

FEMALE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE MEMORIES OF MARIA PAES DE BARROS

PRÁTICAS EDUCATIVAS FEMININAS NAS MEMÓRIAS DE MARIA PAES DE BARROS

PRÁCTICAS EDUCATIVAS FEMENINAS EN LAS MEMORIAS DE MARIA PAES DE BARROS

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this paper is to highlight the memories on education compiled in the book “*No tempo de dantes*” (In the time of before), written by Maria Paes de Barros. Based on the reminiscences from the days of her childhood and youth, the objective of this study is to analyze common aspects of women’s education in the 19th century, described by the author in her autobiographical narrative. On a more specific plane, it is possible to verify educational agents and experiences in the author’s memoirs, with a still very small city of São Paulo as a backdrop. This is a qualitative historical and bibliographical survey whose main source is formed by the recollections published by Maria Paes de Barros, located in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the time of her birth and period of her childhood and youth as part of a typical family of the São Paulo elite. In the face of the author’s autobiographical writings, it is possible to envisage within her daily life in an urban or rural setting, the lessons learned, the strict study routine, the little time for fun and games and the abundance of rules and punishment, with the objective of making of her a "well educated" woman, similar to those living in her time and context.

KEYWORDS: Women’s education. Educational memory. Autobiographical writings. Maria Paes de Barros. Education in the eighteen hundreds.

RESUMO: *O artigo tem como tema evidenciar as memórias sobre a educação reunidas no livro “No tempo de dantes” escrito por Maria Paes de Barros. A partir de suas reminiscências de infância e de juventude, o objetivo do estudo é analisar aspectos comuns à educação feminina no século XIX, descritos pela autora em sua narrativa autobiográfica. Em um plano mais específico, verificam-se agentes e experiências educacionais citados na rememoração da autora, tendo como cenário uma ainda diminuta São Paulo. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa histórico bibliográfica que tem como principal fonte as memórias*

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publicadas de Maria Paes de Barros, localizadas na segunda metade do oitocentos, período do seu nascimento e de sua infância e juventude vividas em uma típica família da elite paulista. Diante dos escritos autobiográficos da autora, é possível depreender, no cotidiano urbano ou campestre em que viveu, as lições recebidas, a rotina rigorosa de estudos, o pouco tempo para brincadeiras e a existência de muitas regras e castigos, com a finalidade de torná-la detentora de uma “boa educação”, semelhante à das mulheres que viveram no seu tempo e contexto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação feminina. Memórias educacionais. Escrita autobiográfica. Maria Paes de Barros. Educação oitocentista.*

RESUMEN: *El tema del artículo es resaltar las memorias sobre educación recolectadas en el libro “No tempo de dantes” escrito por Maria Paes de Barros. A partir de sus reminiscencias de infancia y juventud, el objeto del estudio es analizar los aspectos comunes a la educación femenina en el siglo XIX, descritos por la autora en su narrativa autobiográfica. En un nivel más específico, hay agentes y experiencias educativas mencionados en la rememoración de la autora, teniendo como escenario la ciudad de São Paulo todavía diminuta. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa histórico-bibliográfica, que tiene como fuente principal las memorias publicadas de Maria Paes de Barros, ubicadas en la segunda mitad de los años mil ochocientos, período de su nacimiento y la infancia y juventud vividas en una familia típica de la élite paulista. A la vista de los escritos autobiográficos da autora, es posible percibir, en el cotidiano urbano o rural en el que vivió, las lecciones recibidas, la rigurosa rutina de estudio, el poco tiempo para jugar, y la existencia de muchas reglas y castigos, para que tuviera una “buena educación”, similar a la de las mujeres que vivieron en su tiempo y contexto.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación femenina. Memoria educativa. Escrita autobiográfica. Maria Paes de Barros. Educación ochocentera.*

Introduction

Maria Paes de Barros originally published the book “No tempo de dantes” in 1946. It is an autobiographical work in which its author writes reminiscences of her childhood and youth, in the second half of the 19th century, in which she lived with his parents, in the Province of São Paulo. The memories are linked by a series of narratives that demonstrate the context in which she was born and raised, receiving what she termed the “marks” of who she was, at 94 years of age, when she edited her memoirs.

