

## The boarding schools and the education of women in the novels of Paraense writers

Laura Maria Silva Araújo Alves<sup>i</sup> 

Federal University of Pará, Belém, PA, Brazil

Lília Batista da Conceição<sup>ii</sup> 

Federal University of Pará, Belém, PA, Brazil

### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the education of women in boarding schools, based on literary productions by Eneida de Moraes, Lindanor Celina and Maria Lúcia Medeiros. This investigation is justified by the importance of promoting relevant discussions about female education in boarding schools during the 20th century in the North of the country, especially in Belém, Pará, through literary sources. In view of these discussions, the theoretical basis is based on Bourdieu (1996, 2004), Volóshinov (2021) and so on. From this perspective, creating educational boarding schools for women was an attempt to achieve hegemony in the field of education in the Amazon, as it was not an idea of modern education, but rather a belief in the regeneration of society through intellectual, moral and religious education for female education.

### Keywords

internship; writers; girls; education; literature.

### Os internatos e a educação de mulheres nos romances de escritoras paraenses

#### Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar a educação de mulheres nos internatos, a partir de produções literárias de Eneida de Moraes, Lindanor Celina e Maria Lúcia Medeiros. Esta investigação justifica-se pela importância de fomentar discussões relevantes sobre a educação feminina nos internatos durante o século XX no Norte do país, especialmente em Belém, Pará, por meio de fontes literárias. Tendo em vista essas discussões, o embasamento teórico se fundamenta em Bourdieu (1996, 2004), Volóchinov (2021) e assim por diante. Nessa perspectiva, criar internatos educativos para mulheres foi uma tentativa de conquistar a hegemonia no campo da educação na Amazônia, pois não era um ideário de educação moderna, mas em acreditar na regeneração da sociedade pela educação intelectual, moral e religiosa para a educação feminina.

#### Palavras-chave

internato; escritoras; meninas; educação; literatura.

## Los internados y la educación de las mujeres en las novelas de escritoras paraenses

### Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la educación de mujeres en los internados, a partir de las producciones literarias de Eneida de Moraes, Lindanor Celina y Maria Lúcia Medeiros. Esta investigación se justifica por la importancia de promover discusiones relevantes sobre la educación femenina en los internados durante el siglo XX en el Norte del país, especialmente en Belém, Pará, a través de fuentes literarias. Ante estas discusiones, la base teórica se basa en Bourdieu (1996, 2004), Volóshinov (2021), etc. Desde esta perspectiva, la creación de internados educativos para mujeres fue un intento de alcanzar la hegemonía en el campo de la educación en la Amazonía, pues no era una idea de educación moderna, sino una creencia en la regeneración de la sociedad a través de la educación intelectual, moral y religiosa para la educación femenina.

### Palabras clave

internado; escritoras; chicas; educación; literatura.

## 1 Introduction

The literature, known as a symbolic practice, it is configured by the formulation of a reality that has as reference the real world, that the writer is inserted, therefore, in the moment of literary text production, whether it is a novel, chronicle or tales, its feedstock is the representations of a reconstructed reality. The writer has the commitment to the likelihood, with the argumentative strength in building a reality that is coherent to the reader's reality. The literature is full in the production of characters in educational contexts fields, describing behaviors, conduct and cultural practices that fit into the reader's cultural universe (Gouvêia, 2006).

Literary works of a memorialist nature are, without a doubt, an inexhaustible source for understanding education among 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An example of this perspective is the memorialist works of José Lins do Rego and Graciliano Ramos, the rescue of the everyday life, the school, the games, the family relation and educational practices lived by children of wealthy layers from the northeast of Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Taken as a document, the literary text is constituted as a kind of source that give us, through the characters, the history lived by different female subject. After all, the literary text, as a representation of the real, carries a testimony that creates the real in the

historicity of its production and in the intentionality of its writing (Chartier, 1990). Therefore, the literary works as novel, chronicle and tales present traces open to countless possibilities of reading and interpreting other versions of female reality in the past, which often contradict the official reports. The writer talks about the woman through fictional narratives, but the humans' construction of the characters brings representation of the real world of singularities of the women in their own time. In other words, the author-writer, even when he does not have the explicit objective of “making history” with the writing of his literary work, he ends up recording and providing clues with the capacity to “tell the history”.

