

Death in students' everyday lives in 1930's Brazil

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Abstract: This article analyses the representations of death in different articles published in *Vida Escolar* («School Life») – a pedagogical journal produced by a student body of the city of Campo Grande, Mato Grosso state, central Western Brazil. Published by the Visconde de Taunay School, *Vida Escolar* circulated in the 1930s (between 1934 and 1936), and we analysed nineteen of the 22 published issues – archived at the Regional Documentation Center of the Federal University of Grande Dourados – for this article. This research helps to fill the gaps in knowledge surrounding the themes of death and childhood in the history of education in Brazil, especially in the central Western region. It reveals that the representations of death presented by and for children are closely related to civism, religiosity and medical science. Indeed, analysis of the journal *Vida Escolar* shows that death, as an interdiction, is related to the advancement of medicine; at the beginning of the 20th century, with the development of medical science, death came to be seen as synonymous with failure, as an absence of «scientificity». As emphasized in *Vida Escolar*, it is the job of medicine to prevent death – this was the message given to the students, future doctors.

Keywords: death; representation; child; pedagogical press; history of education.

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1. Introduction

The path of death must lead us deeper into life, as the way of life must take us deeper into death (Morin, 1988, p. 11).

The human species is the only species for which death is present during life, the only one that accompanies the death of funeral rites, the only one who believes in

the survival or rebirth of the dead» and historically, the problem of living with death will go deeper and deeper into our lives, as noted by Morin (1988, p. 13).

The word «death» reminds us of feelings that intersperse the pain of the longing for the absence of those who no longer live among us, the fear of suffering and the uncertainty of what is to come. Because it is inevitable, «death», as poet Mario Quintana said, «should be like this: A sky that gradually grows dark, and we didn't even know this was the end»¹. «Death» has always been and will be present in our lives. Veiled or exposed, it is an unavoidable fact, therefore everyone, regardless of age, experiences death situations in his environment, which leads us to think about the representations of death in the school environment and if the school, which prepares the child for life, also discusses this topic.

In his book *Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Philippe Ariés indicates that the meaning and the way man relates to death have suffered changing attitudes and «variations of consciousness of one's self and the other, the sense of the individual allocation or the great collective destiny» (Ariés, 2012, p. 23). Representations about «death» are influenced by cultural and religious backgrounds and time. It is a fighting field, as Roger Chartier argues and, therefore, «focuses attention on the symbolic strategies that determine positions and relationships and build, for each class, group or means, a being noticed as constitutive of their identity» (Chartier, 1991, p. 183).

José Luiz Souza de Maranhão analyzes that, in a society focused on productivity and progress, one talks and thinks about death as little as possible and «the new customs require death to be the missing object of polite conversation» (Maranhão, 2017, p. 15), perhaps because reflecting on the finitude of life discourages (personal and financial) investments to a future that one wants to be distant.

As this is an uncommon theme in studies, mainly in the History of Education, we challenge ourselves to reflect on the matter when coming across the recurrence of articles on death in the student journal *School Life*, directed by students of Campo Grande and produced by the School Visconde de Taunay, having circulated between 1934 and 1936. Out of the 22 published issues, we privileged the 19 deposited at the Regional Documentation Center of the Federal University of Grande Dourados (CDR-UFGD), Mato Grosso do Sul.

Among the issues available, we found 14 reports concerning death, and eight of them were produced by children from 2nd to 5th grades. They are: *A Morte* («The Death») (year I, 05-20-1934, no. 1, p. 3); *Fora de si* («Out of one's mind») (year I, 05-20-1934, no. 1, p. 4); «To live is to fight» (*Viver é lutar*) (year I, 06-03-1934, no. 2, p. 4); *Sociedade Moderna* («Modern Society») (year I, 09-01-1934, no. 8, p. 1); *Ao João Gomes Júnior* («To João Gomes Junior») (year I, 09-01-1934, no. 8, p. 2); *Assombroso, não?* («Scary, isn't it?»). (year I, 09-16-1934, 1934, no. 9, p. 1); *Viver na morte* («Living in death») (year II, 05-15-1935, no. 13, p. 3); *Uma nova guerra* («A New War») (year II, 05-31-1935, number 14, p. 1); *Fantasma Noturno* («Night Ghost») (year II, 05-31-1935, no.14, p. 4); *A Tuberculose* («Tuberculosis») (year II, 07-31-1935, no. 17, p. 2); *A morte* («death») (year II, 07-31-1935, no. 17, p. 3); *Saudosa mãe* («Longing mother») (year II, 10-01-1935, number 20, p. 1); *A Disciplina*

¹ From the book *Apontamentos de história sobrenatural* (IEL/ Globo, 1976).

