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Maria José Dupré: publishing phenomenon in the history of children's literature

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Abstract: With the aim of understanding Maria José Dupré's place in the history of children's literature in Brazil, this text focuses on the literary career of this woman-teacher-writer, highlighting her consolidation as a publishing phenomenon, whose publications remain in circulation to this day. To this end, the theoretical-methodological contribution is based on the premises of Cultural History, from which some of the biobibliographical aspects of this writer are presented and problematized. Born in 1905 on a farm in the countryside of Paraná, Dupré published 10 books for children during her career, as well as books, short stories and chronicles for adults. Despite the recognition she received from all her publications, it was in children's literature for circulation and school use that she found the "formula" for her success, leaving an indelible mark as a writer on countless generations of readers since the 1940s.

Keywords: Maria José Dupré; history of children's literature; publishing career; bio-bibliography.

1 Introduction

Among the names of Brazilian writers who have marked generations of readers, Maria José Dupré's is one of the most common, especially when it comes to childhood reading during school years. Always remembered for several of her stories, such as the famous journey of Henrique and Eduardo on the Paraíba River in *A ilha perdida* (1944), or the life of Dona Lola and her family between São Paulo and Itapetininga in *Éramos seis* (1943), Dupré's work is also still present today in the country's main school and public libraries.

In addition, as a result of the success she achieved with the release of some of her books, Dupré is on the list of the main Brazilian literary prizes. Among them are the Raul Pompeia Prize, created by the Academia Brasileira de Letras in 1911, and the



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Jabuti Prize, awarded by the Câmara Brasileira do Livro, which can be seen as a symbol of the consolidation of this writer's career¹

Despite this, and following a persistent pattern in relation to many other women who have dedicated themselves to the world of writing, Maria José Dupré remains practically unexplored from the point of view of scientific research, as an apparently less prominent figure in our country's cultural, educational and literary scene, according to a survey carried out by Barros (2024). By consulting institutional research repositories², this researcher states that only three master's dissertations and three doctoral thesis address aspects related to the children's work of Maria José Dupré, in general, with emphasis on the books that she had reissued in the "Vaga-lume" series. The same is true of other works published in the form of book chapters (5) and articles (7), which present specific studies on some of her books reissued in the same series (Barros, 2024). There is also a noticeable lack of prominence for Maria José Dupré's name in the main works on the history of Brazilian children's literature, such as those by Arroyo (1968), Coelho (1981) and Lajolo and Zilberman (1984, 2022), which are restricted to sparse mentions of her children's work published between 1943 and 1967.

In this matter, there is no doubt that it is the mark of patriarchal ideology that excludes women's writings as productions of equal value to those of men. In the historical context in which Maria José Dupré produced her work, as Coelho (1993) rightly explained, "biological" differences were believed to determine artistic and intellectual creation between men and women: while the former, due to their strong and aggressive nature, were the authors of virile and creative productions; the latter, due to their sensitive, fragile, affective and naive nature, could only produce an equally delicate and fragile type of writing, intended only for the interest of their equals. This scenario changed especially in the second half of the 20th century, largely due to the

¹ In addition to these awards, throughout her career Maria José Dupré won other prizes, such as: the Cultural Medal of the Geographical Historical Institute (1955); the Bartira Medal (1964); the Pen Clube Children's Literature Prize (1966); the "Brigadeiro José Vieira Couto de Magalhães" Medal (1966) awarded by the Brazilian Geographical Society; the Children's Literature Prize (1968) from the São Paulo City Hall Education Department; and the João Ramalho Cross Prize (1974), awarded by the Brazilian Geographical Society.

² According to Barros (2024), these searches were carried out in various databases, including the CAPES Journal Portal, the CAPES Thesis Database, the Brazilian Digital Library of Thesis and Dissertations and the Lattes Platform. For her survey, the researcher searched using the author's name and also her books. In addition to the works found on Maria José Dupré's work for children, Barros (2024) also found theses, dissertations, articles and book chapters on her work for adults, almost all of which related to the novel *Éramos seis* (1943).

new roles that women were taking on in our society as a result of the rise of feminism (Zolin, 2009). This has also been "[...] fundamental for reviewing the role of this literary production by women [as] a work of critical revisionism" (Zolin, 2009, p. 328, own translation).

In this regard, thinking about these women-authors who marked the 20th century in Brazil in order to break the silence that is still imposed on them is a necessary and essential task in building a new vision of the female role in our society. This is the aim of this article, which aims to understand Maria José Dupré's place in the history of children's literature in Brazil, given the publishing phenomenon she represents to this day. To this end, we focus on the literary career of this woman-writer, from a biobibliographical perspective, with an emphasis on her children's literature books, which circulated and are still circulating today, mainly in the school environment.

In order to do this, we used all of her ten children's books as a privileged source of research: *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca* (1943), *A ilha perdida* (1944), *A montanha encantada* (1945), *A mina de ouro* (1946), *O cachorrinho Samba* (1949), *O cachorrinho Samba na Floresta* (1950), *O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia* (1957), *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia* (1963), *O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios* (1966), *Cachorrinho samba na Fazenda Maristela* (1967). In addition to these books, we consulted articles published in newspapers and Maria José Dupré's autobiography, which served as auxiliary research sources. To analyze these sources, we adopted the assumptions of Cultural History, in order to understand how "[...] in different places and at different times a certain cultural reality is constructed, thought about, given to us to read" (Chartier, 1990, p. 17, own translation).

