

Reading and Writing in Secondary School: From Teaching Rhetorical-Poetic Precepts to Encouraging Originality and Creativity (1914-1969)

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Abstract:

In the teaching of writing in Portuguese Secondary school classes, there may have been, at first, practices that mobilized rhetorical-poetic knowledge mixed with the idea of originality, until approximately the first half of the 20th century. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, when the notion of originality was further developed, such practices began to value the individual creativity of the student in the elaboration of writing. The purpose of this article is to discuss how rhetorical-poetic precepts, as well as the concepts of originality and creativity are presented in guidelines for teaching writing in didactic texts published between 1914 and 1969. The analysis of the school anthology *Céu, terra e mar* (1914), by Alberto de Oliveira, of the teacher's manual *O idioma nacional na escola secundária* (1935), by Antenor Nascentes, of the school collection *Português através de textos* (1960-1969), by Magda Soares, and of the article "Importância da composição" (1951), published in *Revista de Educação*, which comprise our *corpus*, is based on the theoretical and methodological framework of the Cultural History of Reading. In textbooks edited between 1914 and 1935, rhetorical-poetic precepts are recommended, such as those of invention, disposition, and elocution, which comprise the three rhetorical operations for the composition of speeches, in addition to that of imitation, while originality in writing is also encouraged. In the 1960s, the encouragement of original writing then brings out the idea of writing as an individual creative activity in new textbooks and in teaching journal articles produced in the period.

Keywords:

Teaching writing; teaching reading; history of teaching Portuguese.

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INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric and poetics had a significant influence on the teaching of Portuguese in secondary schools during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. After having been first institutionalized as grammatical studies in Colégio Pedro II, in 1838, the school subject Portuguese later included in its program, from the 1850s on, the reading and recitation of texts, practices previously restricted to Rhetoric and Poetics subjects (RAZZINI, 2000, p. 42). Twenty years later, from 1870 on, the Portuguese syllabuses started to include writing exercises in their guidelines, which should be done after reading a classic text followed by an explanation by the teacher. The reading of a model literary text, as a preparation to the writing exercises, may have been prevalent in the teaching of writing up to the 1960s, as suggested by the indications of textbooks published at that time and Portuguese syllabuses in effect during the same period.

Despite the extinction of Rhetoric and Poetics from the secondary school curriculum, some precepts of these disciplines, such as invention, disposition, and elocution, which comprise the three rhetorical operations for the composition of speeches, as well as imitation, are mobilized in didactic texts published between 1914 and 1935, regarding the recommendations for the teaching of writing. When writing a text, students should put into practice these precepts after having observed their application in a previously read literary text, which served as an example to them. On the other hand, these same didactic texts also encourage originality in writing. This gradual encouragement of original writing then gives rise to the idea of writing as an individual creative activity in new textbooks produced after 1960 and in articles in teaching magazines. The purpose of this article is to discuss how rhetorical-poetic precepts are appropriated and merged with the concept of originality in the school anthology *Céu, terra e mar* (1914), by Alberto de Oliveira, and in the teacher's manual *O idioma nacional na escola secundária* (1935), by Antenor Nascentes; as well as the idea of writing as creativity motivated by reading is treated in the didactic collection for the gymnasium *Português através de textos* (1960-1969), by Magda Soares, and in the article "Importância da composição" (1951), published in *Revista de Educação*.

O idioma nacional na escola secundária, by Antenor Nascentes, was part of the Biblioteca de Educação da Companhia Melhoramentos de São Paulo, a project based on the conceptions of the so called New Scholl, directed by Lourenço Filho. With the intention of offering specialized knowledge to the Portuguese teacher - who, due to the inexistence of Faculties of Arts in the period, was self-taught in language and literature, often graduated in Law Schools -, the manual appeared in 1935, with explanations about contents and methods of teaching Portuguese for the first five grades of secondary school.

The didactic collection *Português através de textos*, by Magda Soares, was published between 1960 and 1969 by Editora Bernardo Álvares, of Belo Horizonte. The work, which had the innovative aspect of integrating textual study and grammatical study, was composed of four student's books, one for each grade

in high school, and a teacher's manual, which was conceived as an aid to the work of the Portuguese teacher.

The *Revista de Educação*, from which the article "Importância da composição" (1951) is excerpted, was a periodical published by the General Directorate of Public Instruction of São Paulo in conjunction with the Education Society (an association of primary teachers in the state), which later became the sole responsibility of the Secretary of Education of São Paulo. It had a long life cycle, lasting from 1927 to 1961, with some interruptions (cf. CATANI, 1996, p. 125). According to the *Catálogo da Imprensa Periódica Educacional Paulista* (1890-1996), organized by Catani and Sousa (1999, p. 84), the paper appeared under the name *Educação* in 1927, continued as *Escola Nova* between 1930 and 1931, returned to its original title between 1931 and 1932, and was published as *Revista de Educação* between 1933 and 1943, and from 1951 to 1961. Its periodicity is also variable, being monthly from 1927 to 1930, bimonthly from 1931 to 1932, quarterly from 1933 to 1934, semiannual from 1935 to 1937 and in 1945 and 1961, annual from 1938 to 1944, from 1946 to 1947 and in 1952, and quarterly from 1951 on.

