



**Children's literature and the formation of readers at school,
according to Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and Juracy Silveira¹**

A literatura infantil e a formação de leitores na escola,
segundo Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho e Juracy Silveira

La literatura infantil y la formación de lectores en la escuela,
según Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho y Juracy Silveira

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Abstract

Based on the analysis of two didactic books, the Compendium of Children's Literature (1959) by Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and the manual Reading in Primary School (1960) by Juracy Silveira, the aim is to answer: what conceptions of children's literature are present in these books? And what is the role of the school and the teacher in educating children's readers?" In addition to the analysis of the sources, there is a dialog with theorists from the field of Manualistics, especially Alain Choppin (2002) and Augustin Escolano (2012); from the history of Brazilian education, with emphasis on the studies of Carlota Boto (2018); Diana Vidal (2001;2009); Fernando de Oliveira (2011; 2012;2013) and reader education, such as Marisa Lajolo and Regina Zilberman (2019), Márcia Cabral da Silva (2009); Márcia Cabral da Silva and Estela Natalina Mantovani Bertoletti (2017). The results point to a close relationship between the conceptions of children's literature and reader training in the two publications.

Keywords: Children's Literature; Training Readers; Schools; Textbooks.

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Resumo

A partir da análise de dois impressos didáticos — o *Compêndio de Literatura Infantil* (1959) de Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho e o manual *Leitura na Escola Primária* (1960) de Juracy Silveira —, busca-se responder: quais concepções sobre literatura infantil estão presentes nesses impressos? E qual é o papel da escola e do professor na formação do público leitor infantil? À análise das fontes soma-se o diálogo com teóricos do campo da Manualística, em especial Alain Choppin (2002) e Augustin Escolano (2012); da história da educação brasileira, com destaque para os estudos de Carlota Boto (2018); Diana Vidal (2001;2009); Fernando de Oliveira (2011; 2012;2013) e da formação de leitores, como Marisa Lajolo e Regina Zilberman (2019), Márcia Cabral da Silva (2009); Márcia Cabral da Silva e Estela Natalina Mantovani Bertolotti (2017). Os resultados apontam para uma relação de proximidade entre as concepções de literatura infantil e de formação de leitores nos dois impressos.

Palavras-chave: Literatura Infantil; Formação de Leitores; Escola; Impressos Didáticos.

Resumen

A partir del análisis de dos libros impresos, el *Compendio de literatura infantil* (1959), de Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho, y el manual *La lectura en la escuela primaria* (1960), de Juracy Silveira, se pretende responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Qué conceptos de literatura infantil están presentes en estos libros? ¿Y cuál es el papel de la escuela y del profesor en la formación de lectores infantiles?». Además del análisis de las fuentes, hay un diálogo con teóricos del campo de la Manualística, especialmente Alain Choppin (2002) y Augustin Escolano (2012); de la historia de la educación brasileña, con énfasis en los estudios de Carlota Boto (2018); Diana Vidal (2001;2009); Fernando de Oliveira (2011; 2012;2013) y de la educación lectora, como Marisa Lajolo y Regina Zilberman (2019), Márcia Cabral da Silva (2009); Márcia Cabral da Silva y Estela Natalina Mantovani Bertolotti (2017). Los resultados apuntan a una proximidad entre las concepciones de la literatura infantil y la formación de lectores en ambas publicaciones.

Palabras clave: Literatura infantil; Formación de lectores; Escuelas; Libros de texto.

This article examines the concept of children's literature and the role of schools in fostering readers. It is based on two educational publications aimed at teacher training that circulated in the 1960s: *Compêndio de Literatura Infantil* by Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and *Leitura na Escola Primária* by Juracy Silveira. In the first publication, educator Barbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho presents a thorough analysis of children's books and suggests that the oral tradition is the origin of this literary genre. The compendium documents issues such as the ideal genres for children's books and activities to encourage reading in the classroom. However, in the manual, when addressing reading processes in elementary schools, a particular perspective is presented on schools' role in fostering readers. It is also worth noting that the issue of appropriate themes for children's books appears indirectly in the second publication. Juracy Silveira refers to books intended for children as either children's books or reading books. This imprecision in terminology relates to the configuration of the field of children's literature itself. According to studies by Regina Zilberman (2004), children's fiction dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries, a period marked by significant political, economic, and cultural changes in Europe.

