



THE CASE *bia.alighieri*: REFLECTIONS UPON A RESEARCH¹

O CASO *bia.alighieri*:
REFLEXÕES SOBRE UM TEMA DE PESQUISA

EL CASO *bia.alighieri*:
REFLEXIONES SOBRE UN TEMA DE INVESTIGACIÓN

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ABSTRACT: This article aims at analyzing part of the school trajectory of a woman who is black, poor, and resident of a poor area in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte/MG, and her **odd** tastes and reading habits. Based on a qualitative case study, the material stems from semi-structured interviews. Aligned with the theoretical reference of the dispositionalist sociology of education, the paper produces intersectional dialogues with the categories of social class, gender, race, and territory. As its central argument, it indicates the need for the use of multidimensional methods in the field of Sociology of Education in the search for the comprehension of the phenomenon of school trajectories and parental mobilizations.

KEYWORDS: Sociology of education. School trajectories. Case study. Sociological profile configuration. Intersectionalities.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar parte da trajetória escolar de uma mulher, negra, pobre e moradora da periferia de Belo Horizonte/MG e seus relativos **estranhos** gostos e hábitos de leitura. De caráter qualitativo e na forma de um estudo de caso, o material foi produzido a partir do resultado de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Alinhado ao referencial teórico da sociologia da educação disposicionalista, o texto produz diálogos interseccionais com as categorias classe social, gênero, raça e território. Como argumento central indica a importância da necessidade de que pesquisas no campo da Sociologia da Educação façam uso de métodos multidimensionais na busca da compreensão do fenômeno das trajetórias escolares e das mobilizações parentais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociologia da educação. Trajetórias escolares. Estudo de caso. Perfil de configuração sociológico. Interseccionalidades.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar parte de la trayectoria escolar de una mujer, negra, pobre y habitante de la periferia de Belo Horizonte / MG y sus gustos relativamente **extraños** y hábitos de lectura. De carácter cualitativo y en la forma de un estudio de caso, el material fue producido a partir de los resultados de entrevistas semiestructuradas. Alineado al referencial teórico de la sociología de la educación disposicionista, el texto produce diálogos interseccionales con las categorías clase social, género, raza y territorio. Como argumento central, indica la importancia de la necesidad de investigación en el campo de la Sociología de la Educación para hacer uso de métodos multidimensionales en la búsqueda de una comprensión del fenómeno de las trayectorias escolares y de las movilizaciones parentales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sociología de la educación. Trayectorias escolares. Estudio de caso. Perfil de configuración sociológica. Interseccionalidades.

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INTRODUCTION: *bia.alighieri* and the ‘odd’ taste for reading literature

I used the services of a cafeteria in front of the institution where I worked as a teacher when I first contacted Beatrizⁱⁱ. Located in a prime area of the Central-South region of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, the cafeteria was owned by the same person for more than 20 years, which proves its stability in the commercial branch. It regularly serves a young, middle-class audience of students and staffⁱⁱⁱ from the region's private schools. Beatriz was an employee at this cafeteria. Because of my usual attendance at the establishment, I began to enjoy some intimacy with its employees. It was for this reason that one day I **joked** with Beatriz: “Beatrice! *Parli italiano?*”. Her response made me reflect and became the motto for the origin of this article: “*And you know what the name of my email account is? It is bia.alighieri@ [...]. In homage to Dante himself, who looks for his 'Bia'*”^{iv}. Beatriz referred to the work “The Divine Comedy”, in which life is pierced by hell, purgatory and sky, by the writer Dante Alighieri, a Florentine born in the thirteenth century and considered *il sommo poeta*^v. She also referred to the author's passion for **Beatrice**, who in the story, is guided by Dante to Paradise (ALIGHIERI, 2006).

At the time of our conversation I was graduating as a researcher in the field of Sociology of Education, studying school trajectories^{vi}. I was interested to know more about Beatriz, a black woman, representative of a fraction of the working class, an inhabitant of the periphery and a clerk at a cafeteria who had read the work of Dante Alighieri. A few minutes of conversation were enough to reveal that Beatriz had not only read Dante Alighieri but also knew works by Machado de Assis - “*The best writer*”; Carlos Drummond de Andrade - “*I'm proud of him being ours*”; Clarisse Lispector - “*A woman I am in love with*” and Guimarães Rosa - “*He knows the soul of our people*”.