(«Discipline») (year II, 10-01-1935, number 20, p. 5); and, *Visita ao cemitério* («A visit to the cemetery») (year III, 06-13-1936, number 22, p. 3). Besides the articles mentioned, what called our attention was the existence of a section called «School Calendar» in the first year of the journal, which lists and celebrates the anniversaries of death of historical figures (Moreira, Sá, 2016).

In this sense, this article analyzes the *different representations* of death through publications in the printed journal *School Life*, inquiring about the intention of the school institution in dealing with the matter. To this end, it is important to clarify the social context in which the school community and the journal were inserted, that is, to unveil the daily life in the city of Campo Grande, to later analyze the representations of death materialized in the pages of that school journal.

2. Campo Grande and the *land disease*: the daily relationship with death

[...] '*dead from land disease, caliber 44.*' Signed: J. Willard Morris

That was the autopsy report written for the corpse of a Paraguayan man, who was murdered in Campo Grande in the early 20th century. The revolver bullet was considered by Barros (1999, p. 18) as a «tenacious disease, endemic, reaper of lives» in a city where, during that period, because of its isolation and rural characteristics, «one would kill with the certainty of impunity».

Barros (1999) also reports that on August 26, 1899, the date when Campo Grande was elevated to the category of town, instead of celebrating the achievement people were longing for, there was a commonplace case:

At dawn, in front of a cabaret, there was a man lying on his stomach among bloodstains on sandy soil.

Children on their way to school walked away, avoiding the dead. [...]

A herd of donkeys, guided by the leading jennet's bell and by two cattle cowboys, went by pacing fast. Dust covered the view of all, but the animals strayed away from the dead. The cattle cowboys glimpsed at him fast, to see if they could recognize anyone. [...]

Past noon, the dead was still in the sun, ignored and alone. An unowned dead man. It was a corpse by himself. Fearing the impending bad smell, the cabaret's owner ordered his employee to use the horse to take the dead man away. He tied a loop on both of his feet and, using a rope, went down the street pulling that one upsetting unowned corpse. (Barros, 1999, p. 14-16).

As they constantly lived with death, the construction of cemeteries became a concern in community life. Barros (1999, p. 18) also reports that a migrant named Naim Dibo, one of the richest men in Campo Grande, worked as a teamster when he first came to town in the 1930s, earning «good money from the City Hall daily, transporting corpses left at Rua 7 de Setembro».

With the opening of the railroad Brazil Northwest in 1914, Campo Grande began receiving many migrants and immigrants who came to populate it. It also transformed the village in the center of all transactions in the region, according to Weingärtner (1995, p. 3):

The movement at the railway station, mainly caused by the export of cattle, timber and other products, and the import of manufactured goods is intense, contributing for tax revenues of Campo Grande being at 28% in relation to the state of Mato Grosso.

The village of Campo Grande, according to Costa (1999, p. 75), was elevated to city status in 1918, when it welcomed barracks, which caused the «arrival of the Army troops, which, besides the role they play of safety and civility, were fully integrated into the life of the city». It was the military who were responsible for urban planning, led by its engineers, also taking on the construction of the Military Hospital, alongside the railway.

At that time, teacher Maria Constança de Barros Machado (cited in Rosa, 1990, p. 63), decided to «try her luck in Campo Grande». She was soon persuaded by her friends and relatives, who claimed: «In Campo Grande, people are killed in the streets in broad daylight every day». She herself witnessed:

It is true that afterwards I learned of many deaths, murders by family issues, political issues. In the 1920s, I lived closed at home, afraid to go out in the streets and be hit by a bullet coming from any shooting from a fight. At the beginning of the century, violence at Rua 7 was terrible: every morning there was someone killed there (Machado cited in Rosa, 1990, p. 63-64).

Gradually, the city now had major administrative bodies, local trade had more than 200 shops, three bank branches, a post office, electric lighting, piped water supply, telephones and recreational clubs, as stated by Weingärtner (1995), however, it did not lose its rural character. Nun Angela Vitale reports that:

Campo Grande, at that time, was a hamlet, Rua 14 de julho was surrounded by barbed wire on both sides. I remember there were wooden houses scattered, here and there, because farmers were not concerned to have beautiful residences in the city. The best buildings were the City Hall, with one floor only, the Headquarters, in front of which there was the School Group Joaquim Murtinho (Vitale cited in Rosa, 1990, p. 126).

