



“In the Enchantment of Her Feminist Ideal”. Teaching Practice and Teacher Associativism of Maura Pereira (Santa Catarina, the 1920s and 1930s)¹

“No encantamento do seu ideal feminista.” Atuação e associativismo docente de Maura Pereira (Santa Catarina, décadas de 1920 - 1930)

“En el encantamiento de su ideal feminista”. Actuación y asociacionismo docente de Maura Pereira (Santa Catarina, décadas de 1920 y 1930)

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Abstract

In the capital of Santa Catarina state at the beginning of the twentieth century, the accessibility of women to political and claiming spaces was still limited. In this context, Maura de Senna Pereira gains prominence by exerting social influence through feminist agendas to defend the interests of local teachers. Salary equity and rupture with the Law of celibacy were part of her speech and granted her the nickname, sometimes praise and sometimes criticism, of feminism. The article was concerned, by this perspective, with mapping in the historiography of their transition spaces, their social networks, and their speeches in defense of the teaching class in Florianópolis of the 1920s and 1930s.

Keywords: History of Education; History of the Teaching Profession; Teaching career.

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Resumo

Na capital catarinense do começo do século XX, a acessibilidade de mulheres aos espaços políticos e de reivindicação ainda eram limitados. Nesse contexto, Maura de Senna Pereira ganha protagonismo ao exercer influência social através das pautas consideradas feministas defendidas em nome do professorado local. Equidade salarial e a ruptura com a Lei do celibato fizeram parte de suas falas e lhe concederam a alcunha, ora elogiosa e ora crítica, de feminista. O artigo se ocupou, por esta perspectiva, em mapear na historiografia seus espaços de transição, suas redes sociais de amparo e suas falas em defesa da classe docente em Florianópolis dos anos 1920 e 1930.

Palavras-chave: História da Educação; História da Profissão Docente; Carreira docente.

Resumen

En la capital catarinense de comienzos del siglo XX, la accesibilidad de las mujeres a los espacios políticos y de reivindicación aún eran limitados. En este contexto, Maura de Senna Pereira gana protagonismo al ejercer influencia social a través de las pautas feministas defendidas en nombre del profesorado local. Equidad salarial y ruptura con la Ley del celibato formaron parte de su hablar y le concedieron el apodo, ora elogiosa y ora crítica, de feminista. El artículo se ocupó, por esta perspectiva, en mapear en la historiografía sus espacios de transición, sus redes sociales de amparo y sus charlas en defensa de la clase docente en Florianópolis de los años 1920 y 1930.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Educación; Historia de la Profesión Docente; Carrera docente.

Received: 2025/08/31

Approved: 2025/12/15

Introduction

Upon the announcement of Maura de Senna Pereira's induction into the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters, it was noted that the 23-year-old had not yet published a book (MATOS, 2014, p. 17). At the institution's induction ceremony, which occurred a mere three years later, other distinguished individuals such as Delminda Silveira, Adolpho Konder, and Marcos Konder also assumed their respective positions (ACADEMIA CATARINENSE DE LETRAS, 1927, p. 1; 1930, p. 4). Along with Delminda Silveira, Maura Pereira was among the first Brazilian women to be nominated and inducted into an Academy of Letters. However, their career trajectories were quite distinct. In this regard, it is noteworthy that at the time of Maura's nomination, Delminda Silveira was already 73 years old and had a solid track record of book publications and contributions to the press (PORTAL CATARINA, 2023, n.p.). In addition, due to her advanced age, Delminda Silveira passed away two years after her induction. In contrast, Maura maintained her engagement in literary pursuits and her professional career. Moreover, she went on to disavow her association with the "academic generation" (MATOS, 2014, p. 19), aligning herself instead with other intellectual groups.

It is therefore understood that Maura de Senna Pereira enjoyed considerable social support and significant influence within the literary, academic, and educational circles of Florianópolis in the early 20th century from a very young age. This was evident in her frequent appearances and mentions in the local press (ANOTAÇÕES, 1927, p. 2; PALAVRAS AO PROFESSOR, 1927, p. 3), her regular attendance at social and literary events (FESTIVAL DE ARTE, 1927, p. 2; LITERARY FESTIVAL, 1927, p. 2), and by their involvement in mutual aid associations² (MISCELLANEOUS, 1927a, p. 5) and academic organizations (MISCELLANEOUS, 1926, p. 4). Furthermore, the alliances previously established by her family—particularly by her father, José de Senna Pereira, a prominent figure in the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Florianópolis—also contributed to the consolidation of her social networks. Consequently, it was this network that furnished her with the requisite support for her admission to the local Academy of Letters. Sponsorship of the event was provided by Henrique Fontes³, and endorsement was provided by figures such as Othon D'Eça⁴ and Laércio Andrada⁵. The induction of Maura Pereira was presided over by the Federal Interventor Nereu Ramos⁶, and as a result, she gained access to certain spheres of activity and visibility that were still largely unoccupied by women at the time (MATOS, 2014, p. 17).

