



Gender and the press: the women's emancipation in the beginning of the 20th century and the newspaper A'Plebe (1919-1934)¹

Gênero e imprensa: a emancipação das mulheres no início do século XX e o jornal A'Plebe (1919-1934)

Género y prensa: la emancipación de la mujer a principios del Siglo XX y el diario A'Plebe (1919-1934)

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Abstract

This text aims to portray the debate about gender in the early 20th century and the impact of the press belonging to the anarchist movement with regard to women's emancipation. This is a study based on the analysis of the newspaper *A'Plebe*, which originated in 1917 but will cover the years 1919 to 1934. With the emergence of the working classes in urban centers following the immigrants' arrival in Brazil, the scenario was marked by the crisis in agricultural production imports and exports of. In view of this, working conditions, in addition to becoming precarious, reinforced the women's exploitation inside and outside the factories. Thus, we understand that work with the press, full of educational character, became a favorable source of instruction and reflection about workers' proposals, especially the principles of women's emancipation proposed in the newspaper's articles.

Keywords: Women; Press; Emancipation.

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Resumo

Esse texto visa retratar o debate sobre gênero no início do século XX e o impacto da imprensa pertencente ao movimento anarquista no que diz respeito à emancipação feminina. Trata-se de um estudo realizado a partir da análise do jornal A'Plebe, originado em 1917 mas que abordará como recorte temporal os anos de 1919 a 1934. Com o surgimento das classes operárias nos centros urbanos a partir da chegada dos imigrantes no Brasil, o cenário era demarcado pela crise nas importações e exportações da produção agrária. Diante disso, as condições de trabalho para além de se tornarem precárias, reforçavam a exploração das mulheres dentro e fora das fábricas. Assim, compreendemos que o trabalho com a imprensa, pleno de caráter educativo, se tornou uma fonte favorável de instrução e reflexão das propostas operárias, sobretudo dos princípios emancipatórios femininos propostos nos artigos do jornal.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres; Imprensa; Emancipação.

Resumen

Este texto pretende retratar el debate sobre el género a principios del siglo XX y el impacto de la prensa perteneciente al movimiento anarquista en relación con la emancipación de la mujer. Se trata de un estudio basado en el análisis del periódico A'Plebe, cuyo origen se remonta a 1917, pero que se centrará en los años 1919 a 1934. Con el surgimiento de las clases trabajadoras en los centros urbanos tras la llegada de inmigrantes a Brasil, el escenario estuvo marcado por la crisis de las importaciones y exportaciones de la producción agrícola. Como resultado, las condiciones de trabajo no sólo se volvieron precarias, sino que también reforzaron la explotación de las mujeres tanto dentro como fuera de las fábricas. Entendemos, por lo tanto, que el trabajo con la prensa, repleta de contenidos educativos, se convirtió en una fuente propicia de instrucción y reflexión sobre las propuestas obreras, especialmente los principios emancipadores femeninos propuestos en los artículos del periódico.

Palabras clave: Mujeres; Presionar; Emancipación.

Introduction

We know that throughout history, it is common for media outlets to consider the interests they are linked to and use strategies to publish and discuss issues that are relevant to society in the historical context in which they are inserted. In the context of the Old Republic (1889-1930), the struggles of the working class in Brazil expressed the experiences and appropriation of ideas that served as a compass in defending their interests. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, periodicals (magazines and newspapers) did not have just one single, homogeneous line of action, since each one published the doctrine aspects that seemed most urgent at the time.

Many of the newspapers of this period were concerned with the working class formation, and for this reason, they dedicated themselves to texts about the educational issue, with the aim of creating revolutionary mentalities and actions. For anarchists, education had a political character, aiming no longer to maintain relations considered unjust, but rather to transform them, which would raise awareness among workers of the necessary changes.

for the libertarian movement, the role played by education was very special: in general, it was clear to most for the libertarian movement, the role played by education was very special: in general, it was clear to most activists it was not the only or the main agent responsible for triggering the revolution; but it was clear to them that, without profound changes in people's mentality, changes brought about largely through education, the social revolution could not achieve the desired success (Luizetto, 1987, p. 42).

In this way, different periodicals linked to proletarian interests, in addition to informing and analyzing, positioned themselves against the exploitation of the men's and women's labor force, and dedicated themselves to spreading libertarian ideals in favor of a society without a country and without a boss.