In 1932, the population of Campo Grande joined the state of São Paulo in the Constitutionalist Revolution. According to Costa (1999), it declared itself «an independent state, whose capital was Campo Grande. The renowned doctor Eurico Vespasiano Martins was chosen governor, moving to the government palace in the Freemasonry building». The same author goes on, presenting the difficult and uncertain outlook:

The city was on the warpath and Rua 14 stirred more than ever. We lost the revolution, our leaders took refuge in farms and many fled to Paraguay. The city was at the mercy of the winners, starting a phase of revanchism and persecutions, only controlled by the interference of the military and traditional citizens like Antonio Luiz Pereira, the founder's son, who was greatly respected even by opponents (Costa, 1999, p. 77).

Schools participated indirectly in this movement. The Normal School building was used to store weapons, for its director, Múcio Teixeira (1990), was the chief commander of the revolutionary forces in Campo Grande. He reported himself:

I was never afraid to die. During the Revolution, I hid in other people's homes, slept in the rain, jumped walls, always with a rifle in hand, I even had to take refuge for 40 days at the Portuguese Consulate to avoid being killed. I am sure that to exist is an adventure, in which it takes courage to survive through difficulties (Costa, 1999, p. 48).

Inarguably, as one can see, in the early 20th century Campo Grande's population in central-western Brazil, including students, lived among violence and death. However, violence was not the only reason for the high mortality rate, as many deaths resulted from wars and conflicts, considering this was a border region with Paraguay and Bolivia. Plus, the issue of banditry resulting from troops organized by the «colonels» of Mato Grosso, and hunger and epidemics (Dourado, 2010).

3. School Life – body of Campo Grande students

In 1933, Campo Grande had 2,580 students enrolled, with approximately 83% in primary education; 10% in junior high; 4% in normal school; and 3% in vocational school, as stated by Rocha (2010). Among the educational institutions, we can highlight School Visconde de Taunay, created in 1932².

Though the northern region was where the state capital Cuiabá was, the southern municipalities had «less dispersed population centers, and greater communication facilities among themselves» (Mato Grosso, Rule..., 1942, p. 3). In Campo Grande, among the factors that aided communication, booming communication media like journals and the radio station expansion stand out, which explains the existence of the student newspaper *School Life*.

Conceived and managed by School Visconde de Taunay, whose owner and principal was professor Enzo Ciantelli, the newspaper *School Life*, a student body of Campo Grande, had its first issue on May 20, 1934 and last issue on June 13, 1936, summing up 22 issues, during its three years of circulation³.

² The School Visconde de Taunay in the city of Campo Grande – Mato Grosso (currently, state of Mato Grosso do Sul), was located on 13 de Maio street, downtown, offering options of boarding school and day school for both sexes, with primary, admission exam and secondary levels. For more information about this institution, see Silva and Moreira (2016).

³ The documents have some stained, mutilated or illegible pages. However, it was generally well-maintained, providing full reading of almost the entire journal.

The pedagogical print in question announced, in its first publication, it aimed to contribute to the intellectual development of the youth, and invited teachers and students of all schools of «this cultured and progressive city» to contribute to the journal maintenance, sending content (*School Life*, 1934, no. 1, p. 1). In the very first edition, it presented six advantages for the existence and permanence of the journal: «1st – the school newspaper helps approaching ideals among students; 2nd – it stimulates and brings progress, 3rd – it gives rise to spirituality of cooperation; 4th – it arouses interest in writing and reading; 5th – it is the transmitter of ideas; and the 6th and last, it is a means of culture and education» The journal aimed to «fully meet the above points, thus seeking to contribute mightily in shaping the character of children, young people and of readers» (*School Life*, 1934, no. 1, p. 3).

Although it is defined as a «student body of Campo Grande», not all content linked to it was written by students. It was a journal created for students, but not entirely made by them, as the journal invited teachers and students of all schools to give their contribution. According to Silva (2015), out of the 230 articles published in 19 localized issues, 104 (45%) were produced by children and young people from different levels and educational institutions from Campo Grande city.

The second largest recurrence, with 55 (24%) articles, was signed, but without the collaborator's link identification with any institution. And thirdly, 31 articles (14%) were published without indication of authorship. Teachers collaborated with 26 (11%) of the articles produced by two professors from School Visconde de Taunay: Enzo Ciantelli, director of the School Visconde de Taunay and teacher at Junior High, Vocational School and Admissions Exam, teaching the disciplines of Accounting and Calligraphy, and Severino de Queiroz, who taught Portuguese in the Junior High and Vocational School courses.

