

**On the fringes of archives - forays, biographies
and memories^{1 2 3 4}**

Nas franjas dos arquivos – incursões, biografias e memórias

Cunha, M. T. S. (2019). *(Des)arquivar: Arquivos pessoais e ego-documentos no tempo presente*. Rafael Copetti Editor.

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Alluding to archiving, Maria Teresa Santos Cunha chose to name her latest publication *(Des)arquivar: arquivos pessoais e ego-documentos no tempo presente* ((Un)archive: personal files and ego-documents in the present.) This gesture, however, invokes the unarchiving movement, from which personal files and ego-documents⁵ are mobilized by historians in the present. Archiving and unarchiving also gain space in nine of the 11 articles that compose the book. They draw attention to the fact that a key of ambivalence is absent in the evocation of both since the author presents the former as part of personal experiences that included textualities and specific materialities and the latter as the act – also dated and producer of textuality – of historically and

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⁵ In the preface of the book, the author conceptualizes the researched ego-documents according to James Amelang (2005) and Antonio Castillo Gómez's (2013) definitions. She defines them as written texts about experiences, feelings, and personal experiences.

historiographically interrogating the surveyed sources. Thus, a methodological description, theoretically supported by well consolidated research on the subject, presents us with a historiographical reading of personal files and ego-documents.

Maria Teresa Santos Cunha is a full Professor of the History Department at the Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina (Udesc), having also taught at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Her institutional career was marked by the elaboration and execution of research projects which mobilized a conglomerate of undergraduate and graduate scholarship holders around organizing, cataloguing, and conditioning personal files. Among these projects, “Territories of many writings: the personal archives of the Boiteux brothers (Historical and Geographical Institute of Santa Catarina, 19th and 20th centuries),” “Profile of a library, traces of a reader: studies on the collection of a teacher – Victor Márcio Konder (1925-2005),” “The personal archive of Catarinense Professor Elpídio Barbosa (1909-1966): from hand writing to digital records,” and “From manual to digital: personal files of Santa Catarina educators: Elpídio Barbosa and Walter Piazza (20th century)”⁶ stand out.

Similarly, the selected articles illustrate parts of the research path fostered in elaborating and executing the aforementioned projects. It is also because it was written in the midst of the execution of a research project that the compilation satisfactorily exhibits its methodological paths and theoretical scenarios. The book, as announced in the preface by Maria Helena Câmara Bastos, gathers studies organized into two categories: personal archives and “intimate documents.” Thus, the first part gathers four articles that deal with research experiences, using Lucas Alexandre Boiteux and Elpídio Barbosa’s personal archives as sources. The intimate documents, carefully presented in the second part, consist of *normalistas* (students of the Curso Normal, a course aimed at training primary school teachers) and primary teachers’ diaries, letters, and scrapbooks dating from the 1940s to the 1960s.

The first part of the book describes Lucas Boiteux and Elpídio Barbosa’s personal archives, showing the care in writing the biography of the collection and those who made it. Thus, both the materialities and discursive interactions of the archives receive attention. Lucas Alexandre Boiteux, who the author credits as a “man of letters” (Cunha, 2019, p. 21), is the

⁶ Data taken from the Lattes Platform (CNPq). <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1895532605964830>.

theme of three⁷ of the four articles in this category. The author then colors collecting practices, placing them as part of a device to constitute a political protagonism that requires the construction of model public individuals. She then chooses to focus on the series of writings *Bordejós sobre meio século de Marinha* (Drifting thoughts on half a century of Navy), published in the *Jornal do Commercio do Rio de Janeiro* between January and June 1955. It is through it that Maria Teresa Santos Cunha revisits his writings on pranks on freshmen, the school building, and the food offered to students at the Naval School of Rio de Janeiro.

It is worth mentioning the treatment that the author employs to memorialistic writing, which she sees as lacunar and polyphonic. Therefore, it involves oblivion and presupposes choices and selections (Cunha, 2019). This consideration supports the necessary critical movement toward the source used as an object for drafting these articles since, by considering oblivion as constitutive of the memorialistic text, it endorses the historiographic questioning necessary to “write the biography of the collection.” Moreover, some of Lucas Alexandre Boiteux’s considerations, then a student, regarding the contents taught in classes allow us to elaborate questions about real school practices, especially when confronted with the curriculum at the Naval School. For Boiteux, the overly theoretical character of the teachings did little to dialogue with the practical aim announced by the institution (Cunha, 2019). Thus, the student’s memories, enlarged in the articles, are considered valuable tools for understanding some aspects of the school culture that formed and socialized the then future military personnel. Moreover, this culture allowed the elaboration of reflections about the school training of a specific professional profile (Cunha, 2019).

Elpídio Barbosa’s archive is presented in an article⁸ that elaborates on his professional trajectory and the constitution and organization of the documents used. Deposited at the Institute of Documentation and Research in Human Sciences (IDCH) at Udesc, the archive consists of about 200 pieces on various media. It especially safeguards traces of his work as a school inspector and education manager. To describe his professional procedures, which detail the constitution of the collection and are the center of teacher/collector themes, Maria Teresa

⁷ Namely: This thing of keeping... man of words and personal files,” “The vivid times in the Naval School: memories of a student (1897-1900),” and “School memories in a personal archive: pondering Lucas Alexandre Boiteux’s training at the Naval School”.