The theoretical and methodological framework adopted for the analysis of the described corpus is formed by the Cultural History of Reading, in dialogue with works on the history of Portuguese language teaching at the Brazilian secondary school, as well as research on the history of education.

CLASSICAL RETHORIC AND POETICS IN BRAZILIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The introduction of classical rhetoric - as a scholastic interpretation of Greek and Latin rhetorical concepts and precepts - had occurred in Brazil during the 16th century. After being reactivated in the counter-reformist movement of the Catholic Church, occasioned by the Council of Trent, rhetoric was one of the main subjects of teaching provided by the Society of Jesus (HANSEN, 2011, p. 25-26). In the Jesuit colleges - which were established here in 1549 and functioned until 1760, when the Society was expelled by Marquis of Pombal - where the Brazilian colonial elite was educated in order to direct society, so as to consolidate the colonizing project of Portugal and strengthen the ties of the colony with the Metropolis, the course of Human Letters was taught (LEITE S. J., 1938, t. I, p. 71-72).

According to the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599, the Jesuits' pedagogical method, this course lasted an average of six or seven years and gradually encompassed five classes, which culminated in rhetoric: lower grammar, middle grammar, upper grammar, humanities and rhetoric (FRANCA S. J., 1952, p. 47-48; LEITE S. J., 1949, t. VII, p. 154). In Colonial Brazil, besides being institutionalized in the schools of the Society of Jesus, rhetoric was also present in the artistic practices of poets, orators, historians and authors of prose fiction. The rhetorical art practiced in teaching, oratory and writing corresponded to the custom of resorting to rules and precepts of the technique of speaking well (tékhne rethoriké), first described by Aristotle, and resumed in Roman treatises (ars bene dicendi), such as that of the anonymous author of *Ad Herennium*, the texts of Cicero, the *Poetic Art*, of Horace, and the *Institution oratoria*, of Quintilian, etc. (HANSEN, 2015, p. 119). According to Hansen (2015, p. 119), this custom (or consuetudo) regulated the particular ways in which colonial Brazilian authors memorized and imitated a cast of authors (elencha auctorum), which provided arguments and techniques for inventing, arranging, ornamenting, memorizing, and dramatizing speeches. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, rhetoric worked as the main model of representation, and continued to be transmitted in education, as it is possible to observe in the curriculum of Colégio Pedro II (HANSEN, 2011, p. 25-26).

Founded in 1837, and conceived as a standard establishment for Brazilian secondary education, the Pedro II College had implemented in 1839 the first chair of Rhetoric in Rio de Janeiro. From 1858 to 1882, as recorded in the syllabuses of this institution, Poetics was taught in high school, either as an autonomous discipline or associated with Rhetoric or with National Literature (SOUZA, 1999, p. 163-

181). The 1858 syllabus for the discipline named “Rhetoric and Poetics”, offered in the seventh year of high school, prescribed, for example, “composition exercises, both in prose and verse, critical analysis of the Portuguese classics; speeches, narrations, declamations, history of Portuguese and national literature” (SOUZA, 1999, p. 164).

The association between Rhetoric and Poetics, as Massaud Moisés (2004, p. 384) points out, had occurred for the first time in Brazil, in 1782, when the Viceroy D. Luís de Vasconcelos founded in Rio de Janeiro a school of Rhetoric and Poetics, putting side by side the two disciplines. In addition to this fact, the publication of important teaching manuals that lasted through the 19th century, such as, for example, the *Postilas de Retórica e Poética*, by Canon Fernandes Pinheiro, whose 3rd edition dates back to 1885, also attests to their union. Rhetoric and Poetics would go on together until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, when there was the inevitable separation and the gradual decline of classical rhetorical studies in Brazil. However, despite the extinction of these disciplines from the secondary school curriculum, precepts from classical rhetoric and poetics would continue to influence the teaching of writing until the first decades of the 20th century, as suggested by the suggestions in Portuguese textbooks published at the time, such as *Céu, terra e mar* (1914), by Alberto de Oliveira, an anthology intended for use in secondary school Portuguese classes, and *O idioma nacional na escola secundária* (1935), by Antenor Nascentes, a Portuguese textbook for secondary school teachers, as we discuss below.