This unconventional backdrop rendered his life and professional trajectory a subject of scrutiny, notably within the purview of disciplines such as historiography (cf. BESEN, 2021; MATOS, 2014; SCHROEDER, 1997) and literary studies (cf. KALCKMANN, 2007). In these works, the author highlights his family, professional, and literary life. Historical studies have emphasized her involvement with class-based organizations (BESEN, 2021) and academic institutions (MATOS, 2014; SCHROEDER, 1997) of the period. Moreover, Maura Pereira

² The Santa Catarina Teachers' League, an association of which Maura Pereira was a member, was listed by Rafaela Leuchtenberger (2009) as one of the 31 mutual aid associations organized in Florianópolis between 1886 and 1931.

³ An educator from Santa Catarina, born in 1885 and died in 1966. He taught at the *Gymnasio Catharinense* and served as a school principal in the capital before assuming the position of Director of Public Instruction, a post he held from 1919 to 1926. It was during his tenure that he prescribed the "Fontes Graded Reading Series" as the didactic textbook for elementary education in the state (PIAZZA, 1985; PROCHNOW, 2009).

⁴ Bachelor's degree holder, writer, and professor; a graduate of the Rio de Janeiro Law School and one of the founders of the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters. He served as a judge, assistant police chief, and professor of Roman law at the Santa Catarina College (MATOS, 2014, p. 17; PONTES, 2016).

⁵ Bachelor of Law from the Niterói Law School, engineer, and professor; one of the leaders of the Presbyterian community in the city (MATOS, 2014, p. 18).

⁶ A native of Santa Catarina, son of Vidal Ramos, who held a bachelor's degree in law (1909), was the founder of the Santa Catarina Liberal Party (1927), and served as governor of the state from 1935 to 1945 (FGV; CPDOC, 2020).

played an active and influential role in Santa Catarina's elementary education system until at least the 1930s. A graduate of the local Normal School, where she was a classmate of figures such as Antonieta de Barros (*ENTREGA DE DIPLOMAS ÀS NORMALISTAS*, 1921, n.p.), she was the first president and one of the founders of the Santa Catarina Teachers' League (*LIGA DO MAGISTÉRIO CATARINENSE*, 1924, n.p.), as well as a regular participant in the major debates and presentations at the 1st Conference on Elementary Education held in Santa Catarina (*CONFERÊNCIA DO ENSINO PRIMÁRIO*, 1927a, p. 1).

This article, therefore, focuses on Maura de Senna Pereira's articulation of certain specific demands. In this regard, it is noteworthy to underscore how some of the causes she championed—individually or collectively—brought to light the specific demands of local elementary school teachers, particularly during her work with the Santa Catarina Teachers' League, as well as how they contributed to the defense of women's occupation of public space at that time. To this end, a documentary series was compiled, consisting of excerpts from her activities in the local press and the proceedings of the 1st State Conference on Primary Education (1927). These materials are available digitally through the Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional e ao Repositório Institucional da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (National Library's Digital Newspaper Archive and the Institutional Repository of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina -University Library-UFSC). In addressing the former, we elected to address the dispersion and volume of the documentary corpus by utilizing the professor's name as a search tool. Accordingly, the methodological approach that was employed resulted in the successful identification of the subject and subsequent categorization of her practices (GINZBURG, 1989, pp. 169–178). In analyzing the documentary series, we sought to list her actions—understood here as operations carried out within a contested political territory (CERTEAU, 1985, 2009)—in an attempt to highlight the networks of support and sociability (SIRINELLI, 1996) that underpinned her professional and academic trajectories.