In general, each issue has around four pages, with subject contents of Portuguese Language, History of Brazil, Geography, Moral and Civic Education, Physical Education, opinion of the student body and faculty on current issues at the time, declarations of love, poems, birth dates, short stories and advertising announcements. The initial frequency was biweekly, then monthly and at the end, with no set intervals, probably for financial troubles to go on with the editorial production and printing of the journal.

Regarding the graphic and spatial composition of the journal, *School Life* varied between four and six pages per issue. The six pages one included only duplicate issues. The journal size ranged from 15 x 20.5 cm in the first year to 16.5 x 21 cm in the second and third years of circulation. The format of the journal name characters also undergone significant change over time (Silva, 2015).

On illustration matters, the only issue with an image is from August 1935, issues 18-19, stamping a photograph in black and white, «view of a corner of our beautiful botanical garden». This number was issued to celebrate the anniversary of the city of Campo Grande.

Ads referred to trade in general (ice cream shops, hotels, dry and wet storage, etc.) and the School Visconde de Taunay itself, mentioning statistical data, extracurricular activities, enrollment logs, faculty log, etc. In addition to articles and ads, *School Life* journal's composition also included an exhibition of calendars with celebrating dates and anniversaries, in a column (without a corresponding author

indication). Sporadically, it also presented poems and popular sayings, indistinctly and without a fixed space, revealing that the journal was careful about using spaces, rather than to standardize a reading protocol. The total amount was 74% of articles (and columns) and 26% of ads, indicating, as stated by Silva (2015), a financial interest around the circulation of this educational print.

The annuity value of *School Life* was four thousand *reis*; a copy, three hundred *reis*; a late issue, four hundred *reis*. Such information appears for the first time, according to research by Silva (2015, p. 4) in issue number 8, under «expedient», also containing advertising price data. From edition number 16 on, the journal started showing advertising pages about the Bookstore, Stationery and Typography «A. Trouy e Cia», responsible for the production and publication of the famous magazine *Folha da Serra*, of the city Campo Grande between 1931 and 1940, which leads us to question if *School Life* would have also been printed in said typography.

Much of the content of articles published in the journal had educational/instructional content, addressing issues of pedagogical and educational order, besides the subject content of History and Portuguese Language, but also of patriotic and regionalist nature. However, what called our attention was that the theme «death» was present throughout the existence of the journal, from the first to the last issue.

4. The representations of «death» in *School Life*

Textual structures used to treat the subject «death» in the journal *School Life* are varied, whether in the opinion articles, in poetry, in short stories and calendars and even in proverbs, when there is the occurrence of the word death, like for example on: «Mais vale um asno vivo do que um doutor morto» («Better a live donkey than a dead doctor») (*School Life*, year I, 07-17-1934, n. 5, p. 2).

Among the data presented in the «School Calendar» section, which was part of the newspaper's composition during its first year, we highlight the «celebrations of dates of death» of people who, while living, contributed to the history of civilization. Perhaps the highlight for the day of death of a historical figure was a form of tribute and respect to the dead, but mainly served as an example for the target audience, students. The proportion of the themes on death, among the celebrations presented in the «Calendar», is 37.7%.

Among the dead prominent national and foreign personalities are remembered, and foreigners are majority:

SCHOOL CALENDAR

May 20 - In 1506, death of Christopher Columbus, the glorious Italian discoverer of America

21 - Dies in 1786 Carl Wilhelm Scheele, German chemist who discovered oxygen, chlorine, manganese and glycerin.

27 - Dies in 1910 Robert Koch, German, discoverer of the tuberculosis bacillus, to which he gave its name.

28 - In 1889 Francisco Otaviano de Almeida Rosa, journalist, political diplomat and poet dies.

29 - Illustrious chemist Humphry Davy, who performed the first experience of electric light dies in 1829.

30 - In 1441 Joan of Arc, the French heroine who saved her country in the 15th century, one of the noblest figures in the history of mankind, is burned alive (*School Life*, year I, 05-20-1934, n. 1, p. 3).

During the three years of circulation of *School Life*, the theme appears concentrated in nine issues. What called our attention was the fact that in November, a month when Catholics have celebrated the day of the dead since the 13th century, there is no mention of death. However, this does not mean that there had not been any religious influence in the representation conveyed on it. School «Visconde de Taunay», which was linked to the publication of the educational print, was not of a religious nature, even though the Catholic religion prevailed, as it had the support of the national government. Therefore, the State instituted religion teaching as an optional subject in state schools of primary and secondary education, as opposed to what the intellectuals who defended the New School and were fighting for school secularity, claimed. Catholic newspaper *A Cruz (The Cross)* (1939, p. 1), said in this regard that:

With this resolution of broad political and social insight, those who consider themselves ahead of the country's destinations met the legitimate and profound aspiration of the Brazilian Catholic soul, making justice to the most imprescriptible rights of the Church and at the same time teaching their children wherever they come to graduate, the eternal truths of the Gospel.

