

Article

JOÃO VICENTE MARTINS AND THE TEACHING OF READING AND WRITING TO CHILDREN IN BRAZIL IN THE XIX CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Based on an analysis of a school textbook produced by João Vicente Martins in 1854, this article aims to understand the history of schooling in Brazil in the second half of the nineteenth century, notably in the elements of teaching reading and writing to children. Martins launched himself into the publishing market with *Cartilha de Leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho*, in an attempt to bring together the ideals of two important forerunners of the debate about methods for teaching the mother tongue engaged with the universalization of elementary education: the Frenchman Joseph Jacotot and the Portuguese António Feliciano Castilho. Taking as a source, above all the periodical press and the productions of Castilho and Martins, the analysis carried out was organized around two main aspects: the biography of the latter author and the materiality of his textbook. It is concluded, that, although it announces the elaboration of a plagiarism of the Castilho method, the work undertaken by João Vicente Martins presented his ideals about the child schooling in the Brazilian context of clashes between techniques of teaching reading and writing in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: cartilha, teaching Reading and writing, Brazilian Empire.

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JOÃO VICENTE MARTINS E O ENSINO DA LEITURA E DA ESCRITA PARA CRIANÇAS NO BRASIL DO SÉCULO XIX

RESUMO

Este artigo visa a compreender a história da escolarização no Brasil, na segunda metade do século XIX, especificamente nos aspectos do ensino da leitura e da escrita para crianças, a partir da análise de um impresso escolar escrito por João Vicente Martins, em 1854. Na *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho*, Martins lançou-se no mercado editorial na tentativa de aproximar os ideários de dois precursores do debate acerca dos métodos para o ensino da língua materna: o francês Joseph Jacotot e o português António Feliciano Castilho. Tomando como fonte, sobretudo a imprensa periódica e as produções de Castilho e Martins, a análise empreendida se organizou a partir de dois principais aspectos: a biografia desse último autor e a materialidade de sua cartilha. Conclui-se que, embora anuncie a realização de um plágio do método Castilho, o trabalho empreendido por João Vicente Martins apresentou os seus ideários acerca da escolarização de crianças no contexto brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: cartilha, ensino de leitura e escrita, Império brasileiro.

JOÃO VICENTE MARTINS Y LA ENSEÑANZA DE LECTURA Y ESCRITURA PARA LOS NIÑOS EN BRASIL EN EL SIGLO XIX

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo comprender la historia de la escolarización en Brasil, en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, específicamente en los aspectos de la enseñanza de la lectura y de la escritura a los niños, a partir del análisis de un impreso escolar escrito por João Vicente Martins, en 1854. En *Cartilha de Leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho*, Martins se lanzó al mercado editorial en un intento de reunir las ideas de dos importantes precursores del debate sobre los métodos para la enseñanza de la lengua materna, comprometidos con la universalización de la educación primaria: el francés Joseph Jacotot y el portugués António Feliciano Castilho. Tomando como fuente, sobre todo la prensa periódica y las producciones de Castilho y Martins, el análisis realizado se organizó a partir de dos aspectos principales: la biografía de este último autor y la materialidad de su opúsculo. Se concluye que, aunque ha anunciado la realización de un plagio del método Castilho, el trabajo emprendido por João Vicente Martins presentó sus ideas acerca de la escolarización de los niños en el contexto brasileño de las disputas entre los métodos de enseñanza de la lectura y de la escritura en el siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: cartilla, enseñanza de lectura y escritura, Imperio brasileño.

JOÃO VICENTE MARTINS: L'ENSEIGNEMENT AU XIXE SIÈCLE DE LA LECTURE ET DE L'ÉCRITURE AUX ENFANTS DU BRÉSIL

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article vise à comprendre l'histoire de l'école au Brésil, dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, en particulier, les aspects de l'enseignement de la lecture et de l'écriture aux enfants, ceci à partir de l'analyse d'un imprimé scolaire écrit par João Vicente Martins, en 1854. Dans *Cartilha de Leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho*, Martins se lance sur le marché de l'édition pour tenter de rapprocher les idéologies de deux précurseurs importants du débat sur les méthodes d'enseignement de la langue maternelle, engagés avec l'universalisation de l'enseignement primaire : le français Joseph Jacotot et le portugais António Feliciano Castilho. Prenant comme source avant tout la presse périodique et les productions de Castilho et Martins, l'analyse réalisée s'est organisée autour de deux aspects principaux: la biographie de ce dernier auteur et la matérialité de son imprimé. On en conclut que bien qu'il annonce la réalisation d'un plagiat de la méthode Castilho, l'ouvrage entrepris par João Vicente Martins a présenté ses idéologies sur la scolarisation des enfants dans le contexte brésilien des querelles entre les méthodes d'enseignement de la lecture et de l'écriture au XIXe siècle.