In accordance with the aforementioned points, the present article is organized into two sections. The following topics will be examined: "The work of female teachers" and "Women in the public sphere." These sections thus serve as categories for cataloging Maura Pereira's practices, based on recurring themes in her work throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Consequently, the initial section assembles the causes she advocated for and supporting elementary school teachers, particularly during the 1st Conference on Elementary Education, which was held in Florianópolis throughout August 1927. The second section of the text provides a comprehensive catalog of the author's statements and actions concerning the defense of women's presence in public spaces, whether in the political, academic, or professional sphere. In this section, attention is drawn not only to her advocacy for women's suffrage but also to some of the issues she championed regarding the professional advancement of female teachers. Both sections incorporate a discussion of the ways in which the label "feminist" was used—sometimes as a criticism, sometimes as a compliment—as these causes were raised. Finally, the study concludes with a discussion of the intersection of causes linked to feminism with the demands of specific social groups, particularly those of the professor and writer Maura de Senna Pereira. The study also sought to map the ways in which she engaged with literary and academic collectives, as well as the conflicts arising from her stance.

1. The Work of Female Professors

Consequently, Maura Pereira's journey was not a solitary one. Beyond her familial and personal connections, her professional role as an educator provided her with significant opportunities for action and engagement. This is because, even as a student at the Normal School, she shared a classroom with Antonieta de Barros (*ENTREGA DE DIPLOMAS ÀS*

NORMALISTAS, 1921, n.p.), who was already organizing the Normal School Students' Civic Center there (ROMÃO, 2021, p. 88), and was also a student of figures such as Henrique Fontes, Altino Flores, and Barreiros Filho—all scholars affiliated with the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters (MATOS, 2014, p. 18). These connections, therefore, extended and spilled over into other roles she held, paving the way for her to become president of the Santa Catarina Teachers' League (LIGA DO MAGISTÉRIO CATARINENSE, 1924, n.p.), a member of the Santa Catarina Center for Letters (DIVERSAS, 1926, p. 4), and a member of the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters (MATOS, 2014).

It was in the first instance that Maura became involved with the organization dedicated to promoting causes that are of importance to the local teaching community. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Santa Catarina Teachers' League, despite its transient history, functioned as a communal space for elementary school educators. The League was organized according to a hierarchical leadership structure that was recognized during social events (A GRANDE MANIFESTAÇÃO AO SR. CORONEL GOVERNADOR DO ESTADO, 1925, n.p.), academic events (UMA CARTA, 1925, n.p.), and government functions (REPRESENTAÇÕES, 1926, p. 7). The association thus functioned as much more than a center providing financial assistance and relief (LEUCHTENBERGER, 2009), since it served as a space for exchanging views, refining demands, and organizing strategies (CERTEAU, 2009) to be implemented on behalf of elementary school teachers at a time when the profession was gradually becoming institutionalized. Therefore, the professional association of this group (associativism)⁷ was regarded as a pivotal point in the process of the teaching profession's professionalization (Nóvoa, 1987). This assertion is supported by the analysis of Maura Pereira's career during her time with the League. The association was also important in its attempt to bring its own demands and aspirations to light and legitimize them (Catani, 2003; Xavier, 2013, 2019).

The subjects in question were particularly active during the Primary Education Conference sessions, which were held at the Catarinense Normal School and the Lauro Muller and Silveira de Souza School Complexes between July and August of 1927. At these sessions, some of the League's members were able to promote their causes with greater visibility. The event's significance lies not only in the extensive participation of the school community, predominantly comprising principals, professors, and school inspectors, but also in the endeavor to legitimize a diverse array of initiatives and individuals active in the educational field during that era (HOELLER; DAROS, 2023). Consequently, the 44 theses presented in various sessions—spread out over several days—written and presented by professors and school inspectors, focused on topics such as teaching methods, the expansion of the Normal School curriculum, vocational education, didactic tools, and hygiene concepts (BESEN, 2021, p. 139). Furthermore, members of the state executive and legislative branches participated, including the then-governor-elect from the Santa Catarina Republican Party, Mr. Adolpho Konder (CONGRESSO DE ENSINO, 1927, p. 2).

This perspective suggests that the forum's role as a platform for promoting the League as a labor organization and its advocacy for the profession may have been a contributing factor. Consequently, during its sessions and meetings, Maura Pereira elected to advocate for two issues that were particularly important to her: the implementation of equal pay for male and female professors, and the repeal of the law that prohibited female professors in school districts from marrying. In both cases, the requests extended beyond the conference sessions and were, in fact, placed on the agenda of regular sessions of the State Congress less than a month after

⁷ Teachers' associations (associativismo) have been a topic of great interest in the fields of the History of Education and the Teaching Profession, especially following the consolidation of the framework provided by Nóvoa (1987) for understanding this process. For more information on scholarship regarding this topic in the aforementioned fields, see Catani (2011).

the conclusion of the first conference (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927a, p. 4; 1927b, p. 4). On both occasions, Maura Pereira also received support from several colleagues, who expressed their agreement with her position or, after the session, defended her actions in the local press (CONFERÊNCIA DO ENSINO PRIMÁRIO, 1927b, p. 3; PENAS, 1927, p. 2).

