



Espírito Santo Secondary School (1908-1930): book, reading practices and literary activity¹

O Ginásio Espírito Santo (1908-1930):
livro, práticas de leitura e atividade literária

La Enseñanza Media em Espírito Santo (1908-1930):
libro, prácticas de lectura y actividades literárias

Maria Alayne Alcantara Salim
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (Brasil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4142-9244>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7413858625106947>
maria.salim@ufes.br

Regina Helena Silva Simões
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (Brasil)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7554-3152>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/6496906753146666>
regina.simoes@ufes.br

Abstract

This paper investigates the reading practices developed at the high-school Ginásio do Espírito Santo concentrating on reading spaces, access to reading material, types of reading control employed by the school, student reading habits outside the school space, school didactic and literary body of work selection, as well as the uses and appropriations of the reading material by the students at the mentioned institution. The research [methodology?] was mostly based on the theoretical reflections of Marc Bloch, Michel de Certeau, Carlo Ginzburg and Roger Chartier. The study results indicated that although classroom readings and literary text workings, under the strict pedagogical principles used at the time, did help students with their grammar and oratory abilities, the strict school and social norms were not enough to stop different uses and appropriations of the reading material.

Keywords: Ginásio do Espírito Santo; Reading Practices; High School.

¹ English version by Ana Maria Dionísio. E-mail: dionisio.anamaria@hotmail.com.

Resumo

O presente trabalho investiga práticas de leitura desenvolvidas no Ginásio do Espírito Santo, focalizando os espaços de leitura e as condições de acesso a livros, as formas de controle exercidos na escola em relação à leitura, leituras de alunos fora dos espaços escolares, indicações de obras didáticas e literárias adotadas, bem como uso e apropriação da leitura pelos alunos da instituição investigada. O trabalho foi norteado, principalmente, pelas reflexões teóricas de Marc Bloch, Michel de Certeau, Carlo Ginzburg e Roger Chartier. Ficou evidente que se, por um lado, nas salas de aula, a leitura e o trabalho com textos literários estavam a serviço do estudo da gramática e dos exercícios de eloquência, dentro dos rígidos princípios pedagógicos que regiam o ensino; por outro lado, a rigidez das normas sociais e escolares não se mostra capaz de coibir diferentes usos e apropriações da leitura.

Palavras-chave: Ginásio Espírito Santo; Práticas de Leitura; Ensino Secundário.

Resumen

El presente trabajo investiga las prácticas de lectura desarrolladas en el Ginásio do Espírito Santo, centrándose en los espacios de lectura y las condiciones de acceso al libro, las formas de control ejercidas por la escuela en relación a la lectura, las lecturas de los estudiantes fuera de los espacios escolares, las indicaciones de los trabajos didácticos. Y textos literarios adoptados, así como usos y apropiaciones de la lectura por parte de los estudiantes de la institución investigada. El trabajo de investigación estuvo guiado principalmente por las reflexiones teóricas de Marc Bloch, Michel de Certeau, Carlo Ginzburg y Roger Chartier. La investigación indicó que si, por un lado, en las aulas la lectura y el trabajo con textos literarios estaban al servicio del estudio de ejercicios de gramática y elocuencia, dentro de los rígidos principios pedagógicos que regían la enseñanza, por el otro, la rigidez de las estructuras sociales y Las normas escolares no fueron capaces de frenar los diferentes usos y apropiaciones de la lectura.

Palabras claves: Ginásio do Espírito Santo; Prácticas de Lectura; Educación Secundaria.

In Brazil, the education system represents the primary access to reading. In addition to teaching how to decipher writing, schools are expected to "train" students in skillful reading, enabling them to appropriate a variety of texts and fostering a love of reading. However, issues surrounding reading are not solely related to school settings. Developing the skills necessary to read and interpret the meaning of a text should not be the exclusive responsibility of schools, since the production of meaning through reading practice is closely linked to cultural memory acquired by listening and a shared oral tradition, which enriches strategies for interpreting the text's semantics. New forms of communication and the circulation of texts certainly influence the configuration of reading practices and the meanings produced by reading, and must be considered in any study on the subject today.

However, when addressing these issues today, we must always bear in mind that reading is not an abstract act or a historical invariant. Reading practices, the ways in which books are used and appropriated, and the meaning attributed to the act of reading are variable and directly related to the general conditions that characterize a given society. Therefore, all issues involving reading and books, and their relations with the school system, must be viewed, as Chartier (2001) warns, as simultaneously contemporary and historical.

Following this perspective, to historically focus on the processes of reading configuration in different times and spaces, it is necessary to recognize the forms and circumstances through which texts are received and appropriated by their readers. In this conception, a history of readings and readers must "[...] be that of the historicity of the modes of use, understanding, and appropriation of texts" (Chartier, 1990, p. 9). In other words, there is no text outside the medium that allows its reading or outside the circumstances in which it is read.

In light of the above, this article aims to analyze, from a historical perspective, the involvement of schoolchildren in Espírito Santo, specifically at the Espírito Santo High School, located in the capital city of Vitória, with books and reading. The target period of our investigation corresponds to the first decades of the 20th century. In order to achieve this objective, we focus on the aspects that marked the insertion and circulation of books in Espírito Santo society; the reading practices and the use of books—didactic and literary—in the various subjects that were part of the curriculum of the school under investigation; the forms of control exercised in the school regarding reading; and the involvement of teachers and students with books and literary activity outside of the school environment. Finally, we emphasize that, understanding reading as a practice closely linked to other social practices, we approach the study questions at the confluence of the social, economic, political, cultural, and educational circumstances that shaped society at the time.

The educational institution under investigation occupied an extremely important position in the state's educational landscape. It was comparable to the *Ginásio Nacional* in Rio de Janeiro and served as a model for other secondary institutions in Espírito Santo. Subsequent secondary schools—whether public or private—were required to adhere to the *Ginásio do Espírito Santo* regulations, adopting the same curriculum, assessment system, teaching methods, and textbooks. Therefore, this institution presents itself as a privileged space for investigating the research questions addressed in this study. The *Ginásio*, which primarily served male students, trained students with a *bachelor's degree in Science and Literature*, who could, at the end of the course, take exams for higher education. The institution's professors were actively involved in other areas of cultural production, a fact that favors the understanding of the ideas and concepts of these professionals expressed in their writings published in the local press and in books.

