, p. 2), *The Punishment of an Angel*.

However, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1897 (issue 04638, p. 7), Quaresma & C. Livreiros-editores circulated an extensive advertisement containing the titles from the collection already identified since 1894, plus other titles presented as new. According to the publisher's conception, it was a complete children's library, whose titles and materiality gave it a single identity that was defined as: *Books for Children*. In the advertisement, the publishers drew "the attention of children, mothers, fathers, teachers and the general public to their very precious *Children's Library*".

It should also be noted that the Library will now be run by the "popular writer Figueiredo Pimentel"<sup>7</sup>. In the same rhetorical tone, it is noted that there has never been anyone in Brazil more concerned "with love and dedication to the study and enjoyment of children". On the other hand, the press's acceptance of and praise for the Library, which was now complete and comprised the following titles: *Children's Little Theater*, *Children's Album*, *The Punishment of an Angel*, *My Toys*, *Oldies Goldies Stories*, *Baratinha (little cockroach) Stories*, *Granny's Stories* and *Fairy Tales*.

At the end of the advertisement, there are two highlights: the first deals with the content and quality of the genres that make up the Library.

#### Children's Library

As can be seen from what has been written, it is therefore a superb series of books for children, on all genres – works that are admirable for the teaching they do, instilling in young souls the love of country, the cult of family, compassion for the unfortunate, affection for animals – all the feelings, in short, of a well-formed heart (O Paiz, 1897, ed. 04638, p. 7).

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel (1869-1914) was a writer from Rio de Janeiro who played a prominent role in literature and the press in the early years of the Republican period. He was fluent in various genres: poetry, short stories, novels, theater, novels, and children's literature (Pimentel, 2015).

The second highlight concerns imitations which, according to the publishers, deserved readers' attention, despite all the identification elements of the collection by Quaresma & C. Livreiros-editores, as can be seen in the excerpt below.

#### Attention

We would like to draw your attention to our editions because, in view of the extraordinary success of these books for children, countless imitations and counterfeits have been made. All of them are bound and have an illustrated cover, the same as always, and contain thousands of engravings and vignettes, as well as the same format, always with more than 300 pages (O Paiz, 1897, ed. 04638, p. 7).

We have identified the occurrences from 1894 to 1897 and the initial hypothesis of a collection for children constituted in a procedural way was confirmed. But for the demonstration to be carried out with theoretical-methodological rigor, we could not do without series organized by content, cross-referencing sources such as advertisements, critical notes, and references.

At this stage, more precise sheets were drawn up, containing title, edition, page, a summary of the content from an analytical perspective, a definition of the type of text (advertisement or critical note) and observations. It is therefore considered the most complex stage of the methodological operation, since it requires critical reading, the use of specialized dictionaries, attention to the accurate description of the source, which may contain spelling from the period, signatures of contributors who use pseudonyms, among other details related to the procedure of historiographical analysis based on the examination of newspapers.

In this respect, it was necessary to assess the precise date when Julião Machado<sup>8</sup> began working on his individual illustrations for the Children's Library, which only occurred in 1900, the year of the 11th edition of *Granny's Stories*. In the previous period, there was contribution of other illustrators or commissioned engravings and vignettes from Germany and the United States, as indicated by the research carried out by Santos (2019).

In addition, there was the emergence of a fierce dispute between authors who aimed to write children's books in the period. In the column *A Moda* (The Fashion), written by Ecila Worms, pseudonym of Julia Lopes de Almeida<sup>9</sup>, amid general comments, the topic of the quality of children's books stands out. There, the *O Paiz* contributor and children's book writer states:

I have a little boy who often asks me for books. I made the mistake of buying him *Fairy Tales*, because I have kept some of the stories by heart. [...] Before handing him the book, I leafed through it and... Jesus! What horror! What barbaric phrases, what chewed-up language; mistakes, mistakes and more mistakes riddled the whole book, taking

<sup>8</sup> Julião Machado (J. Félix. M, São Paulo de Luanda, Angola, 1863 – Lisbon, Portugal, 1930), cartoonist and caricaturist active in Rio de Janeiro between 1894 and 1920. See Ayala (1973).