From that point on, children were observed for their cognitive and moral development. The growth of schools also created a need for materials that aided in teaching reading and disseminated ideas about appropriate behavior for children. One such material was the "reader," which typically featured fictional stories with characters that exhibited exemplary behavior and moral lessons (Zilberman, 2003). However, this does not limit children's literature to its relationship with school and pedagogy. The same author emphasizes that children's literature is characterized by the flexibility of its themes, which can be realistic or fantastical—even within the same narrative. In this regard, it is worth noting that children's receptiveness to certain books or stories relates to their ability to identify with the characters and stories, which eludes adult "control" (Zilberman, 2004). Educator Juracy Silveira presents the perspective of the children's book as a tool for fostering the development of a young readership in her manual aimed at students in teacher training programs. However, Silveira emphasizes the importance of the target audience—children—identifying with the books offered to them. In defining the qualities expected in children's books, Silveira notes:

Graphic Design: The physical appearance of a book significantly influences children. Beautiful books with colorful illustrations, printed on high-quality paper and in an appropriate format, are always well received. Children enjoy leafing through them and are curious to discover their stories. Illustrations should correspond to the text to facilitate interpretation and contribute to a child's artistic education through their aesthetic qualities (Silveira, 1960, p. 123).

Content: The stories or themes should be lively and engaging, and revolve around the predominant interests of children aged seven to eight. Teachers should be guided in choosing primers and first reading books by an objective analysis of these interests and by observing the reactions of young readers rather than judging them based on their own criteria, i.e., their experiences as adults (Silveira, 1960, p. 124).

An analysis of the two excerpts from the manual *Reading in Elementary School* reveals an attempt to guide future teachers in selecting children's books based on aesthetic criteria, such as the presence of illustrations, that would appeal to children and contribute to their aesthetic education. Regarding content, the educator argues that stories in reading books and didactic books, such as primers, should align with children's interests and take into account the target audience's age: children between seven and eight years old. The idea of tailoring books for

circulation in school settings based on children's tastes was not new in the 1960s. In 1936, the National Commission on Children's Literature recognized this importance, drawing on expert opinions and articles, to help ensure that stories could reach a wider audience (Gomes, 2003). The division of the target readership into age groups, similar to the division into school grade levels, relates to ideas in developmental psychology, particularly those of Jean Piaget and Edouard Claparède² (Costa, 2011).

When analyzing textbooks and educational compendiums, it is important to remember that they are a specific type of printed material. The characteristics of these materials must be considered when using them as research sources. As archival objects, textbooks and compendia primarily serve to perpetuate practical or theoretical knowledge for future generations (Choppin, 2002). These printed materials can also be considered generational icons (Escolano, 2012) because they bear the marks of school cultures and reflect the political and social issues of the era in which they were produced. Here, the term "generation" refers to groups of people who underwent similar educational processes during the same period. These groups shared paradigms and political crises and sometimes attended the same educational institutions (Gomes & Hansen, 2016, p. 25). Both Barbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho's compendium and Juracy Silveira's manual highlight the authors' formative generation, which resonates with the generation undergoing academic and professional training at the time the books were in circulation.

Educator Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho was born in Salvador, Bahia, in 1915. Although she graduated from the Bahia Normal School as an elementary school teacher in the 1930s, she did not begin teaching until the 1940s, after her husband's death. She taught Portuguese at the Bahia Normal Institute from 1943 to 1952 and at secondary schools. In 1952, the educator moved to Rio de Janeiro (then the Federal District), where she participated in a specialization course in Brazilian literature. That same year, she moved to São Paulo, where she continued teaching. In 1957, she became the principal of Ginásio de Vila Formosa High School in São Paulo, where she participated in reforming the institution's teacher-training program, introducing children's literature as a subject. During this time, she was also invited to join the team responsible for reforming the Portuguese-language curriculum for teacher-training programs in São Paulo state. In addition to teaching in elementary and secondary schools and in teacher training programs, Carvalho held positions in São Paulo's public administration, working directly on the design of teacher-training curricula. Furthermore, Carvalho produced textbooks and readers, including the following: *Cancioneiro da criança* (1960) and *Folclore para crianças* (undated). Throughout her career, Carvalho published approximately fourteen children's books, some of which were published by the São Paulo-based publisher Melhoramentos in the 1990s (Oliveira, 2011). The São Paulo-based publisher published five books in total: *A Casinha da Chaminé Azul*, *Os Dois Gatos*, *Uma Avenida na Floresta*, *O Papagaio Tubiba*, and *A Galinha Contente*. These books were part of the *Calunga* series by Melhoramentos, which was aimed at children who had not yet learned to read. Key features of the stories include anthropomorphic animals, a "moral of the story" at the end of each narrative, and colorful illustrations (Oliveira, 2011, p. 66)³.

² In the field of experimental psychology, the ideas of Jean Piaget—who argued that child development occurs in “stages,” according to “age groups,” and those of Edouard Claparède—who considers children’s “natural” interests to be indicative of their “stage” of emotional and cognitive maturity—have contributed to the development of studies on children’s books and their relationship with their intended readership.

