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Poetry in contemporary children's and youth literature: reflections on characteristics and trends

I seek for poetry to have some virtue, among suffering and helplessness, to light up any light, any light we are not provided with, which does not fall from heaven. But which is born from the hands and spirit of humans.

Ferreira Gullar¹

A few months away from the world experiencing two years of living in a pandemic, it is impossible not to emphasise the painful record of countless loss of life around the world; adults, seniors and even children have left us, victims of Covid-19. And, beyond the record and manifestation of our immeasurable sadness in face of such a desolate scenario, what do we have left? It remains for us, therefore, to say that literature can save. We believe in this and, consequently, we understand that childhood emerges as one of the most favorable moments for contributing to human development in its entirety.

Thus, in this third edition of 2021 by *Revista Letras Raras*, we present children's poetry as the centre of our discussions, understanding that this form of literary art addressed to children might be an unavoidable path to inspire them to the multiple discoveries which can be favored by literary reading; especially at this time of losses. As we have been doing since the first edition of 2020, we have registered the high number of fallen lives due to their powerlessness and lack of support from their leaders, who could actually act to minimise so many misfortunes we have experienced. Since then, in that first issue of 2020, we have remembered that neither in George Orwerll's "1984", nor in Huxley's "Brave New World", would it be possible to project so much dystopia. The fact is that 590,000 people stopped breathing.

Children's poetry is both inside universities throughout Brazil and beyond our borders, as we can see in this 3rd issue. Studying its characteristics and trends is our object and aim, once it is an indispensable attitude for the children of our days to become adults aware of their social roles, according to an emancipatory perspective, as Paulo Freire taught us. We also pay homage to him in this September issue of 2021, the month in which Freire would turn 100 years old. In the wake of this important educator, we emphasise how literature might be this emancipatory place, considering the

¹ GULLAR, Ferreira. *Toda Poesia*. 11ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 2001. Original text: "*Pretendo que a poesia tenha a virtude de, em meio ao sofrimento e ao desamparo, acender uma luz qualquer, uma luz que não nos é dada, que não desce dos céus. Mas que nasce das mãos e do espírito dos homens."*

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Praxis of Liberation. Since literary reading is fundamental for consciousness, as it helps to instigate the human capacity to act, it leads the human being to act in his own reality, thus transforming it. Freire (2004) teaches us how human experiences can help others, promoting a transition from thought to action; and, this is what we are willing to do in this edition of *Revista Letras Raras*.

Thereby, this issue entitled **Poetry in contemporary children's and youth literature:** reflections on characteristics and trends is composed of eight papers and two interviews that focus on poetry expressed in contemporary children's and youth works, which enhance interactivity and creativity, thus revealing an intention of reading (SILVA, 2018; HUNT, 2010). In the contemporary scenario, according to Carlos Felipe Moisés (2014), there was an increase in poetic production and new poets emerged. Despite this, according to Italo Moriconi (2014), this production circulates predominantly on the internet due to market determinations. Because of that, there is a small number of poetic works circulating in reading archives, available in school framing as some of the results of public policies.

With regard to the production of children's and youth works, disseminated in various media, there was also an increase. However, many of these works are linked to entertainment and neither encourage the constitution of the reader's affective memory (FERREIRA, 2012) since childhood, nor do they contribute to the formation of the critical and/or aesthetic reader (ECO, 2003). In this issue, then, poetry is considered according to its social function, which disturbs the reader and invites her/him to self knowledge (PINSON, 2011), besides breaking with the usual modes of perception, expanding her/his horizons of expectation in this process (JAUSS, 1994; ISER, 1996; 1999). Consequently, this issue fosters debate about the contemporary production of poetry books for children and youth, whether for its recognition in terms of aesthetic value, or for its incorporation in collections of public reading policies and/or its acceptance by the readership.

The first paper Poetry for pre-readers and object-books: a reading for/with pleasure is presented by Sara Reis da Silva, professor at the Institute of Education of the University of Minho (Braga, Portugal), and Diana Maria Martins, professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave (School of Design) and researcher at the Research Centre on Child Studies (CIEC), also from the University of Minho. It reflects on the playful potentialities that come from poetic discourse edited in object-books from a selected corpus. The researchers argue that the child's interaction with these books is fundamental to learning, to foster imagination and to aesthetic awareness, besides promoting a rewarding and fun contact that can result in a positive and affective relationship with reading that, even though "embryonic", is expected to last in time.