<sup>9</sup> Julia Valentim da Silveira Lopes de Almeida (Rio de Janeiro, 1862-1934), in 1911, had already published *Traços e Iluminuras* (1887) [Traces and Illuminations] (short stories); *A Família Medeiros* (1892) [The Medeiros Family] (novel of manners); *Memórias de Martha* (1899) [Martha's Memories] (narratives and short stories); *A Viúva Simões* (1897) [The Widow Simões] (novel); *Livro das Noivas* (1896) [Book of Brides] (practical notions of domestic life); *Ansia Eterna* (1903) [Eternal Longing] (short stories); *Livro das Donas e Donzelas* (1906) [Book of Mistresses and Maidens] (chronicles); *A Falência* (1902) [The Bankruptcy] (novel). She also collaborated in *Contos Infantis* (1886) [Children's Tales] – short stories in prose and verse adopted for use in elementary school in the Federal District, and in the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná and Pará, with her sister Adelina Lopes Vieira.



away the natural grace of fantasy, turning a book of delight into a book of perversion. I angrily closed my copy. Giving it to a child would be a crime (O Paiz, 1899, ed. 05220, p.1-2).

The column by Julia Lopes de Almeida was published in *O Paiz* on January 20th. Nine days later, the newspaper gave way to a reply from Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel, whose offended tone showed, above all, that his reputation as a children's book author was at risk. The author begins by transcribing the criticism made by the author and then goes on to defend himself. The excerpt below shows some elements of the suggested dispute.

Fairy Tales

Defense against aggression

Did you read that right? Did you pay enough attention?

Now for the defense.

The *Fairy Tales* were published for the first time in July 1894 in a 200-page pamphlet containing just 40 stories for children. The success was so great, so fast, so unexpected – the edition sold out in 20 days – that Mr. Quaresma and Co. ordered 20 more tales from me, to make a total of 60, and then published a new edition (...) in a 323-page cardboard volume. The *Fairy Tales* are currently in their 12th edition, forming a thick volume of 400 pages.

[...] Your Excellency perhaps wanted to monopolize children's literature. You wrote the *Children's Tales*, naturally the first in the series [...]. Look, madam, it is the public who judges a book. *Fairy Tales* is more than judged: children love it (O Paiz, 1899, ed. 05226, p. 3).

The defense is signed by Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel on page 3 of the periodical. There, the author warns the reader about the success of the first title published, which, in addition to having been expanded at the request of the publishers from 40 tales to 60 tales, the initial edition soon sold out. In addition, he notes that *Fairy Tales* was already in its 12th edition in 1899, which suggests more than two editions a year. In the second part of his defense, Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel adopts a curious tone of denunciation, pointing out Julia Lopes de Almeida's intention to monopolize children's literature. Despite her wishes, she published only one title aimed at children. Finally, he emphasizes that children would be able to judge the quality of the work and have already done so: "loving it".

Examining the documentation at this particular stage has led us to some relevant inferences: the emergence of a field of dispute between authors who aimed to write children's books, as Julia Lopes de Almeida and Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel illustrate; the books being addressed to parents and teachers, whose mediation was provided for in the books; the representation of reading derived from the analysis of the advertisements as good and edifying; the concept of childhood being universal in nature, with no markers of race, gender or social condition being considered.

### **Nanquinote Library (1936-1947): survey and systematization of criticism**

The idea for the Nanquinote Library, made up of, at least, 20 stories written by Erico Veríssimo and other authors of the time, came about at a meeting between Veríssimo himself and the owner of Livraria e Editora do Globo, Henrique Bertaso, as the author states in his biographical book *Um certo Henrique Bertaso* [A certain Henrique Bertaso] (Veríssimo, 2011).