THE LITERARY TEXT AS A MODEL: BETWEEN THE RULES OF CLASSICAL RHETORIC AND POETICS AND ORIGINALITY

In the preface to the anthology *Céu, terra e mar*, by Alberto de Oliveira, published in 1914, which organized the collected texts by themes - such as mornings, midday, afternoons, nights, stars, mountains, the sea, trees, flowers, rivers, forests, monsters, fires, storms, caves and abysses, life -, the author defends that the reading of “chosen pages” should serve to increase and perfect the acquisition of writing and style. According to Alberto de Oliveira, the division of the selected texts by subject was intended to “confront the compositions of each group and see how the theme is developed. In this confrontation, to be held during the explanation of the text read, the teacher would be responsible for pointing out “the beauty of ideas and elocution, the correctness of language and style, the propriety of epithets, images and metaphors, and the exact meaning of vocabulary that the disciple might not know. After that, according to the author, the student would be able to exercise himself in “compositions of his own writing on each of those subjects”, imitating the pages studied, “or taking them as a model, without plagiarism or servility”. For the corrections of the writing exam, however, Alberto de Oliveira told the teacher to observe the originality of the student’s work, which should be presented more in its expression or form than in the theme treated (OLIVEIRA, 1914, p. 7-8).

In the conception of writing expressed in the preface of the school anthology *Céu, terra e mar*, are merged, on one hand, the idea of imitation, whose foundation is in classical poetics, and on the other, the originality, which emerged in the eighteenth century with Romanticism: the literary text read and explained should be imitated, but in compositions of one’s own handiwork, without incurring in plagiarism.

Imitation, as a writing practice consisting of the slavish copying of the processes employed by the “classics,” that is, by ancient authors who presented in each genre, species or literary form, the creation considered most perfect or highest, is based on Horace, who, in ancient Rome, from glosses on Aristotle’s thought, delineated the concept *imitatio*, originally presented as *mimesis* by the Greek philosopher in his *Poetics* (MOISÉS, 2004, p. 292-294). The concept of imitation guided Western literary production until the end of the 18th century, when European Romantic thinkers defended the idea of

originality allied to the notion of “natural genius”, that is, the one who, by a prodigy or born gift, is able to produce unique and inimitable works of art in its genre. Under the concept of originality or natural genius, a libertarian notion of aesthetic creation was established, which promoted a break with the rules of imitatio of classical poetics (ABRAMS, 2010, p. 250-264).

During the validity of the imitatio, which occurred from antiquity until the eighteenth century, the Greco-Roman notion of authorship as auctoritas (authority) was in force. According to auctoritas, the auctor (author) was the craftsman who executed his art by means of a technique (ars) formed by precise rules of articulation and, thus, provided examples of a usage considered authorized and virtuous to be imitated (HANSEN, 1992, p. 18-29). With Romanticism, along with the idea of originality, a new notion of authorship is established, and the author starts to represent an expressive and creative individuality, so that, in his writing, it becomes unnecessary the recognition of a membership to a tradition of authorities that had preceded him, as previously prescribed by classical poetics (ABRAMS, 2010, p. 250-264).

Already in the early eighteenth century, approximately in 1720 in England, there is still the construction of authorship based on the author’s property rights over his work, which, consequently, is accompanied by the emergence of phenomena such as plagiarism and copyright. The argument used in this period for the treatment of literary work as intellectual property of a specific author was based, on one hand, on the consideration that literary art, as well as the mechanical arts, was the product of human work, and on the other hand, in the aesthetic category of originality, which attributed to the literary composition characteristics related to the uniqueness of its style, feeling and language (CHARTIER, 2012, p. 45-47).

Thus, in the recommendations on writing, presented in the school anthology *Céu, terra e mar*, by Alberto de Oliveira, we note a certain ambivalence in the appropriation made, at the same time, of two concepts that, by their nature, oppose each other: the imitation, arising from classical poetics, and originality, conceived in the context of Romanticism.

The ambivalence in the appropriation of two situations that would naturally tend to oppose each other, such as obedience to the rules of classical rhetoric and poetics and the use of originality, which, through the idea of natural genius, sought precisely the end of submission to the rules of artistic creation of classical poetics and rhetoric, can also be observed in the teacher’s manual *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, by Antenor Nascentes, published in 1935.

In its recommendations on writing, like *Céu, terra e mar*, by Alberto de Oliveira, *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, by Antenor Nascentes, begins by suggesting to the teacher that the teaching of writing should come after the teaching of reading. For the author, the reading class, which would consist first of reading the text aloud, and then explaining the meaning of the passage read, putting the inversions in direct order, replacing the words by synonyms, and sometimes converting verse into prose, had the great advantage of increasing the vocabulary, functioning as a “harvest of material to be used later for the expression of ideas. Antenor Nascentes links the quality of writing to the quantity of readings done, according to the premise that those who read a lot write well (NASCENTES, 1935, p. 73).

As for the practice of writing, itself, Antenor Nascentes suggests the use of three rhetorical operations for the composition of speeches, that is, invention, disposition and elocution. The origin of these three operations dates back to Greco-Roman antiquity, being first described in Aristotle’s *Arte Retórica*: “Three are the questions concerning discourse, which must be thoroughly versed: the first, from where the proofs will be taken [invention]; the second, the style to be employed [elocution]; the third, the manner of arranging the different parts of the discourse [disposition]” (ARISTOTELES, III, I, 1979, p. 211).