The encounter with Beatriz raised some questions: being from the lower fractions of the working class, usually a part of society that does not have access to certain cultural goods, how to explain the motivations that guided their reading choices? As a woman who worked around 10 hours a day and who commuted more than two hours back and forth between home and work, how was she able to get the objects from her reading practices? After all, how did she signify her own reading habit?

This article aims to answer these and other questions. To analyze the social conditions that allowed Beatriz to become a reader of works that would not circulate, with relative ease and frequency, and therefore would **not be so common** among the working classes. My main interest was to analyze the social conditions of Beatriz's existence: a person crossed by the categories of class, gender and race analysis, as well as their belonging to a vulnerable territory.



On the day of our conversation, Beatriz ended it by confessing that, on her 30th birthday, she still did not know the sea, but that it seemed “*so familiar and so close*” only by reading to Machado's description of the sea in *Dom Casmurro* (ASSIS, s.d.), when referring to the character Capitu: “*I think that by his word him I would recognize even its scent*”.

QUESTIONS ABOUT METHOD

Case studies and school trajectories as tools for research in the sociology of education

I treat Beatriz's story as a case study here understood as a “systematic interrogation of a particular case”^{vii} (BOURDIEU, 1989 *apud* GOLDENBERG, 2002, p. 35), part of a theoretical-methodological scope of qualitative current, aimed at understanding general characteristics capable of being apprehended and explained by means of a more singularized cut. Yin (2001) emphasizes that case studies should investigate the object while preserving its unitary and complex character as well as its contextual conditions. Thus, I defend the argument that the apprehension of the particular can pass through an understanding of the general, its effects and its cultural, historical and social contexts. According to Lahire (2006, p. 30)

in order to understand the social in a double, individualized state, one must have a knowledge of the social in an unfolded state; or, in other words, to explain the uniqueness of a case, one must understand the general processes of which this case is only a condensed product.

To understand the social, **folded**, the interviews conducted with Beatriz compose the general methodological framework of this article: three meetings recorded in digital equipment, totaling 4 hours and 39 minutes of conversation. The interviews followed a minimal script of questions that, for the most part, dealt with aspects related to the school trajectory of Beatriz, a little of her life story and her reading habits. The purpose of the interviews was to suggest to my interlocutor the structuring of her own memories. I did not, therefore, have the concern to legitimize the narratives of the deponent, taking them as absolute truth. My interest was to analyze how Beatriz represented her own social experience and what emergencies of singular traits would have in relation to a certain kind of process of schooling and / or reading repertoire, perhaps unspecific with regard to the more general representatives of her social class of origin.

Understanding the fabrication of human “destinies”, their trajectories and paths, is a fundamental question for the Sociology of Education. It has bent over **how** human beings are produced, taking into account what lies **outside**, the larger expression of society and, at the same time, what is **inside**, a more particular expression that could be attributed to individuals. The problem on the **outside** and on the **inside**, responsible for human social destinies, is not



new. Sociology intends, perhaps from its very origin, between questions related to the experiences of individuals, especially with regard to the taking of positions by the subjects, and the weight of social structures. From positions, choices and behaviors that, if one wishes to escape from false dualisms, need to be understood from their articulations with the objective conditions of human existence. Thus, several studies^{viii} suggest that it would be impossible to reduce individuals, their peculiar traits, tastes and interests; more personal characteristics, to an authentic essence prior to any socializing experience. In other words, they indicate the realization that even the most individual, ephemeral, and particular expressions have their origins, causes, or social effects, as a product both of embodied dispositions and cultural contexts in which people act and make choices.

In the educational field the study of school trajectories can represent an important way to understand **how individuals become what they are**. School trajectories have been the subject of research for at least half a century (NOGUEIRA, 2002). In spite of the different theoretical alignments, the studies maintain the interest in the analysis of the educational paths developed by students within the educational systems and the social aspects, especially those related to class belonging, at the confluence of the relationship between the school institution and the family environment (DAVERNE, 2011). The flows and movements of these paths are described and analyzed from methodological procedures that stand out for their wide variety of possibilities.