The result of this analysis points to some of the ways in which we can reflect on how Dupré's literary output for children includes elements of a certain "formula" for publishing success, which has led her to shape the education of countless generations of readers since her first children's book, published in 1943. We have therefore organized this text into four parts, in addition to this introduction, in which we present some data on Dupré's life, data on her literary books for children and young people, how her narratives indicate the construction of her literary "formula" and the final considerations.

2 The writer from 290 Cuba Street

While I was working on my first novel, we sold the house and lived in a hotel until my husband built another one on Cuba Street. In this house, also in Jardim América, where we lived for more than twenty years, I wrote many novels and also many books for children (Dupré, 1978, p. 238, own translation).

In her autobiography entitled *Os caminhos*, Dupré (1978) traced a timeline of the events of her life, highlighting the experiences and stories she lived through in the places she visited. This autobiography contains information about her birth, her schooling, her experience as a teacher in the interior of São Paulo and her marriage to engineer Leandro Dupré. The autobiographical narrative culminates with the author settling in the city of São Paulo, more precisely in Cuba Street, 290, in Jardim América³, which was the starting point of her career as a writer.

Dupré's journey to Cuba Street began on a farm in the state of Paraná, on the banks of the Paranapanema River. Maria José Fleury Monteiro (maiden name) was born on May 1st, 1905 to farmers Antonio Lopes de Oliveira Monteiro and Rosa de Barros Fleury Monteiro⁴. However, due to financial difficulties, when she was still a child she moved with her family to the rural area of the city of Botucatu, in the countryside of São Paulo, where she lived until she was young (Dupré, 1978).

During her childhood in the countryside of São Paulo, because there were no schools near the farm where she lived, Dupré was taught literacy by her older brothers. It was only after moving to the urban area of Botucatu that she started attending school, the Colégio dos Anjos (Mello, 1954). At the same time as she started formal schooling, she received private lessons in foreign languages and music at home, taught by preceptors hired by the family.

After completing her primary education, Dupré was sent to the capital of São Paulo to continue her schooling. In São Paulo, she entered the "Caetano de Campos"

³ It is a noble neighborhood in the city of São Paulo, belonging to the West Zone, and is part of the region called "Jardins".

⁴ Regarding the year and place of Dupré's birth, various sources indicate divergent data. However, in her autobiography she reports that she was born in Paraná and later moved to the interior of São Paulo. Taking this information into account, it is possible that her registration took place after her birth. However, we opted to keep the information about 1905 because of the sources we found and also because of the tribute paid in 2005 by the Botucatu Cultural Center to the centenary of Dupré's birth.

Normal School, located in Praça da República, in the city center, where she graduated as a teacher, possibly between the late 1910s and early 1920s.

After completing the Normal Course, she returned to Botucatu to teach in the city, as well as in Cerqueira César, a neighboring town. However, her career as a teacher was short-lived due to her marriage, on February 17, 1922, to railway engineer Leandro Dupré, whose profession required constant relocation. In addition, Leandro asked his wife to devote herself to the home, which she did for a while (Dupré, 1978).

In the early years of their marriage, the then Maria José Fleury Monteiro Dupré, or simply Maria José Dupré, and her husband, Leandro Dupré, lived in the countryside of São Paulo, in cities such as Itu, Piracicaba, Taubaté and Ribeirão Preto (Dupré, 1978). Despite her brief stay in most of these places, some of them left a deep mark on the writer's life. She recounted in her autobiography that, during her stay in Itu, she faced a serious illness, being diagnosed with paratyphoid⁵. As a result, she was unable to conceive children (Dupré, 1978).

After this tragic episode, Dupré and her husband continued on their way until they reached the city of Ribeirão Preto, where they stayed for almost seven years. During this time, they took up residence, built a house and cultivated friendships. Dupré (1978) described that he resumed his interest in music and reading during this period. However, in search of new opportunities and professional growth, Leandro Dupré decided to move to the city of São Paulo (Dupré, 1978).

During their first few years living in São Paulo, while Leandro Dupré sought professional stability, the couple lived in hotels and rented apartments. They managed to build their first home in Jardim América, in São Paulo. However, this house was soon sold and Leandro built a new home at 290 Cuba Street, also in Jardim América.

It was in this residence that Dupré began and established her career as a writer, giving rise to a vast literary output, including short stories, novels, chronicles, journalistic articles and children's narratives. In addition, the residence at 290 Rua Cuba was the scene of intellectual meetings, social events such as dinners, cocktail parties and teas, as well as women's meetings, among other activities.

⁵ Paratyphoid fever is a rare form of salmonellosis caused by *Salmonella enterica* serovar *paratyphi* A, B and C, characterized by symptoms typical of enteric fever, including high fever, headache, abdominal pain and intestinal symptoms, dry cough, chills and skin rashes, followed by a long recovery period. Source: https://www.orpha.net/consor/cgi-bin/OC_Exp.php?lng=PT&Expert=443227. Accessed on: 28 Jan. 2024.

Based in São Paulo, Dupré's first literary text was written and published in 1938. It was a short story published in a local newspaper. Her inspiration for this text came from observing the lives of young women in the countryside who wanted to get married, but due to their parents' rigidity, they saw time pass and ended up being considered "old girls" to fulfill this desire. When she told her husband the story, he found it interesting and encouraged her to write it down and publish it in a newspaper. Following this suggestion, Dupré wrote her first short story, entitled "As meninas tristes", signing it with the pseudonym Mary Joseph. This short story was published in June 1938 in the Rotogravure Supplement of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (Barros, 2024; Dupré, 1978).