The first phase of speech making, as Heinrich Lausberg (2004, p. 91) points out in *Elements of literary rhetoric*, is invention, that is, “acts of finding thoughts suitable to the matter, according to interest [...]”. According to this author, interconnected to invention, there are also disposition and elocution:

disposition is constituted by “the favorable choice and ordering [...], which, in concrete discourse, are made of thoughts, linguistic formulations and artistic forms”; elocution “is the linguistic expression of the thoughts found by invention”, being subject to the rules of the *ars bene loquendi* (grammar) and *ars bene dicendi* (rhetorical art) (LAUSBERG, 2004, p. 94- 114).

For Antenor Nascentes, the most important of these three rhetorical operations is invention, and for this reason he advises the Portuguese teacher: “Let the student have some intelligence, some culture, study the subject, that the hand will obey the brain” (NASCENTES, 1935, p. 99-100). And, in order to corroborate his argument, Nascentes also resorts to a Latin maxim related to the rhetorical art, “*Rem tene, verba sequentur*”, and to Boileau, “*Ce que l’on conçoit bien s’énonce clairement / Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément*”. The reference to Boileau’s *Arte Poética* (1674), a work that reproduces the rules of classical poetics from Greco-Roman antiquity, and which had great prestige during classicism in France, in the 17th and 18th centuries, is used by Antenor Nascentes to refute the idea that the creation of thought is something spontaneous that occurs during writing. In this sense, Antenor Nascentes shows an adherence to the classical concept of invention, according to which the *inventio* should not be understood as a process of creation, but as a finding, through recollection, the thoughts suitable for discourse, pre-existent in the writer’s memory (LAUSBERG, 2004, p. 91).

Recognizing that classical rhetoric had already fallen into disuse by the time *O idioma nacional na escola secundária* (1935) was produced, Antenor Nascentes, in his recommendations for the teaching of writing, appropriated some rhetorical precepts that he thought were still applicable to his time, such as the three operations necessary for the elaboration of speeches (invention, disposition, and elocution), as we saw earlier, while rejecting other precepts, such as imitation, valuing originality instead.

In the suggestions for the fifth grade, presented in *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, the teacher is instructed to begin his work with literary studies. In the exercises of style analysis, done during the reading and explanation of the text, the teacher would observe the rhetorical figures that, according to Nascentes, although they were considered “old”, were still used today, and should therefore be cited from time to time by the educated man. These rhetorical figures, which served to ornament the discourse through the rules of elocution, would be collected from the reading of literary texts by renowned authors, both Brazilian and Portuguese. The written compositions, elaborated after the reading, could “deal with elevated subjects, abstract themes, updating of classical passages, transcription of verse into literary prose, literary translation of beautiful passages written in other languages” (NASCENTES, 1935, p. 68).

In favor of the notion of natural genius, that is, the one who possesses literary talent as a rare and spontaneous gift, Antenor Nascentes seeks to value writing stemming from the individual’s lived experience, at the same time he criticizes imitation which, for the author, is based only on memories of phrases read, of decorated metaphors, of commonplaces. As previously mentioned, the rules of classical poetics demanded that the writings of a given author recognized artistic creation processes affiliated to a tradition of authorities that had preceded him or her, through the use of memorized linguistic formulations of past auctors. Contrary to this rule of *imitatio*, the European Romantics of the late 18th century had positioned themselves by introducing the concept of originality.

In Antenor Nascentes’ didactic text, this notion of originality, which emerged with romanticism, is also associated with a certain pedagogization of the teaching of writing. Based on Afrânio Peixoto’s ideas, exposed in the book *Ensinar a ensinar*, Antenor Nascentes recommends to the Portuguese teacher the application of writing exercises on daily themes, through the composition of “letters, requests, small scenes or descriptions of very familiar objects”, that favor the sincere manifestation, on paper, of original ideas and own feelings, elements which, according to Peixoto quoted by Nascentes, would be capable of making the written work interesting.

This concern with a type of writing teaching that would elicit an original expression of thought based on elements from the student's daily life, present in these guidelines, also appears in the Portuguese program of 1931, issued in the scope of the Reforma Francisco Campos, which had come into effect shortly before the publication of *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, which occurred in 1935. Both the recommendations in *O idioma nacional na escola secundária* and the Portuguese program of 1931 seem to reflect some of the ideas about teaching methodologies that came from pedagogical reference sciences, such as educational psychology. According to Rosa Fátima Souza (2008, p. 155), internal changes in the subjects, such as those observed in the Portuguese discipline in this period, resulted from the incorporation of pedagogical models that first circulated in the normal schools and secondary schools, through the initiative of some teachers, and that became more systematic in the 1930s, in order to establish the preliminary and official bases of a secondary school pedagogy with the Reforma Francisco Campos, by the action of educators linked to the organs of education administration, the Institutes of Education, and the Faculties of Philosophy, Sciences, and Letters.