³ In her book *Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and the Teaching of Children’s Literature in Brazil*, based on her master’s thesis, Professor Fernando Rodrigues de Oliveira presents an in-depth study of the career and works of educator Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho. Another focus of the researcher’s work is the Children’s Literature course in the teacher training program in São Paulo.

In the 1950s and 1960s, compendiums and teaching manuals for teacher training emerged, with a primary or secondary focus on children's literature. One such manual is *Reading in Elementary School* by Juracy Silveira. Although the study of children's literature in teacher training dates back to the 1930s (Vidal, 2001), textbooks on the subject did not begin to be written until the 1940s, making knowledge about children's books more systematic.

Juracy Silveira was born in São Fidelis, in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, in 1898. At the age of seven, she moved to the federal capital. She trained as an elementary school teacher and joined the Brazilian Association of Education (Associação Brasileira de Educação - ABE) in the 1920s. The ABE was founded in 1924. Throughout the 1930s, the ABE offered professional development courses for elementary school teachers. Juracy Silveira participated in some of these courses as a student, particularly in experimental psychology and school administration. Also in the 1930s, Silveira served as an assistant professor for the courses "Reading and Language" and "Children's Literature"⁴ at the Federal District Institute of Education⁵. Within both the ABE and the Federal District Institute of Education, Silveira came into contact with prominent figures in Brazilian education during that period, particularly Anísio Teixeira and Manuel Bergstöm Lourenço Filho.

Similar to Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho, Juracy Silveira moved between teaching at the primary, secondary, and teacher-training levels; school administration; writing educational materials; and working in public education administration. In 1942, she served as head of the educational district, and in 1950, she was appointed head of the department of primary education, both positions in the federal district of Rio de Janeiro. In the 1930s and 1940s, Silveira wrote articles on children's literature and reader development. The following stand out: "How Can the Principal Improve the Teaching Carried Out by Her Assistants" (1934), "Reading in Primary School" (1939), and "Monteiro Lobato and Children" (1948).

In the three aforementioned works, Juracy Silveira emphasized the importance of teaching reading and circulating literary books in a school setting. In the 1934 article published in the

⁴ The course on Children's Literature, offered to third-year students in the teacher-training program at the time of its inception—that is, during the 1930s—did not yet draw on systematic studies of the subject. Consequently, the course instructors drew upon studies in the fields of child development psychology, general literature, folklore, and a few rare and scarce articles published on the topic of "children's literature" to compile the course bibliography. The textbooks studied here, therefore, represent more systematic works on the subject of children's literature and reader development, from a period following the emergence of the discipline in Rio de Janeiro. On this, see: COSTA, Aline Santos. **The Establishment of Children's Literature as a Discipline at the Federal District Institute of Education (1932–1938)**. 2018. 228f. Thesis (Doctorate in Education) – Rio de Janeiro State University, Rio de Janeiro, 2018. In the state of São Paulo, studies conducted by Fernando Rodrigues Oliveira (2014) indicate that Children's Literature began to take shape as a discipline in teacher training starting in 1947. The author also draws attention to the scarcity of systematic studies on the subject and highlights the relevance of children's literature textbooks produced from 1949 onward to debates surrounding children's books.

⁵ The Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro, founded in 1932, focused primarily on the professional training of teachers. Its curriculum, established during Anísio Teixeira's tenure as Director General of Public Instruction, was characterized by courses focused on technical knowledge, designed to prepare future teachers for classroom practice. To this end, it included so-called "teaching subjects," characterized by a focus on knowledge of child development, as well as didactic activities for use in the school setting. These subjects included "Reading and Language" and "Children's Literature." On this topic, see: LOPES, Sônia de Castro. "The Curriculum as a Representation of a New Pedagogical Culture: The 'Teacher Training School' of the Rio de Janeiro Institute of Education (1932–1939)." In: FERREIRA, Marcia Serra; XAVIER, Libânia; CARVALHO, Fábio Garcez (eds). **History of the Curriculum and History of Education: Interfaces and Dialogues**. Rio de Janeiro: QUARTET; 2013; and COSTA, Aline Santos. **The Establishment of Children's Literature as a Discipline at the Federal District Institute of Education (1932–1938)**. 2018. 228 pp. Thesis (Doctorate in Education) – Rio de Janeiro State University, Rio de Janeiro, 2018.

magazine *A Escola Primária* titled "How Can the Principal Improve the Teaching Carried Out by Her Assistants," Silveira discusses failure rates among elementary school students, their main causes, and the strategies implemented by the school where she served as principal to improve student learning. Silveira points to issues such as poverty as reasons for the high rates of grade repetition and school dropout. Poverty caused many children to leave school to work and support their families. Regarding learning difficulties, Silveira linked them to both social issues (hunger, illness, and poor hygiene) and to issues related to the school's administrative and pedagogical organization, as well as teacher training. To improve student learning at her school, Silveira implemented projects such as school meals, teacher professional development activities, and free reading periods. During these periods, students could visit the reading room throughout the day to read books of their choice and participate in storytelling and shared reading activities. "Each class's free period was generally spent in the reading room. This initiative brought the greatest rewards to the administration, not only because of the encouraging language test results, but also because it alleviated the discipline problem" (Silveira, 1934, p. 63).