Three years after this publication, Dupré had a new text published, this time in the form of a novel, under the title *O Romance de Teresa Bernard*. As with her first short story, Dupré tried to sign the publication as Mary Joseph, but her editor, Artur Neves⁶, then working at the Civilização Brasileira publishing house, didn't accept the suggestion, arguing that the name, as well as being unknown, wasn't commercial. After discussions and suggestions for names, her husband suggested the pseudonym "Senhora Leandro Dupré", which was accepted by the editor. From then on, Dupré used this pseudonym in her publications, and only stopped using it in the mid-1960s (Oliveira, 2018; Barros, 2024). Regarding the use of the pseudonym "Senhora Leandro Dupré", it is important to note that it highlights one of the facets of male chauvinism in Brazil at the time, in which the ladies of society in general were addressed by the surnames of their respective husbands. Thus, by adopting this same logic to sign her books, Maria José Dupré ends up erasing the feminine condition that identifies her as a writer, reaffirming the notion of subjection to the figure of her provider. This idea is reinforced by the fact that she only stopped using the pseudonym "Senhora Leandro Dupré" after her husband's death, when she was already a well-known writer, recognized by the public and critics of the time (Oliveira, 2018; Barros, 2024).

Dupré's first novel, to her own surprise, was an instant success and was responsible for launching her name into the main intellectual circles of the time. Taking advantage of this, in 1943 she released her second novel, *Éramos Seis*, published by

⁶ Artur Neves (1916-1971) worked as an editor at Companhia Editora Nacional and was a founding partner of Editora Brasiliense (1943-1962). He was also responsible for the creation of Editora Universidade de Brasília (Hallewell, 2017).

Companhia Editora Nacional, with a preface written by José Bento Monteiro Lobato. This novel became her first *bestseller* and one of her most critically acclaimed works, receiving the Raul Pompeia Award from the Academia Brasileira de Letras (ABL) in 1944. As a result, *Éramos seis* was translated into Spanish, French and Swedish, and was adapted into a film in Argentina in 1945 (Barros, 2024), as well as being adapted into a soap opera.

Still in 1943, Dupré, her husband, the publisher Artur Neves, the writer Monteiro Lobato and the economist Caio Prado Júnior⁷ embarked on publishing, founding Editora Brasiliense (Hallewell, 2017). With the creation of the new publishing house and with her name already consolidated in the market, Dupré published another ten books for adult audiences between the 1940s and 1960s, many of them by the publishing house of which she was a founding partner. In addition to these novels, during the same period she also published more than 60 chronicles and short stories in newspapers and magazines.

As a result of the texts she wrote, Dupré received several awards and was also active in various literary and publishing institutions, especially in the city of São Paulo. These include the Brazilian Writers' Union (UBE) and the Brazilian Academy of Writers of Children's Literature (Oliveira, 2015). Her dedication to literature was not limited to literary writing either; she was involved in various activities, such as: literature commissions, speaking at congresses and judging literary competitions.

The last book Dupré had published was her autobiography, *Os caminhos*, from 1969, published by Saraiva. After that, she restricted her activities to participation in organizations linked to the literary field and cultural events, as well as her personal and family life. So, after almost eight decades of life, half of them dedicated to literature, Dupré died on May 16, 1984, in the city of São Paulo, at the Samaritano Hospital, leaving no children or heirs⁸.

⁷ Caio Prado Júnior (1907-1990) was an economist, philosopher and historian from São Paulo who was the renowned author of 17 books on economics and politics. He was also the founder of Editora Brasiliense, whose catalog includes all of the renowned historian's works.

⁸ According to some sparse sources we have located, after Dupré's death, the publishing house Ática became the owner of his copyright.

3 Children and young people as interlocutors

Although Dupré was first recognized as a writer of novels for an adult audience, it was in literature for children and young people that she rose to prominence and made her "mark" as a writer among countless generations of readers. In her autobiography, Dupré recounts that she began writing books for children at the request of the children in her family, who complained that she only wrote for adults (Dupré, 1978). Regardless of the reason, it is a fact that she decided to write books for children when, together with her husband, she joined the recently opened Brasiliense publishing house, which had children's literature as one of its editorial lines, which was on the rise in Brazil as a result of two factors in particular: the expansion of primary schooling and the appreciation of literary reading as a formative school tool.

After the establishment of the republican regime in 1889, states such as São Paulo began a broad process of modernizing public education over the first decades of the 20th century, in order to implement a school model whose principle was popular education as the basis for the country's economic, social, political and cultural development (Souza, 2008). Associated with the changes that were imposed as a result, a new school material culture was formed in these schools (Razzini, 2010), marked especially by the consumption of literary books, seen as essential devices for reading practices and the moral and civic training of children (Oliveira, 2015).

These books were given the role of "shaping the public through writing" (Le Goff, 1990), in a view based on the understanding that literary books had the role of providing formative unity in terms of values and virtues, ensuring the proper formation of the "future man" (Oliveira, 2015). As a result, children's literature became the object of widespread interest (and control) from the 1930s onwards, to the same extent that publishers became more professional and specialized in this field, leading to an ever-increasing growth in the publication and consumption of this type of book (Oliveira, 2015).

It was in this context that Dupré entered the world of children's literature and, inspired by the success of the work of Monteiro Lobato, also a founding partner of Brasiliense, wrote her ten books aimed at children and young people. The first of them, entitled *Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*, published in 1943, initially by Brasiliense (a

publishing house in which the author was a partner), received the award for best children's literature book by the Academia Brasileira de Letras (ABL) (Lacerda, 2003).