Mots-clés: livret, enseignement de la lecture et de l'écriture, Empire brésilien.



INTRODUCTION

Regarding what is considered to be an archaeology of the school, Escolano Benito (2017) explains that the material, image, or text used in schools “can be considered as a semantic condenser or synthesizer and as a narrative or informative object, which tells things about the institution in which it was used” (ESCOLANO BENITO, 2017, p. 226). Furthermore, this materiality is a catalyst for the History of Education at a given time and place, encompassing more global aspects that are by no means confined to the walls of the school institution. Therefore, looking at a history of school material culture does not exclusively mean delving into a debate on the characteristics of an artifact. As Peres and Souza warn, “it is necessary to understand that the meanings are not only in the objects but in the behaviors, values, and senses that are assigned by the individuals who use them” (PERES; SOUZA, 2011, p. 55-56).

With this in mind, this work aims to investigate the history of schooling in Brazil, specifically the teaching of reading and writing to children in the second half of the 19th century, based on the analysis of printed material written by João Vicente Martins (1808-1854) in 1854. The book in question is *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho*, in which the author, understanding the disputes undertaken in the publishing field and also the problem of the methods to be adopted for teaching reading in Brazil, attempted to combine two proposals from foreign experts in pedagogy, engaged in the universalization of elementary education: Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840), French, and António Feliciano de Castilho (1800-1875), Portuguese.

We propose to understand, from this artifact, how the institutionalization of the teaching of reading in Brazil in the 1800s was thought out and projected by different intellectuals amid a circulation of ideas in a transnational context. After all, “the school book brought together and ordered school culture, reconciling knowledge, action, and values. The school edition reflects the great scientific, pedagogical, and curricular cycles” (MAGALHÃES, 2022, p. 11).

From a historical perspective, the research took as its documentary sources the 19th-century periodical press, the school printed materials, together with the scientific production on the history of literacy, and the school book in Brazil and Portugal. The analysis procedures were organized around two main thematic categories: the biography of João Vicente Martins and the materiality of his alphabet book.

Thus, we initially highlighted the production context of the book written by Martins, especially the history of the schooling of reading, in connection with the school manual publishing market, which led to the ordering of a “school liturgy” (BOTO, 2014). In this section, we also look at some aspects of Martins’ life and work. Next, we present an analysis of *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método Castilho* (MARTINS 1854a), demonstrating the attempts at appeasement that João Vicente Martins undertook in organizing a method that was capable of linking the ideas of Castilho and Jacotot in the context of a country in which disputes were growing over the methods for teaching reading and writing in the 19th century.

JOÃO VICENTE MARTINS AND THE SCHOOLING OF READING

When addressing the organization of Brazilian public education from the second half of the 19th century, Boto (2014) explains that the alphabet books and reading books were important artifacts that helped in the organization of a “school liturgy”. Among the school’s own “knowledge and possessions”, the author points out that school textbooks guided class rituals and instructed teachers. Maciel, Goulart and Rocha (2020) support this perspective, demonstrating that these books, in the absence of teacher training courses, became formative elements, being appropriated by teachers as the main guides to their practices for teaching reading and writing. Other authors also support the thesis that books occupy a prominent place in the constitution of the modern school in Portuguese-Brazilian contexts (MORTATTI, 2000; BOTO, 2012).

Thus, based on historical studies of literacy, we know that the first books circulating in Brazilian schools were mainly written by Portuguese writers. From 1850 onwards, there was a movement to nationalize the school publishing market and open printing presses throughout Brazil, causing an intense production of books aimed at children, something that, as Lajolo and Zilberman (1996) explain, gained strength at the end of the 19th century.

In a country made up mostly of people who could not read and write, in addition to a public education system that was beginning to take shape, the debate around which method to use for organizing the school and teaching reading and writing was on the agenda, sparking controversy and editorial disputes, which were therefore essentially political. Mortatti’s research (2000, p. 24) on the history of literacy methods in São Paulo asserts that from the “point of view of the long historical duration”, there was a dispute over the “meanings of literacy”, founding, for the author, a tradition around tensions and ruptures between “modern” and “traditional” methods and, at times, between both and those called “more modern”.

In this scenario, many writers in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century emerged with their productions and gained national prominence as a result of the licenses they received from the government, as well as the commercial strategies they used to promote their works in Brazilian schools. In this regard, we would like to point out the case of authors who wrote printed materials for children’s literacy and who advertised them in various ways, with the intention that the methods and materials they had created would be adopted.