Only in the 4th grade will free writing begin, and from then on, until the end of the course, greater attention will be given to it. It is only in the 4th grade that free writing will begin, and from then on until the end of the course, greater attention will be given to it. About three quarters of the school time should be devoted to correspondence, descriptions and narrations, interspersed with exercises in style and literary analysis of texts (Programa de Português de 1931 apud BICUDO, 1942, p. 138).

In the 1931 Portuguese program, as in *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, reading assumes the important role of subsidizing writing. According to the official dispositions, the teacher should indicate “to the student, as much as possible, the readings that should be used in order to better execute [the written composition work]” (Programa de Português de 1931 apud BICUDO, 1942, p. 138). Antenor Nascentes agrees with this, when he states that “the best auxiliary that the teacher has at his disposal to teach composition is [...] reading” (NASCENTES, 1935, p. 106-107).

Revision, the final stage in the teaching of writing, is seen, both in the Portuguese syllabus and in Nascentes' textbook, as a necessary phase to finish the written text. According to the official document, when correcting written composition work, the teacher should “point out all the mistakes, classifying in a special list the most common ones (mistakes of spelling, punctuation, agreement, regency, improprieties, etc.). In *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, the recommendation for revision includes the suppression of superfluous words, sentence changes, rearrangement of ideas, tasks that Nascentes considers appropriate for “every careful writer.

To support the importance of revising the written text, Antenor Nascentes relies again on Boileau's *Arte Poética*, from which he extracts the following quotation: *Vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage / Polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez* [Twenty times submit your work to work / Polishing it without ceasing and polishing it once more]. Boileau's verses, in expressing the idea of a constant reworking of artistic work, in a ceaseless activity, in order to achieve perfection, reproduce in their own way, advice on artistic creation once expressed by Horace in his *Poetic Art*: “You, turn the Greek models with a nocturnal hand, turn them with a diurnal hand” (HORACIO, 1993, p. 33). In this way, besides appropriating the precepts of classical rhetoric/poetics related to the three operations necessary to the elaboration of speeches (invention, disposition, and elocution), as we saw earlier, Antenor Nascentes also presents a certain affiliation to classical rhetoric/poetics in what concerns the practice of revising the written composition (NASCENTES, 1935, p. 106-107).

Thus, during the first decades of the 20th century, in the guidelines for the teaching of writing in Portuguese classes in high school, we find some precepts of classical rhetoric and poetics mixed with the notion of originality. *Céu, terra e mar*, by Alberto de Oliveira, published in 1914, suggests the imitation of the authors gathered in the school anthology, which should be taken as a model, but in an original writing. In *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, by Antenor Nascentes, published in 1935, although the practice of imitation is abandoned, other rhetorical-poetic precepts are recommended, such as the three operations for the elaboration of speeches (invention, disposition, and elocution), at the same time that a type of composition teaching is advocated, one that arouses the original expression of the student's thought. From the 1930s on, as can be seen in the teacher's manual written by Antenor Nascentes and in the Portuguese syllabus issued in conjunction with the 1931 Reforma Francisco Campos, certain ideas from educational psychology were also associated with the notion of originality. This association will give rise to a new conception of writing, which seeks to value creativity, and that, in the following decades, will be the basis of guidelines on the teaching of writing, in Portuguese textbooks for high school and in articles in teaching magazines that deal with the subject.

THE COMPOSITION: CREATIVITY MOTIVATED BY READING

In the 1950s and 1960s, a new conception of writing, which can be defined as a creative manifestation of the imagination motivated by reading, was presented in Portuguese textbooks and in articles in teaching magazines. It is based on the idea of originality allied with certain notions of educational psychology, an association that had already been outlined earlier in Portuguese textbooks and in official teaching programs of the 1930s. This conception of writing will guide, for example, the guidelines for teaching writing in the article "Importância da composição" (Importance of composition), published in *Revista de Educação* in June 1951, and in Magda Soares' didactic collection *Português através de textos*, published in the 1960s.

When the brief article "Importance of composition", written by Aires da Mata Machado Filho, was published in June 1951 in the São Paulo educational periodical *Revista de Educação*, it had already been published in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* in the same month and year. In the text, Machado Filho, while reflecting on the teaching of writing, points out two especially relevant aspects: the observation that writing, as well as speaking and reading, is part of a communicative dynamic; and the confidence in the motivational role of reading and speaking for written composition. According to the author, in the "binomial of understanding and communication", speech, reading and writing are integrated, and the objective of language teaching should therefore be centered on these three activities.

The eagerness to understand is explained by the human need to communicate. Understanding in order to communicate is equivalent to writing [...] To understand, one must read. But really read, that is, choose. Whoever learns to speak as one should, never stop reading as one should: for one's own benefit and the pleasure of others. Mastery of language, which is speech, enables one to write. In the scope of the binomial understanding and communication there are activities that complement each other: speaking, reading and writing (MACHADO FILHO, 1951, p. 101).