Haunted poems: a path in Brazilian children's poetry, by José Hélder Alves Pinheiro, professor at the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) and Emmanuelle Freire Pereira Silva,

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Master's candidate at the same university, is the second paper and analyses some poems from *Chá de sumiço e outros poemas assombrados*, written by André Ricardo Aguiar (2013), a poet from Paraíba (Brazil). In this work, composed of 25 playful, short and humorous poems, Aguiar (2013) reinvents certain characters from the folklore tradition, by addressing problems arising from human reality. His texts resorting to personification and by revealing an innovative and critical perspective on haunting situations might captivate infant readers and lead them to reflection.

The third paper Poetry on the ground floor: the childishness of words in Manoel de Barros is presented by Roberto Remígio Florêncio, professor at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Sertão Pernambucano (IFPE) and PhD candidate at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Vlader Nobre Leite, professor of Literature at the University of Pernambuco (UPE), and Fábio Lima de Oliveira, also from the University of Pernambuco (UPE). The text argues that Barros is one of the most innovative contemporary poets. In his production, he uses words in an "artisan" way. To do so, he makes use of a syntactic subversion that supplants conventional meanings. His poems reflect his conceptions about childhood that seeks happiness, through the poetic transfiguration of words.

In Poetry in my home: children, rhymes and reading access policies in Argentina, Rosane Maria Cardoso, professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), conjectures about public policies on reading and the role of the family in educating readers. For this purpose, it chooses as an object of analysis the illustrated work *Animales rimados y no tanto*, which is part of the collections of the "Libros y Casas" Program from the Ministry of Culture of Argentina, aiming to democratise and encourage reading through affirmative actions. Along 37 poems by renowned Argentine poets, this work thematizes the affection existing between children and animals that can captivate the attention of young readers.

In the fifth paper, we find the study Contemporary poetry in children's picture books: analysis of the work *Que lambança!*, by Ana Maria Machado, authored by two researchers on this domain, Fabricia Jeanini Cirino Pinto and Eliane Aparecida Galvão Ribeiro Ferreira. The first is a Master's Degree and PhD candidate in Literature and Social Life at the Júlio de Mesquita Filho São Paulo State University (UNESP-Assis), and a Portuguese teacher at the state education system. The latter is a professor at the Júlio de Mesquita Filho São Paulo State University (UNESP-Assis). In their analyses, the researchers affirm that Machado's work, illustrated by Denise Fraifeld, has both aesthetic value and potential to fascinate infant readers. They also point to this effect coming from the dialogue they establish with nursery rhymes, songs from popular folklore, and tongue twisters that make up the affective memory and imagination of young readers. In its structure, the work explores the playful game that challenges these readers to discover what is "hidden" and "shown" between the lines and, in

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particular, in the relationship established between their verbal and imagetic texts.

Afterwards, **Sung Poetry: encounters and intertwining, from books to the video clip and vice versa** is presented by Andreia Aparecida Suli da Costa, PhD candidate and Master's Degree in Letters from the Júlio de Mesquita Filho São Paulo State University, and Kelly Cristiane Henschel Pobbe de Carvalho, professor at the same institution. They analyse the works *Assim Assado*, by Eva Furnari, and *Eu*, by Paulo Tatit and Sandra Peres, both belonging to the collections of the PNLD - Complementary Works (2010) and the PNLD Literary (2018) in Brazil. For this purpose, the researchers compare these works with the video clips of the songs that preceded or follow them, reflecting on the importance of these intertwinings in the reader's education, especially in the literacy processes.

Contemporary Brazilian young adult poetry (2010-2020): state of the matter is the seventh paper, by Lucas Felipe Batista Bispo, PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the State University of Maringá (UEM). It presents the state of the matter in Brazilian young adult poetry, based on six works published between 2010 and 2020. Its aim is to investigate the modes of manifestation – themes and forms – and to establish a counterpoint to the question of the adjective "youth", according to the study of the works: Diário da Montanha, by Roseana Murray; Poesia é Fogo, é Terra, é Água, é Arl: haicais, by Sandra Lopes, with illustrations by Janaina Tokitaka; Futurações, by Caio Riter, with illustrations by Ana Gruszynski; Caderno veloz de anotações, poemas e desenhos, by Ricardo Azevedo; Cotidiano, paixões & outros flashes, by Luís Dill, with illustrations by Silvana de Menezes; and Poemas para jovens inquietos, by Sérgio Capparelli.