In developing this study, we recognized the complexity involved in addressing issues related to reading practices, as highlighted by Certeau (2000), who warned of the great challenge facing the history of reading in seeking to inventory and rationalize these practices,

which rarely leave their mark and end up dispersed into a multitude of singular and subjective acts, often imperceptible to the historian's eye. Furthermore, the interpretations produced by readers are not, in general, a mere reproduction of the meaning intended by reading a text. Recognizing the limits imposed on research, it is up to the historian to investigate the circumstances that govern the actual realization of these interpretations. The interpretation of reading practices in a given time and space by a given reading community. This perspective guided the entire approach of the work and the analysis of documentary sources.

Regarding documentary sources, Certeau (2002) observes that the initial gesture of all historical research consists of separating, gathering, and transforming into documents certain objects that occupy different places and functions. The historian, in their investigative practice, produces their documents, displacing certain objects from their original location, giving them a new form and status. This theoretical perspective completely opposes the positivist conception of documents as objects external to the research subject, ready to provide irrefutable and impartial testimony to historical facts. Therefore, it is no longer possible to conceive of the historian's task as merely passively accepting the data provided by documentary sources. In their research, they *constitute* the data through various operations. The material will be copied, recopied, transcribed, cut, and photographed, ultimately, through the interweaving of the data, giving rise to the production of a text. Thus, guided by this historiographical perspective, to map the circumstances experienced and shared by school subjects in the community of readers under investigation, we used a variety of documents as research sources: course syllabi, school assessments, reports from educational inspectors and instruction secretaries, educational legislation, writings from various sources produced by students and teachers at the institution under study, and, finally, interviews with former students². The diversification of sources stems from the very nature of the research work, which focuses on very specific and difficult-to-understand issues. As Bloch (2001, p. 80) warns, for research that investigates deeper themes, "[...] it is less permitted to expect light except from the converging rays of testimonies very diverse in nature."

In the process of evaluating documentary sources, as noted by Ginzburg (2002), the historian must keep in mind that these sources always represent a perspective on reality and, therefore, are selective and partial. Furthermore, they are directly conditioned by the power relations that clashed in the context of their production, preservation, and manipulation. Political interests, economic structure, cultural context, and conditions of access are issues that permeate and constitute documentary sources. To make them speak, "[...] it is necessary to read the testimonies backward, against the intentions of those who produced them. Only in this way will it be possible to take into account both the power relations and what is irreducible to them" (Ginzburg, 2002, p. 43). The information provided by the sources is not limited to what is explicit at first glance; they truly inform us about what they conceal, because "what is outside the text is also within it, sheltered within its folds: it is necessary to uncover it and make it speak" (Ginzburg, 2002, p. 42).

Therefore, the work follows the assumptions of Cultural History, whose approach makes an important contribution to historical research in general and, in particular, in education, as it allows us to break away from a model of ethereal and disembodied history, seeking to highlight how ordinary people give meaning to their everyday experiences. To interpret individuals' actions and constructions of meaning, researchers in the *New Cultural History* have turned their attention to practices. Observation of theoretical production in the educational field shows that, among the history of practices, one of the fields of research that has achieved the greatest impact in recent decades has been the history of reading, which features Roger Chartier's studies as its main theoretical reference. In Brazil, with

² The interviews were conducted during 2008

schools being the primary space in the formation of readers, research on the history of reading prioritizes actions developed within the school environment. It is primarily in this area of study that the assumptions of Cultural History and research in the History of Education in Brazil have been intertwining.

In addition to the emphasis on practices, cultural historians have, in recent decades, turned to the study of the material culture of human societies, aiming to highlight the processes of cultural circulation and appropriation. In educational research, this approach has brought to light previously little-explored sources, such as textbooks, primers, magazines and newspapers, correspondence, school regulations—in short, the entire variety of objects that serve as material support for the circulation/appropriation of pedagogical ideas. It is also worth noting that the presence of the cultural perspective in educational research fundamentally represented a counterpoint to the traditional history of Pedagogical ideas. The focus of the analyses shifted from systems of universal ideas to the concept of representation, that is, how, in different times and spaces, a given social reality is constructed, conceived, and presented to the public (Chartier, 1990).

Reading Spaces, Books, and Literary Activity: The Scenario of the Capital, Vitória

In Espírito Santo, the discourse of valuing literary activities can be clearly perceived by observing press publications and discussions among the ruling elites during the period in question. Still under the Empire, in 1875, the state president, Dr. João Thomé da Silva, in his speech to the Provincial Assembly, drew attention to the need to establish a library in the state. He emphasized the importance of this endeavor for enhancing education and local cultural life. According to his information, from the State Library, which was created in 1855 with the donation of 400 volumes by Brás Rubim, few books remained, abandoned to *moths and dust*:

Don't let this discourage you; it was founded eighteen years ago, and since then, times have changed. Today, as the province, awakening from the lethargy in which it slumbered, attempts to rise and move forward, today as spirits seem to open to the light of instruction, a Serpa library is one more torch, one that must be lit, and whose luminous rays will not be extinguished (O Espírito Santense, May 10, 1873, p. 1).

He concluded his message by requesting an annual budget from the Assembly for the purchase of books and the payment of a librarian. Despite the importance attributed in the state leader's speech, we observed, based on the cross-referencing of information produced in the analysis of documentation (Bloch, 2001), that the library operated very precariously and frequently had to suspend its public services. In 1898, Pessanha Póvoa (1897), director of public education, denounced the looting of books in his report and lamented the low readership:

neither the systematic and methodical regularity of my management, nor the certainty that it operates from 8 am to 3 pm, has achieved a greater readership. Our poets, journalists, politicians, literary scholars, lawyers, and public servants rarely appear here. The collection includes classics and few modern authors. I await new books (Espírito Santo, 1897, p. 8).

Despite the pessimism of the director of education, data published in newspapers of the time regarding monthly library visits demonstrate the presence of readers. For example, in June 1898, there were 276 visitors, according to the *Jornal Estado do Espírito Santo* (July 6, 1888, p. 1). The vast majority sought newspapers and magazines, with literature and history books coming in second.

In the following years, the State Library remained closed to the public, reopening in 1909 by then-President Jerônimo Monteiro (1908-1912), who echoed in his speeches the idea of the social importance of reading: "[...] *the library, for providing the people—without distinction of category—with the easy and convenient acquisition of knowledge that can greatly influence individual and social life*" (Espírito Santo, President J. Monteiro, 1909, p. 13). In the absence of a suitable space, the library was temporarily installed in a ground-floor room of the Legislative Assembly.