The following year, in 1944, Dupré published her second book of children's literature, *A ilha perdida*, followed in 1945 by *A montanha encantada*, both by Brasiliense. Continuing with these publications, in 1946 Dupré published *A mina de ouro*, closing the cycle of his first four publications with this publisher

After a break of around three years, Dupré began writing children's literature again. In 1949, she published *O cachorrinho Samba*, which began a series of five other stories focusing on the title character: *O cachorrinho Samba na floresta* (1950), *O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia* (1957), *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia* (1963), *O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios* (1966) and *O cachorrinho Samba na Fazenda Maristela* (1967), all published by Saraiva.

As Dupré launched these new children's literature books, the previous ones were reissued, sometimes by the same publisher, sometimes by others. This meant that his literary output remained in constant circulation, as can be seen from the data in the table below.

Table 1 - Data on Maria José Dupré's children's literature books reissued

Year	Title	Publisher	Edition and year	Series/Collection
1943	<i>Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1943 2. ed. 1945 3. ed. 1948	-
		Saraiva	4. ed. 1959 5. ed. 1965	-
1944	<i>A ilha perdida</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1944	-
		Saraiva	2. ed. 1959, 3. ed. 1965	-
		Ática	4. ed. 1973, 5. ed. 1974, [1975?], 7th ed, ed. [1976?], 9. ed. 1976, ed. 1977, 11. ed. 1978, 12. ed. [1978?], 13. ed. [1979?],	"Vaga-Lume Series"
			14. ed. [1979?], 15. ed. 1980, 16. ed. [1980?], 17. ed. 1981, 18. ed. [1982?], 19. ed. [1983?], 20. ed. 1984, 21. ed. 1985, 22. ed. 1986, 23. ed. 1987, 24. ed. 1989, 25. ed. 1989, 26. ed. 1990, 27. ed. 1991, 28. ed. 1992, 29. ed. 1993 30. ed. 1993, 31. ed. 1994, 32. ed. 1995, 33. ed. 1995, 34. ed. 1996, 35. ed. 1997,	

			38. ed. 1999, 39. ed. 2000, 40. ed. [2011?], 41. ed. 2015	
1945	<i>A montanha encantada</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1945, 2. ed. 1948	-
		Saraiva	3.ed. 1962	-
		Ática	4. ed. 1975, 5. ed. 1978, 6. ed. 1979, 7. ed. 1989, 8. ed. 1980, 9. ed. 1981, 10. ed. 1982, 11. ed. 1983, 12. ed. 1984, 13. ed. 1985, 14. ed. 1986, 15. ed. 1986, 16. ed. 1988, 17th ed. 1989, 18th ed. 1990, 19. ed. 1990, 20. ed. 1991, 21. ed. 1992, 22. ed. 1994, 23. ed. 1995, 24. ed. 1996, 25. ed. 1997, 26. ed. 1998, 27. ed. 1999, 28. ed. 2000, 29. ed. 2002	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
		Círculo do Livro	1-4. ed. 1993, 5. ed. 1994, 6. ed. 1995, 7-8. ed. 1996, 9-10. ed. 1997	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
1946	<i>A mina de ouro</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1946	-
		Saraiva	2. ed. 1959, 3. ed. 1961, 4. ed. 1967	-
		Ática	5. ed. 1975, 6. ed. 1979, 7. ed. 1980, 8. ed. [1980?], 9. ed. 1981, 10. ed. 1982, 11. ed. [1983?], 12. ed. 1983, 13. ed. 1984, 14. ed. 1986, 15. ed. 1987, 16. ed. 1989, 17. ed. 1990, 18. ed. 1990, 19. ed. 1991, 20. ed. 1993, 21. ed. 1994, 22. ed. 1995, 23. ed. 1996, 24. ed. [1996?], 25. ed. 1997, 26. ed. 1999, 27. ed. 1999, 28. ed. 2000, 29. ed. 2002	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
		Círculo do Livro	1-4. ed. 1993, 5. ed. 1994, 6. ed. 1995, 7-8. ed. 1996, 9-10. ed. 1997	-
1949	<i>O cachorrinho Samba</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1949	-
		Saraiva	2. ed. 1949, 3. ed. 1975	-
		Ática	4. ed. 1975 5. ed. [1979?], 6. ed. 1980, 7. ed. 1981, 8. ed. 1982, 9. ed. 1981, 10. ed. 1984, 11. ed. 1986, 12. ed. 1987, 13. ed. 1991, 14. ed. 1991, 16. ed. 1993, 17. ed. 1994, 18. ed. 1996, 19. ed. 1998, 20. ed. [1999?], 21. ed. [2000?], 22. ed. 2003	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
		Círculo do Livro	1-4. ed. 1993, 5. ed. 1994, 6. ed. 1995, 7-8. ed. 1996,	"Cachorrinho Samba