An exemplary case is that of Abilio Cesar Borges, the Baron of Macahubas, whose work was extensively analyzed by Valdez (2006), who demonstrated the reach of this author in disseminating his books throughout Brazil, as he sent copies to different places, which led to the purchase of large print runs by provincial governments to be distributed in schools. Borges can be considered one of the first Brazilian authors who, in the 19th century, had his work endorsed by various educational bodies and one of the pioneers in the production of serial reading books in Brazil (VALDEZ, 2006), directing aspects of educational legislation itself, as well as influencing the creation of rituals for the schooling of reading and writing.



Borges' commercial strategy expanded with the opening of schools he managed, his involvement in Brazilian politics, and his "network of sociability"¹ with intellectuals and educational agents. An analysis of his works shows that the ideas contained therein were in defense of a school and a method that opposed the boring practices of spelling methods, centered on alphabet books and syllabaries, which were circulating at the time. His argument focused on building a reading teaching methodology capable of meeting the challenges of teaching children to read quickly and enjoyably. This argument is very characteristic of Portuguese school printed materials, for example in the works of João de Deus and António Feliciano de Castilho, contemporaries of those of Macahubas.

As we have seen, Abilio Cesar Borges' actions focused on two interesting particularities that helped him publicize his works and his proposal for teaching reading and writing. The first was to send the books to various locations, and the second was to open Schools to circulate and display the results obtained using his method. In this sense, other writers in the same period also used these alternatives, some with less prominence, such as Antonio Pinheiro de Aguiar, author of the book *Bacadafá ou methodo de leitura abreviada*.

Pinheiro de Aguiar was responsible for creating a reading plan based on 20 lessons, which were made up of the names of four people from a family of indigenous Brazilians and stories. His proposal was created at the end of the 1850s and circulated more widely from the 1860s onwards. Maciel and Rocha's research (2023) shows that, initially, Pinheiro de Aguiar published the lessons of the method separately, and that they were later compiled into a single printed material. Rocha (2019) points out that the author opened schools in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, as a space to advertise the method and also to hold public exhibitions to disclose it. The press also reported that Pinheiro de Aguiar had printed copies of his book to send to the provinces. Some research confirms that the Bacadafá method was present in various locations at the end of the Empire, but there is a lack of documentary sources as to whether and how it was used in schools (ARAÚJO E SILVA; 1975; TRINDADE, 2001; AMÂNCIO; CARDOSO, 2006, FRANKLIN, 2017).

The two authors mentioned above, with their respective works and commercial strategies for their dissemination, demonstrate relevant aspects for understanding a facet of the history of schooling in Brazil that cannot be summarized as the events of classroom practices, the doing that involves educational agents and students in the school environment. Even though we are aware that schooling also means institutionalizing the educational act by creating protocols for organizing human interactions, we must not forget that schooling involves approaches that are external to the school environment and indirectly influence pedagogical practice. In the specific case of this article, we have chosen to focus on the issue of schooling in the light of school printed materials aimed at teaching reading and writing. After all, "textbooks indicate the ritual of schooling" (BOTO, 2019, p. 9). Supporting other studies in Brazilian educational history, we emphasize that, from the second half of the 19th century onwards,

¹ Expression used with reference to Sirinelli (2003).

school practices with reading and writing became increasingly regulated and ritualized, and, undoubtedly, alphabet books and reading books were a major contribution to this.

From this perspective and with strategies similar to those used by Borges and Pinheiro de Aguiar to spread their proposals and books, the Portuguese João Vicente Martins, a naturalized Brazilian, entered the scene with his work published under the instigating title *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método de Castilho* (MARTINS, 1854a).

Based on a text written by Martins in 1846 for the *Jornal do Commercio* in Rio de Janeiro, Santos (2018a) analyzed elements of the author's life. He points out that he was born in 1808 in Lisbon, where he trained as a surgeon at the Lisbon School of Surgery. He came to Brazil in 1837, working as an “allopath in the specialty of ‘eye diseases’” (SANTOS, 2018a, p. 271). He dedicated himself to eye surgery and was in provinces such as Minas and Bahia promoting some of his techniques. In Rio de Janeiro, in 1843, he met Benoît-Jules Mure (1809-1858), a French homeopath, who came to Brazil between 1840 and 1848 and influenced Martins towards the specialty of homeopathy, a subject we will focus on in the next section.

With his dedication to the field of homeopathy, Santos (2018a) points out that Martins was the target of criticism and accusations, especially from doctors linked to allopathic science and nationalist groups, who opposed him, which led him to propagate his ideas in the Rio de Janeiro periodical press, being responsible for a series of articles in the *Correio Mercantil* newspaper, entitled “Espontaneidades” (Spontaneities), starting in April 1849. The texts not only dealt with homeopathy but were, above all, related to the “blood ties that united Portuguese and Brazilians for three hundred years” (SANTOS, 2018a, p. 274). Martins' articles highlighted his excessive patriotism towards Portugal and tried to reconcile this ideology with Brazil's history. This aspect, in the context of a former colony, coupled with the attempt to propagate a science, homeopathy, which was also introduced in Brazil by a foreigner, caused him to suffer harsh accusations in local newspapers (SANTOS, 2018a, 2018b).