Born in 1851, Maria Paes de Barros belonged to the São Paulo elite. In the family, there were members with titles of nobility, such as Baron de Souza Queiroz and the Marquise de Valença, her uncles. Or even the Baron of Piracicaba, father of her cousin and husband, Antônio Paes de Barros. Her grandfather was a brigadier, her father a commander. Her family wealth came from agricultural exports from the sugar cane and coffee plantations, on whose

properties there were, under the dominion of her father, enslaved workers of African origin and German settlers. Furthermore, as was common among the economic elite at the time, they were directly involved in politics. Her father served in the Chamber of São Paulo. Her husband became a senator already in the Republic.

Maria Paes de Barros was the oldest among the ten children who had Mrs. Felicíssima Campos Barros and Commander Luís Antônio de Souza Barros. At the time of the marriage, he took with him three daughters from his first marriage, among which Dindinha stood out, the only one among all the brothers and sisters to be named in “*No tempo de dantes*”. Throughout the book, there are few references to male brothers, which only appear in a few pages, to highlight the differences between the education received by the “sisters” and by the boys, since, when children, everyone studied together, at home. , under the guidance of Dindinha and Mademoiselle, the German governess. However, the boys, “when they grew up”, which occurred around the age of ten, were sent to a boarding school in Germany, while the girls continued their studies in the domestic environment until they got married.

It was customary, at that time, for wealthy families to send their children to study in Europe. Many chose France; he [the commander father], however, preferred to send his own to Germany, as he had business relations with an important firm in Hamburg. The three older boys then followed, having been admitted to schools, while the girls studied with Mademoiselle (BARROS, 1998, p. 12, our translation).

In view of the autobiographical memoirs of Maria Paes de Barros, the main objective of this study is to demonstrate the educational practices common to nineteenth-century women, present in the work “*No tempo de dantes*”, considering that this same education was offered to a good part of the daughters of the elites, particularly in the regions inhabited by the great coffee farmers, in the decades close to the threshold between the Empire and the Republic. On a more specific level, the lessons received to make the girls well-educated women are verified, as well as the daily rules and reports that accompanied the female education, transmitted by the adult women of the household to the younger ones. Therefore, the methodological procedures of the bibliographical historical research in question have as source and object the work of reminiscences written by Maria Paes de Barros, with emphasis on her reports of educational experiences, understanding them involved in the process of construction of female memory in maturity through autobiographical writing, as an act of archiving itself (CUNHA, 2019).

A life among women: education for femininity

Figure 1 – Book cover image “*No tempo de dantes*”



Source: Barros (1998)

The photograph shown in Figure 1 illustrates the cover of the work “No tempo de antes” and was taken around 1875. Its choice as the opening image of the book suggests the female centrality in the author's memories, which is reaffirmed throughout of the text in the interactions with the governess, the sister and the mother, who assumed command of the domestic space and, consequently, are the protagonists of the memories. As in most elite houses in the 1800s, girls were turned into women by the hands of other women (VASCONCELOS, 2018; FERRAZ, 2020). This fact does not mean the absence of the male figure, as the entire house is always marked by the strong male presence that dominates it. However, this domination makes some concessions to women when it comes to managing the domestic space. According to Franco (2015, p. 72, our translation), “the man would have the role of main administrator”, while the woman “had the specific role of woman and mother, along with the duties and obligations that are contracted in society and for the honest recess, established among the people of its class”. Thus, the mother and, in sequence, the older women in the house, were responsible for the education and behavior of the younger ones (LIÁÑEZ, 2019).

In Maria Paes de Barros's memoirs, the division between male domination and the supervision granted to the female figure was concentrated in that which is praisedly remembered by the memoirist, Dindinha, the eldest half-sister, who would help in the task of educating other women of the house (GOMES, 2018).

It is to be assumed that the organization of the 19th century patriarchal family narrated by the author is impregnated with the ambiguities that certainly characterized Maria Paes de Barros's perceptions of the world in her maturity, since, in autobiographical writing, the experiences of the past are reinterpreted by the actor herself, in this case, an actress (ARFUCH, 2010). This overlapping between past and present does not mean an anachronism or a concealment about “the true history of her family”, but a natural process of memory, as explained by Rousso (2016, p. 41, our translation), when memories allow “to relive the past in the present”, trying to give it life, since “history does not exist outside the thought that produces it and gives it form after the event”.

In this recollection that takes shape and context, the author takes the place of an omniscient and omnipresent narrator, mixing her experiences with those of other younger sisters, to highlight the actions of adult women, identified as the authorized voices to guide, educate and form childhood. Thus, female authorities are remembered, initially, for the definition of the routine imposed on the children, which emerges from the daily life of the house, and, later, for the personality traits and very specific functions attributed to each one of them.