Later in the article, the author lists book titles that students identified as favorites in a survey conducted by the principal. The following titles stand out: *O Saci* (by Monteiro Lobato), *Snow White*, and *Robinson Crusoe*. The issue of developing readers had been discussed in previous articles by the educator from Rio de Janeiro.

The second article addressing the issue of reading is titled "Reading in Elementary School" and was published in the journal *Educação* by the Brazilian Association of Education (ABE) in 1939. The magazine was founded in 1939 with the main objectives of reporting on the activities of the ABE and publicizing the educational debates of the time (Cunha, 2021). In this vein, Juracy Silveira, a member of the association, published an article advocating for teaching reading in elementary school, emphasizing its technical aspects and the importance of fostering a love of reading through pedagogical activities. Silveira revisited the study presented in the 1939 article in the 1960s, when she published her teacher-training manual under the same title. In 1948, Juracy Silveira published in the ABE's magazine again. In the article "Monteiro Lobato and Children," she addressed children's books, highlighting their importance and the relevance of Monteiro Lobato's work for Brazilian children. She emphasized the importance of imagination and fantasy for the cognitive, moral, and psychological development of young readers. Thus, it can be concluded that the educator engaged in debates about children's books and reader development, viewing the school as a privileged space for disseminating them.

Although the authors of the compendium and the manual had different career paths, they were, in a sense, part of the same intellectual generation. They shared ideas that circulated in teacher training courses across Brazil. When Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho began her intellectual journey, Juracy Silveira was already well-established in the Federal District. However, an analysis of Carvalho's compendium reveals a convergence of ideas also advocated by Silveira. These ideas include attributing the origins of children's stories to oral traditions, such as fairy tales, songs, popular verses, and riddles; defending the fantastical element in children's narratives; and considering children's literary interests by age group.

The *Compendium of Children's Literature* (1959) by Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho consists of 24 short chapters. Before the chapters, however, Carvalho presents an introduction in which she discusses the growing importance of children's literature in schools and notes that, despite its relevance, few systematic studies on the subject had been conducted up to that point (Carvalho, 1959).

Children's and young adult literature has been attracting increasing interest among those concerned with educational issues. However, it is regrettable that this interest is limited to a small number of educators — particularly Portuguese language teachers—and even then, not all of them. In reality, the true value and purpose of children's literature are still not precisely and fully understood by the majority. The study of children's literature must be brought to light to achieve the scope required for its appreciation, given the breadth and depth of its content (Carvalho, 1959, p. 11).

Thus, more systematic studies of children's literature would aid in understanding this literary genre, which the educator said was poorly understood and undervalued. In her compendium, Bárbara de Carvalho criticizes the treatment of children's literature as subliterature. In defending the genre, she argues that children's literature is just as rich in aesthetic terms as literature for adults.

The manual *Reading in Elementary School* (1960) consists of twelve chapters that directly or indirectly address issues related to children's literature and the development of readers. The first chapter, titled "The Cultural Value of Reading," presents the subtopic "The School's Responsibility Regarding Reading." Since these are materials with specific characteristics, using textbooks as a source compels researchers to consider certain issues. One issue is their organization, which is designed to make them intelligible to their target audience (Boto, 2018). In the case of the analyzed texts, both aimed to disseminate knowledge about reader development and children's literature to teacher trainees. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the choice of content conveyed in these materials is related to the objective of the "modern school": homogenizing sets of knowledge considered important. Such publications, therefore, represent a particular "interpretation of the world," developed by their authors and intended to shape students' education. Thus, consciously or not, such textbooks may exclude other perspectives, whether pedagogical, social, political, or historical, that do not align with the current curriculum framework (Pereira, 2015).

Based on these initial considerations, two questions arise when analyzing both textbooks. The first is, "What conception of children's literature do both textbooks convey?" At some point, do both textbooks present a vision or perspective on what constitutes children's literature and the characteristics that children's books must possess to be considered appropriate and high-quality? The second is, "What should the role of the school, or rather the teacher, be in fostering readers?" Beyond technical literacy skills, both textbooks present ideas about how schools can foster proficient readers by encouraging literary reading and creativity among children and adolescents.