From this perspective, promoting discussions about gender, covering the socially defined roles of men and women, is important, given that such concrete and specific definitions have not yet been presented. Therefore, this study aims to present the main attributions associated with women in the early 20th century, as expressed by the press in the form of the anarchist newspaper, *A Plebe*.

We emphasize that in this investigative path, we adopted the methodology of historical and dialectical materialism, considering that history is not a mere reproduction, as it transforms itself according to the correlation of forces of the class struggle in a given period. To this end, the influence of the press throughout history, as well as any other cultural manifestations, expresses the interests that are in conflict in society, both in the dominant class and in the dominated class.

With the objective of presenting an analysis of the narratives present in the highlighted newspaper that concern women's emancipation, this article is composed of four sections: the first consists of the historical, economic and political contextualization of Brazil during the proposed period, in order to relate these aspects to the workers' movement; the second, we explore the concept of gender, the starting point of our reflections. Next, we present the press, especially the newspaper *A Plebe*, as a way for educating workers and a tool for emancipation (and denouncing) the exploitation suffered by working women; in the third item, we focus on verifying the positioning of the press in defense of projects based on the discourses expressed in the newspaper in question, highlighting the aspects presented that relate to the women's role in the early 20th century.

Historical context and the workers' movement

During the crisis of the Empire in Brazil (1822-1889), fundamentally in the final decades of the 19th century and early 20th century, the coffee oligarchies associated with foreign capital diversified the economy through investments in other areas. The construction of railways, the process of urban growth, the influx of European immigrants and the development of industries producing non-durable consumer goods enabled the emergence of the working class in our lands. At the same time, an industrial bourgeoisie took its first steps in Brazil.

The development of the industrial and urban world, located mainly in the Southeast region, also drives the diversification of urban middle classes who, like the emerging working class, demand greater political participation in opposition to the exclusive control of the oligarchies.

The origin of the working class occurs in the last years of the 19th century and is linked to the transformation process of the Brazilian economy. From slave labor to wage labor. With the beginning of industrial activities and the establishment of an internal market, the coffee export economy constituted industrial capitalism in the country (Antunes, 1983, p. 48).

In the context of the Proclamation of the Republic (1889), marked by a *coup d'état* that did nothing to change the class character of the Brazilian State, the workers received nothing. In the slave-owning past, with an export economy based on large states, the ruling classes did not have the idea of a democracy that would include workers as their horizon. Thus, the conditions of factory workers at the beginning of the 20th century were very similar to the conditions of European workers at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The total absence of labor legislation was the password that allowed the pettiest exploitation of those who owned nothing but their labor power.

The relation between workers and the emerging bourgeoisie oscillated between two poles: police violence and the attempt to co-opt the leaders or workers' unions. It is worth emphasizing that the presence of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese immigrants in Brazil brought advantages for the formation of an army of workers available to capital, but it also represented an additional concern for the oligarchic governments. Many were presented as undesirable, troublemakers, criminals or preachers of anarchist ideas.

In this context, the deportation of foreigners, provided for in several legal provisions of the imperial period, was present in the First Republic (1889-1930). The defense of national sovereignty or the interests of the nation was an argument widely used to combat anarchist militants. It is no coincidence that the expulsion of undesirable foreigners was one of the agendas of the National Congress in 1906, driven by the organization of workers at that time. Decree No. 1,641, of January 7, 1907, determined the following:

Art. 1º Any foreigner who, for any reason, compromises national security or public tranquility, may be expelled from part or all of the national territory.

Art. 2º The following are also sufficient grounds for expulsion: 1st, conviction or prosecution by foreign courts for crimes or misdemeanors of a common nature; 2nd, at least two convictions by Brazilian courts for crimes or misdemeanors of a common nature; 3rd, vagrancy, begging and pimping competently verified (Brazil, 1907).

Thus, this decree, also known as the Adolfo Gordo Law, determined the banishment of foreigners who, for any reason, compromised the social order. In addition, the law expressed the interests of the bourgeoisie in curbing the growth of workers' organizations while seeking to combat what was considered "vagrancy" in the cities, as if there were employment for everyone. In short, it was an attempt to "cleanse" those undesirable in the eyes of the ruling classes.

In its origins, the workers' movement was incipient and without defined boundaries due to the few emerging industries in our territory and located in some urban centers. However, as industrial growth occurred, workers' organizations also grew, accompanied by the class consciousness of their main leaders. In this context, the struggles against excessive working hours, low wages and abuses by employers gained greater notoriety.