The perspectives of trajectory analysis may focus on longitudinal aspects (intended for research in the medium or long term, in the longevity of school careers); macro-social (in reference to large scale); micro-social (in reference to small and punctual scales); of the *ex post facto* type (the analysis of events after their occurrence); case studies (in the form of questionnaires related to specific and singular cases, relative analysis), and, more recently, methodologies aimed at understanding the phenomena of **deviant, atypical** trajectories, considered as sociologically **improbable** or **exceptions**, true **outside the curve points** (according to statistical terms less representative and less well-known probabilistic) but sociologically significant, as the **exemplary case** of Beatriz.

The school trajectories are the result of a unique configuration of multiple and diverse contingencies of existence. They represent "a biographical school course [that can be] captured through the events that mark its scansion, which punctuate with its decisive moments, bifurcations and crossroads" (NOGUEIRA, 2002, p. 59) and that, in this sense, "although they appear as social constructions, [...] they are not limited to reflecting different levels of acquisition of school knowledge that result from inequalities of distribution of cultural privileges" (DAVERNE, 2011, p. 769). This seems to be an important premise: the pathways highlighted by school biographies are the result of influences and extensions of



factors that may or may not be related to school, considering, among other aspects, those of socioeconomic and cultural, family and individual character.

More than half a century later, a basilar aspect in trajectory studies seems to emerge in the last decades^{ix}: the attempt to understand phenomena about the relationship between social inequalities and school inequalities beyond the class category (markedly defined by the relation between the aspects of economic capital and cultural capital, with a strong prevalence of the former over the latter), including the interpretative concern and care of categories such as life stages, gender, territorial belonging, race, sexuality, among others. It is a demand of our time, the result of the contribution of activism and the militancy of intellectuals, especially feminists, homosexuals and blacks, in the search for a more intersectional^x Sociology of Education.

It no longer seems news that different social classes produce different ways of solving everyday problems. Equally, it does not seem news that the problems themselves are different. Not just **for each** social class, but **within each** class; problems perceived and understood in a different way by men **or** women, whites **or** blacks, children **or** young people **or** adults, inhabitants of urban centers **or** rural environments. Thus, for example, the urgency of social survival, signaled by the low life expectancy, unattractive jobs and low pay on the market scale, or short, unhappy and unsuccessful school trajectories are quite common and known in fractions of the working classes (BURGOS, 2009), although it is opportune to say that they are experienced and understood differently by different representatives in this segment. If on the one hand the working classes have experienced situations of social vulnerability, physical or symbolic violence, underemployment or school exclusion, on the other hand no researcher committed to a Sociology of Education interested and able to take sociology really as a **martial art**^{xi} could fail to consider the *dégradé* of overlapping experiences when one is a woman, a black woman, a poor woman and a resident of the periphery, conditions of existence that **cross** and **compose** who Beatriz is. Well, markers of gender, race, class and housing articulate, and, not by chance, the consequent production and maintenance of inequalities reaches, in a **coincident** way, people just like her, engaged in the search for daily solutions to the problems of a social experience already quite arduous. Understanding Beatriz's existence as a cultural, economic, historical and social phenomenon in Brazil, beyond her singularity and her “monthly family income”, can mean a more reflexive political adherence to the fight against intersectional invisibility (CRENSHAW, 2004).

As a way of trying to analyze the social experiences of Beatriz's existence and to grasp the meanings she gave to her own reality, I used the notion of individual patrimonies of dispositions (LAHIRE, 2005), according to the methodological design option presented by Lahire (2004a, p. 22), on the understanding that



a disposition is only revealed through the interpretation of multiple, more or less coherent or contradictory traits of the activity of the individual studied, whether they are the direct observation of the behaviors, the use of the file, the questionnaire or the interview.

The term “disposition” is correlated with a series of other studies and expressions that evoke the “processes of socialization and internalization of past experiences, incorporated, constituting themselves as a synthesis of them” (BUENO, 2007, p. 41), the cultural heritages transported, adapted or (re-) signified and converted into lasting ways of acting, saying, feeling or seeing, and which retain the habits, values, beliefs and categories of appreciation, judgment and perception of people (BUENO, 2007).

The dispositional tradition recognizes disposition as a “series of behaviors, attitudes, and practices [...] embodied product of a past (explicit or implicit) socialization” (LAHIRE, 2004a, p. 27-28) that designates different (and sometimes even conflicting) ways of being; a kind of inclination or social propensity to reproduce and repeat experiences that can not be reduced to a single occurrence. In other words, a tradition that attempts to “take into account, in the analysis of social practices or behaviors, the past of individual actors” (LAHIRE, 2004a, p. 21), thus recognizing the fundamental role of intermediation between people and lived situations (or between people and social experiences).