The circulation of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge

The study of children's literature as an academic discipline in teacher training dates back to the 1930s with the establishment of the Federal District Institute of Education. However, the circulation of children's books in elementary schools began in the late 19th century (Lajolo & Zilberman, 2007). During the Republican era, as Brazilian public education expanded, books designed specifically for use in schools with explicit pedagogical purposes saw wider circulation. Furthermore, by teaching children to read and circulating books intended for young readers, schools contributed to the development of a publishing market segment dedicated to children, both inside and outside the school setting. Thus, in Brazil, the field of children's literature emerged as intrinsically related to education (Silva & Bertolotti, 2017). Evidence of this relationship includes the creation of the Children's Literature course at the Federal District Institute of Education in 1932 and the writing of specific manuals on the subject in the following decades.

Although children's literature had begun to take shape as a school subject by the 1930s, according to those involved, systematic studies on the subject were practically nonexistent. The 1935 Children's Literature course curriculum cited only two articles as systematic studies on children's books: "The Interests of Children in Belo Horizonte" (n.d.), by Helena Antipoff, and "Children's Literature" (1923), by Marcel Braunschweig. Therefore, the course bibliography was based on these two articles and books about Brazilian literature, experimental psychology, and child development (Costa, 2018).

In 1949, educator Janeta Budin wrote the Manual of Reading and Language, which included chapters dedicated to children's literature. At the time, children's literature was part of the Reading and Language course and had ceased to be an independent course. Throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, other authors, such as Antônio D'Ávila, Nely Novaes Coelho, and Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho, devoted themselves to systematizing knowledge about children's books in textbooks for teacher training (Oliveira, 2013).

Since children's books are specific objects of study with characteristics directly related to what is expected of schools, compendia and teaching manuals bear traces of numerous components of school culture (Pereira, 2014). School culture can be defined as a set of norms, pedagogical procedures, and rules that give the school institution its distinctiveness (Faria, Gonçalves, Vidal, & Paulilo, 2004).

In this sense, educators leave evidence of certain practices and theories that permeated the school culture of the period in which the publications were released when they draw upon theories such as the psychogenesis of child development to aid in the construction of knowledge about children's literature (Carvalho, 1959, p. 24) or promote silent reading as the most appropriate method based on studies conducted with fictional books (Silveira, 1960, p. 82). Furthermore, both were intended to train elementary school teachers who were expected to maintain this school culture.

However, rather than merely reproducing existing knowledge on children's literature and reading, Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho's compendium and Juracy Silveira's manual reinterpret the intended curriculum, organizing it in a didactic manner and incorporating usage guidelines. Similar to school subjects, which are not mere reproductions or simplifications of scientific knowledge (Chervel, 1990), these educational materials rework this knowledge to make it more comprehensible and to establish correlations with other areas of knowledge (Boto, 2018). This is evident in both materials analyzed. Both Carvalho and Silveira draw on knowledge from experimental psychology, sociology, and education to discuss children's literature and reading in elementary school. Additionally, educational texts serve as a medium for conveying the ideas of classical authors in pedagogy (Boto, 2018). Through these manuals and compendiums, scientific knowledge becomes intelligible and intersects with aspects of the study developed within the scope of the books in question. This circulation can be observed in the two educational texts analyzed here. In the manual *Reading in Elementary School*, Juracy Silveira reflects on the literacy process of first-grade elementary school children (aged around 7 and 8) and draws on the theory of "Reading Readiness" (Silveira, 1960). Developed over the preceding decades, this theory holds that, to begin the learning process, the child needs to show signs of "readiness," or "cognitive and emotional maturity," that enable them to acquire new knowledge.

This theory is based on studies of child development through stages, as discussed in the works of Jean Piaget. Silveira (1960) addresses the importance of a child's interest in new knowledge for better learning, a concept related to the work of authors such as Edouard Claparède (1927).

Similarly, Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho draws on studies of child development in the *Compendium of Children's Literature* to determine the ideal type of story for each age group. The author notes: "First, the phase of imaginary realism is the phase of little animals, from ages four to six, in which animals constitute the center of interest and dramatic motivation [...]" (Carvalho, 1959, p. 24). Thus, educators did not merely replicate studies conducted by developmental psychologists and educational theorists; rather, they appropriated such studies to understand better and teach the subjects they set out to address: children's literature and the teaching of reading.

The *Compendium of Children's Literature* by Bárbara Carvalho de Vasconcelos and the textbook *Reading in Elementary School* by Juracy Silveira present, both directly and indirectly, conceptions regarding children's books, the reader, and the role of the school in fostering readers and promoting the circulation of children's literature. In this regard, one might ask: "What conception of children's literature is conveyed in both publications?"