The boarding models are also portrayed in various novels of Brazilian's literature, as well as: *O Ateneu* (1888), of Raul Pompeia, *Doidinho* (1933), of José Lins do Rego, and *As três Marias* (1939), of Rachel de Queiroz. In paraenses writers' case and their literary productions – *Promessa em azul e branco* (1957), of Eneida de Moraes, *Menina que vem de Itaiara* (1963) and *Estradas do tempo-foi* (1971), of Lindanor Celina, and *Caminhos de São Tiago* (1988), of Maria Lúcia Medeiros – are materialized in autobiographical speeches that portray the female education in schools and boarding schools. The female writers of the Amazon also show a closeness to the literary style of Clarice Lispector, a renowned writer of Brazilian Literature.

Eneida de Moraes, Lindanor Celina and Maria Lúcia Medeiros were women that lived in Belém city and had a significant representation not only in the literary field, but also in the politic, journalist and educational field. Furthermore, they marked the 20th century at a time of women's resistance in the world of letters in Pará, due to the appreciation of male writers in the paraense literature, such as Dalcídio Jurandir, Haroldo Maranhão, Juvenal Tavares, José Verissimo, Paulinho de Brito, Vilhena Alves, and others.

It is important to highlight that there was an education model that indoctrinated girls in boarding schools, that is, there was a traditional education paradigm that possibly modeled female subjects, based on a hegemonic discourse of women.

The methodological path covered the narrative of literary works by paraense writers Lindanor Celina, Eneida de Moraes and Maria Lúcia Medeiros, who portrayed the daily life of boarding schools that were exclusive to female audiences.

The text is divided in three steps. In the first one, we discuss about the concept of boarding school and the strict and disciplinary methods for educating girls, in the second, we show the writers and their works that discuss about the time in boarding schools and the girl's education. At last, we discuss about the speech established by the writers in the female formation in boarding schools.

## 2 The boarding school and women's education: a historical clipping

The boarding schools appears in France in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this appearance is linked in two meanly factors: the first is that the boys arrived in Paris for studding and they did not have a place for lodging; the second is that the teachers started to come to the boarding schools for teaching the classes. Furthermore, there was, in fact, the influence of the Counter-Reformation in the emergence of this educational profile. In this way, some school institutions gradually acquired the format of the French boarding school. In France, the school/boarding school model had a huge development, specifically between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The boarding school became an institution created in Germany, England and Portugal. In these schools, girls from 15 to 18 years old were admitted for being educated in the "recreative arts' with the purpose to become them attractive in the wedding hall" and the boys "prepared for bachelor degree" (Conceição, 2012).

This teaching model was, gradually, migrating for others countries until coming to Brazil in the half o 16<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in the colonial period, when the Jesuits founded the first schools or seminaries. In this context, it is possible to percept that the first schools or boarding schools were destined primarily to the male people.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Brazil, the female boarding school model for educational purposes was predominantly adopted by confessional or not, mainly due to the demand for education from the wealthy sections of the population. In these establishments there were three different classes of students: internal (boarders), semi-boarders (half boarders) and external. It was designated as a boarding student, that is, a boarding student, that one who lived on the school premises, receiving a bed, food and instruction. Half-boarded students received, in addition to instruction, one or two meals (half board),

according to the contract; and, finally, the external students, who only received instruction.

However, the confinement of female subjects in convents during the period of colonization marks the beginning of female education in boarding school, since “[...] convents were also used for the internment of girls or young women from rich families, where they learned the rudiments of reading and writing, music and domestic chores, but without the vows, mandatory only for those who would follow religious life” (Conceição, 2012, p. 46).

It is important to highlight that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, convents were also used to house girls or young women from wealthy families, where they could develop reading and writing skills, take music classes and do domestic chores. However, as well as happened in Portugal, in the provinces of Brazil, the collections, in addition to their duties of receiving girls for instruction, collected helpless widows, married women in conflict with their husbands, and also married women who could not count on the protection of their husbands (Almeida, 2003; Ferreira, 2006). Collections differed from convents in that they were institutions for female education.