In the specific case of the anarchist movement, it is important to emphasize that its origins in our lands took place long before the immigration policy in the second half of the 19th century and the industrialization process. Initially, it was not a movement that had hegemony among the working class. However, the terrible working conditions with random fines imposed by employers, long working hours, the lack of labor protection laws, the use of child labor and abuses against working women contributed to the union organization of the working class.

Thus, in the final years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, there was a concern with publicizing the struggles, mainly through workers' periodicals and pamphlets. These newspapers had a short lifespan due to police repression and the economic difficulties faced by the workers' leaders. However, despite the obstacles, the anarchist periodicals dedicated themselves to spreading the ideals of a new society, with special attention to the struggles against businessmen, the education of men, women and children, as well as criticism of bourgeois morality, etc.

The anarchist leaders' concerns were not limited to periodicals. Other initiatives were carried out in the libertarian project: the founding of Modern Schools, Study Centers, Popular University, meetings, popular theater, etc. In this way, the educational activity of the libertarian leaders spread to different urban spaces and was always concerned with forming a new type of society free from the constraints of capitalism and patriarchal society.

Regarding the role of women, even in a generic way, it is possible to find a position that is very far from what we can conventionally call the bourgeois family of the early 20th century. While the bourgeoisie saw women as "mothers" and "first educators", companions of men, in addition to preaching a life of modesty, anarchists raised the banner of political and militant education for women with a view to their emancipation.

In this sense, libertarians clearly recognized the role of education maintained by the State in spreading dominant values. For this reason, they defended an education organized by the workers themselves and free from the constraints of the State. They understood education as a means of transforming the consciousness of the working class.

It is also important to note that the urban working class's organization process occurred fundamentally through the arrival and participation of immigrants and intellectuals who arrived in our lands and maintained contact with their comrades in struggle on the European continent. Confronting the interests of the business community and the oligarchic State, anarchists faced police violence, many schools were closed and a veritable hunt for anarchists was promoted by the authorities, which did not mean the silencing of the movement.

Despite the repression, strikes were one of the workers' instruments of struggle. The general strike of 1917, for example, brought the São Paulo business community face to face with the terrible living and working conditions of its workers. Demands for a salary increase, shorter working hours and a ban on night work for children under 14 years of age were the movement's slogans. Police repression in the service of the employers, as it

was to be expected, was characterized by intense violence with the murder of workers and the banishment of foreigners from the country. Even so, despite the losses, the workers' movement remained active in its fight for better working and living conditions, repeating new strikes in 1919.

We know that the forms of resistance used by the workers' movement during this period left an important legacy for the workers' struggle in Brazil. They contributed to the consolidation of the union movement, which grew stronger and more organized during this period; therefore, we understand that workers' strikes act as a legitimate form of struggle for social justice.

The changes in the work system and in the way companies operate do not eliminate workers' demands, the antagonism between profits and wages, between those who give orders and those who obey. However, they alter the forms of workers' consciousness, the perception that workers have of their work, of its importance in the production process, as well as their vision of the industrial world. In doing so, they shift the emphasis of workers' aspirations and demands (Rodrigues, 2009, p. 80).

In view of this, it is important to emphasize that the labor movement recognizes the achievements in relation to the limitations of the efforts of the working class. According to the author, the fluctuations among periods of intense mobilization and moments of repression, as well as the ways in which the labor movements were connected to broader political movements and demands for social reform, offer a deep and historically grounded analysis for an enriching understanding of the trajectory of the working class. Still in this vein:

The working groups' attitudes towards the company and factory work are also affected by the social environment in which the labor force is recruited. In the past, the advance of capitalism meant the increasing proletarianization of peasants, artisans and an independent small bourgeoisie (Rodrigues, 2009, p. 80).

In other words, the labor movement was a social and political force that consolidated itself throughout history as a response to the precarious working conditions and socioeconomic inequalities faced by the working class.

The term “gender” under discussion

Discussions involving the role of women throughout history require a special look, especially at the issue of gender. Amidst much debate about the exploration of the female universe since the beginning of the last century, Maria Odila Dias (1994) states that studying female society is synonymous with uncertainty. Thus, “The study of gender relations moves towards documenting cultural differences, and show a nuance of them, so that one day, eventually transformed, they can come closer together” (Dias, 1994, p. 373).