In *Correio Mercantil*, between 1853 and 1854, Martins promoted widely the Portuguese writer António Feliciano de Castilho, describing his trip to Portugal and his experience with the method of sudden reading. These texts are signed by Martins either with his full name or with his initials (J. V. M. or J. V. Martins). These are not very long articles, but they promote Castilho's work and demonstrate the author's interest in spreading it throughout Brazilian schools. In this sense, the first text located by Rocha (2019), signed by Martins in the *Correio Mercantil*, in the edition of September 3, 1853, in the section “Publicações a pedido”, advertises the second edition of the work *Método Castilho para o ensino rápido e aprasível do ler impresso, manuscrito, e numeração e do escrever*. In this text, he justifies that he would not apply Castilho's method because he was studying homeopathy; he also “offers those qualified to teach by this method a salary or bonus, a house, books, and materials to open a sudden reading school” (ROCHA, 2019, p. 195).

On September 8, 1853, in the same newspaper, Martins announced that he would print Castilho's book and distribute it free of charge to the Brazilian Empire Municipal Councils, which did not happen, as he decided, based on a “private correspondence” he had with Castilho's

brother, José Feliciano de Castilho Barreto e Noronha, to publish an alphabet book with the “plagiarized method” (MARTINS, 1854a, p. V). The extensive research into Martins’ life and work undertaken by Santos (2018b) adds that “he intended to reach the poor population and that is why he set up a free school in his own home, to teach twenty-five poor children, on November 3, 1853” (SANTOS, 2018b, p. 83). Prior to his action, Martins (1854a) explained that Augusto Emilio Zaluar had already opened a school using the Castilho method. “Colégio Zaluar adopted this Castilho Method of sudden reading as of October 1, 1853, for twelve students, free of charge” (SANTOS, 2018b, p. 83).

In 1854, Martins released his *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método de Castilho*, to vulgarize Castilho’s method, admitting himself as his plagiarist. Maciel and Rocha (2022) note that Martins had previously published a work by Castilho in Brazil, the alphabet book *Eco da Voz Portuguesa por Terras de Santa Cruz* (1847). All this supports our claim that João Vicente Martins was one of Castilho’s promoters in Brazil, even before he came to Brazil in 1855.

The general organization of this alphabet book can be understood in four main parts, starting from its pagination. Before the texts, on the back of the endpaper, there is an image of João Vicente Martins, something characteristic of the printed materials of that time, which featured the portrait of their authors. The pages are then numbered in Roman numerals (p. V to XI) with two items: the first is entitled “To the reader”, constituting a kind of preface to the work (p. V and VI); and the second, “Padre Nosso ou Novo Methodo para ensinar a ler e escrever sem mestre nem explicações” (Our Father or New Method for Teaching Reading and Writing without Teachers or Explanations) (p. VII to XI). The next fourteen pages are unnumbered and are scores from “Cantos religiosos para uso das casas de educação compostos por Raphael Coelho Machado, Rio de Janeiro” (Religious songs for use in education houses composed by Raphael Coelho Machado, Rio de Janeiro). The Castilho method is then presented in 159 pages with cardinal numbering. The last 70 pages, also unnumbered, are prints of the letters of the alphabet and the numbers from 0 to 9. This graphic arrangement of page numbers dates back to Castilho’s (1853) print, in which everything preceding the method itself is paginated in Roman numerals, and later, when the method’s lessons are presented, in cardinal numbers.

With the *Cartilha de leitura repentina, ou plágio do Método de Castilho*, during a scenario of disputes between reading teaching methods, João Vicente Martins promoted himself as an intellectual in the field of public instruction for children in 19th century Brazil, with a possible conciliatory proposal between two experts in pedagogy with opposing ideas, António Feliciano de Castilho himself, who gives the title to the work, and the Frenchman Joseph Jacotot.

THE MARTINS ALPHABET BOOK AND ITS ATTEMPT TO APPEASE THE DISPUTES OVER METHODS OF TEACHING READING AND WRITING IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Albuquerque (2019) recorded the disputes in the Brazilian Empire involving Antônio Feliciano de Castilho in an attempt to propagate his method for teaching reading and writing and the defenders of Joseph Jacotot's Universal Education. While Castilho was attached to the sonority of words in a synthetic march, Jacotot started from the principle of the totality of a text at the beginning of the literacy process, towards the matrix of a global method. According to Aguayo (1959, p. 182), Jacotot was the creator of the analytical method for teaching reading through his Universal Education presented in the work *Mother tongue*, published in 1822.