The convents and gatherings, founded in Brazil for religious congregations were the first institutions used for used for female housing or imprisonment with the purpose of protecting, caring and instructing. The confinement of women in convents was motivated by the imposition of parents or husbands, by parents' zeal for the spiritual and educational formation of their daughters, or by the choice of many young women for religious life (Ferreira, 2006).

These boarding institutions destined exclusively for the women people emerged in Belém do Pará, in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, in its majority the boarding schools began their activities as a shelter for orphaned and disadvantaged girls in the capital, Belém or others cities from the state of Pará. Among then, the shelter, including indigenous people, who were welcomed in these spaces stands out. Among the boarding institutions for girls in Belém in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the following stand out: Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo, Asilo Santo Antônio, Ophelinato Paraense and Instituto Gentil Bittencourt.

It is interesting that these girls not only had shelter, food and clothing, but boarding schools also offered access to education, in an inclusive way, the teaching of

good morals and good manners, as well as domestic education throughout their stay in that enclosure.

The religious congregations had the concern in teaching moral principles related, mainly, to the Christianity's values to inmates, once this pedagogical nature was used as a strategy to distance sinful thoughts linked to romantic or sexual relationships.

Some time later, the institutions missed the feature of asylum or shelter and began to be characterized as boarding schools, normally under the direction of nuns from a specific congregation who received the mission of educating these female subjects. Based on this assumption, admission to school became more careful.

Among the various institutions of international interest in the context of the Amazon from Pará, the schools Nossa Senhora do Amparo and Santo Antônio deserve to be highlighted in this analysis, as a result of the autobiographical traces present in the novels *A Menina que Vem de Ataiara* (1997) and *Estradas do Tempo-foi* (1971), by Lindanor Celina, just like the collection of short stories *Zeus ou a menina e os óculos* (1988), by Maria Lúcia Medeiros

from previous elements, the Casa da Caridade (Charity house) was founded in 1789 by Archbishop Dom Caetano Brandão, in Belém, and inaugurated by Bishop Dom Manuel de Almeida Carvalho, and this institution initially began as a shelter for sheltering and educating girls indigenous people, due to Bishop Caetano Brandão's great concern for this abandoned population. After the government of the Province of Pará took over the administration of Casa da Caridade, around 1838, it was renamed Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo, expanding into the collection of orphan girls or daughters of very poor parents who were over 7 years old and children under 12 years old. In 1873, it was determined that girls could stay until they were 18 years old, as, after that age, the girl could no longer remain in the institution. The regulation also determined their departure through various means: marriage, service rental contract, delivery to parents and relatives, employment in public schools and adoption as "foster daughters".

The education developed in the training of underprivileged girls was primary education with reading, Portuguese grammar, sacred history, catechism and arithmetic. In domestic crafts classes, girls learned to sew, mark, embroider, make flowers, wash, iron and cook. All this preparation aimed to train girls to be dedicated wives and good mothers.



In the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo became to be administered by religious order Sant'Anna's daughter, with a boarding school with extremely strict rules. For this reason, disobedience to any of these rules occurred as a result of the application of severe punishments as a form of punishment for the indiscipline of any student who disrespected the regulations of the school institution. Therefore, "[...] the following penalties could be applied: reading aloud; isolation from socializing with colleagues; stand while others are sitting; deprivation of recess or duplication of work at the School" (França, M.; França, S., 2011, p. 180).

It is important to mention that in the half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the capital of Pará, the female education was limited to the marriage and domestic activities. In 1877, it was created in the institution the Escola Normal, that enable the girls for teaching. In reason of this formations, the students could stay in the institution until the 21 years old. It is known that the Colégio Nossa Sehora do Amparo, as an institution for sheltering underprivileged girls, aimed to care and teach them so that they would not fall into begging, stealing and abandonment.

Also, it is important to say that, exactly in 1897, the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo underwent changes, since the institution acquired the character of an institute, through a decree issued by governor Dr. Paes de Carvalho, who named the institute Gentil Bittencourt in honor of Dr. Gentil Augusto de Moraes Bittencourt.