			9-10. ed. 1997	Collection"
1950	<i>O cachorrinho Samba na floresta</i>	Brasiliense	1. ed. 1950	-
		Saraiva	2. ed. 1962	-
		Ática	3. ed. 1975, 4. ed. 1980, 5. ed. [1982?], 6. ed. 1984, 7. ed. 1987, 8. ed. 1989, 9. ed. 1991, 10. ed. 1994, 11. ed. 1995, 12. ed. 2002	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
		Círculo do Livro	1-4. ed. 1994, 5-6. ed. 1995, 7-8. ed. 1996, 9-10. ed. 1997	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
1957	<i>O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia</i>	Saraiva	ed. 1957 2. ed. 1967	-
1963	<i>O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia</i>	Saraiva	ed. 1963	-
1966	<i>O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios</i>	Saraiva	1.ed. 1966	1966
1967	<i>O cachorrinho Samba na Fazenda Maristela/ O cachorrinho Samba na fazenda</i>	Saraiva	1. ed. 1967	-
		Ática	2. ed. 1975, 3. ed. 1980, 4. ed. 1982, 5. ed. 1984, 5. ed. 1985, 6. ed. 1985, 7. ed. 1991, 8. ed. 1994, 9. ed. 1995, 10. ed. [1997?], 11. ed. [1999?], 12. ed. 2002,	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"
		Círculo do Livro	1-4. ed. 1994, 5-6. ed. 1995, 7-8. ed. 1996, 9-10. ed. 1997	"Cachorrinho Samba Collection"

Source: Barros (2024)

As you can see from Table 1, of Dupré's children's literature books, *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia* (1963) and *O cachorrinho Samba entre os Índios* (1966) were the only ones that were not reissued. With regard to *O Cachorrinho Samba na Rússia*, it is worth noting that it was awarded the Jabuti prize in 1964 in the Children's Literature category as the best book of the year. In addition to these, two others had fewer reissues than the others: *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*, with four more editions than the first; and *O Cachorrinho Samba na Bahia*, which had a single reissue in 1967.

Another aspect to highlight is the change in the title of *O cachorrinho Samba na Fazenda Maristela*. When it was published by Ática in 1975, the book was retitled *O cachorrinho Samba na fazenda*. In addition to this change, in the case of this book, which had already been reissued after Dupré's death, there was also a change in content, with several parts of the original text being deleted (Barros, 2024).

Of all of the children's literature books that Dupré has reprinted, the one with the highest number of editions is *A Ilha Perdida*, which has reached a total of 41, in addition to the countless reprints that continue to take place. This is followed by *O Cachorrinho Samba*, which has been published 22 times, while *O cachorrinho Samba na floresta* and *O cachorrinho Samba na fazenda* have been published 12 times each. The books *A montanha encantada* and *A mina de ouro* had nine editions each.

With regard to the reissues of *A Ilha Perdida* as part of Ática "Vaga-lume" series, as Oliveira (2018) explains, through the use of some editorial strategies, this book was inserted into the circle of young readers, unlike the audience initially planned for it: children. This process was a milestone in Brazilian youth literature, and was also responsible for helping to consolidate a narrative and editorial model for these "specifically youth" market segments (Oliveira, 2018). Not by chance, *A Ilha Perdida*, chosen as the first volume of the "Vaga-lume" collection, achieved enviable sales figures, as one of Brazil's biggest publishing successes (Oliveira, 2018).

It is also important to mention here that Dupré's children literature gained international prominence through two of her books: *O cachorrinho Samba* and *A mina de ouro*. According to a note published by columnist Tavares Miranda in the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* in 1975, both publications were chosen by UNESCO as the best children's literature books. For this reason, they were selected to appear in the second edition of *The Best of the Best* catalog, published by Verlag Dokumentation, of Munich Pullach, and Bowker, of New York (Miranda, 1975).

4 A successful literary and editorial formula

With regard to the literary characteristics of Dupré's children's literature books, which is a substantial part of the success she achieved among her readers, when we analyze them together, it is possible to observe a similar narrative pattern among them, which is close to the format of a literary series. Although their narratives were not formally conceived as a series or collection in the strict sense⁹, we can see a recurring editorial strategy: the same settings and repetition of characters who move from one

⁹ Although some of Dupré's children's literature books are known today for being part of a series or collection, such as "Vaga-lume" or "Cachorrinho Samba", none of them were originally conceived in this way. The process of transforming part of this writer's work into a series or collection took place after Ática became responsible for Dupré's publications.

book to the next, promoting continuity and interrelationship between the stories. This characteristic gives Dupré's children's literature the character of a literary series.

In this context, the characters are gradually introduced and reappear throughout the different narratives or take on fixed roles, acting as protagonists in all the stories. The protagonism of these characters is aligned with the adventurous plot they are about to experience.

Another feature that reinforces the serial structure of Dupré's children's books is the setting in which the plots unfold. In the first four books, the "godfather's farm" acts as the main link between the narratives, creating a spatial unity that connects the stories. In the books starring the puppy Samba, the setting varies, but the narrative dynamic remains the same. Samba's adventures take place in different contexts, usually as a result of trips taken with his owners, ranging from the family farm to more distant places, such as Russia. This variation in settings, combined with the repetition of a recurring narrative structure, reinforces the thematic and stylistic continuity of the works, bringing them closer to a literary series model.

These elements used by Dupré are associated with what Chartier (2011) describes as a "network of texts". According to this historian, this concept refers to the way in which different texts or literary works connect, forming a network. These connections can be direct, through explicit references and citations of elements from one title in another, or indirect, through themes and ideas shared between the texts. In Dupré's children's literature, this "network of texts" manifests itself in the interconnection of elements such as the repetition of characters and recurring scenarios, as well as the same narrative genre: adventure. In this sense, it can be said that Dupré structured her literary production for children in two interconnected narrative "series": one that encompasses his first four books -

Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca, A ilha perdida, A montanha encantada e A mina de ouro; and the stories about the puppy Samba – *O cachorrinho Samba, O cachorrinho Samba na floresta, O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia, O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia, O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios* and *O cachorrinho Samba na Fazenda Maristela*.