However, the requests were received and processed differently. The initial concern, specifically the call for equal remuneration for male and female professors, was never subjected to scrutiny regarding its merits. Conversely, it was regarded as "[...] perfectly fair, since female teachers perform their pedagogical duties with the same dedication, competence, and efficiency as male professors; therefore, there is no [...] justification for them to receive lower salaries" (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927a, p. 4). However, the issue could not be addressed in the 1928 budget law due to the "state's financial situation" (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927a, p. 4), and equal pay was therefore to be granted at a later date, "when state finances have overcome the serious crisis that is overwhelming them"⁸ (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927a, p. 4). The second demand subsequently engendered and exacerbated controversies and clashes that extended beyond the confines of the conference and the State Congress, even inciting acrimoniously divided opinions in the local press. In these clashes, opinions and accusations were divided between those who criticized the law as ineffective (TABORDA, 1927a, n.p.; 1927b, p. 1) and those who endorsed it as a measure that was equitably applied and sanctioned by the Executive Branch (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927b, p. 4).

About the demand for equal pay, it is important to note several points. The initial observation is that the Public Education Regulations (1914), which were in effect at the time, did not delineate any discrepancies in remuneration between female and male professors. Conversely, the provision of a pay scale that categorized salaries—comprised of the base salary and bonuses—into the following categories was observed: "tenured school district professor," "provisional school district professor," "preliminary professor," "provisional professor at an isolated school," and "assistant professor at an isolated school"⁹ (SANTA CATARINA, 1914, p. 47). These categories, therefore, differed from one another based on the teacher's training and the location of the educational institution, with professors who had graduated from the teacher-training college or from the Santa Catarina Gymnasium being given priority in the allocation of positions, especially in relation to provisional teachers¹⁰ (SANTA CATARINA, 1914, pp. 22–24).

As understood here, it follows that wage differentiation could occur not because of legal provisions but because of the way career advancement is structured. In this regard, it is asserted that even in the absence of explicit legal provisions addressing the challenges faced by female teachers, their advancement to the upper echelons of the career ladder, where the most lucrative salaries are typically situated, was impeded by the prevailing mechanisms that governed career progression. Among these factors, the most salient impediment to their vertical advancement was the absence of opportunities for promotion to inspector positions, among other roles. These bottlenecks, which have already been reasonably mapped out by historiography (DEMARTINI;

⁸ The committee responsible for drafting the opinion was composed of Marcos Konder, Hermann Weege, Dalmiro de Barros, Otacilio Costa, Carlos Whendausen, Arthur Cota, Durval Melchiades, and Gallotti Jr. (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927a, p. 4).

⁹ According to the General Regulations on Public Education (1914) then in force, assistant professors were appointed without a selection process, being directly appointed by the Director of Education. This category did not count toward retirement eligibility and could be abolished as soon as it was no longer necessary for the teaching system; its existence was restricted to the capital and to cities where there was no School District (SANTA CATARINA, 1914, p. 26).

¹⁰ Provisional teachers would be eligible for the position without taking a competitive examination when the vacancy was at a school district and after passing an examination when at an isolated school. This exam would cover the same subjects as the one for admission to the Normal School, and in all cases, the candidate would have to provide proof of being at least 18 years old, a Brazilian citizen, and criminal records from the places where they had resided in the past two years (SANTA CATARINA, 1914, p. 23).

ANTUNES, 2013) and also reasonably defined in analyses of this subject (PHILIPPI, 2021), revealed the existence of a career path in which the highest salaries were reserved for those who left the classroom—and who, not coincidentally, were commonly male professors.

The call to abolish the "celibacy law" (OTTO, 2008) has been met with controversy, both in its initial proposal and during its deliberation in the State Legislature. This was because Law No. 1,187—which had already been in effect for a decade at the time of the conference—established that a female teacher's continued employment in the public school system was contingent on her remaining unmarried. The document explicitly states that "those teachers who, from the date of its enactment onward, entered into marriage" would forfeit their positions (SANTA CATARINA, 1917, n.p.). The bill, which was met with controversy from its inception, garnered opposition from figures such as the then-Federal Inspector of Subsidized Schools, Mr. Orestes Guimarães. Conversely, it received support and proposals to extend the restriction to female teachers in supplementary education from school inspector Flodoardo Cabral during the Teaching Conference (BESSEN, 2021, p. 140).