Based on the ideas of the eminent linguist Serafim da Silva Neto about "acquired language" and "transmitted language", Machado Filho deals with a concept of communication, whose dynamics is based on two poles: on one side, there is the understanding, which includes reading, making up the acquired language; and on the other side, the communication, which includes speech and writing,

constituting the transmitted language. And it is in this dynamic that Aires da Mata Machado Filho locates the importance of composition exercise as a school task, since, being the written composition “part of the language subject to transmission”, it would be responsible for “integrating the individual in the social group to which he belongs, enabling him to the indispensable expressional exchanges”. Using such arguments, the writer then tries to convince the teacher of the need for the student to perform frequent writing exercises, which seems to resemble, in a way, a training: for the author, “one learns to write by writing”, and the lack of writing skills would be related to the lack or deficiency of writing exercises in the classroom. In the teaching of writing, the subsidiary activities would be “reading well done, which teaches comprehension”, and “oral composition, which enlivens written composition”. Success in writing would depend, however, on the motivation to do so:

In the dosage of exercises, there is either too much or too little. Among us, the first alternative is a theoretical possibility. In any case, the error of composition should always be prevented at all costs, without motivation. Evidently, it leads to nothing. What is common, however, is to register the second alternative - the deficiency. Also, if the teachers, without discontinuing, from primary to secondary school, in all grades, stop sending out written compositions, the students will not learn to write. Due to the lack of this exercise, many among us, when forced to write something by the necessities of life, leave the impression that they have never been to school (MACHADO FILHO, 1951, p. 102).

The relevance of the motivational aspect for writing, pointed out by Machado Filho, will be preponderant in recommendations for the teaching of writing presented in Portuguese textbooks published later, in the 1960s, such as the didactic collection *Português através de textos*, aimed at the gymnasium, by Magda Soares. For the author: “The text creates the affective climate necessary for creation, arouses interests, and the writing becomes an answer to an inner need to express oneself on a certain subject” (SOARES, 1969, p. 49).

In the teacher’s manual of this collection, the author explains to the reader, the Portuguese teacher, the importance of choosing the themes of the texts included in the textbooks for students of the first, second, third and fourth grades of junior high school, since they would work as a writing aid: the writing themes would be suggested by the text previously read, discussed and commented in class with the students. Thus, according to the author, her choice sought to avoid generic, abstract, vague themes, incapable of arousing the student’s interest or desire to write, such as “springtime, a rainy day, a walk in the countryside, charity, etc.”, whose advantage would only be to inhibit the possibility of creation, leading “to the common place, to conventionalism, to triviality”. On the contrary, the texts of the collection Portuguese through texts, by dealing with themes closer to the teenager’s daily life, had the potential to “awake” in the students “ideas, reminiscences, past experiences and, above all, the will to write” (SOARES, 1969, p. 49).

The didactic collection *Português através de textos*, in the books for first grade (1969, 10th edition), second grade (1967, 2nd edition), third grade (1969, 2nd edition), and fourth grade, within each grammatical subject to be developed in the classroom, presented a literary text for study. Among the authors of these selected texts, besides those already renowned by Brazilian literary history and criticism, such as Machado de Assis, José Lins do Rego, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Guimarães Rosa, whose excerpts were chosen for their themes close to the student’s daily life, there are also authors who dedicated themselves to writing literature for children and young people, such as Monteiro Lobato, Viriato Corrêa, Cecília Meireles and Clarice Lispector.

Poem appreciation”, in turn, receives special attention in this collection. In the second grade book, poems such as “Um passarinho”, by Vinícius de Moraes, “Lua cheia”, by Cassiano Ricardo, “Ou isto ou aquilo”, by Cecília Meireles, “As amazoninhas”, by Ribeiro Couto, intersperse the grammar and

text study sequences. In the third grade book, fourteen poems are gathered at the end of the textbook, constituting what the author called a “poetic anthology”. And in the fourth grade book, in the same way as in the third grade, the “poetic anthology” closes the didactic material. In the first two books mentioned, that is, those for the 2nd and 3rd grades, as the author herself explains in the teacher’s manual of the same collection, “the poems are accompanied by questions of appreciation, which seek to guide the student in the perception of the poetic message”, a procedure that was abandoned in the 4th grade book, as it was deemed unnecessary.

The inclusion of excerpts from children’s literature in the Portuguese Through Texts student’s books was a concern to offer a topic that would revolve around subjects related to the student’s daily life, such as childhood and youth, school, family, nature, games, etc., from which, in turn, the composition topics would be derived. Thus, when commenting on the writing topics proposed in the first and second grade books of her collection, the author states in the teacher’s manual:

As the texts were chosen according to the usual and frequent interests and motivations of pre-adolescents (11 to 13 years old), the composition topics, which are derived from them, also meet these interests and motivations (SOARES, 1969, p. 49).