Thus, the construction and analysis of a sociological profile of configuration made possible the understanding of dispositions, be they behaviors, strategies, mobilizations and the relations of these aspects with the social and objective conditions investigated; namely, the trajectories of schooling of Beatriz and the aspects of intersectionality in contemporary studies in the field of Sociology of Education. Perhaps the *bia.alighieri* case can provide an understanding of a phenomenon that is not restricted only to the study in question, a specific one and on the trajectory of Beatriz, but preserving its differences and distortions, it may favor the more general implications of social cases in **unfolded** state.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF CONFIGURATION

Intersectionalities and overlaps from the effects of class, gender, race, territory

The trajectory enunciated by Beatriz must be understood here as part of **an** interpretative drawing, among **many other** possible, whose result produces a descriptive and informative reading, and often a panoramic one. Thus, it should be emphasized that the analysis of the material privileged the understanding of the narrated feeling in relation to the specific facts investigated that ground this work and not of the facts themselves. In this case, it is important



to point out that not always what people feel or how they perceive things are directly related to reality.

Beatriz was 29 years old at the time of the interview. Black, resident of the Venda Nova region, north of Belo Horizonte, had complete basic education. Natural of the countryside of Minas Gerais, where she completed the first part of elementary school, in a public school, then moved to the Capital with the family in search of better living conditions. Beatriz had been working since she was 14 years old, “*to help with the family income*”. Family of one-parent origin composed of semi-illiterate mother and two male brothers. Beatriz is the middle sibling. Her older brother has a difference of eight years from her, and the younger brother, four less. Both, according to her, “*did not like to study*” and, therefore, did not complete basic education, although they also surpassed the formal school education of the matriarch. The father did not accompany the family in the change. Both his education and also his professional occupation were unknown.

When I met Beatriz I would end my night work schedule and it was common for the employees of the cafeteria to ask me for a ride to the public transport stop. They had as a common feature the fact that they were all black women, especially of the working classes, with only a few years of schooling (except for Beatriz) and residents of areas on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, or neighboring municipalities. The ride was to some point near the bus station. For some the hitchhiking represented the guarantee of not missing the last bus of the night. The metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte still suffers from the discontinuity of public transport offerings at certain times. This is especially true for people from the working classes living in peripheral neighborhoods. This is because modern urbanism advocated the division of the neighborhoods: it imposed on its inhabitants a certain type of zoning, different and appropriate for the rich and the poor, forming a phenomenon of geography notably human. It is important to emphasize that the conditions of habitability, the sense of belonging and the consumer and service goods, whether material or immaterial, are, like practically everything in our society, made available in a different and unequal way in the territoriality of cities. This provides the clarification that the mechanisms of transmission of cultural and social advantages tend to concentrate, in the case of Belo Horizonte, more in the South and Center-South regions of the Capital and; in an inversely proportional way, in the North and Venda Nova regions.

Every day, a large part of the population of urban centers around the world moves in immense migratory flows from their places of residence towards their places of work, and vice versa. Collective transport, including subways, buses and certain types of trains, seek to ensure the alternating connection between two spaces that seem to tend to mutual exclusion, in a historical construction of the separation between the residence and the place of work.



Thus, the "dissociation between private and professional life today is inscribed in the very configuration of cities and structures of use of time" (PROST; VICENT, 1999, p. 38). Beatriz lived in a place not only geographically distant from the distribution map of the city's riches, but also distant from the great centers of circulation of these riches. After all, "for the poor, the places are farther away" (ROSA, 2001, p. 63). Or, as Bourdieu (2008a) pointed out, different kinds of zoning correspond to unequal social conditions of existence. This means that social space would be characterized by

their relative position by the relation with other places (above, below, among, etc.) and the distance that separates them. As physical space is defined by the mutual exteriority of the parts, social space is defined by the mutual exclusion (or distinction) of the positions that constitute it, that is, as a structure of juxtaposition of social positions. Obviously, social space is retranslated into physical space (BOURDIEU, 2008a, p. 160).