Faced with the disputes involving these synthetic and analytical matrices of teaching reading, João Vicente Martins presented the path of conciliation in the preface to his alphabet book, proposing that “Castilho begins to teach us something perfectly; e.g.: reading and writing, which the rest Jacotot has already taught us how we should learn it without a master nor explanations” (MARTINS, 1854a, p. XI).

As we mentioned earlier, Martins made a trip to Portugal, where he learned about Castilho's ideas. As for his approach to Jacotot's principles, we believe it was due to his experience with homeopathic medicine. In his professional career, we know that he taught at the Homeopathy School² and wrote some articles for the journal *A Sciencia* (1847-1848)³, which aimed to defend the entry of homeopathy into the Brazilian Empire. In this journal, there is an admirable and respectable reference to the professor's work.

One of the most important sources to draw on is the history of homeopathy in Brazil. This controversy, without example, which for the last five years has disturbed the entire press, which has invaded newspapers of all formats, and which has so often stifled the resounding clamor of politics, deserved to be concentrated in a more lasting work than the pages in which it is disseminated. This inexhaustible brilliance, this exuberance of life and strength, this boldness of thought and expression, which give Mr. João Vicente Martins' writing an inimitable type, should be revived to serve as a model throughout the world for those who dedicate themselves to the propagation of homeopathy (A SCIENCIA, 1847, vol. 1, p. 2).

Homeopathy was introduced in Brazil when Dr. Mure, who, based on Joseph Jacotot's precept of *panecastiqué*, “everything is in everything”, opened the Homeopathic Institute of Brazil, together with João Vicente Martins.

² “At the Institute's annual meeting in July 1844, João Vicente Martins, one of its members, presented the plan for an Academy of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery. Once its statutes were written and approved on January 12, 1845, it was then installed under the name of Escola Homeopática do Brasil, at Rua São José, Rio de Janeiro, n^o 59, under the management of Benoit Jules Mure” (VELLOSO, online, n.d.).

³ This journal has been digitized and is available on Hemeroteca Digital website of the National Library.

Just as he had done in Europe and Africa, Mure spread homeopathy in Brazil through teaching, publications, experiments, and the preparation of homeopathic medications. Soon the Institute began to open offices throughout the Court and in the countryside of the provinces of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Mure and João Vicente Martins, who was his important right-hand man while in Brazil, were in charge of the propagation. Later, the Homeopathic Society of Bahia (1847) and the Homeopathic Society of Maranhão (1849) were created as branches of the Institute (CRUZ, 2018, p. 51).

After João Vicente Martins' records in the journal *A Sciencia*, in which he presented Jacotot's Panecastic Philosophy in great detail, leading to the defense of homeopathy and the opening of the Homeopathic School in Brazil, he set out to write a reading and writing method for children, praising what he had learned about this philosophy and his experience in the field of education, based on principles such as listening, closer attention to the student's interests and their participation in their learning activities, moving away from the classical structure of a master explainer and holder of all knowledge and answers.

One of Hahnemann's glories is that he was the first to understand that the physician should only listen to and not guide the patient: in a different way from Jacotot, he understood that the master must listen to the disciple and check his work instead of giving him explanations (MARTINS, 1865, p. 36).

Following in the footsteps of Joseph Jacotot, who broke with the reading teaching methods of his time, bringing a creative power on the part of the subject to the process, Martins (1854a) focused his alphabet book on the controversies surrounding the teaching of reading and writing in Brazil. Right at the start of his work, he mentions Jacotot's influence on his ideas:

Honor and praise to Jacotot, who until his death insisted on the good purpose of convincing the poor that in his hand was, if in his will was, all that is necessary for them to achieve that their children know everything that they must know, and whatever else they want (MARTINS, 1854a, p. V).

In the same way that he had honored Jacotot, Martins presented "honor and praise" to Castilho, "who not only wrote, but also with perseverance and his example, made him adopt his ingenious Method of reading and writing", and, therefore, in his preface, he already thanked "the old blind man for the light and life that he distributes to the poor ignorant children, to those who are most loved by God and most worthy of being so" (MARTINS, 1854a, p. V).

After writing a preface, praising Jacotot and Castilho, Martins presented a topic entitled "Padre nosso ou novo methodo para ensinar a ler e escrever sem mestre nem explicações" (Our Father or new method for teaching reading and writing without masters or explanations), presenting Jacotot's principles based on autonomy, the absence of tutors and the Panecastic precept that "everything is in everything".

Nor will we be in blatant contradiction, because Jacotot says *tout est dans tout*. – All science is about knowing something perfectly and comparing with it everything that was ignored and that you intend to know as perfectly as what you already knew (MARTINS, 1854a, p. XI).