Finally, Eliana Yunes, from the UNESCO Chair and PUC-RIO, in **Poetry at six feet from the ground**, presents significant reflections on poetry and its relations with childhood due to the possible approximation of their languages. To do so, she looks for the reception of poems from different works by Marina Colasanti, considering their aesthetic value as a potential in readers' education, as well as their encouragement to young people as producers of literature. Based on her analysis and reflections, Yunes deals with the child's relationship with time that takes place spontaneously, very different from that of the adult world, guided by the clock. She argues that, through literature, it is possible to rescue the past, to experience time's infinity, as well as the simultaneity of the instant and lifetime, likewise a subversion to urban modernity tied to speed. Through reading, children experience imaginaries that, in turn, unveil a new world.

Considering the editorial policy of *Revista Letras Raras*, which also consists of publishing an issue tied to athematic papers, as long as they are linked to the scope of the journal, there are also seven other papers differing from the theme of children's poetry, but yet revealing necessary discussions over Literature. Furthermore, according to the journal's editorial policy, this issue features

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three interviews, two of which are directly linked to the proposal of the issue **Poetry in contemporary children's and youth literature: reflections on characteristics and trends**, an essay, three translations, and some literary productions, short-stories and poems.

Thus, in the ninth paper, From Aristotle to contemporaneity: an architectural of beauty, Elaine Daróz, researcher and PhD in Language Studies, besides a specialist in French Discourse Analysis, takes "a historical-discursive perspective to think about the movements of slips/displacements of "beauty" over time, in order to denaturalize the meanings about this signifier, in view of the inherent historicity", according to the author herself.

Following that, we read the paper Between reason and passion: the Ovidian myth of Pyramus and Thisbe revisited in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, by Jorge Alves Pinto, Graduate in English Language from the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG), and Viviane Moraes de Caldas, professor at the same university. The authors present analyses of two classic books: "Romeo and Juliet", by William Shakespeare, and the myth of "Pyramus and Thisbe", from the book IV of "The Metamorphoses", by the Latin poet Ovid. They emphasise that similar catastrophes in Shakespeare and Ovid portray the consequences of the soul that allows passion to settle at the level of rationality.

In the paper Brazilian chronicles and the anti-racist teaching of Portuguese in the Sertão of Pernambuco, the professor and researcher at the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE), Larissa de Pinho Cavalcanti, and Janaína de Lima Ferreira, who is an undergraduate in Letters at the same university, share a writing experience based on a workshop on the textual genre "chronicle", along with ninth grade Portuguese students at a state school in the Sertão of Pernambuco. For the authors, it is urgent to build a linguistic education that proposes a break in hegemonic practices and knowledge, by focusing on the diversity of the most different types of knowledge, thus inciting reflections on issues of different orders, such as political and social, and instigating students to develop their citizenship awareness.

The island of Muipíti: memory in the poetry of Mozambican poets Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim, by Patrícia Resende Pereira, PhD in Literary Studies by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and post-doctoral candidate at the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP), is the twelfth paper. It brings contributions about the poetics of Mozambicans Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim, as they are known for the configuration of memory in their lyrical works. The author makes an accurate study of the poem "Muipíti", from 1972, a period of effervescence in the struggle against colonisation and, accordingly, the poet evokes memories of the poetic subject lived on the island of Mozambique. The study also presents a theoretical-comparative analytical perspective, by also focusing on the memory of Patraquim, who references Knopfli's poem and builds "Muiphíti" (1991). More than a

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tribute, this new poem reveals the importance of Memory for the Mozambican people in face of colonialism.

The paper **Red as a symbol of human materiality in Augusto dos Anjos**, by Ayanne Larissa Almeida de Souza, PhD in Literary Studies by the State University of Paraíba (UEPB) and post-doctoral fellow at the same university, seeks to analyse the generative path of meaning in the poetry of Augusto dos Anjos. She analyses the effects of the color red in the work of the poet from Paraíba, by emphasising the figuration of flesh and blood as elements of a metaphor for the human condition in the face of imminent death.

In the last paper of this issue, we return to children's literature. Fabíola Ribeiro Farias, PhD in Information Science by the Federal University of Minas Gerais and post-doctorate in Education by the Federal University of Oeste do Pará (UFOPA), and Jéssica Mariana Andrade Tolentino, Graduate and Master's Degree in Language Studies at the Federal Centre for Technological Education of Minas Gerais, besides a Master's candidate in Children's Literature, Media and Culture at the University of Glasgow (United Kingdom), discuss experiences with children's literary work in **Metaliterary experiences in children's books: acts of creative reading and writing**. The authors turn their gaze to editorial production for children in Brazil, by comparing reading with productions translated into Portuguese and circulating in the country. Discussions about metaliterary experiences are based on *Alice no telhado*, by Nelson Cruz, *Pinóquio: o livro das pequenas verdades*, by Alexandre Rampazo, and *Robinson*, by Peter Sís, thus considering children's universe as a cultural asset.