Although the Brazilian housing problems are multifaceted and are dissolved by various urban conditions, the housing issue is undoubtedly an aspect that deserves more attention in the form of public policies. Beatriz worked in the region that had the lowest poverty indicators in the city, concentrating no less than four of the five richest regions of Belo Horizonte – the neighborhoods of the Center-South region: Anchieta/Sion, Santo Antônio, Savassi and Serra. The fifth region refers to the neighborhood Barroca and its adjacencies, located in the West region. However, Beatriz lived in Venda Nova, a region whose poverty indices are the largest, added to that of the northern vector region of the City and losing only to the exposure to vulnerability to which the residents of the agglomerates Cafezal, Barragem Santa Lúcia, Baleia, Jardim Montanhês, Olhos D'Água and Morro das Pedras, favelas with high levels of violence, visibly composed of blacks and workers with low schooling and remuneration^{xii}. Added to this is the fact that such places still lack the basic social rights related to the dignity of human life, such as: basic sanitation, paved roads and state apparatus (social work centers, daycare centers, health centers, schools, hospitals).

PARENTAL MOBILIZATION AND THE INCORPORATED PROVISIONS

What made Beatriz become bia.alighieri?

Beatriz revealed in interviews that her identity as a reader was forged around the age of five, when she began producing her first reading practices. Her mother worked outside the house sweeping the streets of the city, under conditions of employment by contract. She collected the books directly from the trash and took them to her daughter. At the age of eight, Beatriz began reading the works of Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Fernando Sabino. Beatriz started working early, at age 14 and it was only at the age of 20 that she had her work permits



signed for the first time. Therefore, six years of work were not recognized for labor and social security rights. According to Beatriz,

"I have been building my world from these readings. Usually the child starts reading comic books, but for me it was the kind of reading I had access to. So I thank my mother. I even say I am a 'Saramago case' because his parents didn't have any reading either. My mother did not have access to reading, but she did not deprive me of it. In what she could have contributed to my having access to reading, she did "(BEATRIZ).

The dispositions for reading acquired and incorporated by Beatriz seem to have been formed by two conditions: the first one, through a maternal investment, not necessarily orchestrated. Her taste for reading seems to be shaped by her mother's apparent mobilization, since the books presented were destined exclusively to her daughter; who in the growing strength to become a reader began to correspond positively to the wishes of the mother. In addition to the objectified cultural capital of the researched, represented by the possession of books, the incorporated capital also seems to have constituted itself as a relevant element in its favorable cultural dispositions for the inclination to reading. Likewise, another condition that seems to have contributed to its dispositions was a regular and systematic schooling process, without marks of failure. Beatriz revealed that

"The school also encouraged me to read. I think it has a lot to do with the person too. If there is an opening, the person has to seize it. [...]. The teachers were very committed, they wanted everyone to learn and they had a lot of knowledge. I was chosen, among five students from the school, by the director, for a literature project from the Education Department. I've always been a good student. I was up to date with my activities, I have an ability to hear, to pay attention. I like to dedicate myself. I always wanted to study and take good grades, I always wanted to be among the best student"(BEATRIZ).

Beatriz's testimony produces relevant information about her educational mobilization: the desire to stand out among her peers and the construction of a student identity as "*good student*", being up to date with her activities, dedicated, studious, concerned with the grades and, above all, responding to the most elementary school demands: willingness to work and sufficient docility to listen and pay attention. Added to this is another revelation. When asked why she was the only sibling able to complete her studies, she argued:

"I don't understand. Well, I like to read. My teachers always said, 'Let Bia make a mess, she is allowed to. She can learn.' I also made a mess, but I always had a commitment: I knew I needed what the school offered me. My brothers, on the opposite, never had the thought of having to learn to change their condition of life, their history. History sometimes of a generation ... I learned early on that study opens doors, that [with study] you have the possibility to know, to learn" (BEATRIZ).

Beatriz's words reveal the belief in the metaphor, according to which **it is necessary to have faith so that the saints can make their miracles**. This seems to apply to some behaviors of



students with regard to school. In order for school promises to be turned into objective income, even if they wear out only at school, it is necessary for the students to express to their teachers (and for themselves) their faith in the schooling process. This movement is articulated to a series of expectations, desires, fantasies and dreams, tangible or not, dependent on the judgments of values in which the moral sense operates. Thus, a school investment mechanism seems to work based on the belief of the importance, for example, of good, "committed" teachers and with "great knowledge".