As it is a "remembrance space" (ASSMANN, 2011), located in the middle of the 19th century, the educational practices told and attributed to the "masters" of the house involved much more than simply learning signs and teachings, but it was a education built at every moment, in social environments, in religious festivities, on outings, on trips and, mainly, in learning situations planned, organized and applied, formally, by Dindinha and Mademoiselle, or introduced, informally, through sharing Felicíssima's domestic experiences.

Dindinha, the eldest sister, is Maria Paes de Barros' great reference and to whom the author attributes her education, as well as that of her ten younger brothers and sisters. She was the one who taught the children the first letters and how to play the piano, established a home study routine and listed the teaching materials to be acquired, in addition to taking the initiative to introduce other skills in the girls' curriculum, such as dance and preparation for marriage. Dindinha "disposed, ordered, supervised and directed - everything with great proficiency and dedication" (BARROS, 1998, p. 11).

Under the austere routine ruled by the ringing of a bell, the children remained seated in the center of the study, from very early in the morning until dinner, which was served at 2 pm. Boys and girls gathered around a large desk, surrounded by large geographic maps, studying lessons from books that had come straight from France. While the younger ones improved their French and general knowledge from biographies, stories and travel reports, the older

girls could enjoy the “*Revista Popular*” and the novels published in the “*L’Echo des Feuilletons*” collection. With dance, introduced to the girls at the suggestion of Dindinha, who saw in this practice an efficient means of acquiring good body posture and delicate mannerisms, the girls received lessons at home, taught by two former Italian dancers, and Dindinha accompanied them by playing piano.

Although she herself was responsible for the education of the brothers and sisters, Dindinha also did what was usual at that time, and the family hired a governess, among the many advertised in the newspapers, to provide her services teaching in the homes. According to Vasconcelos (2018, p. 291, our translation):

[...] normally, they were received at their consulates or had some relationship with them, as shown by many advertisements, from those that provided the official address for correspondence between the candidate and her contractors, to those that gave information about the person who announced its services. Thus, the French consulate, the German consulate, the Swedish consulate, the Portuguese consulate and the cosmopolitan agency constantly appear in the advertisements.

As was the recurrent desire of the nineteenth century elite to educate their daughters, the Barros family opted for a German governess, although Fraulein was called Mademoiselle, considering that the fluent language to teach was French (VASCONCELOS, 2018). Thus, Dindinha and Mademoiselle constituted the typical image of women who worked in the education of children in a house of the Brazilian aristocracy in the second half of the 19th century.

In the study hall were the sisters in their element. There Dindinha ruled, with indiscriminate power, and Mademoiselle was her idol. She was affable and obliging, she knew how to make herself wanted and everyone tried to guess her slightest desires. [...] Who knows if such an attitude would not be determined by an unfulfilled aspiration? [...] Always ready to help and provide small services, she was the one who planned jobs and tours that the sisters performed. In this way she became the object of general affection and esteem for the admirable Mademoiselle, as if she were worthy of the affectionate expansions she received with that lovely smile (BARROS, 1998, p. 95, our translation).

The partnership between Dindinha and Mademoiselle dates back to the educational model that was widespread among the families of the Brazilian elite in the 19th century. A private education, given to children and young people inside the house, according to the interests of their parents, who had the autonomy to choose the subjects and teachers involved in the process. According to Vasconcelos (2005; 2018; 2020), it was common for families to resort to the work of governesses to educate their female daughters – and foreigners were

considered, in a hierarchy that privileged German, French and English, but admitting all nationalities as long as they were fluent in French – the most suitable for the aspiring standard of education.

Even after they were already living in Brazil, the advertisements show that the families' preferences were for foreign women; the mere fact of being German, French or English was a sufficient reference of skills for hiring (VASCONCELOS, 2018, p. 293, our translation).

The governesses were in charge of educating all the children in the house until the boys were old enough to study at a college or boarding school. The girls were under her care, sometimes, until the age they were ready to get married. The Barros family's home did not deviate from this model: "The teacher was really gifted: in addition to being beautiful, intelligent, cultured and skilled in crafts and cooking skills, she spoke several languages, played, sang and drew well" (BARROS, 1998, p. 12, our translation).