In the first of these series, made up of works published between 1943 and 1946 - *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca; A ilha perdida; A montanha encantada* and *A mina de ouro* - Dupré uses the Lobatian narrative strategy, focused on the idea

of adventures on a farm, to captivate her readers. In them, she portrays characters belonging to the same family nucleus - siblings and cousins, accompanied by their pets - who spend their vacations on the "godfather's farm". The plot usually develops when these characters get lost in rural, unknown, exotic or wild environments, producing a type of adventurous narrative similar to that of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but imprinting marks of Brazilianness on these adventures - a "Robinson à brasileira" - as a distinctive element between the reference "matrix" and the new text (Oliveira, 2014).

So, in the first book, *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*, Dupré introduces the reader to the most famous setting of her first four children's books, the "godfather's farm". It is also in this book that we meet the first characters who will be part of most of the writer's stories: cousins Vera, Lucia, Oscar and Quico.

As the author develops her later narratives, new characters are gradually introduced. For example, in the second book, *A ilha perdida*, we meet the brothers Henrique and Eduardo. In the third book, *A montanha encantada*, we meet their cousin Cecília. Finally, in the fourth book, *A mina de ouro*, Dupré introduces us to the puppy Samba. This character marks the end of the cycle of adventures on the godfather's farm and inaugurates a new phase of stories, whose protagonist is the family dog.

In this "network" between the texts, the settings follow a pattern: the godfather's farm is the initial destination for urban children on school vacation. However, due to adverse circumstances, there is a break in the routine, placing the child characters and/or domestic animals in challenging situations in places considered dangerous, such as an unexplored wild island, a mysterious mountain or an abandoned mine.

Although these four initial publications show similar patterns, with the main link being adventure and the connection with the godfather's farm, it's important to note that in their first book, *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*, part of the narrative still takes place in the city, during Vera and Lúcia's school time. In this first book, adventure is represented through mischief, school activities, outings and games, such as running away from home, fights between the sisters, playtime, visits to the beach and family farms, trips to the movies and vacations on the godfather's farm.

Compared to the subsequent books, *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca* does not have the godfather's farm as its main setting, although part of the plot takes place there. The dynamic in which the characters explore the wild environments around the property and end up getting lost does not occur in this first book. In any case, the

motto of the "lost child" - an element that became characteristic of his first books - is present in *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*. In it, Dupré recounts the experience of Lucia, who, wanting to go to school like her sister Vera, wanders away from family supervision and ends up getting lost in the city streets. After this episode, the narrative returns to the sisters' daily routine, emphasizing aspects of their family life and vacations on their godfather's farm.

In *A ilha perdida*, the protagonists Henrique and Eduardo, on vacation at their godfather's farm, decide to explore a mysterious island near the property. This expedition, undertaken without their family's consent, leads them to face dangerous and challenging situations, as they end up getting lost and encounter an enigmatic inhabitant living on the island. After days of hardship, the boys manage to return to the farm and are rescued by their families.

In *A montanha encantada*, it's the turn of cousins Vera, Lucia, Cecilia and Oscar and puppies Pingo and Popcorn to go on adventures on a mysterious mountain. Attracted by a light shining on the top of a mountain near the farm, the children convince their godfather to take them on an excursion to unravel the mystery. As they approach the site, they are sucked deep into the mountain, where they discover a town inhabited by dwarves. Lost and not knowing how to return, they spend their days getting to know the culture of the local inhabitants. After an unsuccessful attempt to escape, the children are freed by the princess of the dwarves and return to their families.

In the last story that closes the cycle of adventures on the godfather's farm, *A mina de ouro*, the cousins Henrique, Eduardo, Oscar, Quico, Vera, Cecília and the puppy Samba decide to explore the Jaraguá hill, located in the city of São Paulo. With the support of their godfather, the children are taken to the site and plan to go camping. However, motivated by curiosity and attracted by stories about an abandoned gold mine inside the hill, they decide to enter it and end up getting lost. After days of hardship and facing various dangers, they find a way out and are rescued by their godfather.

As you can see, despite some differences between the four narratives, especially in *Aventuras de Vera, Lúcia, Pingo e Pipoca*, the narrative pattern always remains the same: the child, usually driven by curiosity and, in some cases, disobedience, ends up getting lost. After facing dangers and difficulties, they are rescued by a relative.

These characteristics also give Dupré's work a pedagogical character, so that with each adventure the children experience, there is an associated moral lesson. These lessons emphasize the transmission of norms and values, especially with regard to obedience to adults, constant figures in the author's children's narratives.

With regard to the books revolving around Samba, which make up Dupré's second "series" of children's books, there is a narrative that resembles the idea of a travel diary, in which we follow the adventures of the puppy-protagonist from birth to adulthood. Among the books that make up this narrative "series" are: *O cachorrinho Samba*, *O cachorrinho Samba na floresta*, *O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia*, *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia*, *O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios* and *O cachorrinho Samba na fazenda*, published between 1949 and 1966.

In these books, the plot revolves around Samba's experiences and adventures during his travels. These adventures usually take place through contact with the inhabitants of the places he visits, who range from human characters to other animals, equally anthropomorphized as the protagonist.

Also, in these books, unlike the previous narratives, in which the animals were not anthropomorphized and acted according to their nature, Samba replaces the child characters and starts to behave like them. In the first book, *O cachorrinho Samba*, the motto of the "lost child" is also repeated, from where the whole plot revolves around the dog. This strategy was left aside in the subsequent books, when the reader has already "settled in" with the new protagonist, and the adventure resulting from Samba's interactions with the inhabitants of the places visited, especially other animals, prevails in the other books.