In the same direction of the Colègio Nossa do Amparo, the Asilo de Santo Antono was founded in 1871 by the bishop Dom Antonio de Macedo Costa with the mainly objective of educate orphan and helpless girls in the city of Belém. With this attitude, the religious believed that they would help with the development of the Amazon, because rise:

[...] the intellectual and moral level of the Amazon's peoples is an economic question of the first order. What do I say, lords? Do we go to the highest sphere? It is a political question, a social question, a humanity question, a serious problem from the point of view of the civilization and the Christianity (Costa, 1883, p. 4).

The Bishop Dom Macedo Costa considered that, proposing this refuge to the poor girls, he would be automatically contributing to the European civilization model that disseminates a hegemonic discursive practice anchored in moral principles and Christian values.

In 1877, when the Irmãs Doroteia Congregation got the control of the Asilo, the nuns separated the orphans and poor girls from the others. With this division, it is possible to realize the social difference, including in the offer of the education, that is, the rich girls had the access of a refined education, learning French, piano and choir lessons, while the poor girls had only the teaching of domestic skills. Above all, the mission of the boarding school was educating the girls for, in the future, be respected for their religious formation too.

In this regard, the female confinement in the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo and in the Colégio Santo Antônio were linked in the discourse of civility in the midst of a hygienist policy in the context of the Amazon of Pará. Furthermore, Christian religious discursive formation was used to offer an oppressive, disciplinary and patriarchal education in the face of the female condition.

### 3 Between writers and protagonists: times as a girl, times at boarding school

It is possible to realize that the intersection between the facts and fictions in literary productions of realist and modernist authors. From this point of view, we observe that some authors talk about the everyday scenes or denunciate the social problems through literature. Between the authors literary narratives in the context of the literature of the Amazon of Pará, stand out: Eneida de Moraes, Lindanor Celina and Maria Lúcia Medeiros.

The Works of the authors mentioned show the protagonists who experience a traditional education in boarding schools as if they were a remembrance of the writers' childhood. Based on this premise, one can observe the presence of autobiographical marks in the prose that also denounce the reality of rigid and punitive educational practices in boarding schools.

As a pioneer of this investigation, “wings are opened” to Eneida de Villas Boas Costa de Moraes, simply Eneida, who was born on October 23, 1904 in the city of Belém and died on April 27, 1971 in Rio de Janeiro. She was a journalist, writer, activist and researcher. Among so many works, the following deserve to be highlighted: *Cão da madrugada* (1954), *Aruanda* (1957), *História do Carnaval carioca* (1958) and *Banho de cheiro* (1962).



During her adolescence, Eneida passed a time in the Colégio Interno Sino<sup>1</sup>, located in Rio de Janeiro. This experience deeply marked her career as a chronicle writer and journalist as she was able to develop her writing skills at boarding school. In this way, the moments she spent as a boarding student served as a basis and inspiration for the production of certain literary texts.

The Work *Aruanda*, for example, is composed by six narratives belonging to the chronicle genre that are: *Promessa em azul e branco*, *Tanta gente*, *Muitas árvores*, *Amiga, companheira*, *Seu Lima e Banho de cheiro*, the first one that was named stands out among these prose.

*Promessa em azul e branco*<sup>2</sup> tells the history of a girl that needed wear only White and blue clothes until her 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as a result of a promise made by her paternal grandmother to Nossa Senhora de Nazaré, when the child's father was ill. In this dilemma lived by the protagonist, an autobiographical path is observable, as in other chronicles written by Eneida.

It is important to mention that the character's life is portrayed, including, in the daily life of the boarding school, where the rigor of the rules established by the institution can be seen, as in the following fragment: “[...] when the boarding school and the mandatory uniform, grandma wanted to protest. And the promise? But there was not answer. No one would think of imposing conditions on a respectable school, with its own regulations” (Moraes, 1989, p. 35).

In the shelter institutions, the students received refined education, which aimed to prepare them to be educated and well-trained family mothers and/or domestic workers. Generally, they learned to wash, iron, cook and do housework. The subjects taught in this institution model were distributed across the following activities: Christian doctrine, reading, calligraphy, arithmetic, sacred history, Brazilian history, Portuguese grammar,

<sup>1</sup> Female school founded in 1888.