Notwithstanding the controversies engendered by the legislation and its ramifications, it is salient to acknowledge the arguments proffered in its defense or opposition during the conference. In this regard, Maura Pereira was a vocal proponent of the female teachers' cause, asserting that "female silence would be cowardice" (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 81). She vociferously protested on their behalf

and of her colleagues against that congressman's views, as they ran counter to the highest, firmest, and most rational aspiration of feminism, thereby undermining all the intellectual effort expended to prevent female professors from achieving their rightful economic emancipation simply because they marry (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, pp. 81–82).

Alongside esteemed colleagues such as Catharina Demoro, Beatriz de Souza Brito, Floscula de Queiroz Santos, and Maria Amorim, Maura Pereira made an impassioned plea for the repeal of the legal provision that prohibited "[...] married female professors from teaching in 1st- and 2nd-class school groups [...]" (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 82). The appellation "the leaders of the feminist movement" was not an arbitrary designation; it was bestowed upon the group by Marcos Konder, a state representative for the Republican Party at the time (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 82). For him, the aforementioned law was as useful as it was necessary, given that "[...] quite recently because of circumstances inherent to marriage, an important school in the [...] state was nearly forced to close" (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 82).

In defense of Maura and her colleagues, the names of professors Raja Gabaglia, Orestes Guimarães, Marcílio Santiago, and João dos Santos Areão were raised. For the former, the introduction of such legislation would have been illogical, as nations such as France did not possess a legal prohibition against marriage and had already established legal mechanisms to safeguard the marital status of female educators (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 82). Secondly, the prohibition on marriage was deemed to be unconstitutional, as evidenced by the existence of married female professors who were fulfilling their responsibilities and unmarried ones who were not. In the latter case, the school principal was obligated to act in accordance with the prevailing regulations (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, pp. 64–65). Finally, Marcílio Santiago and João dos Santos Areão have expressed consistent opposition to the law, primarily due to their conviction that the matter at hand should not be subject to legislative scrutiny (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 25).

Despite these alliances, Marcos Konder remained steadfast, asserting that "[...] between the duties of a mother and a professor, sentiment and reason must prevail [...]" (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 24), and in this case, she preferred "[...] to err in accordance with her conscience and principles" (SANTA CATARINA, 1927, p. 83). He was accompanied by notable

figures, including Arthur Costa, a representative from Bahia elected by the Santa Catarina Republican Party, whose positions were extensively discussed in the local press. In fact, his arguments were presented and refuted in the pages of the newspaper "O Estado," prompting him to go public to defend the validity of the existing law and its full enforcement. He further argued that if the law were not valid and enforceable, "[...] the Executive Branch, in any of its messages, would have already requested its repeal, which was never done" (CONGRESSO DO ESTADO, 1927b, p. 4). He was also the one who engaged in fierce debates on the subject in the pages of the newspapers "A República" and "O Estado," in which the columnist "A. Taborda" (Pedro Paulo) strongly advocated for the repeal of the law. Taborda's analysis revealed that Arthur Costa's insistence on defending the law exhibited not only despotic behavior in Congress (TABORDA, 1927, p. 1) but also the inherent injustice in his arguments (TABORDA, 1927, n.p.).

However, the state of Santa Catarina was not unique in its enactment of legislation that regulated primary education similarly. Pizolati (2023) has demonstrated that discourses and proposals of this nature were so pervasive that they were included on the agenda of the 1st National Conference on Education, which was held in December of that same year. By juxtaposing debates on eugenics, education, and the role of women in the educability of Brazilians, figures such as Nestor Lima advanced the argument that "[...] the mentally demanding nature of the professor's work leads to exhaustion and deterioration of the nervous system [...] and [...] women engaged in mentally demanding work [...] are ill-suited for the 'maternal profession' [...]" (Lima, 1997 [1927], pp. 405–406, cited in Pizolati, 2023, p. 8). Discourses such as this coexisted with the progressive expansion of primary education—which increasingly demanded the professional expertise of female teachers—and with the strengthening of a eugenic discourse that placed them under a moral obligation to bear children. However, these roles have been found to be incompatible (PIZOLATI, 2023).