The Concept of Children's Literature According to Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho and Juracy Silveira

In her compendium on children's literature, Bárbara Carvalho makes an important observation regarding the origins of children's literature. According to the author, the development of children's literature is directly linked to the "discovery" of childhood—that is, of the unique characteristics of children. Drawing on studies in experimental psychology from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Carvalho argues that: "[...] Only Child Psychology, in the late 19th century, with its first scientific studies of an experimental nature and its initial technical research, began to delve into the child's soul, capturing their reactions." (Carvalho, 1959, p.14). In this sense, for the educator, studying children's literature should begin with knowledge of the intended readership, that is, the child. Child Psychology would thus be an important ally for the educator in better understanding children's literature and its educational role. It is also from the perspective of the need to understand children's needs and provide them with "tailored" literature that the educator advocated the use of fantasy in narratives for children:

Fantasy and imagination do not, as some believe, undermine reality; on the contrary, they can soften it and serve as an oasis within reality. Imagination and fantasy are inexhaustible sources within a child, nourishing their intelligence, refining their character, and purifying their spirit[...]. (Carvalho, 1959, p. 9).

In this sense, fantasy and imagination are considered common childhood characteristics and significant parts of children's psychosocial development. When seeking to define children's literature, educators begin by identifying characteristics attributed to the target readership. Thus, connecting with the readership would make the educational and recreational role of children's stories more effective. Furthermore, Carvalho argues that the focus on children's books emerged alongside a specific form of education designed for children. According to the educator, the origins of children's books lie in oral tradition, which, in ancient societies, took different forms depending on the audience. Once children were viewed as learners, popular narratives took on a more educational tone, focusing on the "moral of the story." Although their origin is uncertain and linked to oral traditions, Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho notes that:

Although we cannot yet characterize 17th-century literature as strictly children's literature, we seek to mark its beginnings there, given the impossibility—especially from a psychological and pedagogical standpoint—of finding specialized literature in that century [...] Fénelon, tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, the wayward grandson of Louis XIV, the Sun King. To instruct and educate his pupil [...], he wrote admirable works for young people (Carvalho, 1959, p. 28).

Once again, the educator addresses two issues concerning children's literature. First, he discusses the idea that children's stories originated in oral traditions, drawing from legends, rhymes, and folk songs, as noted by other contemporary authors, such as Antonio D'Ávila and Cecília Meireles. Second, literature intentionally written for children would have emerged from a consideration of the psychological characteristics and educational needs attributed to children.

Juracy Silveira's manual, *Reading in Elementary School*, does not offer specific insights into children's literature because its primary focus is on teaching reading methods and the role of schools—and thus teachers—in developing “reading students.” However, Juracy Silveira, a Rio de Janeiro educator, participated in debates about Brazilian children's literature as early as the 1930s. In addition to the reading textbook, Silveira published articles on the subject in the 1940s. One notable article is "Monteiro Lobato and the Children," published in the October 1948 issue of the magazine *Educação*. In this article, while discussing children's books, Silveira notes:

A child's first encounters with literature occur in the cradle through lullabies. The rhythm creates a euphoric state that calms and lulls the child to sleep. As language emerges, rhythm is joined by the sound of words and rhymes as elements of aesthetic pleasure. Children learn and repeat nursery rhymes for the sheer joy of it, regardless of their meaning. As intelligence develops, a taste for plot and story structure emerges. At first, it is very simple and linked primarily to the familiar, such as people and animals. However, it gradually becomes more complex with the introduction of new literary elements, such as the marvelous, fiction, the spirit of adventure, mystery, and the success of endeavors. (Silveira, 1948, p. 25).

Similar to Barbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho, Juracy Silveira argues that children's literature, or more precisely, the relationship between children and literature, has its origins in oral tradition and folklore. In this sense, the rhymes and aesthetic elements of children's stories and songs predate written language and reading itself. As children develop psychologically and cognitively, their tastes regarding the themes and characteristics of literary narratives broaden. Once again, the psychosocial and cognitive development of the genre's target audience is invoked to define its characteristics and to delimit children's literature. The focus on the child in the relationship that educators establish between children's literature and the presumed reader became possible through psychology's relationship with education. Therefore, one can assume that this is the main characteristic of the studies conducted by these educators regarding children's books. However, Juracy Silveira and Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho did not overlook another important characteristic of children's literature, dating back at least to the 19th century, or to the 17th century in the case of Bárbara Carvalho: its moralizing or civilizing potential. Both authors also highlight children's need for imaginary, fantastical elements.

No one can deny the powerful appeal that wonderful stories—whether read or heard—have on children’s minds. I can cite an example: As principal of the México experimental school, I managed, simply by introducing “story time” into the Saturday schedule, to achieve high attendance on that day, which is known for its low student turnout (Silveira, 1948, p. 25).

Continuing his discussion of children’s relationship with fantasy stories, Silveira explains this phenomenon and, albeit implicitly, links it to the theories of the Swiss scholar Jean Piaget.