That said, we sought to briefly present the concepts of the term “gender” had already established in other discussions among scholars about the subject. The term “gender”, defined by Joan Scott (1995), initially emerged with American feminist women, who aimed to demonstrate that social inequalities occurred due to a sexual nature, in addition to the biological one. In the author's words,

The use of the term "gender" is intended to suggest the erudition and seriousness of a work, since "gender" has a more objective and neutral connotation than "women". "Gender" seems to fit the scientific terminology of the social sciences, thus dissociating itself from the (supposedly noisy) politics of feminism. In this use, the term "gender" does not necessarily imply a position on inequality or power, nor does it designate the injured party (and to this day invisible). While the term "women's history" proclaims its political position by affirming (contrary to usual practices) that women are valid historical subjects, the term "gender" includes women, without naming them, and thus does not seem to constitute a strong threat [...] The term "gender", in addition to being a substitute for the term women, is also used to suggest that any information about women is necessarily information about men, that one implies the study of the other. This use emphasizes the fact that the world of women is part of the world of men, that it is created in and by this male world. (Scott, 1995, p. 75).

That said, we note that the definition of the term highlighted above by the author directly links the debates about women to the male universe, highlighting a culturally constructed relationship that continues to this day.

Regarding the definition of gender, for Camila Padilha Trindade (2017, p. 15) it is possible to separate the concept of gender into two parts “[...] gender as part of the social relations identified in the difference between the sexes and gender as the first form of meaning of power relations”. In such a way that, according to Bila Sorj (1992) cited by Trindade (2017, p. 14), studies that involve the dimensions of the debate related to gender, understand a first idea that “the biological sexual equipment, by itself, is not capable of explaining the variation in female and male behavior witnessed in our society”.

To this end, gender also refers to “power, which is distributed unequally and which confines women to a subordinate position” (Trindade, 2017, p. 14) and, although the term "gender" is used because “relations between the sexes are social” (Scott, 1995, p. 76), it says nothing about the reasons why these relations were constructed as they are, “it does not say how they work or how they change” (*Ibidem*). According to Scott (1995), the descriptive use of the term "gender" is, therefore, a concept that should be associated with the study of things related to women.

In this sense, the concept of "gender", in addition to being used to delimit social relations, prioritizes the rejection of "biological explanations, such as those that find a common denominator for various forms of female subordination" (Scott, 1995, p. 75), such as the fact that women have the full capacity to be mothers and that men have superior physical strength. Thus, we also emphasize that the term under discussion also "emphasizes an entire system of relations that may include sex, but is not directly determined by sex, nor does it directly determine sexuality" (Scott, 1995, p. 76).

By creating a new perspective on the history of society “where new researchers – and feminists – sought to broaden what was considered historically important and, in this way, include new angles and new visions to what was considered certain” (Trindade, 2017, p. 12), we understand that the construction of a definition of gender is necessary within the scope of the study, given the need for advances in the debates on this topic.

The newspaper *A'Plebe* and emancipatory thought

The way in which the press in general presents itself contributes significantly to understanding the problems, contexts and different projects of people, which are debated in society and expressed in the pages of a newspaper.

We cannot fail to say that each printed periodical represents certain political and ideological interests, which make choices for a certain type of information that will be conveyed. When we consider that the press in general was, and still is, controlled by groups linked to dominant interests, there is a burden on the educational guidance offered to the oppressed classes, especially women.

In the context in which the newspaper began its publications, dealing with the scenario of a country that had just come out of a general strike in 1917, in which workers demanded better wages and working conditions, the industrialization that aimed to modernize social relations from the point of view of the bourgeoisie was still far from happening.

Founded in 1917 in the city of São Paulo, *A'Plebe* established itself as an expression of the press, independent of dominant interests and identified as a newspaper linked to the anarchist movement. It was not the only newspaper to circulate among the working class during this period, but it became one of the longest-running and most combative in the working class press. The newspaper's origins date back to the historical context of the First World War (1914-1918), marked by the reduction of wages and the violence of the oligarchic State against the working class. The newspaper emerged as an offshoot of another periodical, "*A Lanterna*", which ceased its activities in 1916.

Edgard Leuenroth and Florentino de Carvalho were its first editors and, among the issues addressed by the newspaper, we find discussions about the workers' organization, workers' strikes, anarchist education, women's living and working conditions and the proletariat's exploitation. Presenting itself as an anarchist and anticlerical periodical, the first edition was made available to the public on June 9, 1917. Initially, the newspaper was published weekly, becoming a daily in 1919 and banned from circulation in 1924, although it did so clandestinely. The material obstacles, police repression, criminalization of the workers' movement, among other problems, are an expression of the difficulties faced by this workers' newspaper, which was published until 1951.