One afternoon we discussed the project of a collection dedicated to children, in large-format volumes, with illustrations in many colors. I wrote six stories for this series (Nanquinote Collection), which appeared between 1936 and 1937. I named the hero of the first one (*Aventuras do avião Vermelho* [Adventures of the red plane]) Fernando. At that time, I had a program on Rádio Farroupilha, under the pseudonym “Old Friend”, where I told stories to children (Veríssimo, 2011, p. 44).

The beginning of Erico Veríssimo’s writing career, when he dedicated himself to writing his first novels and short stories, was mixed with his production for children, concentrated in the 1930s. The writer-editor set about writing and organizing the Nanquinote Library, which had the contribution of other writers, including Mário Quintana<sup>10</sup>. Veríssimo “projected himself in the most diverse areas of literary creation: from children’s adventures to the epic universe of *O Continente* [The Continent], from social caricature to psychological fiction, from travel chronicles to the allegorical novel *Incidente em Antares* [Incident at Antares]” (Chaves, 1972). The titles written by Erico Veríssimo that made up the Nanquinote Library collection were:

**Chart 2 - Books by Erico Verissimo in the Nanquinote Library Collection.**

<b>Books by Erico Veríssimo in the Nanquinote Library - Editora do Globo</b>			
<b>Book</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Illustrator</b>	<b>Circulation<sup>11</sup></b>
<i>Aventuras do avião vermelho</i> [Adventures of the red airplane]	1936	João Fahrion	5,000
<i>Os 3 porquinhos pobres</i> [The 3 poor little pigs]	1936	Edgar Koetz	5,000
<i>Rosa Maria no castelo encantado</i> [Rosa Maria in the enchanted castle]	1936	Nelson Boeira Faedrich	5,500
<i>Meu ABC</i> [My ABC]	1936	Ernest Zeuner	5,500
<i>O urso com música na barriga</i> [The bear with music in his belly]	1938	João Fahrion	11,500
<i>A vida do elefante Basílio</i> [The life of Basil the elephant]	1939	Nelson Boeira Faedrich	10,000
<i>Outra vez os 3 porquinhos</i> [The 3 little pigs again]	1939	Edgar Koetz	10,000

**Source:** organized by the authors (2023).

The Nanquinote Library collection was considered a source of knowledge and leisure, encouraging the practice and circulation of reading. Its editors/organizers were considered those who attested to the legitimacy of the collection and the criteria for choosing the titles and authors who wrote for it.

<sup>10</sup> Mário de Miranda Quintana (1906-1994) worked at Globo Bookshop for three months in 1924. In 1936, he returned to the bookshop, where he worked under the direction of Erico Veríssimo. A Brazilian poet, he was the author of *O Batalhão das Letras* (The Battalion of Letters), the 16th book in the Nanquinote Library collection, published in 1948 and still reissued today as a book of poetry.

<sup>11</sup> The circulation for the first edition of the books written by Erico Veríssimo, indicated here, first appeared in the book *O Contador de Histórias: 40 anos de vida literária de Erico Veríssimo* [The Storyteller: 40 years of Erico Veríssimo’s literary life], written by professor, historian, and literary critic Flávio Loureiro Chaves (1972). It was not possible to locate this information for the other titles in the Nanquinote Library.

The material characteristics that ensured the inclusion of the books in the collection ranged from the size of the books – 27.5 x 18.8 cm (10,8 x 7,4 inches) – to the cover page, with colored cubes forming the title of the collection and representing the characters of the different stories. The standardized cover page creates a brand for the collection, conforming it with specific characteristics, as well as being an economical option, since the publishing process develops more quickly, as the identifying graphic design is already planned, even considering that the series analyzed here concerns a collection of books for children, which involves specific illustrations and cover pages.

In the archives of the Brazilian Digital Library of the National Library Foundation, we found critical texts about Nanquinote Library in the periodicals *A Razão* (Ceará) and *A Federação* (Rio Grande do Sul), some of which were complimentary and others, negative. We used the keyword “Biblioteca de Nanquinote [Nanquinote Library]”, which returned satisfactory results, but also the titles of the first two books in the collection – *Aventuras do Avião Vermelho* [Adventures of the red airplane] and *Os três porquinhos pobres* [The 3 poor little pigs], with some promising results.