Consequently, when Maura de Senna Pereira assumed the role of president of the Teachers' League, she positioned herself to advocate for the demands of her profession. In this regard, she strategically utilized her extensive network of relationships (SIRINELLI, 1996) to advocate for concepts central to understanding the work of elementary school teachers. In this article, Maura Pereira's argument that elementary school teaching should be regulated by a career path organized for work in the public sphere is of particular interest. Pereira's position is that this approach would eliminate the current reliance on private domestic arrangements for applying for positions or career advancement. In other words, its bureaucratization (FORMOSINHO, 2007) and professionalization would constitute a form of political action, ensuring its organization and regulation in the public sphere and bringing it closer to the strategic sphere of education and teaching management (CERTEAU, 2009).

Further elaborating on her methodology, it is noteworthy that Maura Pereira, a staunch proponent of the issues advocated during the conference, refrained from engaging with the media to defend herself. The individuals responsible for its drafting, regulation, and oversight were predominantly male professors. Conversely, Maura Pereira utilized the conference as a medium to articulate her demands to the relevant authorities, adeptly maneuvering within an academic milieu that had hitherto been uncharted (CERTEAU, 2009). On the subject of her networks of relationships, two points are worthy of highlighting: first, the demands of Maura and her colleagues were defended not only, but primarily, by professors. Conversely, her opposition mobilized state and national legislators, thereby transcending the bonds established through their shared profession. To articulate their concerns, the demonstrators were compelled to adjust their demands to align with the Conference's bureaucratic procedures. These procedures encompassed a range of organizational aspects, including the scheduling of sessions and the protocol for addressing requests.

2. Women and Public Spaces

Even during her early years, Maura de Senna Pereira leveraged a well-established network of connections. These relationships facilitated her recognition for her roles and supported her advocacy for positions, which, although held by other supporters, did not contribute to her academic career or the advancement of women. The local press characterized her as "an organization, a will, and a triumph [...] in the women's community of Santa Catarina" (ANOTAÇÕES, 1927, p. 2), attributing this designation to the "charm of her feminist ideal [...]" (ANOTAÇÕES, 1927, p. 2). During her participation in an event at the Youth Center, she was introduced as "one of the most brilliant feminist minds in Santa Catarina" (CENTRO DA MOCIDADE, 1927, p. 2). These statements, which were disseminated by the newspaper "A República" — the official publication of the local Republican Party, in which Maura contributed with some regularity—highlighted her professional and personal ties to the aforementioned newspaper, evident even in the laudatory use of the term "feminist." However, the press outlets and the individuals associated with them at the time did not concur with the positivity exhibited in the description and reception of her proposals.

This is because, although Maura was frequently referenced in *A República*, the aforementioned newspaper allocated minimal coverage to her most contentious defense at the conference. In this regard, although her literary and professional career was extensively covered in this newspaper, it was the independent newspaper **O Estado**, then under the leadership of her former professor, Altino Flores, that published favorable coverage of her petition to overturn the "celibacy law." Conversely, Maura Pereira cited the anarchist and feminist educator Maria Lacerda de Moura¹¹ in "A República" (PALAVRAS AO PROFESSOR, 1927, p. 3), characterizing her as a "preeminent Brazilian educator." The concept of dissonance, as comprehended in this context, attains coherence when we contemplate the intellectual and social organization that is emerging around local newspapers as a manifestation of enduring political arrangements (Cf. SCHARF, 2008). In this sense, while "A República" explicitly aligned itself with the leadership of the local Republican Party and with then-Governor Adolpho Konder—even resetting its issue numbering upon his inauguration in September 1926—it did not find it easy to criticize legislators active within the party, as "O Estado" did.

Despite the inconsistencies that characterize political disputes in the press, however, Maura Pereira used the platforms she gained access to and the partnerships she forged there to carry out maneuvers that would safeguard women's participation in the public sphere. It was there, for example, that she openly spoke out in favor of women's suffrage during the Senate debate, describing some opposing views as exhibiting "veiled sarcasm that was often imbecilic" (PEREIRA, 1928, p. 1). In this regard, she aligned herself with the jurist Clovis Beviláqua in a letter to Juvenal Lamartine¹², then governor of Rio Grande do Norte, to whom she wrote:

under the Brazilian Constitution, there is no justification for the line of reasoning that seeks to undermine women's legitimate aspirations in our country: the right to vote and to be elected. It further emphasizes the full citizenship guaranteed to women in the Constitution and that, as citizens, they shall, pursuant to Article 70, have the right to register to vote upon reaching the age of majority. (PEREIRA, 1928, p. 1).