However, regardless of the violence, censorship or even the organizers' imprisonment, in the opinion of Rodrigo Rosa da Silva (2005), *A'Plebe* can be considered the "most important" vehicle of the anarchist press in Brazil, given its educational character.

Without a doubt, Leuenroth's newspaper was the most important and longest-lasting organ of the anarchist press in Brazil. It existed for over thirty years, being published until 1949, with small interruptions due to financial problems and police persecution. It was published bimonthly, monthly, weekly and, in 1919, it was published daily, reaching a circulation of 10 thousand copies. It circulated throughout the country and even abroad. The newspaper was distributed through direct sales on the streets by anarchist militants themselves, through points of sale throughout the city, such as newsstands, and was also sent by mail. A copy was periodically sent to subscribers in various parts of the country and packages were sent to be sold by militants in other cities. The newspaper was maintained by the value of subscriptions, individual sales and contributions from individuals or support lists, through which donations were collected to maintain the newspaper (Silva, 2005, p. 27-28).

Thus, in addition to providing information, the newspaper played a fundamental role in the workers' organization, training and mobilization. Through articles, editorials and reports, the workers' media encouraged solidarity among workers, shared successful experiences of struggle and promoted class unity.

In view of this, we understand that the press was a means of communication that was not open to the public, but maintained a formative influence on the workers' lives who had access to it. Above all, on the lives of many women who had no knowledge of the extent to which they were exploited, nor an active voice in dealing with these issues.

In this sense, the issue of women's emancipation through their freedom the economic and cultural dimension was reinforced in the broad debate that anarchists held, when criticizing bourgeois and patriarchal institutions. The fight for female independence was, in this context, primarily a moral issue: it was about freeing oneself from the imposed bourgeois femininity model and building a new woman figure (Rago, 1997, p. 77-78).

As the author presents, we see that the idea of forming a free woman, emancipated from patriarchal principles rooted in society, began to gain strength within the anarchist movement, which was not common in the mentality of the bourgeois class. There was then a concern with educating for the freedom of their desires and wishes, and it was no coincidence that, during the early 20th century, education became the space par excellence for debates involving different political projects for the workers' formation.

In this way, *A'Plebe* expressed a proposal for the construction of relations of equality and solidarity among all. However, the construction of the new society would not happen by chance, but required educational and propaganda actions that would prepare workers for the transformation of society. Its editors and collaborators shared the press perspective that prioritized the anarchist activists' formation.

These issues refer to the pedagogical and educational nature of the periodical, as Khoury (1988, p. 83) points out:

decisively in the self-educational process; as an agile and inexpensive means of communication, it is used as one of the main organs of activism and reveals abundant data on this complex experience of the agents, where professional and militant action are mixed [...].

In this way, the anarchist press assumed its character before society, in such a way as to establish the commitment to educate readers with the aim of promoting the political education of workers. In the case of the periodical *A'Plebe*, in addition to the educational bias, awareness raising in favor of working-class women gained space in the pages of the newspaper. The discussions dealt “with women's participation in public life, political activism, women's space in the world of work, female literacy, the possibility of free love, birth control, and issues related to sexual education” (Ribas, 2014, p. 6).

This highlights the anarchists' concern for women's freedom, offering them multiple possibilities of expression. However, the situation of anarchist culture, which appears to have been harmonious, was marked by numerous conflicts. For this reason, we emphasize that the intention of this article is not to romantically idealize the interests and principles of the libertarian movement.

In this way, the texts in the newspaper aimed to awaken in readers, especially female readers, the knowledge of their capabilities, especially through “rational and scientific” instruction (Ribas, 2014, p. 11), with the aim of preventing women from becoming ignorant and ceasing to be subservient to patriarchal society. The influence that anarchist discourses exerted on their publications about women's emancipation was not limited to labor relations. Mikhail Bakunin (1975, p. 13) in one of his texts published in the Journal, states that

as we are convinced that by abolishing religious marriage and civil, legal marriage, we will restore life, reality, and morality to natural marriage, which is solely based on human respect and the freedom of two individuals, a man and a woman who love each other; that by recognizing each person's freedom to separate from the other whenever they want and without having to ask permission from anyone, equally denying the need for this permission to unite the two, and generally rejecting any intervention by any authority in their union, we will make them more closely united, much more loyal to each other [...].