### **The review about the launch of the collection**

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to begin by contextualizing the two periodicals that offer elements for understanding the launch of the Nanquinote Library. *A Razão*, a newspaper from Ceará that ran from 1929 to 1938, had the subtitle: independent, political and with a news slant. It first circulated under the direction of Monte Arraes. It was published daily and had 8 pages during the week and 12 on Sundays. The price ranged from \$200 réis (local currency at the time), for a daily issue, to \$50,000 réis, for an annual subscription. It was also possible to buy a back issue for \$400 réis. It ceased to circulate in May, 1938, when the last issue (number 592) presented the text entitled “To the Readers and Subscribers of A RAZÃO”, in which the reasons for the dissolution of the publishing house and, consequently, the extinction of the periodical were set out<sup>12</sup>.

The newspaper *A Federação* was founded on January 1, 1884, in the then Province of São Pedro (Rio Grande do Sul). With a party-political slant, its mission was to disseminate republican ideals. It was run first by Venâncio Ayres (in 1884) and then by Júlio de Castilhos. It circulated until November, 1937, when the Estado Novo [New State] (1937-1945) was installed under President Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, who decreed that the newspaper’s publications should cease<sup>13</sup>. In the same year, after the November, 1937 Constitution, political parties were abolished in Brazil<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> This information was collected after researching and analyzing the first and last editions of the periodical, available at the Brazilian Digital Library of the National Library.

<sup>13</sup> Observatório da Imprensa [Press Observatory]. Available at: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/memoria/federacao-um-jornal-que-fez-historia/>.

<sup>14</sup> According to the entry entitled “Political Parties (Extinction)” on the website of the Center for Research and Documentation of Contemporary Brazilian History (CPDOC, in Brazilian abbreviation). Available at: <http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-tematico/partidos-politicos-extincao>.

The text signed by Father Helder Câmara<sup>15</sup> about the Nanquinote Library, published by the newspaper *A Razão* on July 26, 1936, stands out on the page amid advertisements of butter, earrings, buttons, cement and iron, boarding house rooms, besides a list of students who had passed the first places in an educational institution competition.

Helder Câmara begins his analysis by presenting the collection and its Nanquinote puppet identifier. He goes on to say that, among the writer's defects and qualities, and also the editor of the collection of books for children, Veríssimo "did well to join the company of Monteiro Lobato and Viriato Correia" (Câmara, 1936, p. 15), renowned writers who dedicated themselves to producing books for children; the former distinguishing himself through the invention of Sítio do Picapau Amarelo [Yellow Woodpecker Farm], and the latter standing out in the production of books that tell the history of Brazil for children or children's fiction<sup>16</sup>. The churchman also states that Veríssimo's stories published up to that time – *Aventuras do Avião Vermelho* [Adventures of the red airplane] and *Os três porquinhos pobres* [The 3 poor little pigs] – were very close to the classics by Andersen<sup>17</sup> and Grimm<sup>18</sup>, as well as being influenced by Monteiro Lobato. According to Helder Câmara's assessment, Erico Veríssimo could, in the future, "shy away" from the volumes he published, but a good observer could see in his productions "the seeds of his future merits" (Câmara, 1936, p. 15).

In his opinion, Veríssimo gave in to what he called "childish whims", since, in his analysis, his stories included "absurdities and impossible fantasies", reminiscent of movie cartoons, with their "picturesque and illogical" sequences. He cites the story of the three poor little pigs who run away from their pigsty in search of adventure, warning that not only do animals talk, but trees also talk, smile and call. The sun and the moon respond to children's requests and drink ice cream or water. He goes on to warn that imagination is not always "harmless".