<sup>2</sup> The work was adapted for the cinema and had as the director Zienhe Castro. She was born in Belém and Works too as cultural producer to 21 years. She made researches about the life of Eneida de Moraes for producing the homonymous short movie known as *Promessa em azul e branco*. This new version shows the following synopsis: “Eneida is an 8 years old girl that need dress clothes only in the colors White and blue until her get the 15th anniversary due to a promise made by her grandmother. On the day that she dress red, her father is arrested by the military dictatorship and she grows up with the belief that it was her fault”. After its production the short movie was presented in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Mostra de Cinema Infantil de Florianópolis in 2013.

general notions of geography, drawing, needlework, embroidery, flowers, tapestry, in addition to piano and singing lessons (Marcílio, 1998).

Another writer from Pará who appropriated autobiographical discourse in the composition of her works was Lindanor Celina Coelho Casha. She was born on October 21, 1917 in the city of Castanhal, in Pará, but considered herself Bragantina, due to her experience with her family in the city of Bragança, in the same state.

Lindanor Celina was a civil servant, teacher and writer of chronicles for the journal *A Folha do Norte*, as well as author of literary works, such as, in this case, the novel trilogy *Menina que vem de Ataiara* (1963), *Estradas do tempo-foi* (1971) and *Eram seis assinalados* (1994)<sup>3</sup>.

In the trilogy, narratives that intertwine facts and fictions between author/protagonist are noticeable, since the biographical aspects of Lindanor Celina can be identified in such productions after an analytical reading. This autobiographical technique consequently earned her a series of literary criticisms, including from Antônio Candido<sup>4</sup>, when she debuted in Literature with the publication of the novel *Menina que vem de Ataiara*.

In *Menina que vem de Ataiara* and *Estradas do tempo-foi*, the story of the protagonist Irene is told, and in this study the educational training of this character at the Colégio Interno Santo Amaro, which, in reality, is the Colégio Santo Antônio, located in Belém. Based on this assumption, Irene's entire trajectory at the boarding school is observed from receiving the letter from the superior until the completion of her studies.

The first novel highlights Irene's childhood and education in other school institutions, such as: Externato Santo Afonso and Grupo Escolar Doutor Brandão. However, the desire expressed by Irene's father about his daughter entering boarding school is already notable, as the model of girls who studied at boarding school was considered a more suitable profile for society. In other words, she would learn to behave like a true lady in the social world, in addition to acquiring a domestic education that prepared her for marriage, to be a good mother and to take care of the home and family. Faced with her father's wishes, Irene showed a certain amount of suffering, due to the

<sup>3</sup> Beyond these productions, were published too: *Breve sempre* (1973), *Afonso contínuo, santo de altar* (1986), *Diário das ilhas* (1992), *Crônicas intemporais* (2003) and *Para além dos anjos: aquele moço de Caen* (2003), and the last two literary texts were published *post-mortem*.

<sup>4</sup> He was a Brazilian sociologist, literary critic and university professor (1918-2017).

fear of the nuns. Such fear represented a resistance to rigid methods. It was an education developed under the aegis of behavioral control, including corporal practices that punished the students.

The narrative ends with the receipt of the letter from the superior and the preparation of the girl's trousseau to enter boarding school, as in the excerpt: “Dona Adélia, don't you ever dare to call me faint again! Try to prepare this girl, she will embark next month” (Celina, 1997, p. 206).

In view of the various scenes that denounce daily life at the boarding school, what is most interesting is the nuns' differential treatment of the girls at the institution, since the social difference marked, in fact, the level of education that the rich and the poor had to have there. This can be seen explicitly in the following excerpt:

She arrived almost on the eve of the exam, with no time to gauge the level of the others. When the marks were read out, she was delighted when the principal announced the highest mark, hers! Surprise for the nun herself, then for the silly girl from the backlands, first place? You see what it's like to take things in your stride? You trusted too much, and then this girl from the countryside comes along and gives you your asses handed to you [...]. But look at the one in the thick gibbon, the one in the friar's burel skirt, eh? (Celina, 1971, p. 27).

Maria Lúcia Medeiros<sup>5</sup>, popularly known as the teacher Lucinha, was born on February 15, 1942, in Bragança, where she lived until she was 11. The family then moved to Belém. When Lucinha moved to the capital of Pará, between 1956 and 1957, she began studying at Colégio Gentil Bittencourt, formerly known as Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo. This school was exclusively for orphaned and destitute girls.