The words of the libertarian thinker proposed a critique of ‘conventional marriage’ that could be solved if it were transformed into ‘natural marriage’ as presented in the statement above. In this way, his intention was to present the “[...] sexual union that would be beyond the laws and precepts of contemporary society, but which, nevertheless, would be within the possibility of a context of truth” (Ribas 2014, p. 10). With this, the periodical, equipped with principles of anarchist socialism, expressed ideals that encompassed other agendas besides affective relations:

sexual unions must be based on love. The woman must be economically and morally independent. Children will naturally depend, through the bond of affection, on their parents, as well as on the whole of society, which owes everyone, without distinction, instruction, support and means of work (*A Plebe*, 1919, n. 3, p. 2).

In other words, we see the defense of a discourse that expresses concern in preparing women for their freedom in all areas, making the emancipated one.

The role of women according to the anarchist press

Revisiting the history of women's struggles for emancipation is a current issue in light of perceived setbacks. Understanding past struggles and transformation processes is not a test of erudition, but a necessity for future educators.

We know that the work carried out by the educational press, especially the *A Plebe* newspaper, in the context of transformations, occurred through a great deal of resistance. In addition, the media, especially newspapers, aimed to bring the ideas and principles (Rodrigues; Biccás; 2015) that permeated the time to the population.

As Maria Helena Rolim Capelato (1988) states, the problematization established in the relationship between History and the press records the use of newspapers as a source of study for historiography. As an influencer on the thinking of certain periods, we understand that the press sought to report on the main changes that occurred in the country and to disseminate ideas.

Before continuing and delving into the topic of the patriarchal view (and we still come across some of them today) regarding women and their role in society, it is necessary to contextualize, albeit briefly, the principles of the anarchist movement.

Among its many different currents, this movement sought to awaken values of solidarity, equality, freedom and responsibility among its followers, in order to interpret the struggles waged within the workers' movement to rescue the social utopia of a free society. As a result, women's struggle to overcome their position is found on several fronts, even though they are distinct phenomena. For Mariana Affonso Penna (2016), the women's position was 'naturally' inferiorized in everyday life, but there were female anarchist activists who organized themselves and reflected about their position, as well as forcing male activists to assume gender equality as a fundamental issue.

Thus, Samanta Colhado Mendes (2010) also points out that women active in the anarchist movement were ahead of many other researchers, proposing theoretical bases for anarchism as a means for the emancipation of female workers.

In this vein, when we reflect about the impacts that the sexist mentality imposed on the women's role, we find that many approaches have been linked over the years have favored and privileged the subordination of the female gender to the men's figure. According to Lina Aras and Marinho (2012, p. 111), the relationship between men and women is one of domination and subordination, and the so-called feminine powers, including the "feminine way" and the "queen of the home", are mere illusions that do nothing more than perpetuate the male hegemony rooted in society.

The fact is that in the representations of the "feminine way" or the "queen of the home" as it was attributed to the role of women, it is not only about the existence of the reproduction of a totally unequal system, but also reveals the imminent threat of their contribution to the subversion of this same system, as pointed out by Lina Aras and Simone Marinho (2012).

Based on the biologically scientific discourse that "the inferior nature of women" (Aras; Marinho, 2012, p. 107), they categorized them as being treated only by family and maternal relations. From this perspective,

the construction of a women's model symbolized by the mother, devoted and completely self-sacrificing, implied their complete professional, political and intellectual devaluation. This devaluation is immense because it is based on the assumption that women in themselves are nothing, that they should deliberately forget themselves and fulfill themselves through the successes of their children and husband. [...] Women's field of activity outside the home was limited to that of helper, assistant, that is, a subordinate role to a male boss in activities that always placed them on the sidelines of any decision-making process (Rago, 1985, p. 65).

The impact of the impositions made on women during this period is still present and can be easily noticed today, given that the devaluation in the professional field occurs largely by the opposite sex. In this sense, Rago (1985, p. 64) also states that information conveyed by the working-class press frequently testified to "the indignation and feeling of humiliation of men when they were replaced by women in the production process".

Living in a context in which her life was submissive to her husband, father or even son, it was natural "to try to control women's reading, especially those that were considered immoral, such as novels and serials" (Aras; Marinho, 2012, p. 112) [...] Women had the freedom to read. As long as it was a "pure and chosen" reading, by men,

whether they were religious or not, because only “they would have greater discernment than that would be a healthy reading” (*Ibidem*).