Meeting the claim of the Catholic Church through the Nation-State, with the offer of religious education in schools, even on an optional basis, represented a link between the two institutions. The State could have the Church as an ally, joining the nationalist project to the desire to «recatholicize», making the Catholic religion the «religion of the Nation», with the support of the official educational system and the religious Catholic one, which gained more space in President Vargas Age.

It was also for this reason that some written compositions, which referred to death in the newspaper *School Life*, had a close relationship with the religious belief, mainly the Catholic one, cementing values, prescribing behaviors, leading «to believe, to do or to imagine», as noted by Chartier (1990), when referring to the power of print.

The short story «death», by school principal Enzo Ciantelli, presents a dialogue between a nine-year-old girl and her mother after the death of a neighbor. Very curious about death, Laurita asks her mother:

[...] What does death mean, mom? It means you do not breathe anymore, you do not move, you do not feel anything. And where do they go, mom, a person who dies? Their body is buried and their soul goes to heaven, to God [...] (*School Life*, year I, 05-20-1934, n. 1, p. 3).

The short story shows a concern to prepare children for this fatality which, in turn, is not treated as a taboo, but as something natural, as part of the existence of living beings. There is not concealment here of the facts about death from the child, as analyzed by Elias (2001), for whom death is a problem of the living, what means to say that it is not death that awakens fear, but the anticipated idea of death in the consciousness of the living. However, the explanation is imbued with a religious representation, stating that the «soul goes to heaven, God», reaffirming the belief of life after death, which meant, for religious morality, the possibility of punishment after death.

Another text with the same title, «death», written by Alfredo Braz, a child of the second grade, is an epic article about death as the responsibility of «Satan», which created hell as his kingdom, and death as a scourge of humanity, in competition with God:

Death

The afternoon was dying slowly. [...]

God, in His just wrath, had just cast out of Paradise the «Evil Genius» or «Satan». Feeling insulted, he swore revenge on the Omnipotent one's work and with eyes giving off flames, like a volcano erupting, guided his steps to the beyond. Once he arrived there, he built his kingdom, «Hell», and created the scourge of humanity, the pale goddess, Death. And with her foul habit, became full of all the diseases there are in the world (*School Life*, year I, 07-31-1935, n. 17, p. 3).

The student's text reminds us of the affirmation by Saramago (1996, p. 34) on the necessity of death for the existence of religion:

Without death, there is no resurrection, and without resurrection there is no church.

[...] death was absolutely essential for the realization of the kingdom of God and, therefore, any discussion of a future without death would not only be blasphemous but absurd, as it would have to assume inevitably an absent God, not to simply say a missing one.

As Morin (1988, p. 26) said «the pomps of death terrify more than death itself. But these pomps come from terror itself. Neither the wizards, nor the priests make death terrible. It is from the terror of death that the priests serve themselves».

The text *As Uvas Bravas* («The wild grapes») by Alberto Bonfim, a student of the fifth grade, recounts an episode in which his mother says: «Never again will you risk your life for what pleases you in the eyes, my son! Death is the most insidious beast there is» (*School Life*, year II, 06-15-1935, n. 15, p. 2). As the article by student Alfredo Braz, death was associated with «evil genius», «Satan».

Christian preaching and the diffusion of concepts such as purgatory and hell makes understandable, as said by Ariés (1990, p. 133), «that the fear of the beyond has been able to conquer populations that had not yet feared death. This fear of the beyond was undoubtedly translated by the depiction of the torments of Hell». Morin

(1988, p. 138), in turn, notes, «Among all the whereabouts of the dead, the most publicized are the Hells, underground address, or rather, reverse of the Earth». For the Church «the suffering and provisional annihilation of the body are less fearful than sin and hell. Man can not do anything against death, but – with the help of God – it is possible to avoid eternal punishments», as noted by Jean Delemeau (1989, p. 37).

With regard to the subject of suicide, the text entitled *Night Phantom*, authored by Pierret (probably a pseudonym) is a first-person anecdote, which is about a dialogue between a gentleman and a «ghost», killed by suicide.

I have committed suicide! I have disobeyed God's laws! But God should forgive me because my suicide was fair! See, friend!

The being I idolized most - my mother - was left behind on a bed, about to die! I was rich! In this moment of supreme pain, I looked for friends of the good times, they all denied me help! Mad with despair, unable to give even a grain of medicine to my dear mother, I committed suicide!