With regard to the journeys made, the first is to the family's rural property in Tremembé, in the interior of São Paulo. In *O cachorrinho Samba na floresta*, the second book in this set, the narrative takes place in a rural and wild environment. The narrative structure remains similar to that of the author's first books, featuring the main character, who comes from the city, spending the weekend in a rural area and exploring the wild environment near the property.

The dynamic of exploring wild places also prevails. The protagonist decides to explore his surroundings and ends up in a nearby forest, where he experiences various adventures with the wild animals that live there. However, unlike the previous narratives, the protagonist has no trouble leaving his owners' property. He enters the

forest freely, faces tense and dangerous situations when interacting with wild animals and returns home without any major obstacles.

In the following books, *O cachorrinho Samba na Bahia*, *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia* and *O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios*, the protagonist stops making trips restricted to the family's rural properties and starts exploring various locations in Brazil and abroad. In the case of national locations, the Center-West stands out, with an emphasis on Araguaia, and the Northeast, particularly the state of Bahia. Internationally, Samba traveled to Europe, to the countries of the former Soviet Union, especially Russia.

Although these settings move away from the predominantly rural environments of the previous books, the exoticism and wildness are still present in these narratives. In *O Cachorrinho Samba na Bahia*, Dupré describes the passage of Samba and his owner through the city of Salvador, the capital of Bahia, and through the sertão, in the region of Canudos. The plot develops from the protagonist's contact with the local inhabitants, but a significant part of the narrative revolves around the history of the "Canudos War", most likely as a way of aligning the literary text with school purposes. In doing so, the narrative presents a historically biased reading of the "Canudos War", as it portrays the events exclusively from the perspective of the Brazilian Army, offering a pejorative view of the countryside people and Antônio Conselheiro.

Many didn't work. They lived playing guitar, chatting or praying. [...]. But Conselheiro was ignorant, he didn't know how to interpret religion, he did everything in his own way. [...]. Well. One day the Rio de Janeiro government found out that this was the hideout of a bunch of murderers and gave orders for soldiers to come and wipe out the camp and Antônio Conselheiro (Dupré, 1957, p. 80-81, own translation).

The quote shows Dupré's distorted and prejudiced view of the "Canudos War". As Dias (1997, p. 141-142, own translation) explains, it can be said that she represented this event in our history through the lens that the elites of the late 19th century used, that is, "[...] with prejudices, manipulation of facts, and the dumbing down of the poor because she thought they were uneducated and inferior, and therefore incapable of becoming agents of history".

In *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia*, this exotic look and biased perspective on certain historical events are also present. In the plot, Samba and his owner travel to Europe and during the journey the protagonist comes into contact with the countries

that made up the Soviet Union, especially Russia. While exploring these places, the puppy criticizes the Soviet socialist regime, considering it authoritarian, limiting freedom and exploiting subordinate countries.

It's important to note that *O cachorrinho Samba na Rússia* was released a year before the military coup that established the dictatorial period in Brazil from 1964. In this context, it can be seen that the narrative echoes the anti-communist discourses widely disseminated in the period, especially by the Brazilian press. In this respect, Silva (2009, p. 172, own translation), when analyzing the anti-communist discourses in the newspapers of that period, describes that the Brazilian press fed these arguments by publishing that "[...] communism threatened not only religious tradition, but also property, freedom, social stability and, above all, the democratic regime". For Silva (2009), these discourses contributed to the population seeing the Soviet Union as the antithesis of freedom, private property and democracy.

Despite the many negative aspects attributed to the Soviet regime, in *The Little Dog Samba in Russia*, Dupré, at certain points in the narrative, points out the positive aspects of the Soviet regime. These include the education system and social welfare policies. In this respect, it's worth remembering that in 1963 the Brazilian reality in terms of education and social assistance was far from ideal. At the time, more than "50% of the Brazilian population was excluded from national political life because they were illiterate" (Soares; Galvão, 2005, p. 270) and "illiteracy [was] seen as the cause of poverty, but as the effect of an unjust and non-equal society" (Soares; Galvão, 2005, p. 270, own translation). Therefore, the points made by Dupré in his narrative reflect a development project for the country, in which education was considered the main driving force for change, being seen as the key to overcoming social inequalities and promoting progress.

In the subsequent book, *O cachorrinho Samba entre os índios*, Samba travels again with his owner, this time to the Midwest of Brazil, in indigenous villages in the Brazilian cerrado biome. The plot begins with Samba's interaction with the local inhabitants. Much of the narrative develops from Samba's observations about the culture of the indigenous peoples, which is portrayed in an exotic and savage way, reinforcing a stereotyped view of them.

Among "curious" accounts of the local characters, the author highlights and praises the work carried out by the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) and the Catholic religious

missions in the region. While the FAB dedicated itself to "caring for" and "looking after" the health of these peoples, the Catholic religious missions were given the task of educating them. In this respect, Bonin and Kirchof (2012, p. 232) argue that:

From very early on, the Brazilian literary canon [...] incorporated the idea that the Amerindian, when not subjected to the civilizing and Christianizing process of the European, would be left to a savage and animalized nature from which they could not escape, cannibalism being one of the manifestations of this nature. With regard to the project of conquest and colonization, it should be noted that, in the same way as the representation of the *good savage*, the representation of the Indian as a *cannibal* also serves the colonizing purpose of the Europeans, insofar as it proposes, firstly, that the inhabitant of the Americas is completely defined by his animal/wild nature and, secondly, that this nature can only be domesticated through a civilizing model, the values relating to law, religion and the authority of the European himself. (own translation)

After exploring distant places like Bahia, Russia and the Midwest of Brazil, Samba, in the last book of this "series", finally returns to a familiar environment: the farm. In *O cachorrinho Samba na Fazenda Maristela*, the protagonist travels with his owner during the Easter holidays to Fazenda Maristela, also located in the municipality of Tremembé (SP). The plot explores Samba's interactions with the farm animals, Samba, Maristela and Kumbe, narrating the puppy's daily life, which includes playing, walking around the property and listening to stories about the former owners, the Trappist friars.