In the same vein as the previous writers, Maria Lúcia Medeiros followed this autobiographical path, but did not name the protagonists or the educational institutions in her literary productions. She also embarked on this reminiscence of her childhood in various literary texts in the short story gender.

Her main published works include: *Corpo inteiro* (1984), *Zeus ou a menina e os olhos* (1988), *Velas, por quem?* (1990), *Quarto de hora* (1994), *Horizonte silencioso* (2000), *Antologia de contos* (2002) and *Céu caótico* (2005). However, it is in the

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<sup>5</sup> Maria Lúcia Medeiros was a victim of an illness called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Due to this illness, the professor, researcher and writer died on September 8, 2005. It is also important to clarify that Professor Lucinha herself narrated her biography, as can be seen in a statement: “I was born in Bragança, a simple city inland, with a railway train and a river in front. I therefore had a very Brazilian childhood: backyard, cousins, fruit, uncles, church, Olympia cinema” (Medeiros, 2005, p. 61).

collection of short stories entitled *Zeus ou a menina e os óculos* (Zeus or the girl and the glasses) that 16 micronarratives are gathered, which make reference to childhood, mainly of girls, sewing, embroidery and piano lessons, memories of times gone by, books, reading and the female body in formation associated with feelings of fear.

The short stories in this collection are: "Corpo inteiro", "Macie", "Zeus ou a menina e os óculos", "Rounds", "Era uma vez", "Ter/Ser", "Nimbos", "Cirros, cúmulos e estratos", "Caminhos de São Tiago", "O olho viajante", "Espelho meu", "Ares, chuvas e trovoadas", "Se Caetano soubesse", "Janelas verdes", "Marcel" and "Um conto para um canto".

In particular, the short story "Caminhos de São Tiago" recounts memories of my childhood, in which boarding school is emphasized. Her daily life is marked by the lessons she learned in that school, the embroidery classes, the terrible fear of the nuns' harsh punishments and the unpleasant consultations with the doctor. Let's look at a passage from the micronarrative:

Ah, if it were only rainy December, the start of the vacations, and I was allowed to read everything, magazines, books, almanacs, go to the movies, play with my friend who was also back from boarding school... And to put on lipstick and high heels and look like a made woman, squeezing and puffing out her chest to look like Rita Hayworth [...] (Medeiros, 1988, p. 35).

Therefore, it is essential to emphasize that the writers recalled the times when they were girls, through the fictional world, even going back to the period of puberty, when they began their existential crises as a result of physical and psychological changes, which in fact contributed to the process of forming the female subject.

Then, these remembered episodes were linked to the education of girls during the 20th century, which was not just restricted to boarding school regulations at the time, but was closely related to the hegemonic discourse that sought to shape women so that they knew how to behave according to the rules imposed by society at the time.

#### 4 Female education and religious congregations

The historical context from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by *the Belle Époque* in Brazil, and this whole process in Brazilian

<sup>6</sup> Actress, dancer and American producer.

society even reached Belém do Pará. Consequently, the state of Pará needed to keep up with these moments of modernity. However, this was only possible due to the growth of the rubber economy in the Amazon region.

Faced with this modern moment, which also saw experiences of a hygienist policy, the religious founded shelters and/or asylums to house and educate destitute girls, including indigenous girls. Over time, these asylums were transformed into boarding schools, where nuns from different religious orders came to Belém to run the boarding schools and educate the boarders. Among the religious congregations that took over the administration of these boarding schools were the Irmãs Doroteia, the Filhas de Santana, the Irmãs Maria Auxiliadora and the Congregação Pia Nossa Senhora das Graças.