¹¹ For more information on the biographical details and career of Maria Lacerda de Moura, see Jourdan (n.d.).

¹² At the time, Maura Pereira described Juvenal Lamartine as a "pioneer of feminism in Brazil" (PEREIRA, 1928, p. 1), referring to the inclusion of women's suffrage in the constitution of Rio Grande do Norte in 1926 (PEIXOTO, n.d.).

Maura's appointment to the board of the Centro Catarinense de Letras was announced in the pages of the newspaper "A República," just over a year after she was named president of the Teachers' League. Initially, she was invited to the association's meeting (CENTRO CATARINENSE DE LETRAS, 1926, p. 1) along with notable figures such as Antonieta de Barros and Beatriz de Souza Brito. By the following year, she was already running on a slate for the board of directors alongside the latter (DIVERSAS, 1926, p. 4). It is important to acknowledge that the invitation and subsequent collaboration were not a fortuitous occurrence. As indicated by Romão (2021) and Souza Brito (2021), both Antonieta de Barros and Beatriz de Souza Brito were actively engaged in their respective academic professions at the time. Moreover, both scholars had already gained recognition for their advocacy for the causes they championed. Notably, a former classmate of Maura Pereira at the Normal School secured a position in the state legislature approximately ten years later. Moreover, at a time when the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters did not admit women or Black individuals into its membership (MATOS, 2014), the network centered around the Center produced alternatives that both challenged the status quo and engaged with literary circles.

Still on the subject of the struggles and displacements of individuals in the literary sphere—and, consequently, in the public sphere—Maura attended the celebrations organized by the Center in the name of and in honor of the local poet, Cruz e Souza (DIVERSAS, 1927b, p. 3). During these events, he was presented as a Black, local writer whose legacy had been cultivated at the Center, primarily through the efforts of the young members there, in an attempt to “raise the literary profile of the region” (DIVERSAS, 1927c, p. 2). Here, too, the Center's dispute with the Academy regarding the racial and sexual composition of Santa Catarina's literary scene is reiterated, this time through the celebration of a Black poet who was scarcely recognized in the prevailing canon.

Consequently, in September 1927—six months after her involvement with the Santa Catarina Academy of Letters and a few weeks after her participation in the Conference on Primary Education—Maura Pereira was elected to a seat at the local academy (ACADEMIA CATARINENSE DE LETRAS, 1927, p. 1), although she did not officially take office until three years later (ACADEMIA CATARINENSE DE LETRAS, 1930, p. 4). It was not until 1931, after these two events, that Maura had her first book published. At the time, it was presented as "a beautiful expression of female talent in our land" and as part of Cruz e Souza's legacy (CÂNTARO DE TERNURA, 1931, p. 1). In this context, it is crucial to emphasize the fluidity of her trajectory, which is perpetually influenced by the intricate networks of relationships interwoven into her utilization of public space. While Maura relied on professional support networks to gain access to the Center and championed figures largely overlooked by the literary canon, she was soon absorbed into the academic establishment—the very institution that had previously rejected her. Notwithstanding her status as an academic, her work and writing were aligned with those of Cruz e Souza shortly after her induction.

Likewise, her repeated endeavors to leave an indelible mark on the public sphere—through her professional career and literary oeuvre—underscore the distinctive character of her life story. This is because, despite hailing from a family with well-established connections in the academic and social circles of the capital of Santa Catarina, the subject's father's death in 1923 placed her in the role of breadwinner, as she was the eldest of twelve siblings (PEREIRA, 2004). Consequently, Maura Pereira's ability to meet her family's most fundamental needs was contingent, at least in part, on the professional recognition she received. As understood here, this rupture in the network of relationships that had structured some of her career transitions had the effect of repositioning her and her work, giving meaning to her advocacy for causes that supported women's labor and political engagement in the public sphere.