The selection of literary excerpts whose theme dealt with the student’s daily life was already noticed in school books for the junior high school in the 1950’s. However, it is from the 1960’s on that we can see an inclusion of children’s literature in school books for this segment. However, it is from the 1960s on that we can see an inclusion of children’s literature, that is, literature written specifically for children and teenagers, in the textbooks for this educational segment, such as *Português através de textos*, by Magda Soares. According to Nelly Novaes Coelho (1991, p. 256-258), most of the writers that had started in this kind of literature during the 1950s entered in a “phase of essentially enriching production” in the 1960s. Still according to Coelho (1991, p. 256-258), this production can be explained, in part, by the growing demand for literary books (which will be accelerated in the 1970s), which, in turn, was prompted, on one hand, by the significant expansion of public education, and on the other hand, by the curricular guidelines for the teaching of reading, introduced by the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education (Law no. 4.024, of 12/20/1961), especially those related to elementary school, as presented, for instance, in the Primary School Program of the State of São Paulo (established on 05/31/1967 by a Work Group appointed by the Secretary of Education of São Paulo).

In the book for the first grade, as described by Magda Soares again in the teacher’s manual, themes related to dreams and fantasy, which were intended to develop the imagination, would guide the preparation, for example, of a description of a trip to an imaginary country, suggested by the reading of the text “A ideia do Visconde” (O Sítio do Pica-pau Amarelo, by Monteiro Lobato), or an anthropomorphized description of an animal, based on guiding sentences such as “what it would be like, if it were a dog”, or “what it would be like, if it were an ant”, constructed from the text “Sesta”, by Augusto Meyer. In this book, there are also themes related to the world of childhood that, according to the author, would lead the student to look at his own life and analyze his past experiences, such as, for example, “what idea did you have of the gym and your school before you started classes?”, taken from the text “Entrada para a escola”, of Viriato Corrêa. In the first book of the collection, there are also themes for descriptions of landscapes or people, which should be based on the observation of reality, in order to avoid empty repetition and of other people’s experiences or common places, such as, for example, “what I see from my window”, suggested by the text “Arte de ser feliz”, by Cecília Meireles, and “children who work”, suggested by the text “Meninos carvoeiros”, by Manuel Bandeira.

The writing topics proposed in the second grade book would follow basically the same principles of what was presented in the first grade book. The innovation, however, was in the third grade book, with the inclusion of topics for dissertation, which would appear more frequently in the fourth grade book, since, according to the author, “the students are now sufficiently mature for this kind of writing” (SOARES, 1969, p. 53).

Examples of dissertation topics in the book are: *The Amazon, Fire, friend and enemy of man, Popular beliefs*. The first appeals to the student’s geographic and economic knowledge; the second demands a reflection on the role of fire in human life; the third demands knowledge of aspects of Brazilian culture and asks for a reflection on the origin and nature of popular beliefs (SOARES, 1969, p. 54).

In the fourth grade book, the composition themes, always extracted from read texts, seem to take on an ethical dimension, which aimed to form the student morally, as justified by the author: “[...] in the fourth grade, themes that require dissertation appear frequently, and aim, above all, to lead the student to a process of valuation [...]” (SOARES, 1969, p. 55). This was the intention, for example, of the theme extracted from the text “Amor e outros males”, by Rubem Braga. Starting from a concept of love proposed in the text read (an uncomfortable feeling, worse than bursitis), the student should write a dissertation in which he formulates his own concept of love, which, according to Magda Soares, would lead him to clarify ideas and points of view of which he was probably not very aware.

As the texts gathered in the first, second, third and fourth grade student books of the collection *Português através de textos* are mostly short narratives, the terms “description” and “dissertation”, used by Magda Soares to define the texts to be written by the students, seem to refer to sequences or parts of the text that are more predominant in the structure of a narrative text, which can be, according to this idea, either more descriptive or more dissertative. The structure of a text, or its form of organization, would be learned by the student from a previously read text (with some help from the teacher), so that he/she would be able to reproduce it in his/her writing. As for the planning of the text, a preparatory task for writing, the teacher would help the class only in the first writing activities, in order to preserve the originality of each individual, avoiding the influence of ideas that were not their own:

In the first compositions, it is also convenient to previously discuss with students the plan for the development of ideas; showing how the texts studied always present a structure, in which the thought is organized logically, insisting on the need to plan the composition before starting to write. Sometimes the teacher can even construct the plan in class, with the collaboration of the students. However, he will do so only until some learn to construct a plan, because collective planning can destroy the originality and steal the individual character of the writing (SOARES, 1969, p. 58-59).

According to the guidelines about the writing exercises, to be done from the student books of the collection *Português através de textos*, the writing themes seem to work as a kind of motto extracted from a text previously read in class. These themes, in turn, being close to the student’s daily life, would work as the main engine for the original writing. Magda Soares’ conception of writing is that writing is a creative act, triggered by the students’ own interests, whose main objective would be to communicate the student’s inner world to the outside world around him. The student should write not to fulfill a routine activity or to satisfy a teacher’s demand, but to respond to an inner need, a personal interest (SOARES, 1969, p. 58).