The collection, comprised of approximately 2,000 volumes, included works by major Brazilian and international writers, such as José de Alencar, Gonçalves Dias, Machado de Assis, Casimiro de Abreu, Castro Alves, Gonçalves Dias, Álvares de Azevedo, Thomaz Antonio Gonzaga, Raymundo Corrêa, Fagundes Varella, Graça Aranha, Aluisio de Azevedo, Olavo Bilac, Sylvio Romero, Euclides da Cunha, Joaquim Nabuco, Vitor Hugo, Camões, Julio Verne, Eça de Queiroz, and others. In addition to literary classics, the collection included works on history, law, natural sciences, philosophy (mainly positivist and Roman rhetorician works), religious works, magazines, almanacs, and collections of laws and decrees.

The construction of a dedicated building for the library was repeatedly postponed by various state presidents, often citing a lack of funds and low demand from readers:

The library is located adjacent to the archive in two rooms on the ground floor of the legislative assembly, with modest furnishing and stocked with the best works on law. I intended to furnish it with some luxury, but the current state of affairs forced me to postpone this project until better times. Visitors to our library are few; only 1,248 people visited it in the space of a year. Due to the low attendance, I kept it open only from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Espírito Santo, President Marcondes de Souza, 1914, p. 187).

In addition to the lack of adequate space, the library suffered I, throughout the First Republic, was plagued by administrative inefficiency that led to the deterioration and loss of its collections. This problem was even recognized by the president of the state, without any action being taken to change the situation:

Unfortunately, such an important department did not always have the zealous management that would have prevented the lamentable state of disorder and anarchy it has recently reached. The library was no more successful than the public archive, completely lacking the zeal and care of its administration. It is necessary to install the library in a more appropriate location, reorganize the cataloging, and replenish the collections depleted by the criminal misappropriation of several works (Espírito Santo, President Bernadino Monteiro, 1920, p. 51).

In 1927, during the Florentino Ávido administration, a building was constructed on Pedro Palácio Street to house the State Library and Public Archives, which until then had been temporarily housed within the Legislative Assembly. At that time, the library's collection comprised 5,347 volumes, and, due to user requests, its opening hours were extended until 9 p.m. This demonstrates that, despite the precarious structural conditions, the reading public grew, and with it the demand for new reading spaces.

Regarding literary activity, we observe that during the early years of the republican period, not only in Espírito Santo but in all states located on the periphery of the country's economic and cultural hubs, literary centers and reading clubs developed, focusing on the problem of literary creation and the dissemination of reading. During this period, Silvio Romero became the icon of an entire generation of intellectuals in the state, and his ideas exerted a tremendous influence on local literary production. Espírito Santo writer and politician Affonso Cláudio, who graduated in Law from the *Escola do Recife*, was one of the most important promoters of his ideas and a fundamental reference for writers and teachers in the state. Following Romero's theoretical model, he wrote the book "*História da Literatura Espírito Santense*" with the purpose of presenting a history of folkloric traditions and literary activity in Espírito Santo. The study was completed in 1907; however, the author faced enormous difficulties in publishing the work. Rejected by the national and state press on the grounds of lack of resources, the work was published five years later in the city of Porto. This fact highlights the barriers faced by local writers in publishing their works, even when they were representatives of the local economic elite.

The textbook "*Noções de Literatura*" (Notions of Literature), written by Pimentel, a Portuguese and Literature teacher at Ginásio Espírito Santo, is an example of the influence of positivist assumptions among the state's writers. This influence can be seen right from the first theoretical reflections woven by the author in the text's introduction:

The embryonic formation of a country, its geographic location, climate, the race or races that formed its constitution, as well as its struggles and conquests, the progress and setbacks in the general march of its existence, the glories that crown it, the bitterness that saddens it—in a word, the pulse of its entire life—will be reflected in the work of its most illustrious sons (Pimentel, 1917, p. 5).

The textbook adopted in all secondary schools in the state, according to Presidential Decree No. 3,347 of July 1917, followed the model of other textbooks of the time, presenting literature as an evolutionary process linked to the general historical movement. It described the various literary schools and their main representatives (with emphasis on Portuguese authors), highlighting some excerpts from their most significant works. It reserved a portion of the work for national and local literary expressions, evidencing the period's concern with asserting an identity in the field of literature. Regarding the literary life of Espírito Santo, it stated: "*We never had, and still do not have, a literature of our own, original, characteristically, definitively constituted*" (Pimentel, 1917, p. 96). In fact, this type of statement was common among the circle of writers of the time, who idealized the production of a literature of Espírito Santo based on external references and models.

The romantic aesthetic, so prevalent in the literary production of young Espírito Santo writers, began to be criticized by those who embraced a realist perspective. This stance can be seen in the comments made by a columnist for the newspaper *Gazeta do Povo* regarding the two short story collections published in 1889 by Professor Francisco Rufino:

It's always the same old theme of romantic and inconsolable love, melting into tenderness and dissolving into kisses and caresses, flaccid and limp. This has been, and will continue to be, for many years to come the favorite topic of those dedicated to literature among us, despite the ongoing reaction against this literary mold that, beaten down for centuries, no longer satisfies the modern spirit, no longer reflects reality" (*Gazeta do Povo*, January 15, 1889, p. 1).

These examples show that literature began to represent an instrument of action in the attempt to recognize our historical and social condition, even though, initially, this reflection was tied to external models.

In subsequent generations, the ties between literary production and social reality became increasingly close. At the beginning of the century, authors such as Euclides da Cunha, Graça Aranha, and Lima Barreto, who, according to Bosi (1994), can be called *pre-modernists*, problematized, in an even more forceful manner, the various aspects that shaped the country's social reality. Despite being more attentive to Brazil's historical and cultural particularities, they experienced, To a greater or lesser extent, the same contradictory feeling as writers of previous generations—as Bosi (1994, p. 306) put it—“[...] *lived with a consciousness divided between the seduction of Western culture and the demands of their people, diverse in historical roots and geographic dispersion.*”

Euclides da Cunha, Graça Aranha, and Lima Barreto were published in the Espírito Santo press; however, the most revered among the capital's high school teachers was the former. His book *Os Sertões* was required reading for students at *Ginásio Espírito Santense*. Furthermore, it served as inspiration for Professor Cecílio Abel de Almeida in his book *O desbravamento das selvas do Rio Doce*, certainly one of the most important works in Espírito Santo historiography on the First Republic.