Starting with the need to relate the multiple factors involved in the act of reading, Universal Education had as its basic premise “to learn something and relate everything else to it, according to the principle that all men have equal intelligence” (RANCIÈRE, 2015, p. 30), because there is always something that can serve as a term of comparison, to which it is possible to relate something new to be known. Martins appropriates this idea in his printed material when he mentions that:

All human knowledge is the result of comparing one thing, which is perfectly known, with all the other things that are not known. An ignorant and poor father or mother who cannot read and cannot afford to send their child to school, if they want to, can teach the child to read and write by making him/her learn a prayer perfectly by heart, for example: Sunday Prayer, or Our Father, as it is commonly called; and when the child not only knows it perfectly by heart, but also understands it in its proper sense as a prayer addressed to God, in supplication, adoration, and promise, giving him/her the prayer in printed form, and telling him/her that the first word he/she knows by heart must be the first one written on the paper, which says – Our – [...] and so on, without ever giving any explanations, without even needing to immediately name the letters, but just asking and representing [...] (MARTINS, 1854a, p. VII – VIII).

For Martins (1854a, p. XI), in Jacotot “everything seems paradoxical”, a definition currently used by Raisky (2012), who defines him as a paradoxical pedagogue for envisioning a defense of the individual intellectual emancipation and, at the same time, aiming to “prepare them to play a social role, to occupy a place in the world, in the economic and political order, because this will be the condition of their existence” (RAISKY, 2012, p. 117). However, despite understanding this philosophy and propagating Jacotot’s principles, Martins states at the beginning of his alphabet book that “the Castilho Method for teaching reading and writing is preferable because it is essentially practical, easy and fun” (MARTINS, 1854a, p. XI). Although he announces that he is close to Jacotot’s principles, he is also inspired by the methodical school of António Feliciano Castilho.

I was already working on developing a method for learning to read and write, and everything else, without a teacher or explanations, just through the effort of one’s own will. I recognized that this method, (which is Jacotot’s), is less practical for children because it is supposed to be able to give them an education, which is slower, but more solid, developing them *motu proprio*, all their faculties, not allowing them to borrow ideas from others, making them men who owe everything to themselves, reaching the *desideratum* of intellectual emancipation (MARTINS, 1854a, p. VI).

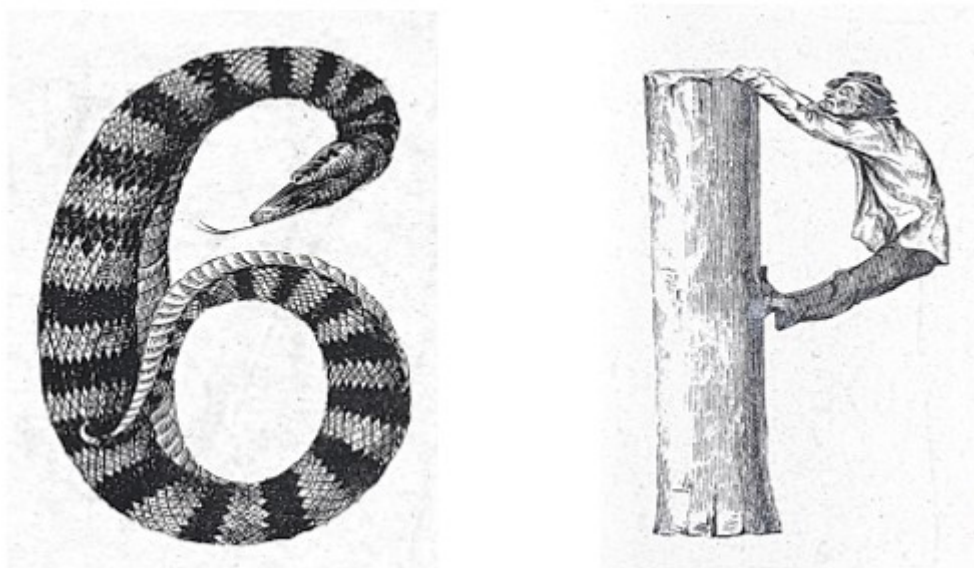
Vojniak (2014) showed Martins’ preference for the Castilho method at the end of his life, because “after a stay in Europe, between late 1851 and early 1853, he began to devote himself to the graphic arts, and the alphabet book he prepared for his first applications of

the zincography technique in Brazil” (VOJNIAK, 2014, p. 24-2). 247-248). On this issue, the author also explained:

And it was precisely an alphabet book for teaching reading that the Lisbon physician João Vicente Martins (1810-1854), who settled in Brazil in 1837, chose for his first experiments in applying the Gillot process in Brazil. This is the engraving technique created in France in 1851 by Firmin Gillot, “the first to achieve real success in a series of engravings on zinc, i.e. “zinc is engraved in etching” so that in a short time the terms “gillography”, “paniconography” or “gillotage” were replaced by the designations: “zincography” (VOJNIAK, 2014, p. 169).