Another memoirist, a contemporary of Maria Paes de Barros, also recalls the governess of her house, during that same period. A resident of the Province of São Paulo and born in the 1870s, Floriza Barboza Ferraz (2020), perhaps influenced by that author's publication (SOUZA, 2020, p. 269), wrote in 1947 her "*Páginas de recordações: memórias*" (Pages of recollections: memoirs), work in which she says that her sister Júlia "sent a very educated teacher to come from Europe, she was called mademoiselle Luiza Neget" (FERRAZ, 2020, p. 64, our translation).

It is interesting to note that even gathering the qualities expected from governesses, especially from a German governess, recognized for her strict discipline, in the eyes of Maria Paes de Barros, Mademoiselle was not the one who applied punishments, "she was so indulgent that she did not like to punish them when they were wrong, giving them only a bad note in the notebook. When the fault was greater, Dindinha, always righteous, was the one who inflicted the punishment" (BARROS, 1998, p. 96, our translation). For the author, however, Dindinha was endowed with a great "sense of justice", understood as a perfect balance between "sensitivity" and "firmness". In her memories, these attributes of Dindinha made her a role model for all women, especially mothers, as, with watchful eyes, she followed "all the actions of their lives, attentive both to instruction and to moral and religious education. As auxiliary means, as we have already said, there was no lack of punishment, which was always considered indispensable" (BARROS, 1998, p. 32, our translation).

The theme of the rules placed on children and the arguments about the need to impose limits on them are taken up by Maria Paes de Barros at different times in the book, as well as

the memories of the punishments applied to those who violated them. Notably, the author identified in these practices fundamental actions for the creation of respectful adults, being considered a positive aspect of the education received, which had not affected the atmosphere of family harmony that she constantly remembered.

Regarding this debate, Maria Paes de Barros places the discussion about the excesses of physical punishment inflicted on children in the 20th century, but, according to her perception, in the 19th century families did not share these ideas, although she insists on demonstrating that the use of physical force was not the usual corrective method at home (GOMES, 2016). According to her, Dindinha resorted to the suspension of recess when the offense committed was related to classes: “Breaks to the rules were always punished. At that time, punishment was an integral part of the school curriculum” (BARROS, 1998, p. 14, our translation). In other cases, she applied moralizing lessons, which should serve as an example to all brothers and sisters. Therefore, punishments were carried out at dinnertime. The disobedient should remain at the table in silence while the others savored dessert; she could have posters attached to her clothes, or she could be subjected to a situation that exposed her to the harsh stares of those present. As an example, the author tells the episode in which one of the “sisters” was forced to beg, for having been merciless with an old lady who asked for food from door to door. However, she temporizes: “although vexatious impositions, they did not scandalize anyone: they were patiently suffered, as fair and natural, and did not constitute a cloud that tarnished the happiness of the children, who lived satisfied, surrounded by the protective affection of their parents” (BARROS, 1998, p. 53, our translation).

The Barros family houses – both in the city and on the farms – were configured as the catalyst for educational experiences, spaces of knowledge that stimulated and fostered intellectual production (AGUIAR, 2015; 2020), each with its formative potential. Every room was used for the lessons, the study room equipped with maps, books in French and encyclopedias; the orchard where children could have fun between classes; the sewing room; and the dining room. In the same way, the surroundings of the big house and the slave quarters are remembered, from which experiences immortalized in her memory emerged, in a world that she saw completely change during the transition between the two centuries in which she lived.

When education is over, it is time to get married: female sensibilities and obligations

Figure 2 – Photograph of five generations of women from the Souza Barros family



Source: Barros (1998)

Figure 2 shows five generations of women in Maria Paes de Barros' family and was taken in 1920, when she was already a widow and had been surviving from running a maternity hospital and acting as a teacher in a Presbyterian school (BARROS, 1998). The memoirist is on the left of the photograph, which has at the center her mother, Ms. Felicíssima, who also taught at the same school as a piano teacher. The other two women are the daughter (sitting), the granddaughter (standing) and the author's great-granddaughter (the baby in her great-great-grandmother's lap), which highlights the youth with which the women were married. “Just leaving the study room for the wedding, she felt intimidated by such a great contrast” (BARROS, 1998, p. 125, our translation). With this phrase, Maria Paes de Barros summarizes the path that was expected of all the women in the house.