Although Dupré returns to a rural setting that was widely explored in his first stories, Samba doesn't venture out alone into the wild places around this environment as he did in *O cachorrinho Samba na floresta*. He always does so in the company of his owner and other locals, reinforcing the idea of adult guardianship over childhood. This way, he doesn't face any major dangers or difficulties; on the contrary, he enjoys the walk, praising the natural beauty of the landscape.

It can also be seen in this last book that the rural setting is presented as an idyllic place, ideal for vacationing or going on adventurous expeditions, a marked characteristic of the author's earlier narratives. As a result, what can be seen in Dupré's last four narratives is that the adventure plot is marked by an excess of "pedagogism", which according to Lajolo and Zilberman (2022, p. 209), refers to "[...] the supremacy of the more mature character and the entities through which they express themselves, namely the school, the family; and bourgeois elitism".

5 Final considerations

By analyzing Maria José Dupré's bio-bibliographical data, it is possible to understand some of the striking elements of her career as a woman writer. As Veyne (1971, p. 67) explains, the "history" that is presented here "[...] is first and foremost an account, and what is called explanation is no more than the way in which the account is organized into a comprehensible plot" based on "[...] profound structural forms of the historical imagination" (White, 2008, p. 11, own translation). In this way, the focus on aspects of the life and children's books published by Maria José Dupré is aimed at "making intelligible" some of the social and cultural representations of this woman-writer in the history of children's literature, just as her positions and interests help to "decipher" how she thought about society or how she wanted it to be (Chartier, 1990).

So it's impossible not to think that, as a woman from a middle-class family who grew up in the interior of the state of São Paulo, Dupré's personal and professional life as a writer was undoubtedly marked by the possibility of study. Unlike most of the women who preceded her or were contemporary with her, access to formal schooling, accompanied by complementary education in music and foreign languages, opened the way for her to "use the pen".

As Jinzenji (2012) explains, until the mid-19th century, largely due to the restrictions imposed on female education, women's participation in the world of writing was restricted to private life. It was only with the expansion of access to school and the conquest of the right to read that, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, they began to make their presence felt in the press and literary circuits. These changes, slow and not without conflict, allowed an increasing number of women to access the world of literate culture, often using reading as an escape from their domestic chores or writing as a way of expressing their worldview, in an exercise to make themselves heard in their way of thinking (Almeida, 1998).

This was also the case for Dupré. After marrying in 1922, she stopped working as a teacher to devote herself to her husband and household chores, which she interspersed with reading and music. However, in search of new opportunities, the couple moved to the capital of São Paulo, where Dupré, immersed in a new network of sociability (Sirinelli, 2003) resulting from her husband's spaces of circulation, saw in literary writing the possibility of narrating the female universe through an authentically

feminine voice. This led to her first short story and her first novel, both starring women and focused on a female readership.

As Dupré began to enjoy a certain prestige and recognition as a writer among "adult" readers, she embarked, supposedly at the request of the children in her family, on the world of children's literature. In this new literary field, she developed what can be called a "formula for success" when it comes to reading literature to children and young people in Brazil.

In her books aimed at this audience, Dupré established the adventure narrative as a priority genre, very much inspired by Daniel Defoe's model and the artifice of Lobato's farm. With this, he built up a representation of children with energy, curiosity, a pioneering spirit, willingness and a certain inconsequence, while at the same time emphasizing the role of the adult as guardian and as the one who, with the most experience, "educates" the little men in training and leads them down the path of morality, civility and learning.

By structuring his children's adventures in this way, Dupré uses the strategy of interconnecting them in a network, as Chartier (2011) explains, in the style of a "series", either by the recurrence of spaces, or by the transience of characters between one story and another, or by a basic type of plot: narratives starring children, young people or animals, who venture into places represented as exotic and generally opposed to the notion of urban spaces.

This "formula", although it can generate the idea of repetitiveness and a certain circularity between the different stories, is precisely what makes Dupré so effective at captivating readers, since it builds a bond between them and the characters, ensuring continued interest in her different books. In this sense, it can be inferred that this literary "formula" adopted by Dupré was what enabled her to achieve the position of a publishing phenomenon, author of one of the best-selling books in the country¹⁰, leaving an indelible mark on countless generations of readers since the 1940s.

This can even be seen in her contemporary writers, whose production is very similar to Dupré's, such as Isa Silveira Leal, with her books about the character Glorinha, Virgínia Lefèvre, with her "Ana Selva" series, or even Lucia Machado de

¹⁰ According to a report published on the BBC Brasil website in 2023, *A ilha perdida* has sold more than 5 million copies since it became part of the "Vaga-lume" series, making it the best-selling book in this collection. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/articles/clj7wykjkdo>. Accessed on: 15/03/2025.

Almeida, who invested heavily in the adventure genre from the 1950s onwards. In view of this, Dupré occupies an important place in the history of Brazilian children's literature, whether because of her status as a woman, who broke barriers and achieved success that persists over time, or because of the way she imprinted a mark on the way this literature is thought of, by building a successful publishing "formula".

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