The gillotage technique⁴ was introduced in Brazil by João Vicente Martins, who, according to his report in the journal *Ilustração Brasileira*, bought Gillot’s process in France to apply it in Brazil, serving, as he claims, to “favor the instruction of the less privileged class” and “to make it easier for the poor classes to read the Castilho Method, of which I have composed, and for a long time in the press, an alphabet book, or plagiarism” (MARTINS, 1854b, p. 64). The final pages of the alphabet book contain images of the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters of the alphabet, which followed the gillotage technique.

Figure 1 – Details of the gillotage in João Vicente Martins’ alphabet book (number 6 and letter P)



Source: MARTINS, 1854a.

It should be made clear that the prints of letters and numbers presented follow Castilho’s (1853) proposal, which associated their formats with some image referring to a story, the basis of his presentation to the students. There is a whole liturgy proposed for presenting the

⁴ “Gillography, or paniconography, as Gillot calls it, is the art of transforming into metallic type (or embossed like wood type) any transport of an engraving, print or drawing, or any drawing already made expressly to be transformed into type, like those of the ordinary press” (MARTINS, 1854b, p. 65).

letters to the children; and Martins (1854a, p. 12) recovers it, transcribing the steps explained in the Castilho method, including the position of the teacher and the students, the gestures of each one, the rhythm and the order in which the letters should be taught.

When we look specifically at the part of the alphabet book in which Martins (1854a) explained Castilho's method, we notice that he initially presented the item "Mobília e alfaia necessárias para uma aula de leitura repentina" (Furniture and implements necessary for a sudden reading class), unlike Castilho (1853), who began his work with a prologue with answers to the three questions, "What is the history of the method?" "What is this method?" "And whose method is this?", followed by explanations of aspects such as sudden reading and other concepts that governed his methodological proposal.

In this first chapter, which preceded the alphabet book lessons, Martins (1854a) began by demonstrating the fifteen objects to be used in a sudden reading lesson, based on Castilho (1853). In addition to these, the author added five more meticulously described materials that would make up the school environment for applying the method, including, in this description, elements of color and lighting to draw the children's attention. With this, Martins reiterates Castilho's thought that "spaces, furniture, printed materials, and other objects must be present" for the schooling of knowledge (CASTRO; BOTO; MAGALHÃES, 2022, p. 15).

Next, when describing the disposition of the students in a sudden reading class, João Vicente Martins copies in full the topics presented in Castilho's method (1853), inserting additions referring to his positions, which are graphically marked throughout the book, either in footnotes or within brackets. The announced plagiarism does not prevent his perspectives on the subject from being recorded, as the author himself mentions.

I made a lot of changes, but whenever possible I noted them, recommending the reading of the method in the part that I changed or providing the reasons why I made those changes, or otherwise decorating my plagiarism so that it did not look as ugly as the plagiarisms that take their title from the originals seem to be (MARTINS, 1854a, p. 11).

An example of these insertions was his denial of Castilho's announcement that, if there were disciples of both sexes in the same class, it would be necessary to completely separate boys and girls.

There is no such a need, as one might think at first glance, to be so strict in complying with this precept; rather, it seems to me that this precept tends more to arouse bad thoughts than to prevent them. The strict separation in which we, Portuguese and Brazilians, usually keep boys and girls, brings with it the great evil of arousing the curiosity that they naturally have to know the reason why we so carefully separate them (MARTINS, 1854a, p. 6).

At this point, we believe that Martins (1854a), by making it more flexible the fact that classes could be formed with "boys and girls", highlighted the principles of mixed-sex education, something that at that time in Brazil was not yet legislated, nor was there a consensus among intellectuals and politicians. From this perspective, the author demonstrated his ideals about the process of schooling Brazilian children, focusing much more on intellectual and moral

formation than on the homogenizing nature of a school organization centered on gender parameters.

The opening of mixed classes in Brazil will be better outlined by the novelty undertaken by the Leôncio de Carvalho Reform in 1879 when the prerogative for girls and boys to attend classes together was opened (BRASIL, 1879). Gondra and Schueler (2008, p. 204) remind us that during the Brazilian Empire, “manuals of civility and books on moral education and behavior for girls” were published and disseminated, whose main purpose was to produce an “ideal model of a woman, predisposed to manage the family life and the primary role of mother and child educator”. Therefore, although Martins (1854a) proclaims his ideals for mixed classes, he specifies that there are more feminine practices, for example, in the other comment he made in the item about the “Disposição do pessoal de uma aula de leitura repentina” (Disposition of the students for a sudden reading class). There, the author believes that girls will always be given the authority to occupy the position of “disciple-watcher” – that student who, sitting in the middle of the bench, would “watch over her neighbors on the right and left” (MARTINS, 1854a, p. 7).