What is the reason for this fascination? These wonderful stories, drawing on the elements of art, imagination, beauty, and desirable emotions and feelings, achieve their full purpose—they delight the child, providing a wholesome joy that contributes to the development of the child’s personality. [...] Joy, here, is considered from a psychological perspective—as a perfect harmony between the processes of assimilation and accommodation that bring the individual self-confidence, an inner sense of well-being, and contentment [...] (Silveira, 1948, p.25)

In the previous passage, Juracy Silveira points out that fantasy stories inspire joy in young readers. As a result, they achieve "perfect harmony between the processes of assimilation and accommodation"—an indirect reference to the theory of knowledge construction from biological and psychological perspectives. According to Piaget (1964), when a child encounters new knowledge, they seek to assimilate it mentally. In this process, they attempt to compare what they already know with the new information. Next comes the stage of accommodation, when the child establishes relationships between the new information and what they already know, thereby understanding it. Regarding the construction of knowledge, Piaget further notes:

In reality, all fundamental feelings associated with an individual's activity are expressed through energetic regulation. Interest, for example, is a remarkable regulator. As we discussed regarding early childhood, simply showing interest in a task provides the motivation needed to complete it, whereas a lack of interest disrupts that motivation (Piaget, 1993, p. 81).

In dialogue with Edouard Claparède’s (1927) theory of interest, Piaget asserts that interest is a fundamental motivating force for any activity, especially in childhood. This motivation is also linked to emotional attachment. According to Piaget (1964), without it, volition does not develop. From this perspective, the educational value of children's literature depends on its ability to appeal to children's tastes, thereby establishing an emotional bond between the reader and the book. The knowledge mobilized by Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and Juracy Silveira in their textbooks and articles in educational journals facilitated the circulation of debates regarding children’s books and schools' role in fostering readers.

School and the development of readers

Regarding the development of young readers, both Bárbara Vasconcelos de Carvalho and Juracy Silveira emphasize the importance of the school, or more precisely, the teacher. However, it is important to acknowledge that other settings and individuals in the child’s social

circle also serve as mediators between emerging readers and literature (Silva, 2009). Developing individuals who are capable of reading and writing is fundamental to the school system. However, mastery of the technical aspects of reading and writing is not the institution's sole concern. In the context of Republican Brazil, the school emerged as an important instrument for homogenizing cultures, ways of thinking, and worldviews (Boto, 2018). Since at least the late 19th century, children's books have circulated in Brazilian public schools. With these books, one can observe the imprint of the school cultures present during their circulation period (Vidal, 2005). The textbooks *Reading in Elementary School* by Juracy Silveira and *Compendium of Children's Literature* by Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho are examined here to illustrate the role of schools in fostering readers and to reveal one of the school cultures prevalent in early 1960s teacher training. These textbooks offer insights into the perception of children's books and reading instruction from a student development perspective. Based on common theoretical assumptions about child development and childhood, both authors promote specific guidelines for working with children's books in the classroom, whether in selecting titles (which considers students' age groups) or in reading instruction methods.

In her teaching manual, Juracy Silveira presents a comprehensive study of reading instruction in elementary school. In addition to engaging with theorists from the New School movement, such as John Dewey, Edouard Claparède, and Jean Piaget, Silveira also presents practical experiences conducted in elementary schools in the federal capital. Among the guidelines regarding reading modalities and those best suited to the time of the publication's release, Silveira discusses the role of schools in shaping the reading habits of children and youth. She states:

It is not enough for schools to simply teach reading. It is necessary to encourage and foster the practice and enjoyment of good reading, as factors in individual development and in enriching the community's cultural conditions. The habit of studying in elementary school should be grounded above all in the practice of conducting research through reading [...] (Silveira, 1960, p. 42).

In the excerpt above, the educator describes the school's role in fostering proficient readers. Although she does not focus specifically on fiction, the aforementioned paragraph illustrates the "school culture" common to experimental schools⁶, developed during Anísio Teixeira's tenure at the Federal District's Department of Public Instruction (Xavier & Rocha, 2016). Juracy Silveira served as the principal of the Mexico Experimental School in the 1930s. Inspired by the work of American educator John Dewey, experimental schools aimed to foster students' autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge. Also known as "project schools," classes were expected to conduct studies based on a specific project that integrated various academic disciplines. One of the experiences described by Silveira in her manual