Still focusing on the issue, we present two interviews linked to it. The first is **Interview with**João Pedro Mésseder, literary pseudonym of José António Gomes. João Pedro Mésseder is

Coordinating Professor at the School of Education from the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (Portugal), and
is responsible for the Literary and Cultural Studies Research Nucleus of InED (IEL-C) from the School of

Education (ESE) of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (IPP), besides an integrated researcher at CIPEM

(INET-md/IPP) from the NOVA University Lisbon (Portugal) and collaborating researcher at the Centre
for Portuguese Literature at the University of Coimbra (Portugal).

The interview was given to three professors/researchers: Ana Cristina Macedo, professor of Literature and Culture and collaborating researcher at *Red Temática - Las Literaturas Infantiles del Marco Ibérico and Iberoamericano* (LIJMI) (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain), at the Galician-Portuguese Research Association on Children's Literature (ELOS - section of ANILIJ), and at the Literary and Cultural Studies Research Nucleus of InED (IEL-C); Maria Madalena Marcos Carlos Teixeira da Silva, professor at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures from the University of Azores (Portugal) and scholar in areas such as Portuguese Literature, Literature for Children and

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Youth, and Azorean Literature; and Sara Reis da Silva, one of this issue's organisers, who is a professor at the Institute of Education from the University of Minho (Braga, Portugal) and a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

João Pedro Mésseder, founder of the journal *Malasartes - Cadernos de Literatura para a Infância e a Juventude (Porto Editora)* and author of poetry books and dozens of works for children and youth, with translations in Galician and Spanish, also reveals during the interview a little of his childhood, his first productions, talks about Literary Criticism and his concerns on poetry for children and young people, as well as its teaching. This important scholar on the subject is part of poetry anthologies in several countries, among which Brazil is included. He has had some of his productions adapted for theatrical shows and has been among the best-sellers of 2021, besides some of his poems adapted for musicals, cinema and television. The author closes the interview with his clear hope for better days on the way, with regard to poetry for children.

The second one is entitled **Interview with Marta Cocco**, presented by Rosana Rodrigues da Silva, professor at the State University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT), and Eliane Aparecida Galvão Ribeiro Ferreira (UNESP), both organisers of this issue. They interviewed Marta Cocco, a researcher and professor of Literature at UNEMAT, as well as a poet, short-story and children's book writer. Among her productions, it is worth mentioning: *Lé e o elefante de lata* (2013); *Doce de formiga* (2014); *Sabichões* (2016), selected as part of the collections for the 2018 PNLD literary programme in Brazil; and *Escrituras animais* (2020), awarded with the "Estevão de Mendonça Prize for Literature".

By this conversation with the author, the interviewers reaffirm the importance of productions "inserted in the children's literary subsystem", taking into account "the respect for the child reader manifested through communicability, playful and sound games, innovations in dialogue with verbal text and imagery, and, therefore, through the countless stylistic resources employed". There are several reasons that make the interviewee one of the main names in children's and youth literature nowadays, as the social function and aesthetic value of her lyrical body of work are very meaningful.

The literary experiences of these significant writers, whose creative and sensitive production, with contemporary themes justify their recognition in the literary domain, are also accompanied by the experiences of Auritha Tabajara. This is unveiled in the interview that draws attention since its sensitivity in the title: **Heart in the village, feet in the world - interview with Auritha Tabajara**. Eliane Cristina Testa, professor of Portuguese Literature at the Letters Course from the Federal University of Northern Tocantins (UFNT), and Soraima Moreira Alves Ferreira Leite, Master's candidate in the Post-Graduate Program in Letters (PPGL/UFNT), conducted this conversation with the author of the Tabajara people, by highlighting her as the first Brazilian indigenous cordel poet. The interview also emphasises "that

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indigenous women need to occupy their space in society, to have a voice and visibility". As a forerunner in indigenous cordel literature, the author intends to open up paths so that other indigenous writers also come to be known in poetic cordel lines.

In the aftermath, the reader will read the essay **Poetry**, **Human**, **Word**, by Marcos Laffin, an experienced scholar, now retired from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). This poetry and poetic prose writer received the *Mérito de Literatura Catarinense* Prize and is the author of books of poems, as well as of technical-scientific books. He has participated in literary concertinas and poetic anthologies, committees, editorials and reviews. In this essay, he "speaks of words surrounded by discursive imagery and hooked up for emerging movements [...] in their provisional condition, by the morphing transition of polysemy". The author also "articulates poetic language and rationality in which he seeks to demonstrate rigor without desiring exactness, however not neglecting to bring their links closer together, as certain statements concur in order to search for a counterword".