During these pivotal periods, her name became synonymous with and recognized in various contexts. For instance, she collaborated with prominent figures such as Antonieta de

Barros, Barreiros Filho, Henrique Fontes, Altino Flores, Trajano Margarida, and Lucas Boiteux. During this period, she served as the Santa Catarina representative among the columnists for the periodical "O Pensamento," which was then under the editorship of Hermínio Mills. In this publication, they shared space with a team of columnists from Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná, who disseminated the "literary output of Santa Catarina's leading authors" (INTERCÂMBIO INTELECTUAL, 1927, p. 4). The following year, Maura was also honored by Congressman Arthur Costa—the very same man with whom she had so fiercely disagreed the previous year, during the Education Conference—as a "victorious and efficient pioneer of Santa Catarina feminism," at the invitation of the Brazilian Association of Education (PROF. MAURA DE SENNA PEREIRA, 1928, p. 1). These shifts, therefore, point to a gradual occupation of the public sphere that was progressively recognized, albeit punctuated by setbacks.

In this regard, it is important to note that the gradual increase in the number of women in primary school teaching was accompanied by precarious working conditions and gender stratification within the profession, as well as the attribution of feminine and masculine meanings to school and workplace relationships (VIANNA, 2001). Furthermore, this was not a simple or continuous process, and it is not possible to establish unambiguous causal relationships. However, it is evident that the increased presence of women in classrooms was accompanied by state regulation of the profession and the consequent loss of autonomy among educators (LOURO, 2020, pp. 443–480). Consequently, Maura Pereira's professional practice and intellectual output were characterized by a discontinuous and pendular movement, whereby she drew based on her connections to the field at times and clashed with recalcitrant public figures at other times. In this regard, the historiography of education has clearly delineated the diversity of trajectories and the discontinuity in the regulation of the teaching profession (CATANI, 2000; cf. VICENTINI; LUGLI, 2009) as constitutive features of the category. In contrast, the following section will examine Maura Pereira's strategies and tactics (CERTEAU, 2009) employed within collectives that enabled her to advocate for women's progressive occupation of the public sphere in academic, literary, and journalistic spheres. One such occupation was the teaching profession.

Final Considerations

Of course, Maura Pereira was not the sole individual to traverse the public and private domains that influenced political life in Florianópolis during the 1920s and 1930s. However, her trajectory exemplifies the progressive application of the label "feminist" to the paths she chose to pursue and the spaces she fought to occupy. In this sense, her trajectory sheds light on the processes that shaped the political and professional activities of women during this period. This period was characterized by an evident reconfiguration of the political landscape, as well as the progressive organization of educational institutions and media outlets.

It is worth noting that the adjective "feminist" was used at times as a compliment and at other times as an insult. However, it was always invoked as indicative of a progressive occupation of intellectual, academic, professional, and political spaces. In this context, the convergence between feminist ideology and the establishment of professional associations and literary collectives is evident. Consequently, a woman was regarded as a feminist if her trajectory intersected boundaries, whether as an individual or as part of a collective. For this reason, we chose to use a categorization of practices (CERTEAU, 1985; 2009) organized by Maura Pereira to highlight their networks of support, protection, and sociability (SIRINELLI, 1996). As understood here, this focus on practices tactically organized in the struggles over spaces allows for the observation of the progressive structuring of the occupation of these spaces. Primarily, the act of being identified as a feminist in this context is indicative of a prevailing culture of resistance.

This may be indicative of the profound impact that her professional network had on her well-being. Maura de Senna Pereira mobilized a substantial support network, predominantly comprised of educators. Consequently, the signatories of petitions and editorials in her name were predominantly professors. It should be noted that not all of those who expressed opposition to her were professors. It was within this same professional circle that her contributions to local newspapers took root. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that, although each side organized itself around explicit party affiliations, Maura was covered in both publications, albeit in different ways. In this regard, A. Taborda's impassioned advocacy for the repeal of the "celibacy law" found expression in the newspaper **O Estado**, then under the direction of Altino Flores, a mentor of Maura's intellectual pursuits. Nevertheless, "A República" — a publication clearly aligned with the ruling party—also championed the cause of defending Maria Lacerda de Moura's actions and the passage of women's suffrage in its pages.

Finally, an analysis of Professor Maura Pereira's career reveals how the term "feminist" has evolved. As associations among women became more firmly established, the term "feminist" acquired new meanings. In other cases, alliances were formed with individuals considered allies of the movement at some point. The adjective, in this way, acquires meaning and form as women occupy other spaces, such as classrooms, magazine newsrooms, and conference rooms. In conclusion, her journey demonstrates the confluence of circumstances that ultimately guided her to publicly advocate for the demands of a teaching community. In this regard, the emphasis placed on the paid nature of her work—in the context of a family that had lost its primary breadwinner—sets the tone for her priorities and her alliances.

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