What year is it?

- Nineteen thirty-five?!

Oh! My God, how long have I suffered!

I died in 1823, and since then I only see sinister darkness!

[...] (*School Life*, year II, 05-31-1935, n. 14, p. 4).

The message seems to have as one of its objectives to remember to the one who suffers next to a sick person that they need to be strong and that suicide, besides a manifestation of weakness, was a sin, not taking them to the deserved rest after death, to eternal life, as the Catholic Church guarantees to its good followers⁴.

Suicide – among all the deaths, is the one that presents more taboo, since from the perspective of religious morality, death cannot be a personal choice, because for many religions, death belongs only to God or to a deity (Kovács, 2013).

An opposite situation, where the person, upon seeing the sick one without any future prospects kills them, presents the same sense of guilt, sin, of the reprehensible human action. The article is entitled *Sociedade Moderna* («Modern Society»), and the following excerpt highlights this court sentence:

In North America, a girl who killed her consumptive brother, the only member of her family who lived with her, was acquitted. She killed him not to see him suffering anymore.

They said she killed him out of pity, for excess of love.

I think she killed him because of selfishness, as the sufferings of the brother were somehow her own sufferings, she was forced to care for him, with detriment to her personal freedom, her share of material welfare. (*School Life*, year I, 09-01-1934, n. 8, p. 1).

⁴ It should be noted, in this period, the strict relationship between the Vargas administration and the Catholic Church, as evidenced by the classic works of Lustosa (1983) and Mainwaring (1989).

In this article, parallel to the religious nature, which condemns suicide and «euthanasia», the message aims at helping in the formation of character and morality of children and teenagers, questioning acquitted court actions which, according to the values and customs of the society of the time, could not be admitted or treated positively⁵.

The poetry titled *Cristo* («Christ»), written by João de Deus, has openly religious content:

[...]
Father of love, Father of kindness,
Died to show us
That we, seeking the truth
Should be left to kill.
(*School Life*, year II, 11-20-1935, n. 21, p. 3).

In our view, the poem shows, again, the relationship between death and religion. As dying for «Christ» is to live in the kingdom of heaven, with the right to resurrection.

Representations of death are also related to Science, as demonstrated by the text *A Morte* («death») by Alfredo Braz:

[...]
And then, said: walk, get up and follow your destructive work, until you arise against the barriers of science! Then she, with tousled hair, pale forehead, and the body still warm by the contagious breath of her creator, opened her black wings over the earth and followed her destiny.
She created to the flag war, her cult is killing, the land and the sea are her temples.
She is the macabre queen, her court is grim and ugly, has gala and all costumes, she enters the humblest hovel and attends the most luxurious palace.
Finally, she is only happy when soaked in the blood of the crowd.
She never rests, is she asks for law right here, there she is roaring like a hyena.
This dreadful spectrum, killer in darkness or in the sunlight, is always by our side and even by the most powerful kings of the earth.
She was the exalted companion of Alexander the Great, gave him a mighty throne, stroked him with a cold kiss, was he only 32 years young.
She followed Napoleon in his victories, giving him finally rest in her arms.
She was also on board the Amazonas vessel, next to Admiral Barroso, but when the brave admiral's voice was heard, frightened, she bowed at his feet.
Fortunately for us, her empire already reached its peak, it cannot progress further because the science army has awoken from its lethargy and has seized her step.
She will no longer have as many victims as she had before.

⁵ On the power and influence of Catholic thought in this context, see text *A Igreja entre a Revolução de 1930, o Estado Novo e a redemocratização* by Beozzo (2007).

This being insatiable for human flesh will not enjoy many glory days because science will triumph.

We must, therefore, pay tribute to our supporters and applaud those who show desire to follow the science savior of humanity, which is Medicine (*School Life*, year I, 07-31-1935, n. 17, p. 3).

Science and medicine appear as barriers before death, saviors of humanity, to which we should pay our respects. This representation brings us to the context of President Vargas Era which sought in science the cure of many diseases that plagued the Brazilian population.

Among them was tuberculosis, the subject of a text entitled «A Tuberculose» («Tuberculosis»), by Erundino Louzada, student of the fourth grade. Tuberculosis is presented as «a contagious disease and terminal weed, which, except for very few cases leads its victim to die» because the «motto of tuberculosis» is «all for destruction and death». However, «it tends to disappear» because «science, guided by the great current and future doctors will destroy this disease completely, which implements suffering and death!» (*School Life*, year II, 07-31-1935, n. 17, p. 2).