In the Translations section, the reader will first find "Impressions of the Milan Convention", written by James Denison, translated by José Raimundo Rodrigues, PhD candidate in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Lucyenne Matos da Costa Vieira-Machado, PhD (2012) and Master's Degree (2007) in Education by the same institution, as well as Gabriel Silva Xavier Nascimento, PhD candidate at the same university. Thereby, in *Impressões sobre o Congresso de Milão*, the translators present an unpublished text in Brazilian Portuguese, originally published in 1881. The importance of the translation lies in the fact that J. Denison "was one of the four deaf people present at the Congress in order to improve the condition of deaf-mute people, held in Milan from September 6th to 11th of 1880". Therefore, it is an indispensable reading for the readership and, above all, for sign language researchers.

The second translation is a paper: **O romance em segunda pessoa: análise estrutural**, translated by Altamir Botoso from the State University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UEMS), based on the original text by Francisco Ynduráin, entitled **La novela desde la segunda persona: análisis estructural**. The text discusses "the use of the second person in Hispanic novels and deals with works of English and French literature". The translator emphasises that this is one of the rare texts on such theory and, for this reason, such publication is considered necessary, even taking into account the first date of its publication (1969).

The last translation is presented by Dionei Mathias, from the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). Likewise the other ones, it is a rare text in the public domain. **Joseph von Eichendorff - Poemas em tradução** reveals one of the most important voices in Romanticism, "alongside writers such as Novalis, Ludwig Tieck, Clemens Brentano, Adelbert von Chamisso or Wilhelm Mülle". In this

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publication, the translator presents the reader with twenty poems by Eichendorff, considered canonical by the readership, especially in the context of German-speaking culture. Dionei Mathias also remembers that many of these poems "speak of loneliness, fragmentation or lack of belonging, but also of existential affirmation in contact with the beauty of nature and the world".

Now stepping into the scope of literary creation, we start with two short-stories: **O banco e o crédito da calamidade** and **Vítima**, by Francisco Rafael José Raposo, Graduate in Clinical and Laboratory Analysis by the Catholic University of Mozambique (Mozambique). This also reminds us that literary creation is beyond the Letters domain. Both intriguing, the narratives are moving and, for sure, an unavoidable path for those who love literature. Following that, the reader will come across another tale, the disturbing **Pingo na goela**, by Felipe Augusto Ferreira Feijão, philosopher by the Federal University of Ceará (UFC).

Among the poems, Higor Lima da Silva, Graduate by the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) and with experience in several foreign universities, presents the poem **Erhu**. In this poem, an invitation to enter into a lament of the lyrical self is identified, given its condition. Then, in A promessa da UFCA, by Ives Romero Tavares do Nascimento, from the Federal University of Cariri (UFCA) and a researcher at the Interdisciplinary Laboratory in Social Management Studies (LIEGS), as well as a Scholarship holder in Research Productivity. Stimulus to Internalization and Technological Innovation (BPI/Funcap/CE), the reader will have a meeting with Antônio Conselheiro in order to understand: "The sertão will turn to sea", thus coming to understand the title of this poetic creation, too. Also among the poems, Azão, azinho: Íris em Marte, Marte em Íris, Martíres, by Leandro Moreira de Sousa, undergraduate in Letters at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), instigates the reader to think about the form of life, of the human being. According to the author, the human being seeks conquests, escaping from existence. Closing this issue, in the sonnet Lembranças de uma vida sem COVID, the poet and jurist Cristóvão José dos Santos Júnior, from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), makes a clear reference to the situation currently being experienced across the planet. As a sonnet, it is a short poem and a painful reading, once we see that it depicts a reality that has been lived for almost two years. The clear references to the lack of air to breathe also record and confirm the need for literature and poetry in our lives.

So, dear reader, may the various studies that make up this issue represent a moment of (re)encounter with poetry and its reading, as well as an inspiring reason for research into this beautiful literary matter that might highly seduce younger readers (as well as those of all ages), even determining their literary education. Therefore, in this pandemic context, let us continue reading poetry, taking it to children and still studying its importance, directing them to the praxis of liberation, filling our lungs with



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the air of liberation and emancipation, as proposed by Paulo Freire.

Hoping that this third edition of volume 10 in 2021 by *Revista Letras Raras* will contribute to help us breathe, we wish you a great reading.

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