For Rago (1985), the articles that debated the situation of women present in the pages of the anarchist press that intuited movements demanding gender rights were significant. However, these movements were still part of the control of men who “[...] certainly had greater freedom of movement, greater access to information and greater organization among themselves. Women should participate as daughters, wives or mothers, that is, in a condition of subordinates to the leaders (Rago, 1985, p. 64).

With the commercial and industrial advances that marked the period, the anarchist perspective, despite demanding new perspectives and changes regarding the female role, clearly recognized the signs of setbacks because even the “Fragile and sovereign, self-sacrificing and vigilant” woman (Rago, 1985, p. 62) in her new ‘behavioral model’ should receive instruction in etiquette. At first, this was common among girls from wealthier families, who were expected to receive “good preparation and education for marriage, as well as concerns about aesthetics, fashion and the home” (Rago, 1985, p. 63). However, this model gradually spread to working-class women, resulting in a great “exaltation of the bourgeois virtues of industriousness, chastity and individual effort” (*Ibidem*).

We see that a symbolic representation of women was ‘forged’. The one who is “the wife-mother-housewife, affectionate, but asexual” (Rago, 1985, p. 62) when new demands of the country’s growing urbanization gained ground.

Contrary to the culture of power, anarchists sought to destroy existing relations of domination, especially the subordination of women. In this way, the activism carried out in the pages of the newspaper acted as an instrument of education for readers, that is, workers.

In this sense, when we consider the writings of the newspaper written by anarchist women who demanded the emancipation of workers, we notice a certain gender resistance when addressing such issues. Erna Gonçalves, a woman and writer, denounces through her text published in the newspaper, the proletarian women’s situation, as a way of raising awareness not only among workers, but especially among women workers about their social position.

It is humiliating, it is unconformable, it is revolting, the situation in which women have been kept throughout successive generations. And you, proletarian woman, a mocked woman, a betrayed woman, a broken woman, remain calm, without caring about the horrible pile of rubbish they have made of you, or even understanding the mockery which you are the object. You do not see how many fallen women there are in the world, how many unfortunate women suffering the most ridiculous humiliations for the hard and bitter bread of each day! You do not even see your own horrors; you do not understand that your suffering brings social bitterness. Indifferent and oblivious to your suffering, you let your children, your husband, your parents and your brothers suffer. You must wake up, proletarian woman! You are everything in this universal life; you are life itself, you are the nourishing sap of your descendants. [...] Proletarian woman, your destiny is in the balance: Either you rise up strong and strong, united and fearless against the intruders who enslave you to work, when your place was in the home taking care of your children, or you will be eternally disgraced and all your loved

ones with you. You must act! You cannot have an uneasy conscience because of the crime you commit. Comrades, get to work! The revolt that the barbaric acts of today's "feudal" lords instill in us cannot remain repressed. *Let us act*, proletarian women, and the first step in the field of struggle is unity. Let us unite strongly and we will be invincible (*A Plebe*, 1934, n. 73, p. 2).

The author harshly exposes the wounds carried by women belonging to the dominated class; in addition, she dedicates herself to calling for the union of working women in search of revolution. However, when we analyze the article from the perspective of the contradiction proposed by materialism, we notice that, even though the author defends anarchist agendas, subtle statements reveal the patriarchy's roots in a direction contrary to the women's emancipation. In this sense, even considering the anarchist proposal to overcome the bourgeois order, women's participation is restricted, judging by the article analyzed, to the extent that it reserved the domestic space for them. Isabel Cerrutti, an activist and defender of anarchism, did not mince words when she also wrote in *A'Plebe*:

The women's emancipation does not lie in their equality before men, in political prerogatives, in command and work, but rather in the Humanity emancipation from political tutelage and in the economic and social equality of all humankind. [...] Women are not slaves to men (except in abnormal cases), but rather slaves, together with men, to a thousand prejudices, and victims, like them, of the exploitation exercised by the powerful of both sexes, both on men and women. [...] to make them equal to men is to remain where we are. What we must do is fight alongside them and with men so that the emancipation of women becomes a fact, not for women or for men, but for all people (including children and adolescents) for Humanity, because the two sexes integrate and complement each other (Cerrutti *apud* Rodrigues, 2007, p. 95).

Therefore, the fight for women's emancipation was, above all, a fight to overcome capitalism, because only in this way could women emancipate themselves from oppressive relations. In this context, numerous issues related to motherhood, emotional relations, work, etc. emerged, which were also part of the discussions in *A'Plebe*.