In the work, the author—in tune with the Euclidean spirit—recounts the period in which he worked as an engineer on the construction of the Vitória–Minas railway, between 1905 and 1930, describing the landscape, the indigenous people, recording their customs, their songs, and their prayers. The book's organization also follows the model of *Os Sertões*: the first part presents a description of the physical environment of the regions near the *Rio Doce*; the second addresses the population of indigenous people and *caboclos* who inhabited the riverside regions. In Almeida's narrative (1959), the *caboclo* of the *Rio Doce* is compared to the *sertanejo* of Euclides da Cunha. Using the author's famous phrase, Almeida states: "[...] the *caboclo* is, above all, strong." (p. 35)

Thus, albeit modestly, the incursion of local writers into literary activity became more frequent. This movement spurred the creation of the *Academia Espírito Santaense de Letras* in July 1921, which saw the active participation of teachers from the *Ginásio*: Aurino Quintaes, Elpídio Pimentel, Aristeu Borges de Aguiar, and Aristides Freire, as well as figures linked to the religious scene and political sphere of the State. This fact highlighted the close relationship established between these various spheres of social life.

The 1920s also marked the rise of the São Paulo publishing market, which, for the first time, began to threaten Rio de Janeiro's historic cultural hegemony. This shift was part of a series of cultural transformations that unfolded in São Paulo during the period: Modernism. This movement affected various areas of artistic production and deepened, in an even more radical way, the relation between art with references to local culture. In Espírito Santo, some information on the subject appeared in the local press in the 1920s. However, as Bosi (1994) pointed out, purists and general readers were astonished by the new ideas. For them, even free verse was seen as a ridiculous innovation, and they still preferred the Olavo Bilac's verses.

The same reaction of astonishment and indignation toward new ideas could also be seen among teachers and writers in the capital of Espírito Santo, as in the case of the literature teacher at the *Ginásio Espírito Santaense*, journalist, and writer Ellpídio Pimentel. In his biweekly column, published in the *Revista Vida Capichaba* on August 30, 1924, he harshly criticized Modernism, classifying its ideas as *ridiculous* and *crazy*. He continued:

The crazy people of current literature forget that without culture and talent, there will never be originality and aesthetic purpose [...]. We cannot believe that the new arhythmic meters will supplant the golden sonnets of Bilac and Augusto dos Anjos (Pimentel, 1924, p. 20-21).

This was also the view of Nilo de Freitas Bruzi, lawyer and literature teacher at the *Ginásio Espírito Santaense*. In the thesis that secured his admission to that institution, the author presented a study of Brazilian literature of his time, analyzing the 1922 movement and focusing primarily on the writer Mario de Andrade and his works: *Há uma gota de sangue em cada poema*, *Paulicéa Desvairada*, and *Macunaima*. The professor's view of the movement and the work of the São Paulo writer is as negative as possible. He emphasizes that "[...] the current literary landscape is deplorable; they are trying to form a literary school, seeking to destroy the names that have established themselves without, however, having built anything worthy of value" (Bruzi, 1930, p. 50). He concluded his text with a prophecy that, fortunately, did not come true: "[...] authors like Mario de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Raul Bopp, live and will die obscurely for the happiness of Brazilian literature" (Bruzi, 1930, p. 51). Considering that the professor wrote this text to be read by a panel of evaluators, we can infer that this view of Modernism prevailed among the institution's professors.

However, in articles published in the local press in the late 1920s, a different stance toward the Modernist movement can be identified. In 1928, journalist João Calazans began a literary criticism section in *Revista Vida Capichaba*, entitled "*Última Hora*." In this space, the author, in addition to promoting the movement's ideas, harshly criticized the literary style and reading standards of local writers:

Today I will begin to promote the Modernists among us. Photograph the last-minute developments of the Brazilian avant-garde movement. Here, little is known (or even unknown) about these people in the present-day reality. When all of Brazil follows, with sympathy, the works of the new generation with "expressive capacity"! [...] Therefore, it is time to abandon this history of classicism. To create emphatic literature. Instead of memorizing Camões' catechism, let's memorize Ronald de Carvalho's American diary, or Romain Rolland's Book of Hours. Memorizing Camões doesn't demonstrate intelligence. Quite the opposite! (Calazans, 1928, p. 18).

The following year, the same magazine published, in its Literary Movement section, an article entitled "The Greatest Books of the Year," honoring the originality of modernist writers who, according to the author, gave a new face to Brazilian literature "[...] which is no longer the one that, for several centuries, we copied from the Portuguese, French, Italians, etc." (p. 22). And it presented as the two greatest books of 1928, *Retratos do Brasil*, by Paulo Prado, and *Macunaima*, by Mario de Andrade.

The newspaper *Diário da Manhã* also began publishing, starting in 1928, in its *Página Literária* section, articles by modernist authors such as Oswald de Andrade. The circulation of modernist ideas in Espírito Santo—more precisely, a subcurrent called the *Movimento Anthrofágico*, led by Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral—was closely linked to the work of Atilio Vivacqua, then Secretary of Education in the Aristeu de Aguiar administration, and journalist Garcia Rezende, his advisor and director of the *Diário da Manhã* newspaper. Both had participated in the *Revista Anthrofágica* in São Paulo and sought theoretical support from the movement for implementing educational reform and establishing the *Escola Activa* in Espírito Santo. The connection between the artistic-literary movement and the educational thought emerging in the state at that time can be seen in Garcia Rezende's article (1929, p. 1):

Anthropophagic teaching is based on the direct and necessary relations between man and his physical environment. Therefore, it neither recognizes nor accepts the old pedagogy that advocated the uniformity of the human soul through a model of a collective soul organized by it.

With Vivacqua's educational reform (1929), the State Government established, for the first time, more systematic measures for the dissemination of reading spaces among teachers and students in public schools. The reform program provided for the organization of libraries in state public schools; the creation of a teacher's library, which would operate in a room attached to the Normal School; and the organization of annual *literary fairs*, with the aim of disseminating the works of local authors.

In order to promote reading in rural areas, especially rural areas, circulating libraries were created, inspired by a reading policy developed at the time by the French government. The project consisted of the formation of several libraries composed of books and magazines, which were sent by the Department of Education to public schools for distribution in their respective locations. Book loans, which could be granted to students and their families, were controlled by school teachers. After readers returned the book batch, it was sent to the nearest school, following an established circulation schedule. In this way, the various libraries circulated throughout all state schools. Fourteen libraries were created and began to be distributed to schools in the municipalities of Affonso Cláudio, Conceição da Barra, Colatina, Itabapoana, Moniz Freire, Marataízes, Barra do Itapemirim, Fundão, and Timbuí. However, the departure of Vivacqua's group after the 1930 coup marked the end of the project.