Another text referred to the sciences is titled *Uma Nova Guerra* («A New War»). In it, the author and director of the newspaper, Manuel Ballian, says that death reigns, but it is necessary to «look for ways to eliminate death! Human life cannot be limited!!! It should be endless». And so, the author calls for help, calling all those who want to help sad humanity, who are dedicated in body and soul to overcome evil and to discover drugs and vaccines that annul diseases. «Help cleaning up this planet!» (*School Life*, year II, 05-31-1935, n. 14, p. 1).

An example of the amount of diseases that ravaged the country at the time is the text *Hostilidades* («Hostilities») by Manuel Ballain, who refers to the disease in a generic way (synonym of possible death) and embodies it in the figure of a queen:

Queen disease is indifferent to all. [...]

When she smiles, instead of «lipstick», she shows her lips smeared with «Cholera Morbus» and some teeth decorated with Pyorrhoea, in her face malaria is stamped, her fingers have rings of «Wild Fire», her hair is trimmed by Meningitis, her ears tinkle Smallpox, on her neck hangs a necklace of disgusting germs of Leprosy, in her chest heaves the tumid boss of Koch's bacillus (tuberculosis), she wears the sandals of Influenza, feels tightened with a Typhus corset, she wears the nauseating dress of Syphilis, finally, she feeds on bubonic Plague tea and as a dessert, has a salad made with the following «fruits»: Mumps, Uric Acid, Measles, Trachoma and Ulcers, all seasoned with Diabetes sugar (*School Life*, year II, 06-15-1935, n. 15, p. 1).

In another text, entitled *A Medicina* («Medicine»), again written by student Erundino Louzada, the writer presents medicine in a prominent place among the sciences, especially in the fight against death:

[...]

It is not needless to say that before medicine emerged, those attacked by diseases, unknown up to that moment, were treated by means of root teas and more often by witchcraft, and rare were the times when they would not land under cold gravestones. [...]

The great lover of science [Hippocratic] could not see all his dreams come true, except for some, as treacherous death did not consent him to do so. But we are seeing all his great results that will perpetuate forever in our minds the memory of this great ability of medicine (*School Life*, year II, 06-15-1935, n. 15, p. 3).

The last texts presented above show that death, as an interdiction, is related to the advancement of medicine. At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the development of medical science, death comes to be seen as synonymous with failure. It is up to medicine to avoid death. With the scientific advance the death could no longer keep in the same indexes, that's why the journal *School Life* emphasize on its articles for the students who would be future doctors, to continue their studies on behalf of the nation, of medicine, to conquer death, or at least to control it.

The texts in question evidence the beginning of a new discourse, in the first half of the 20th century, in which medicine helps to make death more and more manageable. Today, more than ever, we wait and seek the postponement of death, as noted by Elias (2001). In this sense, we can affirm that the context in question refers to a period of construction of new senses and sensibilities in relation to death, from the overvaluation of medicine, unlike the 19th century, in which death was seen as familiar and everyday⁶.

Besides the obvious connection of the topic death with religion and science, other productions mention it with different approaches, indicating the incidence of the subject as part of the everyday life of children and adolescents. The text entitled *Penumbra* («Twilight»), without identification of authorship, questions on the forms of funerals:

On the street where I live, two processions are about to leave:

A funeral and an engagement.

The dead goes all in white - her crown of orange tree flowers on her head, a palm of lilies in her hands, smiling like someone who has just heard a love secret... She goes on full of flowers in her white car [...]

The burial ceremony turned the corner... The engagement ceremony entered the church...

And I'm wondering why do they make virgins wear dress brides when they die (*School Life*, year II, 11-20-1935, n. 21, p. 3).

The description reminds us how celebrations of the dead were held in that context, with processions by foot, through the city, the coffin with the deceased

⁶ According to Bibeau and Eddy (1985), there was a more positive attitude toward death in the nineteenth century, in America, due in part to higher childhood mortality rates, large extended families, and shorter life expectancies.

followed from the deceased's home or the church towards the cemetery, carried by the hands of friends and relatives.

Another custom, as stated in the text title by Valdemar Tessitore, was «A visit to the cemetery». In this article, the author describes a visit to his brother's grave:

I come, Joel, to your grave [...]
Near or far, at your feet I will come pray!
Tears shed my heart in flame
The longing in the tomb slate!
(*School Life*, year III, 06-13-1936, n. 22, p. 3).

In other contexts, when venting some feelings, a comparison of the suffering of death comes up, like on the poem *Viver na morte* («To live in death»), by student Hugo Pereira:

To live in death
This life is so hard and full of bitterness,
Hypocrites, vile people with no discretion,
It is preferable to live in the cemetery
Inside the cold and forgotten graves.
[...] (*School Life*, year II, 05-15-1935, n. 13, p. 3).