It is important to note the religious man's concern about the type of education that would be offered to children who read books from Livraria e Editora do Globo. In the 1930s, a time when children's literature was seen as a type of manifestation that would convey moralization and teaching, instructing children and entertaining them; imagination was welcome, but sparingly. In her opinions for the National Commission for Children's Literature (CNLI, in Portuguese abbreviation), Professor Elvira Nizynska<sup>19</sup>, although she affirmed the importance

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<sup>15</sup> Father Hélder Câmara (1909-1999), when he took part in the Catholic Education Congress, classified a manifesto launched by the Brazilian Education Association (ABE, in Portuguese abbreviation), which included Anísio Teixeira and Manuel Bergstrom Lourenço Filho, as having communist content. In 1936, Father Hélder was appointed technical director of religious education for the archdiocese, with the mission of implementing religious education in Rio de Janeiro's public schools. In the following years, Father Hélder dedicated himself to education. In 1955, he joined the National Education Council, which later became the Federal Education Council, a body linked to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Information from Condini (2004) and the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) entry on Helder Pessoa Câmara. Available at: <http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-biografico/helder-pessoa-camara>.

<sup>16</sup> From his works for children, stands out *Contos da História do Brasil* [Tales from the History of Brazil] (1921), *História do Brasil para Crianças* [History of Brazil for Children] (1934), *As belas histórias da História do Brasil* [The beautiful stories of the History of Brazil] (1948) and *Cazuza* (1938). He also collaborated with the magazine Tico-Tico. Information from the FGV entry on Viriato Correia. Available at: <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/sites/default/files/verbetes/primeira-republica/CORREIA,%20Viriato.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Christian Andersen (1760-1842) wrote plays, patriotic songs, tales, stories, and fairy tales, for which he is known worldwide. He lent his name to what is considered the Nobel Prize for children's literature, the *Hans Christian Andersen Award*. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0026153/>.

<sup>18</sup> The Grimm brothers – Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) – were German academics, linguists, poets, and writers who dedicated themselves to recording various children's fables. They also made great contributions to the German language, having both worked on the creation and dissemination, from 1838, of the *Definitive Dictionary of the German Language* (the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*), which they never completed. Available at: <https://www.editorawish.com.br/blogs/novidades/quem-foram-os-irmaos-grimm>.

<sup>19</sup> Elvira Nizynska da Silva (1896-1964) studied at the Escola Normal do Distrito Federal [School for Teachers of Federal District] between 1911 and 1913. As well as teaching, Nizynska also worked as associate

of aesthetic elements in children's literature, gave greater weight to educational elements, considering that children's books had a civilizing mission in relation to small readers. In her opinions on children's cultural centers, the teacher stressed the "useful entertainment" provided by reading good children's books<sup>20</sup>. The child could, at the same time, entertain and instruct himself in some way.

Still on the subject of the appreciation of the religious man, when he brings Veríssimo and Lobato together, Helder Câmara says that the two authors make use of "crude and trivial terms, such as scoundrel and shameless". However, he ponders, the language used by both writers can also be attractive, charming.

Erico Veríssimo, like Lobato, often uses crude and trivial terms, such as scoundrel and (I write?) shameless. But, like Lobato, he has attractive language and sometimes charming ways of saying things: "Did I say the donkey had glasses? I did not. Yes, he did" (Câmara, jornal *A Razão*, 26 jul. 1936, p. 15).

According to the criticism made by Hélder Câmara, Lobato and Veríssimo were close in their use of more colloquial language when it came to stories for children. This characteristic may not have been admired by the religious, however, a simpler and more accessible language for small readers was praised in the advertisements for the collection edited by Veríssimo and published in the newspapers of the time.

On page 3 of the newspaper *A Federação* (July 9, 1936), among news of strikes in two European countries, the birthday of the commander of the military brigade, Colonel Canabarro Cunha, the London Court and a meeting of the Rio Grandense Academy of Letters, and other political news, there is a critical article in the bottom left-hand corner of the page about the launch of the Nanquinote Library, the collection aimed at young children.