According to Bourdieu (2006), the biographical narrative developed as a linear and teleological sequence tends to introject in the subject of the past characteristics that define him in the present. Such practice ends up constructing a representation of life as a coherent whole, endowed with a previous meaning. From the perspective of Maria Paes de Barros, childhood was just a stage that preceded adulthood, that is, the only one before becoming a woman. For a girl, this basically meant the period of preparation for marriage, when the young lady would put into practice everything she learned in the family home, with the women who taught her. For this, the knowledge learned in the study room was not enough, as marriage also required other skills. In addition to being intelligent and cultured, the lady needed to be the "owner" of her own house and not forget to evoke everything she had learned from the other women in her life:

There was no small task before her: to govern, direct and, if need be, even punish the numerous female slaves who worked inside the house, all older and more practical in the service than she! [...] However, she did not lose heart, nor did she lose her joy, because she had the strong hand of her husband, who guided her, and helped in all difficulties (BARROS, 1998, p. 126, our translation).

A considerable portion of the author's reminiscences is occupied by the memories of her mother, Mrs. Felicíssima, fulfilling fundamental roles for the family, as a great partner of her husband, ready to encourage him and assume his responsibilities; performing domestic tasks with the help of the enslaved who acted at her command; packing luggage; producing and assembling important utensils for the family's long trips to many of their farms. In the author's recollections, Dona Felicíssima knew all the enslaved and the settlers by name, listened to their needs, advised on family life and handled herbs and medicines, “with the help of the two thick volumes of 'Popular Medicine', by Chernoviz, many people were cured” (BARROS, 1998, p. 66, our translation). She was therefore also responsible for taking care of the health of family and household members.

Not only in her home, but also in administration, she carried out her activities. The lady not only listened and advised, but went personally to the administration house, visiting the black women's and black men's infirmary. Endowed with a singular medical acumen, she would cautiously apply the medicines, using only mild processes - poultices, fomentations and teas prepared by herself (BARROS, 1998, p. 82, our translation).

This practice aimed at women is also corroborated by Vasconcelos (2018, p. 299), in a study on the “Doctrine on the government of the house”, much appreciated for the education of women in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as written in the book by Adrien Sylvain, translated and published in chapters in the *Revista Bazar Litterário*³, in which it was stated that among the functions of the mistress of the house was to watch over and take care of the health of everyone who lived there.

From this perspective, it is possible to see a certain autonomy of women in defining house management activities. Dona Felicíssima removed the oldest enslaved women, who had been tired, from the heavy work, naming the younger ones to their places. Before, she attested to everyone's health. The sick were reserved for tasks considered lighter, while health was restored by the sweet potato, the same “strengthening” that he recommended to children to

³ According to the Annals of the National Library, vol. 85, 1965, the biweekly magazine *Bazar Litterário*: education and recreation was published from 1 October 1878 to 15 June 1879, in Rio de Janeiro, by the São Vicente de Paula Typographia.

avoid premature death. There was a whole “domestic system” ruled by women, as Carvalho (2008, p. 242, our translation) describes:

A set of rules aimed at establishing regularity in the work of the wife, daughters and employees. The sequence of activities is materialized in a set of tasks distributed in pre-established times and days and supervised by the wife. Maintenance activities, the production of decorative objects (handwork), food processing and replacement, and the education of the daughter for the reproduction of domestic knowledge are part of the routine.

Such knowledge was aspired by Maria Paes de Barros so that she herself could be able to manage her future house. However, before her, the older “sisters” reached marriageable age, which made the commander begin the search for suitors. He tried to be meticulous in his analysis, paying attention to the slightest sign of “color mixing” in the boy's family. Found, the candidate was soon dismissed, corroborating the immense prejudice existing in that period. Anyway, the main nominees for the consortium of marriage with the girls of the family were, above all, the relatives, either to concentrate wealth or to avoid taking risks with unknown adventurers. Thus, the couples were normally selected from among their own family members, the cousins, corroborating what Peñarrocha (2013, p. 232, our translation) states that “marrying, understood as a social reproduction strategy, is so necessary for the whole group as reserved for only a small part within it”⁴, that is, before being a social practice, it was also a recurrent family practice.

Soon after the sisters' marriage, Maria Paes de Barros, still quite young, also got married. She was just sixteen years old, when her interest, considered excessive, in books, especially those of love poetry, began to worry Dindinha, who soon convinced her to accept a marriage proposal: "Don't refuse this happiness!" (BARROS, 1998, p. 123, our translation). It was time for the “best student in the class” to get married.