The Dorothea Sisters cultivated the Pious Work of the Saint Dorothy, which was to promote the Christian education of girls. Therefore, the boarding schools were supposed to prepare them for the domestic home. The Asilo de Santo Antônio, run by this congregation, was supposed to admit girls between the ages of 5 and 12, who had to be vaccinated and not suffer from chronic or contagious diseases (Bezerra Neto, 1994). With regard to education, the Irmãs Doroteia provided religious instruction, especially for poor girls, because they were exposed to the dangers of the world. In addition to teaching reading and writing, arithmetic and manual labor or household chores were also important for women's education. Bezerra Neto (1994) categorized the teaching done by the Irmãs Doroteia into religious, literary and artistic instruction. The Irmãs Doroteia provided a strict and controlling education at the Asilo de Santo Antônio. Repressions and punishments of the girls were recurrent in the daily life of the institution, as they ensured good order in the classes, as can be seen in the following excerpt: "The bell rang, end of recess, the queues passed. Small, medium-sized, larger, they looked with big eyes at the bunch of girls being punished, astonishment that grew without measure" (Celina, 1971, p. 64).

The Filhas de Santana ran three boarding schools for girls: Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo, Instituto Gentil Bittencourt and Ophelinato Paraense. The nuns were linked to the Catholic Church movement called Romanization<sup>7</sup>. In the context of

<sup>7</sup> Romanization was a movement of the Catholic Church whose power was centered in Rome. Furthermore, the Church, with this policy of Romanization, decided to carry out several actions with the aim of expanding and strengthening itself. This policy included the actions of religious congregations that followed the precepts of the Vatican. Due to this policy, many congregations were supported by the



Pará, they found great support from Bishop Macedo Costa, who received this religious order for the purpose of "[...] developing important administrative and educational work, at a time when education for women was still designed to make them loving mothers [...] and docile housewives" (Pimenta; França, 2023, p. 115).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was very fruitful with the arrival of religious orders in Brazil, especially those that pursued missionary work, such as the Filhas de Santana. They worked in the field of health, running hospitals, but undoubtedly the greatest legacy of the religious of this congregation is rooted in their administrative and educational work in the field of institutions that housed destitute girls (Miceli, 2009), so much so that an article in a widely circulated newspaper in Pará highlighted the recognition of the work done by the religious:

They have been in the state of Pará for more than twenty years, and we can say that it has been twenty years of unsurpassed dedication. [...] All those who need support find in these inimitable women charities, love, dedication, zeal for the good of body and soul (A Província do Pará, 21/01/1900, p. 2).

The education of girls in schools and/or boarding schools under the administration of religious congregations was linked to the principles and moral values of Catholicism, as well as anchored in the model of civility of the European world, since the dominant discourse at that time was masked by the idea of the development of the Amazon. In other words, the nuns came to the Amazonian context with the aim of disseminating hegemonic and ideological forms of discourse, based on a traditional paradigmatic axis of education that sought to shape the female profile. With this in mind, it is clear that "[...] everything that is ideological has a meaning: it represents and replaces something found outside of it, in other words, it is a sign" (Volóchinov, 2021, p. 91). This discursive formation can be seen explicitly in: "The letters recounted the tribulations I endured so well, because of the Christian education [I] received at the beloved school" (Celina, 1971, p. 40).

Because of this educational scenario, educating female subjects in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in boarding schools also meant turning girls into exemplary future wives and mothers according to social rules. For this reason, family members considered that the

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Holy See and began to develop missionary and philanthropic work in various parts of the world. (Miceli, 2009).



model girls who studied at boarding school had more opportunities in society, as well as being socially successful.

In boarding schools, social class differences were portrayed in the educational sphere, since wealthy girls had access to a more refined education, while poor girls were entitled to domestic education. This highlights the conflicts between social productive forces. Thus, "[...] the ruling class tends to attribute to the ideological sign an eternal and superior character to the class struggle, as well as erasing or concealing the clash of social evaluations within it, making it monophonic" (Volóchinov, 2021, p. 113). This is what the sisters, as much as they wanted to, could not avoid. When they themselves spoke to these girls, it was in a different way that even a blind man could see" (Celina, 1971, p. 49), because "[...] few of them were chosen, usually the richest ones, this was honestly recognized" (Celina, 1971, p. 108).

It's worth pointing out that the literary micronarratives of the chronicle or novel genre of the Para writers only briefly mention the spaces of the boarding school. However, it is in the novelistic works, especially *Estradas do tempo-foi*, that it is possible to witness in detail the educational experiences of girls linked to the routine of the boarding school at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the capital of Pará, as can be seen in this excerpt: "Routine. Bell, clapping, form, mass, class, recess, everything measured out. Time to sleep, time to eat, study, bathe, time to play" (Celina, 1971, p. 47).