In making this comparison, he allows us to notice the frequency and familiarity of death in the society of the time, and the rituals of burial, the cemetery, the grave, etc.

The text *No Exílio* («In Exile») by Waldemar Tessitore mentions the difficulties of those exiled and killed outside the country, probably resulting from the rebelling movements of the period, like the Communist Uprising of 1935 led by the National Liberation Alliance, the uprising of the Brazilian Integralism Movement of 1938 by Plínio Salgado, among others, and lieutenants' uprisings repressed by President Getúlio Vargas having its participants sent into exile:

[...]
Brazil! Beautiful Brazil in so many colors!
Who else suffered and felt you were happy?
This one, who dies away from the country
Who did not have, for his burial, your flowers.
(*School Life*, year II, 11-20-1935, n. 21, p. 3).

Maybe the rebellious movements against the Getúlio Vargas administration were possibly discussed in schools, due to the specificity of Campo Grande as a center of resistance during the São Paulo movement of the 1932 Constitutionalist Revolution⁷, which intended to overthrow the government and establish a new national constitution.

⁷ Aiming at separate themselves from the state of Mato Grosso, creating a so-called state

The text *Assombroso, não?* («Scary, isn't it?») without declared authorship, highlights the murders in Soviet Russia, having among the dead, bishops and religious men, and continues:

It has been said that the number of those executed in the Russia of the Soviets, to date, goes beyond two million.

And there are Brazilians who are nuts by this solvent and bloody communism, by a godless regime, with no country and without a family – a regime that proclaims the supremacy of the workers and peasants and orders the killing of workers and peasants against the criminal indifference of the nations (*School Life*, year I, 09-16-1934, n. 9, p. 1).

Convergent with the Catholic discourse, all texts dealing with communism in the newspaper *School Life* are vehemently opposed to this political position, condemning the Communists by the numerous killings and lack of faith in God and the Church⁸.

5. Final Considerations

To experience and reference death was part of the daily lives of the residents of Campo Grande and, consequently, of school life. Compared to current times where the customs require death to be «absent from polite conversation» (Maranhão, 2017), during the 1930s, probably due to the high mortality rate plaguing the state and the country, death made up some pages of the student newspaper *School Life*, with texts written by students and teachers. The representations of themes varied, from a seemingly natural way, going through a religious content, sometimes isolated, sometimes associated with the virtues of medicine, responsible for the decrease of deaths in the country and the world. Anyway, it did not fail to deal with a disturbing question which generated suffering.

Through the session of school calendars, death was associated with civility, when contemplating the dates of death of people who dedicated their lives for humanity, and in some other columns, it was referred to as a result of political actions and wars. But at times, death is described as a «scourge of humanity» or «treacherous beast», associated with the image of Satan, the personification of evil and disobedience.

The analysis of the journal *School Life* makes it possible to show that death, as an interdiction, is related to the advancement of medicine. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the development of medical science, death comes to be seen as synonymous with failure, as absence of scientificity. It is up to medicine to avoid death. So the emphasis given in the texts of the journal *School Life* for the students to be future doctors: «Human life cannot be limited!!! It should be endless». Students: «Help cleaning up this planet!» (*School Life*, year II, 05-31-1935, n. 14, p. 1).

Maracajú, Campo Grande natives supported the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932, going through moments of intense conflicts and battles. In this respect, cf. Bittar (1997) and Zorzato (1998).

⁸ A characteristic speech of the time, as Plínio Oliveira (1976) and Portelli (1990) recall, when treating communism as a threat to the Catholic Church.

On the other hand, the religious nature that permeates a significant part of the texts analyzed, besides presenting certain comfort, shows the relationship between the Church and the State in the delimited context, even with the secularism established from the proclamation of the Republic in Brazil (1889). Death appears associated with the natural part of human existence, having as continuation the eternal life. This expectation generated the comfort and strength required before the termination of life on earth. However, the end of earthly life, under the religious point of view, is acceptable only by divine intervention, human action being abominable, such as the practices of suicide and euthanasia. Suicide, as evidenced in the journal *School Life* is, of all deaths, the greatest taboo, that disturbs beyond life, because religious morality does not allow death as a personal choice.

In summary, the manuscripts of journal *School Life* were able to identify several indications of religion in the writings about death, also allowing to realize the value of medical sciences, presented by and for children as salvation, as the most powerful weapon as a means to delay death. The pedagogical print served, therefore, for the materialization of these representations, for their production as truths and for the teaching of this stage of life, or to its end.

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