Despite her sisters' fate being the same – marrying a cousin – something was different in the memoirist's trajectory, as she never abandoned her involvement with books and attention to her studies. After years of dedication to the family's home and business, Maria Paes de Barros published the work she wrote for a long time and leveraged her among the main names of the São Paulo intelligentsia gathered at the Historical and Geographical Institute of São Paulo. It is the book “*História do Brasil*” (History of Brazil), published in 1932. These tasks were joined by the interest in teaching the discipline of history and the enthusiasm for education, as highlighted by Caio Prado Júnior (BARROS, 1998, p. 14, our translation):

⁴ Free translation of the original in Spanish.

Being intelligently interested in the physical and spiritual growth of all of her large family, she had a brilliant role in it. In the evenings of her farm, on the rumbling banks of the Mogi-Guaçu, she delighted herself in teaching history to the youth. Reliving through dramatized narratives the paintings of the past, in the avid eyes of their loved ones, castles full of idylls, crusades, tournaments, caravels...

The author continued with the same enthusiasm for education, even when her financial conditions were no longer favorable, leaving only the memories of the years of prosperity. However, even so, she continued to welcome grandchildren and friends who needed to reside in São Paulo to study (PRADO JUNIOR *in* BARROS, 1998).

It is worth noting the emphasis that Maria Paes de Barros gives to marriage in the final chapters of her memorial work, which also refers to the education received, for various aspects. In a complex weaving of representations, she demonstrates how she left her childhood to marry, become an adult, but always carrying with her the collective of women who formed her. Each one with its unique and specific characteristics left their marks on the young lady. On the one hand, important marks for acting in public life, on the other, the elements for the construction of a harmonious and happy marital life, like the one she believed her parents had known.

Another aspect highlighted is that even when marriage is the central theme, there is no lack of references to sister Dindinha and the German governess Mademoiselle, as memories that do not fade from the artisans of the methodical, constant and persistent work of training that girl, transformed into a woman, and her lifelong application of these teachings.

Thus, especially the mother, Dona Felicíssima, Dindinha and Mademoiselle, but also other female characters who acted in her process of intellectual formation and in the practices she learned for life, are represented without any trace of imperfection, with a description that can be inserted in a mythical family pattern.

Kotre (1997) draws attention to the fact that mystification does not mean the falsifying of memory in maturity, but an attitude that seeks comfort in the face of loss, creating new memories that make the old ones invisible. Also according to the same author, this is a process that we go through when facing moments of crisis, which provoke milestones of readjustment in our memories.

According to Bourdieu (2006), this teleological perspective of biographical narrative is one of the “illusions” of the writing typology, which he calls ordinary biography, developed under a totalizing perspective of the subject's life history, revealing a linear and logical narrative. In fact, it is in this field of biographical writing that “No tempo de dantes”, in which

the author tries to recover a coherent whole about the identity she built in the present, from the influences received, notably, from the women with whom she lived until adulthood. Even so, it is a privileged source of understanding of the representations of female educational practices in the 1800s, precisely because it highlights the perspective of those who lived, as well as the reflection on what was experienced, offering a reinterpretation of education and the role of women in training other women.

By the year 1946, with more than ninety years of age, the main characters in Maria Paes de Barros' reminiscences were no longer at her side, nor were the opulence and wealth of those times part of her daily life. Likewise, the memoirist, after long years of caring for her ailing husband, saw her fortune slip away. Perhaps, the harsh reality of recent years has lightened with softer colors the memories related to the people who populated her life so many years before: "And at the end of life, when memory is no longer essential to deal with reality, it can become transform into the raw material from which dreams are made" (KOTRE, 1997, p. 217, our translation).

Final considerations

In writing "No tempo de dantes", Maria Paes de Barros remembers the girl who she was, through her reminiscences, searching in the past for the woman of her present, mixed with herself, Dindinha, Mademoiselle and Dona Felicíssima, a collective in a single woman. They were the ones who gave her the tools they needed to go through life, from when she found herself in the emergency of taking over her own home with marriage, to her everyday attitudes and behaviors, which somehow remained following the voices of those women, whose aim was to educate her to all the feminine sensibilities and obligations of that time and context.