⁸ The article is titled “The personal archive of Catarinense Professor Elpídio Barbosa (1909-1966): from hand writing to digital records.”

Santos Cunha questions the constitution of a network of specific sociabilities, understanding the subject as an intellectual mediator (Cunha, 2019). Moreover, the author defends the centrality of the revisited personal archive to examine the existence of a past that reverberates the experience of time. This premise allows us, thus, to consider the role of the historian who focuses on this documentation and detail the various temporalities resting in the archive (Cunha, 2019).

In the latter part of the book, the second category of enlarged documents are nicknamed intimate documents. Of the five chapters narrating research experiences, with categorized sources, three address female Brazilian teachers or Education majors' personal diaries. The first of these – “From the chest to the archive: writings of self, writings of the other” – reprises the diaries of two young Florianopolitan normalists, written between 1967 and 1969. Both are understood as ordinary writings, intimate documents which recorded everyday aspects and passing experiences. Also because of these characteristics, Maria Teresa Santos Cunha (2019) understands that personal diaries are incapable of existing outside the temporal gravitation supporting them. She emphasizes their operationalization as a historical source and the difficult, but necessary, historiographical movement to problematize the personal experiences voiced in the diaries, relating them to broader social experiences. Finally, she asserts the urgency of discussing policies to form collections and archives, so institutions also embrace such documents for their importance for perceiving different territories of sensitivities and narratives of the lived.

“The bio that was written: gender and generational models in MRRH’s diary” also uses a personal diary as its source. In this text, two diaries, written by a teenage girl from the state of Rio Grande do Sul between 1964 and 1966, were researched to discuss their individual experiences and strategies for constructing subjectivity. Cunha (2019) highlights the gendered understanding of her memorialistic writing since many of the socialization spaces and experiences described were typically led by middle-class women in the 1960s. Thinking such writings allows the author to detail the ways in which the construction of subjectivities takes place, in addition to generational models and the experience of gender experiences. She also defends the theoretical value of the writings themselves for Cultural History of Education articles which privilege the study of constructed representations and shared experiences (Cunha, 2019). This research guideline is also present in the following chapter – “A life in first person:

ego-document readings of a Brazilian teacher” – in which four notebooks of a young “Miss M.” serve as sources. Ms. M., an education major, recorded her memoirs between 1967 and 1969. The document draws our attention for repeatedly reporting the reading of novels from the *Biblioteca das Moças* (Young Women’s Library) since it allows us to infer the formation of romantic sensitivity and the permanence of a religious logic in teacher training courses. Finally, Maria Teresa Santos Cunha (2019) defends the consideration of these writings as parts of a material school culture since they allow a closer approximation with the internal functioning of educational institutions.

The exchange of correspondence between two letter writers – Cláudia and Lúcia – lent the researcher a set of 171 letters. The letters were exchanged between 1967 and 1968 and are taken as places of memory (Nora cited by Cunha, 2019). They are analyzed as cultural practices and a set of historical documents in the article “That is all for today...: letters between friends.” Both correspondents were primary teachers, and the former was also a Pedagogy student. Cunha (2019) chose to emphasize the reported fragments of school practices as a means of accessing excerpts from school routine. The author claims that, from the typographic narrative devices Cláudia and Lúcia used, she could think of the arts of living, the conditions to which teachers and students were subjected, and their representation.

The last chapter of the book uses anthologies and scrapbook of four *normalistas*, compiled between 1941 and 1966, as its source. Her effort involved resorting to these objects and making them dialogue with History of Education, surpassing the affective dimension, common attraction, and curiosity they generate. These were considered documents of everyday life whose production is institutionally guided by the school. This consideration is supported by the expedient of signaling school teachings in the aforementioned documents and even by the recurrent use of written language, traditionally learned in formal educational institutions. Finally, the author highlights the richness of this source, in addition to its importance as a carrier of a written culture and a world of affections and sensitivities, as a way of perceiving, albeit indirectly, the drifts and transits of school culture (Cunha, 2019).

It is worth mentioning that, although the book gathers articles whose circulation was prominent in specialized journals, Cunha deserves the merit of organizing them in coherent categories and exposing their methodological arsenal and the theoretical background employed by her throughout her career as a teacher and researcher. In this regard, the cherished work of

Professor Maria Teresa Santos Cunha is evinced not only by the diversity and vastness of the researched collections but also by the constant update of the theoretical references mobilized in her research movements. According to the postface of the book, the course of academic production enables us to see a sensitive History of intimate documents. The researchers view assigns meaning to the History of affections, proximities, and sociability networks. Finally, the book has a perceptible biographical dimension in showing us meetings amidst archives and research trajectories illustrated by the reported initiatives. Some of these meetings gained space and body in the flap of the book, written by Felipe Matos, and in the postscript, by Ana Luíza Mello Santiago de Andrade, both former graduate students of the author.

“(Des)arquivar: arquivos pessoais e ego-documentos no tempo presente” invites us to delve into personal files and look closely at intimate documents, making significant contributions to History of Education by showing a range of possible sources for historiographic writing. Moreover, its catalogue of concepts, theoretical contributions, and methodological approximations allows readers to think about possible uses for such documents so we can understand school culture and its interfaces with its surroundings.

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