While giving the teachers a considerable part of a decisive contribution to her educational background as a reader, which may indeed be real, it is necessary to reconsider the importance of the maternal role in the constitution of a provision for this purpose. This means that perhaps her disposition for school work can be explained by "a total, early learning ... carried out from infancy in the family and prolonged by the school learning that presupposes and completes it" (BOURDIEU, 2008b, p. 65). As one can deduce, perhaps the continuous, early and prolonged effort, whose experience and model of inspiration were the mother's dedication to work, and which Beatriz knew well at home, can explain the notion of meritocracy that crosses her speech, in a clear reference to the fact that it would depend on people "seizing opportunities". She would have taken advantage of them, her brothers, notably men, wouldn't^{xiii}.

Beatriz's fluency of speech, the organization of ideas, the rhythmic pace with which she raised hypotheses and arguments during the interviews reveal much of her willingness to deal with the narrative of her school memories, and also in this case, oral proficiency should not be considered a surprise. Beatriz had the participation of a mother who became an interested listener of her schooling process, stimulating her to assume, increasingly, a prominent role in the family dynamics. It is quite likely that this practice benefited her greatly because she fulfilled a dual function: it produced affective bonds and favored positive skills related to her oral expression, which was clear in another passage from the interview:

"I had to work. Unfortunately my mother was not able to support us, even if she worked hard. She was interested in me in school and said that I was a safe haven for her, that school was the most important thing in the world and that I spoke well" (BEATRIZ).

Although Beatriz's mother considered her a "safe haven," it is likely that she herself had had the mainstay necessary for her educational background. In the absence of the paternal reference, Beatriz's mother is frequently cited 68 times in the interview, against 33 appearances of the word "school" and 28 times the term "teachers." Only the sum of the expressions "reading" (24), "read" (14), "book" (18) and "literature" (16) surpass references to the mother, with a total of 72 citations throughout the recordings. It occurs that when the



paternal point of reference became faltering, Beatriz was left with the maternal model, a permanent and stable one.

For Hurstel (1999, p. 58), "women work, but mothers are still those who look after their children. This is also true for collective representations; this is true [...] at the level of everyday practice." As in the poem "Ensinamento" by Adélia Prado (2011, p. 118), Beatriz's mother seemed to believe that the study was indeed " [...] the finest thing in the world", a belief that would have favored the daughter's dispositions to the taste for study.

In Belo Horizonte, in the second part of elementary school and throughout high school, Beatriz studied in a charity school. This aspect also seems to have been decisive for her educational background, considering the school investment received. She said that:

"I was studying at a school supported by the Fundação Cristão para Crianças project. I was sponsored and received some aid, such as basic food. In the morning I stayed at school and in the afternoon at home, or with my [maternal] grandmother. I learned to read at the age of five, very young, in the first school. My mother could not read. But it was in [Name of School] that I started to read more" (BEATRIZ).

Beatriz was one of the many children and adolescents assisted by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) *ChildFund Brasil*^{xiv}, a social development entity responsible for the elaboration and monitoring of welfare programs and projects based on philanthropy and aimed at people at risk and of social vulnerability. In search of more advantageous school conditions and perceiving the interest and the resourcefulness of the daughter, the mother managed to enroll her in one of these institutions. In the Institution, all sponsorship and all donations follow strict protocols for monitoring and publicizing their results. The NGO has its own accounting and auditing policy available on its website. Beatriz studied in a school that enjoyed good infrastructure, especially the classrooms, sports court, library, cafeteria and gardens; also it didn't offer the intemperance of the legitimate possibilities of struggle of striking teacher movements of public schools that would make the school year intermittent, and offered qualified teachers. Also, the curriculum included, in addition to the more common disciplinary components, classes in the field of arts and sports and manual crafts. She also received quality food from the NGO, defined by a staff that included a nutritionist. Finally, it is necessary to emphasize the role of the maternal grandmother in caring for the granddaughter, an important type of moral and affective support, attention and time found in the family network. This coexistence with the grandmother may have represented an important contribution Beatriz's educational background, above all, in her competence to deal with the experiences of life. Asked about her condition as a black and peripheral woman and how these characteristics would have marked her trajectory, Beatriz produced a very critical account:



"I think if I was different maybe things would be easier for me, maybe my career would be much easier ... I am black and poor woman. And there is prejudice. And only now black people are being recognized; only now the universities are opening their doors for black people and it is possible that they enter. Even when they thought it was not possible for a black person, I never found it impossible. I am the captain of my soul, the lady of my destiny. For example, I am like a poem by Cruz e Souza, who is a black writer. It is a prayer for me, because it comes a lot close to my own life: 'A Being that is a being turns everything into flowers ... And to ironize their own pain they sing, through the waters of the Flood!'"^{xv}(BEATRIZ).