The *Ginásio Espírito Santo*: books and reading practices in the school space

The *Ginásio Espírito Santaense* was created by Law No. 460 of October 24, 1908. According to its first regulations, the educational institution was to offer the "*necessary secondary education, not only for the proper direction of the citizen's social life, but also for enrollment in higher education courses and for obtaining a bachelor's degree in science and literature*" (Espírito Santo, Decree No. 96, February 1908, Chapter I, Article 1, p. 85). The program and teaching methodology, organized by a congregation of teachers and the institution's principal, were subject to the guidelines established by the *Ginásio Nacional* Regulations. Following the pedagogical guidelines that were gaining strength during this period, instruction was to be provided of an "*essentially practical nature*" (Espírito Santo, Decree No. 96, February 1908, Chapter I, Article 2, p. 86).

According to the curriculum, the Bachelor of *Science and Letters* program was divided into three areas of study: languages, science, and arts. To obtain the *Bachelor of Science and Letters* degree, students had to, in addition to completing all the subjects in the program and passing the midterm and final exams, take, at the end of the course, the so-called *maturity exam*, which aimed to verify whether the student had assimilated the *necessary intellectual culture* (Decree No. 117, September 1908, Chapter V, Article 47, p. 16). For students who did not pursue a bachelor's degree, taking Literature, Latin, German, Greek, Mechanics, and Astronomy became optional. In this case, they would only receive a secondary school graduation certificate, which did not qualify them for higher education.

The *Ginásio* was an institution deeply intertwined with the cultural, political, and economic life of the state, which was undergoing profound transformations at the time. It was responsible for training an entire generation of professionals involved in education and cultural activities, such as the press and literature, public administration, and politics. There was a strong connection among these various areas, and people were involved in each of them, as they shared

the common goal of building a new image, both for the state and for themselves. In this context, the existence of an institution like the gymnasium became essential for the movement to assert itself in the local community in relation to neighboring states.

Although local authorities frequently emphasized the need to establish a library in the official secondary school in their reports, the study of selected documentation and the testimonies of former students demonstrated that this reading space never functioned effectively during the period focused on in the research. The *Ginásio Espírito Santo*, responsible for training bachelors in *science* and *literature*, lacked a library and sought to make up for this lack through private donations, as can be seen in the report of the head of Public Education in 1922 (Espírito Santo, 1922, p. 39):

What we have is not a library, no matter how cheaply this title is made. It is simply a project, a sham. It would be most convenient if Your Excellency, with all the good will and enthusiasm for education that characterize you, could provide us with the books used in the course with duplicate copies. From Dr. Sete, the illustrious former director of education, we received a small collection of precious books, which once again greatly contributed to our well-being.

However, there were reading spaces outside the school environment, such as the State Public Library and the library of *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Espírito Santo*, which were open to high school students at the time. Mr. Amorim, a former high school student, stated in his interview that he loved reading, a habit he maintained throughout his life. As a result, he was a frequent visitor to the State Library during his student years. He read all genres, but in his youth, he especially enjoyed the novels of French writer Alexandre Dumas, found in the library's collection. When commenting on some aspects that shaped his development as a reader, he highlighted the importance of a Portuguese teacher in the high school's entrance course. According to him, "[...] Professor Nunes was an extremely erudite individual, who always introduced students to the poems and novels of national writers during class" (Amorim, 2008). This demonstrates that, despite all the obstacles, the school had the potential to promote students' encounter with *the world of reading* (Chartier, 2002).

Another literary program attended by some high school students were the poetry readings, held on Saturday mornings on the premises of the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Espírito Santo*. During this period, institutions dedicated to the development of historical research and literary activity in the state emerged—the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Espírito Santo* (1916) and the *Academia de Letras Espírito Santaense* (1921)—which constituted new spaces for reading and access to books. Secondary school teachers in the capital, such as Aurino Quintaes, Elpidio Pimentel, Cecílio Abel de Almeida, Carlos Xavier Paes Barreto, among others, actively participated in the development and operation of these cultural spaces in the capital.

While, as we saw in the account of a former student, the school represented a space for access to reading, on the other, school regulations established strict control over all printed material circulated among students and teachers. As Certeau (2000) observed, the practice of reading is marked by a contradictory movement in which the possibility of freedom and the mechanisms of control clash. Thus, Decree No. 177 of September 12, 1908, which regulated the operation of the *Ginásio Espírito-Santense*, established, in its article 84, the following determination: "[...] students are prohibited, in the establishment, from reading books, newspapers, or any other writings not authorized by the congregation" (Espírito Santo, 1909, p. 28). However, students certainly managed to circumvent this regulation on several occasions. Former students of the institution studied reported, in their interviews, that magazines and even

the dreaded novels circulated among the school's students. According to Mr. Abreu, M. Delly's novels circulated among his female classmates at the *Escola Normal*, and his interaction with the female world led him to become a reader of this type of literature. He also said that some classmates had the habit of hiding the writings under their chairs to read during *the most boring classes* (Abreu, 2008). Therefore, as Chartier (1999) points out, despite the entire set of social rules aimed at controlling the practice of reading, readers always resort to strategies to obtain forbidden books and subvert the imposed orders.

Turning to the texts used in secondary education, it is important to highlight that, during this period, textbooks had already been seen as essential materials for the smooth running of classes, as demonstrated by a high school teacher from the capital in an article published in the press: "[...] *good teaching will be achieved with a good didactic author and a good teacher. One united with the other, the two actions combined, one explains and the other clarifies*" (Diário da Manhã, 1919, p. 2). The selection of textbooks for use in secondary education essentially followed the guidelines prescribed in the Pedro II School curriculum. In fact, most textbook authors in Brazil during the period investigated were teachers from the Republic's official educational institution, such as Eugenio Werneck, Fausto Barreto, Carlos de Laet, among others. In this way, *Colégio Pedro II* directed not only the curriculum but also the teaching materials that would be used by other secondary education institutions in the country. It is important to note that, during this period, some secondary school teachers from official state educational institutions, such as Antunes de Siqueira, Elpídio Pimentel, Amâncio Pereira, and Collares Júnior, also entered the textbook production market.