The notion of writing as an expression of individual creativity maintains a close relationship with ideas of educational psychology based on experimental psychology, which, together with Durkheim's sociological theory and Dewey's pragmatism, grounded teaching methodologies propounded by the New School. Having circulated in Brazil from the 1920's on, the School-Novative ideology, which had as one of its premises that the student is the center of the learning process, later became part of the secondary school teacher's training curricula, also influencing the training of Magda Soares, who studied Neo-latin Letters between 1950 and 1953 at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, as the author herself describes in her intellectual autobiography (SOARES, 2001, p. 55-56). In this sense, the contact Magda Soares had with the ideas of the New School, during her undergraduate course, may have impacted the elaboration of *Português através de textos*, and, consequently, the conception of writing present in that collection.

Unlike what had been exposed by Aires da Mata Machado Filho, in his article "Importance of composition", published in *Revista de Educação* in June 1951, which took the written composition inserted in a communicative dynamic, linked to a wider context, in Portuguese through texts, the communicative sphere of the writing appears restricted to the classroom, which would constitute the listening audience of the author, to whom his text would be read out loud:

when receiving the compositions, [the teacher] will ask some students to read aloud the work, so that, as they write, they can feel that they are doing it for an audience - their peers - and feel the *functionality* of the work (SOARES, 1969, p. 58, author's emphasis added).

On the other hand, in the same way that in Machado Filho there is the idea that the development of writing occurs through constant training, that is, "one learns to write by writing", without the need to apply a systematic writing method, in Magda Soares there is the idea that only motivation, exercised by reading a text, is necessary for the student to develop writing in an original and individual way.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the teaching of writing in secondary school, during the first decades of the 20th century, we find in textbooks produced in the period some precepts of classical rhetoric and poetics mixed with the notion of originality. This is what occurs, for instance, in *Céu, terra e mar*, by Alberto de Oliveira, a school anthology intended for the secondary grades

published in 1914, and in *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, by Antenor Nascentes, a Portuguese teacher's manual, published in 1935. In Alberto de Oliveira's anthology, imitation of the authors of literature gathered therein is suggested, which should be taken as a model, but in a writing that was original. In Antenor Nascentes' manual, although the practice of imitation is rejected, other rhetorical-poetic precepts are recommended, such as the three operations for the elaboration of speeches (invention, disposition, and elocution), at the same time that a type of composition teaching is emphasized; one that encourages the original expression of the student's thought. In the suggestions for the teaching of writing presented in *Céu, terra e mar*, as well as in *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, one notices a certain ambivalence in the simultaneous appropriation of concepts that, by their nature, tend to oppose each other: on the one hand, the concepts of imitation, invention, disposition and elocution, derived from classical rhetoric and poetics, and on the other hand, the concept of originality, conceived in the context of Romanticism precisely in order to eliminate obedience to the compositional rules of the classical tradition and to value individual artistic creation.

Having lasted as a formal subject in the curriculum of Colégio Pedro II until the end of the 19th century, the precepts of Rhetoric may have been incorporated to the Portuguese discipline, as suggested by the analysis of the books by Alberto de Oliveira and Antenor Nascentes. This conservation of rhetorical-poetic precepts in didactic texts for the teaching of Portuguese, produced in the first decades of the 20th century, attests to the importance that the rhetorical art has assumed in Brazilian secondary school, since its implementation in the 16th century with the Jesuit education.

From the 1930s on, the notion of originality, which emerged with Romanticism, was also associated with a certain pedagogization of the teaching of writing, supported by educational psychology, the reference science of Pedagogy. The relationship between originality and educational psychology then became part of the recommendations of the Portuguese syllabus issued with the Reforma Francisco Campos of 1931, insofar as it recommended the application of writing exercises on themes related to the student's daily life, which was followed by textbooks such as *O idioma nacional na escola secundária*, by Antenor Nascentes.

In the following decades, this association gave rise to a new conception of writing that seeks to value creativity, which became part of the guidelines for teaching writing, in articles in teaching magazines, such as "Importância da composição", by Aires da Mata Machado Filho, published in *Revista de Educação* in June 1951, and in Portuguese textbooks for secondary school, such as the Portuguese through texts collection by Magda Soares, produced in the 1960s. The conception of writing, with which Machado Filho and Magda Soares deal with, likens writing to a creative act, triggered by the students' own interests, whose fundamental objective would be to communicate the student's inner world to the outside world around him. According to these two authors, the development of writing would consist in constant training, without the need for the application of a systematic teaching method, being necessary only the motivation, exerted by the previous reading of a text, so that the writing develops in an original and individual way by the student.

Thus, the analysis of the didactic works mentioned above suggests that, in the teaching of writing in Portuguese classes in secondary school, there may have been, at first, practices that mobilized rhetorical-poetic knowledge mixed with the idea of originality, until approximately the first half of the twentieth century; and that, later, deepening the notion of originality, they began to value individual creativity in the elaboration of writing, in the 1950s and 1960s.

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