Another aspect in which Martins (1854a) departs from Castilho (1853) is his explanation of the time and manner of lessons, in which he recorded his preference for three-hour lessons, as opposed to Castilho, who envisioned two-hour lessons. Regarding the order in which the letters of the alphabet were taught, Martins (1854a) proposed a new order, using it to present the lessons in his alphabet book. Unlike Castilho (1853), he starts with the vowels A, I, U, O, E, Y, and then the consonants P, B, M, F, V, S, Z, X, J, G, Q, K, C, Ç, H (PH, CH, NH, LH), L, N, D, T, R. Finally, in several places in the alphabet book where he departs from the original proposal of the Castilho method, he notes the freedom granted to teachers to choose and put into practice the methodologies studied.

It is up to the teacher to choose and practice all the means he can think of to more easily achieve the only goal we have set ourselves, which is to make the children learn to read and write as quickly and as pleasantly as possible, to read and write letters and numbers as well as possible (MARTINS, 1854a, p. 10). 10) [...] and the study can start in the order in which they are in the Sunday prayer, as well as with Castilho’s alphabet or this alphabet book (MARTINS, 1854a, p. 14).

All this suggests that the plagiarism undertaken by Martins (1854a) constituted a perspective of appropriation and reinvention of Castilho’s (1853) methodological proposal, also demonstrating his ideals for the teaching of reading and writing in Brazil in the 19th century. Not only did he transcribe the alphabet book, but he also deleted parts, gave his opinion, and proposed new applications, always offering the master possibilities for use.

Martins’ alphabet book proposes a reconciliation between two antagonistic perspectives, Castilho’s and Jacotot’s, especially in the relationship between the master of first letters and the disciple, which is in stark opposition to the methodical school architecturally conceived by Castilho. This Castilho’s school, as we know, had a teacher with a hermetically designed profile, indicating activities, explaining the school material, times, and spaces, with a whole

ritual of the practices, to fulfill “the task of leadership, to which he would inevitably be bound, in the firm direction of that collective and disciplined body constituted by his class-group” (BOTO, 2012, p. 4).

At this point, the freedom presented by Martins, which is very much impregnated with the Jacotist conception, contrasts with Castilho’s valorization of authority in dealing with teachers, which suggests inspection by inspectors and constant police surveillance in everyday school life.

Castilho criticized Jacotot’s Universal Education, which, for him, was full of aphorisms and lacked specific explanations that involved everyday school life and the materialization of the proposed method (ALBUQUERQUE, 2019). On this issue,

If Castilho envisioned a serial, rhythmic school, with simultaneous education, architecturally designed and governed by a teacher, for Jacotot, the destruction of all this structure and the presence of an ignorant but emancipated teacher with the ability to emancipate his student would save the educational process from all the brutalizing methods developed in his historical time (BOTO; ALBUQUERQUE, 2018, p. 18).

Regarding the schooling of children, Martins (1854a) reiterated the role that a method played in teaching reading and writing, but he also argued that religious precepts should be part of the daily routine of a class, which was organized lesson by lesson, with the mention of prayers, biblical passages, religious and moralizing stories, etc. At this point, the author explained a class routine that, unlike the Castilho method, mentioned religious songs and Sunday prayers at the beginning and end of each lesson. Castilho (1853) goes so far as to recommend songs and invocations to God and work in his method, but Martins (1854a, p. V) specified that he designed his alphabet book to “learn to read by playing, praising God”.

According to Ferreira (1977), Martins died in the same year as the alphabet book was released, in 1854, “probably hit by the terrible cholera epidemic that decimated the city, as soon as his alphabet book arrived in Rio” (FERREIRA, 1977, p. 116). His death was a year before Castilho came to Brazil, so the two educators never met in Brazil.

CONCLUSION

A story like this has the merit, firstly, of recovering aspects of the pedagogical debate, from a historical perspective, on the teaching of reading and writing in Brazil. This is the first fundamental dimension. The discovery of the controversies and projects created for this first schooling of the people is essential to understanding how the disputes over the seminal issue of literacy took place in our country.

In addition, the story of this alphabet book revisits the very concept of plagiarism, since the author has no qualms about presenting his teaching proposal as plagiarism. In turn, as we have seen, it was a very specific re-reading of Castilho’s proposal, and there was a whole movement of appropriation and reinvention of what was supposed to be plagiarized.

Finally, a story like this transports us to contemporary reality and makes us wonder where the concerns about the most recommended procedures for teaching Brazilian children to read and write ended up. It is worth asking whether the abandonment of the discussion on literacy methods was a mistake in our current educational debate. Would not it be time to resume the discussion about how we teach or propose to teach children to read and write? As Monteiro Lobato would say, “this is another story for another time”.

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