The high school curriculum, in addition to Romantic writers, included names linked to the realist and pre-modernist movements, such as Machado de Assis, *Quincas Borba*, and Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões* (Espírito Santo, 1919). D. Helena recalled how *Os Sertões* was read in the classroom: "[...] *the book was large and heavy. I have to take him to school every day. The text was read aloud by the students and then commented on by the teacher*" (Silveira, 2008). In the former high school student's current assessment, reading this book was not suitable for young people with an average age of 13, which is why, at the time, the task became so uninteresting. Years later, she had a new encounter with the book, and the impression Euclides da Cunha's text left was completely different from her first experience in school. This fact brings us to Chartier's (2002) reflections on reading, since for the author, the meanings produced by reading depend on the forms and circumstances through which texts are received and appropriated by their readers. Therefore, in reading studies, it is essential to consider that forms of appropriation also produce meaning "[...] *and that a text takes on a new meaning and status when the supports that propose it for reading change*" (p. 6). Currently, these reflections are fundamental in the search for new teaching strategies that promote students' encounter with books, going beyond the merely mandatory nature of reading in schools.

In the syllabuses for Literature and Portuguese, there are no references to the literary production of the modernist authors who emerged in the 1920s. This fact can be understood if we consider, as already mentioned, the negative view of teachers of these subjects regarding modernist literary production and the new ideas propagated by this cultural movement.

We identified some books that were used in the courses that were part of the high school curriculum. In the Literature course, the collections published by the teachers of Colégio Pedro II were used: *Anthologia Nacional*, by Fausto Barreto and Carlos Laet, and *Anthologia Brasileira*, by Eugenio Werneck (Espírito Santo, 1919; Espírito Santo, 1921). Beginning in 1917, the book *Noções de Literatura*, authored by the teacher, Elpídio Pimentel, also became part of the course's curriculum. The book had the same organization as other textbooks of the time, presenting literature as an evolutionary process associated with the general historical movement, from the ancient East to Western society in the early 20th century. It highlighted a number of names from world and national literature, accompanied by brief biographical

comments and their major works. The final chapter focused on Espírito Santo literature, presenting the work of its most representative writers. It is important to note that this selection did not include any female literary representatives. For example, the work of teacher and poet Adelina Lírio, who, since the late 19th century, had actively participated in the state's literary life with the publication of her poems in the local press, was omitted. At the time, two other textbooks, written by state high school teachers, were part of the school curriculum. The oldest, *Geographia and História do Estado do Espírito Santo*, by professor Amancio Pereira, was published in 1891 and, in 1922, reached its sixth edition teaching programs, it was also possible to identify other references from the textbooks adopted, such as:

Portuguese: *Gramática expositiva, de Eduardo Carlos Pereira*; French: *Selecta Francesa, de Roquete*; *Grammatica Franceza, de F. De Oliveira e Théâtre Classique, de A. Régnier*; Science: *História Natural de Albert*; Physics : *Tratado de Physica Elementar, de Francisco Ribeiro Nobre*; Chemistry: *Chimica, de Pergueiro do Amaral*; Geography: *Atlas de Geografia, de Olavo Freire, Chorografia do Brasil, de Mario da Veiga Cabral, Compêndio de Geografia de Schorosoppi*; History: *Compendio de história do Brasil, de J. M. Macedo*; *Compêndio de História do Brasil, de João Ribeiro e Compêndio de História Universal, de Raposo Botelho*; English: *Grammatica Inglesa, de Guilherme Ferreira Rabelo*; German: *Grammatica alemã, de Emilio Otto*; Mathematics: *Arithmetica Teórica, de Cerqueira*; *Tratado de Algebra, de Bertrand e Geometria, de Thimóteo*; Latim: *Gramática Latina, de Peter e Gramática Latina, de José Ladislau* (Espírito Santo, 1919; Espírito Santo, 1921; Diário da Manhã, 1922).

In our documentation, we observed that, beginning in the 1920s, issues related to the quality of textbooks and their use in the classroom began to permeate the pedagogical discussions held by secondary school teachers. In 1921, a secondary school teacher, who wrote a column in the *Diário da Manhã* under the pseudonym *Xis*, suggested that the Federal Government appoint a commission of competent educators to evaluate all textbooks used in public schools, and pointed out the poor quality of the teaching materials: "[...] there is a lot of ridiculousness that needs to be removed from the catalogs of our schoolbooks. Poorly directed compilations, unfaithful translations, false notions, and unflattering imitations, devoid of any originality, are the common resources of our school writers" (Diário da Manhã, 1921, p. 1). Three years later, Professor Ivan Chavirin, discussing the role of books in education, warned of the inadequacy of the language used in textbooks (Diário da Manhã, January 1, 1924, p. 1):

Our textbook writers generally write for teachers, not for students. This tendency contributes to the transformation of education into a kind of golden el dorado accessible only to the intellectually privileged. The simplest topics of education are cloaked in language solemnly laden with cheap philosophy. Teachers, in turn, lecturing on any subject, seek to cover the nakedness of the simple and true with flashy oratory, useless and detrimental to teaching.

Education leaders in the state also engaged in the discussion about textbooks. The head of Public Education, Mirabeau Pimentel, advocated for a state policy to encourage teachers to publish textbooks (Espírito Santo, 1924, p. 45):

There is an urgent need to encourage the publication of textbooks. Among the state's teachers, there are some capable of producing good textbooks, but due to a lack of resources, they are unable to undertake the project. Supporting them with bonuses and even free publication of their work is a duty imposed on the government.

This incentive, as already highlighted, encouraged the publication of textbooks among primary and secondary school teachers.

Before addressing specifically, the use of books and reading practices in schools, we will offer some more general considerations. The first issue concerns the view of teaching professionals regarding the reading and writing skills demonstrated by secondary school students. Teachers and federal inspectors, in their articles and reports—as is still the case today—emphasized students' poor reading and writing skills, as well as their lack of willingness to read the books assigned by the school. School inspectors blamed the teachers for the problem (Oliveira, 1918, p. 157):

There is, however, one thing that, in our humble opinion, must be taken into consideration: the ease with which they issue secondary school certificates to children who barely read, without the necessary knowledge of the language's elementary grammar, a fact we constantly see, and from which many disadvantages arise. If they read poorly, they cannot understand, they do not assimilate, and hence the lack of interest in studying, discouragement, and ultimately, school dropouts! They cannot read aloud! They have no regard for punctuation, nor do they have inflection; Everything is read in a singsong, stuttered tone, **demonstrating the teachers' disregard** for such an important subject. Prose and verse are the same thing.