With regard to social and symbolic spaces, this theoretical approach emphasizes the logic of classes, since in this conception struggles do not take place between classes, but in the space of differences. Because of this theoretical approach, school institutions contribute to the distribution of symbolic or cultural capital, bearing in mind that "[...] school is the school of the state, in which we transform young people into creatures of the state" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 92).

## 5 Final considerations

Creating boarding schools for women was an attempt to gain hegemony in the field of education in the Amazon, as it was not an idea of modern education, but of believing in the regeneration of society through intellectual, moral and religious education for women. Thus, the main interest was in the education of women, defended mainly by

the Romanizing priests, who implemented an education based on a religious and pedagogical project proposed by the Roman Catholic Church.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the boarding school model came under a lot of criticism, with the most serious problem pointed out by reforming intellectuals being the hygienic conditions of the boarding school buildings, especially the dormitories, which occupied a prominent place. With this in mind, the hygienist doctors, in their doctoral theses, warned of the insalubrity and lack of hygiene in the spaces of some boarding schools due to the proliferation of diseases, since the physical environment often did not follow what the hygiene manuals preached, as in the case of the Colégio Nossa Senhora do Amparo, which was denounced by José Verissimo, director of Public Instruction in Pará, who on a visit made serious complaints about the precarious conditions of the institution (Bezerra Neto, 1994). Despite criticism from the health authorities, the women's boarding school model was highlighted for its merit in instilling "social order" in women's education through disciplinary practice.

Regardless of the criticism of the women's boarding school system, it is important to note that the process of gentrification in Pará society, stimulated by the commercialization of rubber, in a way favored the education of women, according to their social position, because the aim was to train women to serve the local elites: the destitute for domestic services and the pensioners for marriage.

Faced with the need to create boarding schools for women, there was also the concern to cater for the population of orphans arising from the social problems brought about by the rubber economy and the modernization process in the city of Belém. In short, it was necessary to create a system of instruction for female training, since they were the key to the transformation of Brazilian society, above all to ensure civilization and progress in the region.

In this sense, it was possible to perceive the social and educational relevance that this model of boarding school provided for local society by sheltering, instructing and educating destitute and pensioner girls, based on the writers from Pará who portrayed the spaces of women's boarding schools in their works, given that this educational profile was a means of "civilizing" women to meet the demands of the local elites who tried at all costs to educate girls so that they could live in society, free from "ignorance", from "worldly vices".

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**Laura Maria Silva Araújo Alves**, Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Postgraduate Education Program

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2936-605X>

Psychologist. Full professor at the Institute of Educational Sciences at UFPA. Professor of the Postgraduate Education Program. Childhood History Researcher in the Amazon.

Authorship contribution: Writing of the text regarding theoretical, conceptual, methodological foundations, analysis of sources and textual organization.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6009592378453661>

E-mail: [laura\\_alves@uol.com.br](mailto:laura_alves@uol.com.br)

**Lília Batista da Conceição**, Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Postgraduate Education Program

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8590-2489>

Graduated in Literature from UFPA, master in Language and Knowledge in the Amazon, doctoral candidate in the Postgraduate Program in Education at UFPA.

Authorship contribution: Writing of the text regarding the theoretical foundation and review of the standard of the Portuguese language.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4987157402942143>

E-mail: [lilia\\_batista@hotmail.com](mailto:lilia_batista@hotmail.com)

**Responsible publisher:** Lia Machado Fiuza Fialho

**Ad hoc reviewers:** Vitor Sousa da Cunha Nery and Maria do Perpétuo Socorro Avelino

**Translator:** Antônio Darlan de Oliveira Holanda

### How to cite this article (ABNT):

ALVES, Laura Maria Silva Araújo; CONCEIÇÃO, Lília Batista da. Os internatos e a educação de mulheres nos romances de escritoras paraenses. *Educ. Form.*, Fortaleza, v. 8, e11579, 2023. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/redufor/article/view/e11579>



Received on August 3, 2023.

Accepted on November 17, 2023.

Published on December 7, 2023.