⁶ The so-called Experimental Schools were established in the Federal District during the early 1930s, on the initiative of Anísio Teixeira, who headed the Department of Public Education in Rio de Janeiro. The idea was to create schools with an organizational structure and pedagogical orientation based on the educational principles proposed by John Dewey. Through educational activities (project development, literary clubs, group work), the aim was to develop citizens capable of contributing to society. The inspiration for the so-called experimental schools was the Lab School in Chicago, United States. As Juracy Silveira points out in her manual, content was taught in an integrated manner across disciplines, based on a project, such as "life in the countryside" (Silveira, 1960, p. 134). In the case cited by the educator, the stories covered in reading classes, the problems in math class, and the science studies would all be focused on the project's theme. For further information, see: XAVIER, Libânia Nacif; PINHEIRO, José Gledison Rocha. "From the Chicago Lab School to the Experimental Schools of Rio de Janeiro in the 1930s." In: **History of Education**; Porto Alegre, Vol. 20, No. 50, Sept./Dec. 2016; pp. 177–191.

was carried out with students at the Guatemala Experimental School. Silveira describes a project for a first-grade class about rural life. The subjects primarily involved were social studies, science, arts and crafts, and language arts. In language arts, the students created a book featuring rhymes and short verses on the theme "Vacation on the Farm." Students and teachers wrote and illustrated this book.

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!
- Diva, wake up!
The rooster has crowed.
- Okay, Paulo. I'm coming.
- Have breakfast! (Silveira, 1960, p. 137).

In this regard, the project involved activities requiring students to read proficiently and to write short stories and poems, which were compiled into a book. This approach fostered writing skills and imagination. It is also important to note that the Guatemala School became an experimental school in 1955 through an agreement with INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos), the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies) a federal agency (Santos & Lima, 2016). The Guatemala Experimental School became a hub for training elementary school teachers and welcomed teachers from other Brazilian states. These teachers sought to learn about the "Experimental Pedagogy" developed by the school, inspired by North American pedagogical methods, to implement it in their home schools. Juracy Silveira, an educator, participated in this process and served as director of experimental schools in the 1930s and 1940s.

When discussing the role of the teacher in fostering a reading public, Silveira states, "The teacher's role is not limited to teaching how to read but also to providing reading experiences that stimulate interests and foster in students a desire to read what is beautiful, useful, and constructive" (Silveira, 1960, p. 47). In addition to teaching the technical aspects of reading and writing, teachers should guide students in selecting appropriate books. The school would therefore be responsible for providing children with appropriate reading materials featuring elements such as the charm of imaginative stories and simple language suited to children's psychological and cognitive development. These materials would entertain and educate through moral and ethical lessons.

Although Bárbara de Vasconcelos Carvalho's compendium dealt with children's literature, it offers insights into the role of schools in fostering a reading public. "What we wish to recommend to young teachers is that they know how to guide reading according to the students' age and interests. They must know how to replace anything that is not suitable for their psychological development" (Carvalho, 1959, p. 10). Teachers were responsible for selecting and directing appropriate books. For this reason, studying children's and young adult literature in the teacher training program was sensible. Furthermore, according to Carvalho, it would also be the teacher's responsibility: "It is not enough for the educator to tell the story to the child simply. It is necessary to understand the story's underlying meaning to convey it to the child in an entertaining way that will have a positive impact in the future" (Carvalho, 1959, p. 12). The idea that educators would mediate the relationship between children and literary books circulating in schools is evident. In addition to selecting books based on criteria found in children's literature teaching manuals, teachers were tasked with engaging students through activities such as storytelling, dramatization, and shared reading.

Final considerations

The analysis of educational publications reveals the circulation of ideas about children's literature and reader development that have been discussed since at least the 1930s. Examples include classifying children's books by age group, attributing interests to the characteristics of the target audience, and advocating for fantastical elements in children's fiction. Concern with reader development and the role of teachers in mediating literature in schools appears to have been a recurring theme in teacher training colleges in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo for over thirty years. The establishment of the Children's Literature course in the Federal District and São Paulo in the 1940s (Oliveira & Trevisan, 2012) can be interpreted as a key milestone in the convergence of schools and children's literature, as the course aimed to teach future teachers how to select and utilize children's books in the classroom.

The first manuals that systematized knowledge about children's books date back to the 1950s and 1960s. However, the use of studies on children's psychological and cognitive development to interpret children's literature and its relationship with readers developed earlier. In the 1930s, for example, due to the lack of specific studies, adult scholars attempted to understand children—their tastes, interests, and presumed needs—so they could recommend books that best suited this developing readership.

Thus, educational publications in circulation during the decades following the establishment of the discipline of children's literature served as vehicles for disseminating ideas about children's books in teacher training courses. At that time, theoretical studies on the subject were still in their infancy. The incorporation of pedagogical studies and ideas, as well as the relationship between these studies and children's books, became more apparent in textbooks. As generational icons, one might infer that the analyzed textbooks and compendia shaped a generation of normal school students who were still influenced by educational ideas and projects that had been widely disseminated and debated in previous decades.

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