On the other hand, teachers blamed the students and the training they received in elementary school (Pimentel, 1923, p. 571): *"How often, in secondary schools, is the educator forced to waste his time on dictation and repeated reading rehearsals, to get his students to learn to read and write, since they arrive from elementary school ignorant in these two very useful subjects."* Another issue highlighted by the teacher was the students' lack of interest in reading (Pimentel, 1917, p. 90): *"[...] contemporary youth, with very rare exceptions, does not read. Past generations read the classics: Goethe, Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Victor Hugo."* The professor was a student at the Atheneu, and given the precarious material conditions that characterized secondary education in Espírito Santo, it was difficult to imagine the existence of a youth with such literary erudition. The professor's criticism was directed not only at the low reading rate, but also at the type of literature the students chose (Pimentel, 1917, p. 95):

And the few who do read choose, preferably cheap, ineptly written translations of vulgar French novels, an inexhaustible source of vulgar Gallicisms and absurd syntactical constructions, with which they taint, whenever possible, their dissertations. The writings of incorrigible gallant delight in this evil, unnerving, and harmful literature, replete with adultery, betrayal, and murder, which perverts taste and destroys sentiment, which tarnishes virtue and lashes morals. And these are their favorite and best-selling books these days.

The serial novel continued to be the main target of criticism from teachers, as it represented a threat to the reading model established by the school system's norms. According to this model, the practice of reading should be an instrument for affirming prevailing moral values, and any reading contrary to this perspective should be banned from the school environment.

The second issue is related to the authoritarian nature of teaching relations, which involved teachers and students in the school environment. The provision present in all secondary education regulations during the historical period in question clearly illustrates the disciplinary control exercised by educational institutions: "[...] *students are required to attend quizzes and practical exercises, and during class they must be attentive, respectful, and docile to the observations of instructors and teachers*" (Espírito Santo, 1925, p. 229). It is important to remember that, during this period, corporal punishment was still a common practice in the classroom and tolerated by education professionals. The idea of replacing corporal punishment with moral humiliation in front of classmates was still being discussed. It is difficult to determine which would be more damaging. The former students interviewed emphasized the authoritarianism and aggressiveness of most teachers. Mr. Amorim recalled the strict discipline and the "jolting" some classmates received from teachers (Amorim, 2008). Given this context, it was to be expected that the practice of reading, like other teaching practices, would be subject to and delineated by the disciplinary rules in force in schools. However, we must be careful not to reduce all educational experiences developed in schools to this authoritarian dimension. The Espírito Santo writer Haydée Nicolussi, in a chronicle about her student days, captured the dual nature of educational experiences at school very well (Nicolussi, 1927, p. 16). The author portrays both experiences of control and violence:

There is nothing more shocking, more demonstrably idiotic to modern pedagogy than those terrible books from which we learned to read in our childhood. Especially for the poor souls who, along with the criminal monotony of books, have acquired cakes, arrows, half a dozen kernels of corn under their knees, and the pointy cap with donkey ears.

She also recounted the experiences that provided pleasure and paved the way for his understanding of the world:

João Kopke.... João Ribeiro.... Arnaldo de Moraes.... they were the ones who taught me the love of travel and famous anecdotes. No one told me to buy new multiplication tables and geometry books, and I'd come home exhausted. But a little list with the name of a reading book, what a thrill.

Some education professionals, influenced by the ideas of the New School, which began to circulate in the state with the educational reforms³ of Cardim (1908) and Vivacqua (1928), adopted a discourse opposing the memorization method used in secondary education. Criticism of the persistence of this teaching method can be found in the writings produced by teachers, in the reports of federal inspectors, and in articles about education that circulated in the local press. In his written work, submitted to the entrance exam for Portuguese and Literature teacher at the *Ginásio Espírito-Santaense*, the professor made the following criticisms (Pimentel, 1917, p. 88):

³ About the reforms see SALIM, Maria Alayne Alcantara. *Encontros e desencontros entre o mundo do texto e o mundo dos sujeitos nas práticas de leitura desenvolvidas em escolas capixabas na primeira república*. Thesis (Doctorate in Education). Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Centro de Educação. 2009.

We also condemn the teachers who, in secondary schools, allow their students to follow the thankless, reprehensible method of memorization at will, tiring their memory and exhausting their intellectual powers, to fruitlessly cram pages and pages of any textbook into their brains, forgetting to enlighten the mind with this extravagant method.

The teachers of other subjects, such as History and Geography, also began to discuss issues related to teaching methods. The high school Geography teacher, in a paper presented at the Geography conference, criticized the teaching methods employed in the subject, which, according to him, “[...] consisted of a tedious and sterile memorization of the names of rivers, straits, lakes, and cities, with no explanatory value” (Barreto, 1923, p. 13). The History teacher, from the complementary course (a one-year intermediate course between primary and secondary education), also discussed this same issue in an article in the *Revista Labor*:

Being a teacher, therefore, is not about dictating points to be memorized and then recited. It must avoid chronology, giving the explanation a story-like form to make it appealing. Teachers are always tying they were tired of dictating extensive points *ipsis verbis* from the textbook, only to hear them repeated in chorus in class the next day. (Souza, 1926, p. 31).

In the local press, especially from the 1920s onward, several articles circulated criticizing the teaching methods adopted in the capital's secondary schools (Diário da Manhã, 1921, p. 2):

They forget that language is a living, mobile, and inconstant organism, the offspring of the human thought that creates it and imprints upon it all the variations of its admirable versatility. Only dead languages can blindly subject themselves to the rules and laws of school, immobilizing themselves under the oppression of grammarians.

An examination of documentary sources shows that, in high school, contact with literature was seen as a means of deepening knowledge of the national language and developing writing and textual analysis skills, as suggested in the course syllabus:

The teaching of the Portuguese language and its literature will be organized so that, by the end of the bachelor's degree, students will not only be able to speak and express themselves correctly in their native language, but also become familiar with the most vernacular Brazilian and Portuguese prose writers and poets (Espírito Santo, 1908, p. 89).

Finally, knowledge of literature was synonymous with erudition and a requirement for admission to higher education. We identified that reading excerpts from literary works in class had the primary purpose of developing studies related to grammar. The Portuguese and Literature curriculum, as set out in the first regulations of the *Ginásio*, determined that the subject teacher would be responsible for reading texts by prose writers and poets indicated in the curriculum with the students,

requiring them to explain terms, idiomatic expressions, figurative expressions, etc., using synonyms and paraphrases, vocabulary usage, and the reduction of literary prose to common language, verse, or literary or vulgar prose, as well as various and increasingly difficult compositions that would address acquired knowledge and literary topics previously explained (Espírito Santo, 1908, p. 89).