Signed simply by X., the text begins by characterizing the first two stories – *Aventuras do avião vermelho* [Adventures of the red airplane] and *Os três porquinhos pobres* [The 3 poor little pigs] – as "simple and fluent". With a different understanding to the one expressed by Father Hélder Câmara in the text published in the newspaper *A Razão*, he goes on to explain that they are stories "told in unpretentious language and without the artificial plurality of those who don't know how to speak to the naive soul of children". The stories are therefore defined as free of "artificial plurality" and "simple and fluent".

The text praises the "imaginative creator" of the first stories from the Nanquinote Library, and states that, by "launching [into] such difficult and complicated literature [for children], he won with the same unconcern and superiority with which he won in the others". Still according to the anonymous author, "many well-known people have written intentionally for children" and he goes on to say that "it has happened that children, almost all of them, have not understood his books and have not been interested in them". Veríssimo, on the other hand, says the anonymous critic, "knew how to use all the convenient resources, with his short sentences, his clear ideas and his common words", thus managing to find a way of communicating with children in such a way that they became interested in what he was telling. This excerpt from the text published in the newspaper *A Federação* shows what the critic considered to be the prerequisites of a quality children's story: short sentences, clear ideas, and common words.

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dean of the now defunct Rodrigues Alves School, in Catete Rio de Janeiro's neighborhood, between 1928 and 1932. In the same period, as a Brazilian Education Association member, she took part in various debates on children's books. Over the years, Elvira became a scholar and specialist in children's literature. In 1936, she was invited to join the Children's Literature Commission and played an important technical role in it, seeking to present research and recent studies on the subject at the time.

<sup>20</sup> Elvira Nizynska's opinion on Children's Literature. *GCg1936.04.29p.419 – 420. rolo 42. fot. 814 a 1016.*

Finally, it is emphasized that the competition would be surprised and afraid by the good quality of the printed books and by the sale price, “accessible to all children”. Veríssimo, owner of a “fruitful imagination and a brilliant talent”, is then praised. At the end of the text, it is stated that “the Nanquinote Library has triumphed. And what is certain is that Erico’s books are as interesting to children as they are to grown-ups”.

### Final considerations

The establishment of the Quaresma Children’s Library between 1894 and 1897 marks a promising phase for literary books aimed at Brazilian children readers. On the one hand, there was a significant segment of the publishing market – Quaresma & C. Livreiros-editores or Livraria do Povo (Rio de Janeiro) – investing in books with a material and content identity that promised to bring joy and fun to children readers. In addition, there was a fierce competition for writing children’s books between established writers such as Julia Lopes de Almeida and Alberto Figueiredo Pimentel. On the other hand, it was noted that the titles and content of the books’ collection had to be subjected to ideological filters by teachers and mothers of families, who were called upon to participate in the reception of the works “which would guide children along the path of good and virtue” – the designation of child followed the universal approach and did not include markers of race, gender or social condition.

In the 1930s, there was another type of collection aimed at children made up of, at least, 20 titles, and organized by the ingenuity of Erico Veríssimo, a prominent writer and publisher in the south of the country. This is the Nanquinote Library, which, in turn, is a bet by Editora do Globo in Porto Alegre to reach small readers. If, on the one hand, the idea of organizing the collection arose in an informal conversation between the writer and the owner of the publishing house, on the other hand, its formation was debated in newspapers of the time, which either praised the books and the initiative to set up the library, or criticized the texts and the vocabulary used by the authors of the works.

An analysis of the texts published by the two periodicals examined, *A Razão* (Ceará) and *A Federação* (Rio Grande do Sul), shows that the books written and edited by Erico Veríssimo were not unanimous among critics. However, none of the authors of the texts examined failed to recognize the movement carried out by the writer and Editora do Globo as important for the affirmation of children’s literature circulating in the country at the time.

Finally, it should be noted that both collections analyzed – Quaresma Children’s Library and Nanquinote Library – had well-defined identities, following the series pattern (Olivero, 1999). According to the criticism conveyed in the sources examined, children’s books could either guide child readers towards goodness and virtue, or they could be entertainment, as long as they were regulated by the hegemonic vision of adults.

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