Carretero (2019, p. 918, our translation) states that "the mother's education at the origin of our lives and the later projection, in the public sphere, of the teaching of those people who cultivated and created knowledge and/or know-how", were configured, for a long time, as essentially feminine crafts, transmitted among women, to continue the wisdom accumulated over the years, so necessary to face the challenges of daily life. However, what Dindinha, Mademoiselle and Dona Felicíssima could not assume is that the world they imagined could be taught and transmitted to the women of their household to exercise their role in society would completely change in the following decades and demand other female educational practices.

Caio Prado Júnior opens the introduction of “No tempo de dantes” with the following sentence: “Certainly what civilization owes to women has yet to be written” (PRADO JUNIOR in BARROS, 1998, p. XIII). Drawing attention to her condition as a woman, the writer praised Maria Paes de Barros and her contribution to the “flourishing civilization of São Paulo”, not only for her book, written in a setting that definitely moved away from the 19th century, but mainly for her performance in the field of health, as director of the Maternity Hospital in São Paulo, collaborator at Hospital Samaritano and founder of the first Tennis Club in the city. Furthermore, according to the preface, by publishing a “History of Brazil” in 1932, Maria Paes de Barros became nationally recognized for her historiographical work.

But it is necessary to disagree with Caio Prado Júnior. The highlight of Maria Paes de Barros, among so many other elite girls from São Paulo who were educated in the house, is the work that, according to him, was written “for the delight of those who delight in imagining environments of the past” (PRADO JUNIOR, 1998, p 15, our translation). The author, through autobiographical writing, dared to give a glimpse of what “civilization owes to women”, breaking, in the genre of her own writings, with the masculine absolutism of the authors and actors of history.

In another perspective, Loriga (2011, p. 69, our translation), relating biography and history, demonstrates that the event immediately disintegrates in the multitude of images that follow it, therefore, “what happens does not contain any truth in itself and only makes sense when thought and told”. In this way, Maria Paes de Barros proposed as much as to tell the history of Brazil in her book with that title, as she did “*No tempo de dantes*”.

As a woman representing a time that can no longer be recomposed, except for the traces and memories, albeit idyllic, written like the one by Maria Paes de Barros allow us to perceive the importance of women in the formation of other women, suggesting also that, later on, it will be in the feminine universe itself that women will teach others to break the previous order.

Maria Paes de Barros' description of the most relevant women in the house does not place them in the feminist vanguard. To say this would be to incur anachronisms. In fact, the representations of Dona Felicíssima, Dindinha and Mademoiselle say much more about our nineteen-year-old memorialist. Kotre (1997), in his studies of memory in maturity, draws attention to the fact that it is difficult for us to remember how we saw the world in the past. In general, what we remember is closely related to the present, to the moment when we resort to

memories. With this, we want to draw attention to how much of the present there is in the past (ROUSSO, 2016).

When Maria Paes de Barros exposes her memories, she was no longer what she was in her childhood and youth. Not only because of biological impositions, but especially social ones. The nineteenth-century woman who came from a traditional São Paulo family, educated to be a wife and mother, saw her fortune dilapidated in the nineteenth century and started working as a teacher. Writing her reminiscences meant a reunion with her identity. Not a return, but a reunion. The author maintained a realistic relationship with her present, but she certainly readjusted her memories to the new directions of her life, bringing a bit of the past to the present, even if it was in the form of what she learned at her parents' house. Focusing her memories on the paternal house is, in the words of Arfuch (2013, p. 28, our translation), to center the house as “space/temporality”, where “interactions, affections, routines, everyday transits” and gender differences also mark the rhythms of the narrative.

Although there are intense allusions in her work to the impositions of patriarchy on the house, it is women's actions that fill a large part of the pages, in which Maria Paes de Barros wrote and left her reminiscences registered. From the memories of the active woman in the 20th century, important evidence emerged about the female education practiced in the 1800s, by women and for women. Her father, Commander, figured in the author's memoirs only as a representation of authority, but her mother was the fundamental piece of all the stately machinery, adding to her Dindinha and Mademoiselle. They, the three, the only women named, were the protagonists who, together, formed the ideal woman for the 19th century. Ideal for memories of a romanticized past.

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How to reference this article

VASCONCELOS, M. C. C.; GOMES, E. V. Female educational practices in the memories of Maria Paes de Barros. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 16, n. esp. 3, p. 1422-1438, jun. 2021. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v16iesp.3.15290>

Submitted: 05/02/2021

Required revisions: 30/03/2021

Approved: 12/05/2021

Published: 01/06/2021