The expectation was that the study of literary texts would lead to written production among the students, and the results of this production would be published in a high school magazine. According to information gathered from the local press, in its early years, the gymnasium even launched a literary journal entitled *A Penna*, organized by students Aurino Quintaes and Elpídio Pimentel, who, a few years later, would become Portuguese and Literature teachers at the *Ginásio* and the *Escola Normal*. The publication, by all accounts, had a brief existence, and after that, no news of another literary publication from the institution appeared. Another practice widely used in the classroom, as mentioned by former students interviewed, was reading literary texts aloud. The Portuguese and Literature teacher theorized in his didactic work about the advantages of this practice (Pimentel, 1932, p. 640):

Reading aloud is more advantageous than reading silently, because in the former, the stronger muscular sensations better awaken activity and memory, ensuring lasting intellectual development. Reading aloud is preferable because it simultaneously engages visual, auditory, and motor memory. It has been proven that the greater the number of partial memories that contribute to the retention of an impression, the more secure its retention.

The author recommended that teachers force students "[...] *to read effortlessly, effortlessly, pausing as needed, pronouncing terms appropriately, with appropriate intonation and vocal inflection, following the author's sentiments, so as to convey the meaning of what they are reading*" (p. 644). This type of activity did not focus on the perception and interpretation of the literary work. The full attention of students and teachers was focused on the correct and fluent reading of the text. This is an important fact because, according to the reflections of Chartier (2002, p. 124), the meaning of the text also depends on how it is read: "[...] *aloud or silently, alone or in company, in a private space or in a public square*."

In addition to reading aloud, students copied portions of the texts in their notebooks and on the board, and presented oral and written summaries of the works assigned for reading, as can be seen in the 1st-year secondary school curriculum (Espírito Santo, 1910, p. 1):

Frequent and expressive reading, first of prose, then of verse, with theoretical knowledge concerning the technical precepts that constitute the basis of conscious reading. Written reproduction, on the board, of the excerpt that constitutes the lesson, followed by the reading of the original. Oral reproduction of the excerpt read, if prose, and its conversion into this genre for verse. Create expositions and summaries, orations or writings, of the poems and chapters read in these books.

Finally, the analysis of the documents shows that there were numerous forms of controlling reading in the school environment. This control extended from the type of reading, and in this regard, the serial novel continued to be the main danger, since "[...] *exclusively novelistic readings are harmful to the spirit and the heart. Moral readings are pleasant and useful. Therefore, they should be the exclusive pastime of school classes*"; and even the reader's body, establishing the posture they should adopt: "[...] *it is essential that the reader, maintaining the correct posture, be able to read them, standing erect, without bending forward, keeping their eyes at a regular distance from the words*" (Pimentel, 1923, p. 576-577).

Identifying the ways literary texts are used in the classroom leads to a question raised by Bourdieu (2001, p. 241) when analyzing the historical relation established between schools and the process of reader development and access to reading. According to the author, when the school system becomes the primary access point to reading, it ultimately has the power to destroy a kind of need for reading: "[...] *there is an effect of eradicating the need for reading as a need for information: one who takes the book as a repository of secrets, who possesses the book as a guide to life, as a text to which one questions the art of living.*" In this way, this perspective is destroyed and another is constructed, based on the laws and pedagogical assumptions that govern school life. Thus, the reading of literary texts was sometimes related to the teaching of grammatical rules; at other times, it represented a means of social refinement or the affirmation of prevailing moral standards in society, which the school sought to reproduce.

Conclusion

The development of secondary education, beginning in the late 19th century, increased the demand for books and textbooks, boosting the book trade in the capital. Secondary school teachers embarked on the production of textbooks, relying on crucial support from the State Government, which financed the publications and designated the material as required reading in state schools. These books, written by the teachers, focused primarily on themes related to Espírito Santo, demonstrating this generation's concern with developing studies on aspects of regional history and culture.

At the beginning of the 20th century, language and literature instruction in the two official secondary schools was in the hands of members of the Catholic clergy. The reading material prescribed in the curricula consisted primarily of authors from Portuguese Classicism, the Baroque period (such as Father Antonio Vieira), and Brazilian Romanticism. These religious teachers were dominated by the ideas disseminated in the 18th century by Portuguese theologians and philosophers, according to which the practice of good reading was an instrument of social refinement and the formation of taste. This view of literature teaching began to change in the late 1910s, when the discipline's teaching came under the control of law graduates who returned to the state after completing their studies. These professionals, influenced by the positivist assumptions that circulated in higher education institutions, saw literature and literary activity as a way to raise awareness of our historical and social condition, as well as to express and affirm our identity. This perspective was expressed by Pimentel (1917, p. 16-17) in the introduction to his textbook on literature:

Literature and history are twin sisters: they walk side by side on the paths of human civilization. To study the literature of a race is also to study its history, its triumphs, its progress, its glories, because races become more exalted the more their literatures shine.

The works by authors from Brazilian realism and pre-modernism were introduced into the curriculum. However, teaching and reading practices remained unchanged. It is important to emphasize that, in the girls' education, the ideal of reading as a means of social refinement still prevailed. The works of modernist authors were not included in the syllabus, as teachers of these subjects were completely resistant to the literary concepts disseminated by this cultural movement. However, in the late 1920s, the ideas and texts of modernist writers began to circulate in the state, thanks primarily to the close ties of the Secretary of Public Instruction, Atílio Vivacqua, and his team with the modernist movement.

In addition to identifying what was being read, we sought to understand, based on small clues, how this text was addressed in the classroom and what purpose the reading was assigned. Through analysis and documentary sources, it was possible to perceive that the use of literary texts in teaching was not, initially, intended to develop a more subjective teaching activity. In the prevailing conception of teachers at the time, literature was not seen as a means of developing students' perception and expanding their analytical skills. Nor it was a form of entertainment or an exercise in the imagination, although literature could fulfill this function outside of the classroom. For example, Aurino Quintaes, a Portuguese and Literature teacher at the *Escola Normal*, in his weekly column in the newspaper *Diário da Manhã*, described the sensations provoked by reading a short story by Monteiro Lobato (Quintaes, 1919, p. 1): "*The impression this story made on me cannot be described—its effect is so intensely felt, to the point that the vibration deprives one of discernment, of daydreaming about its intelligible secrets.*" However, in schools, there wasn't as much freedom for daydreaming and engaging with the text, which was largely confined to grammar studies or eloquence exercises, or subordinated to the rigid pedagogical principles that governed instruction.

Thus, the history of reading practices shows that, at different times and in different contexts—both today and at the beginning of the 20th century—readers are constrained by a series of political, material, religious, or pedagogical impositions. However, a thorough analysis of the sources has shown that there is always the possibility of subverting the imposed order, of circumventing the rules that govern reading, and of reading between the lines.

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