In another article dated July 15, 1933, the writer named Lupianez addresses her speech to working-class women:

Comrades, get ready! I am addressing you, proletarian woman, because the time has come when you need to understand that this is not the place you are in, what belongs to you in this corrupt society in which we live. Have you not yet discovered that your duty is to fight alongside us for a cause that concerns us all and that no one but ourselves can win? Well, let me explain: your life today is full of all kinds of dangers and humiliations. And what is the reason? This is the truth, raw and naked. You tremble before your boss, before your manager, like a fragile wand whipped by the wind, despite leaving your generous blood stuck to the terrible machine where you work for hours and hours in a row in exchange for a few

miserable pennies that end up destroying your precious existence through hunger. Don't tremble, my friend! Rebel and show that you are not the slave they think you are, because you, my friend, deserve a better fate. And when you feel a tiny being moving in your womb, already growing rickety from the effort you put into the work you have to endure until the last hour, don't you rebel? You who breastfeed your little one and give him life, at the moment when he already knows how to understand you and say to him out loud these words, burning like the lava of Vesuvius and sublime like the greatest of the greatest works: Love, Justice and Fraternity for all men on earth. Do you not see how they act, bringing misery to homes and implanting terror with their hooked claws, this horrible fascism? Comrade, who reads me, you have completely distanced yourself from the Church, and with your words full of love, always keep in mind the propaganda of the Ideal that unites us in misfortune, and everywhere in the suburbs, on the trams, in the public square, spread the pure seed of Anarchism; imitate, dear proletarian, the comrades of Spain who prefer to die on the barricades of the streets rather than be whipped by the beating of the Jesuits and their rabble. You see, comrade, that we must fight unitedly for the sake of our work, because among us there is not, does not exist, the weaker sex. We are all equal and strong and we will win for the good of humanity. Forward then, Comrades, ready! (*A Plebe*, 1933, n. 3, p. 2).

We see that the pages of the newspaper are marked by the authors' intense clamor for workers to revolt and unite in a movement of struggle with the aim of changing their realities imposed by the capitalist system. In this way, we perceive that the participation of women in *A'Plebe* constitutes the expression of experiences of struggle in the workplace and in activism itself. Their actions, demands and proposals were forged in a context marked by patriarchal relations.

In this sense, as we direct our discussions towards its conclusion, we agree with the author, who states that the intention

of feminist studies directs the researcher's gaze towards the apprehension of differences, towards the exercise of documenting the specificities of female roles. It provides an activity of critical scrutiny, in order to reveal, in the daily life of contemporary societies, the possibilities of areas of resistance, improvisation, alternative, complementary, shows the nuance of social roles, to discover other focuses of study, in order to reveal future possibilities of possible changes in the stereotypical representation of gender relations (Dias, 1994, p. 379).

Thus, we understand that the relevance of the discussions presents in the anarchist press at the beginning of the 20th century is necessary today, given that the 'standardized' models have not yet been overcome. These are the targets of studies that aim to change social relations.

Final considerations

It is worth noting that in this study, the newspaper in question, considered a tool for historical research, was presented as a source for studying the press, which allowed for valuable reflections on the History of Education.

We believe that it is not enough to simply explain the principles and ideals of the anarchist movement and the interests of the newspaper “*A Plebe*” in a systematic way, as if individuals produced their ideas independently of the reality in which they operate. In addition, based on the concept that the press has a formative role, this source of research should also be presented and reflected upon, since it allows researchers to understand a series of issues, such as projects, organization of society, education and values dissemination.

In the case of the speeches in the newspaper “*A Plebe*”, the concern to speak out against the oppression and poverty present in the country is clear. More than that, the debates about women belonging to the anarchist movement that gained space in the newspaper, constituting columns that published about free and conscious motherhood, love and libertarian sexuality and opposed monogamous bourgeois marriage, reinforced the need for the female gender emancipation.

However, it is important to point out the existence of contradictions present in articles published in *A Plebe*. This is not to disregard their shortcomings, but to understand them as an expression of the construction of the struggle for the denaturalization of female subordination. In a country with a strong patriarchal and authoritarian tradition and high illiteracy rates, the newspaper in question represented the possible struggle within the political and material circumstances of the period.

Finally, even though major changes have been achieved over the years in the roles played by women, which, as seen in this article, were restricted to caring for their family institution, it is still important to reflect about the path taken by the female figure, given that such a movement contributes to the process of transformation and deconstruction of retrograde mentalities.

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