The portrait that Beatriz produces of herself, considering her own self-esteem, "*I never found it impossible,*" reveals a woman very clear of the difficulties imposed by the inequalities of structuring intersectional aspects, at the same time that produces reflections that extrapolate only her own existence. If the testimony reveals, on the one hand, intertwined with quotations from authors and literary works, an incorporated capital of her readings, it also reveals, on the other hand, a rather politicized notion of the conditions of access of the black population to universities^{xvi}. Also, in another passage, Beatriz analyzes the social conditions of existence of a "*black and poor woman*":

"Sometimes I feel like a fish out of water. I have cultural inspirations that my colleagues do not have, I like Vivaldi, for example. I learned to enjoy classical music by listening to the home of a family in which I worked. Last year I was able to watch, for the first time, a concert of classical music. It was an event of a private institution, a free event. I was moved. People generally think that because I'm a woman, because I'm black and because I'm poor, I have to like pagode, but I do not like pagode! Sometimes I keep quiet, so as not to embarrass people. Sometimes I want to go to some exhibition and I do not have [financial] conditions, so when free activities come up, like that of the concert, I go"(BEATRIZ).

During part of her high school, Beatriz worked as a maid. This allowed her to reconcile the care and cleaning of a home with her studies and secured her significant financial income. It is for this occasion that she is reported to be in contact with a number of previously unknown artifacts and cultural goods. Obviously, as **a point outside the curve**, Beatriz's cultural capital seems to disagree, in common sense, with what is expected of people with conditions of social existence such as hers. In this sense, another account is quite enlightening:

"In the places where I worked, nobody knew I liked to read. I am reserved with my private life, although someone sometimes noticed a difference in me. That scared my bosses. It is as if a more humble person, who lives in a particular place, could not like the things that I like, could not know a certain author, or could not like a type of music. A few people sometimes lent me books, but it was something unusual, something very rare indeed. I got to work in some places that, I think, I read more than my own bosses" (BEATRIZ).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bia Alighieri by Beatriz



For students of the field of Sociology of Education interested in the dispositional and intersectional categories, the investigation of people can be an interesting game of analytical possibilities. In the light of these references, each individual is constituted from innumerable, diverse and sometimes conflicting and excluding social experiences. This means that individuals are linked to different types of social phenomena that support their trajectories by ties that are very narrow and consolidated, sometimes by very weak and fragile threads. This means that individuals are linked to different types of social phenomena that support their trajectories by ties that are very narrow and consolidated, sometime Each person, therefore, would share in themselves and by themselves the existence of numerous cultural, historical and social expressions, marked by their class, gender and race conditions that precede and surpass it, and also each person would still signify their own experiences which, if difficult and painful, would also not be fully stable and enduring to immutability. This aspect seems quite hopeful for me, scientifically.

Thus, through the books donated by the mother to the daughter, through the process of long and successful schooling, to the access of books borrowed by employers, Beatriz seems to have built a strategy of "*good behavior*" whose action would occur strategically, **in silence**. According to Lahire (2004b), because parents are not always able to help their children in the schooling process, often due to lack of pedagogical skills or lack of objective conditions, parents tend to make their children submit to school authority, which means avoiding quarrels, accepting the conditions for studying from school environment, and complying with school rules (LAHIRE, 2004b). In this way, parents instill in the family the moral of a "*good behavior*" based on respect for rules, school docility and, above all, respect for the teacher. According to Lahire (2004b), certain traits such as good conduct, acceptance and respect for rules, effort and perseverance in studies would tend to contribute to a successful school trajectory. These traits would favor important cognitive structures, necessary and valued by the school, such as scheduling habits, organizing school material and planning activities. Thus, if it is true that arrangements, classifications and domestic ordinances would produce provisions for smooth schooling, it is perhaps equally true that these same provisions, triggered on the professional market, could produce material and/or immaterial benefits and incomes.

However, the case analyzed, limited to Beatriz's school or family conditions, at her disposal for work or for the habit of literary reading, reflected as the possibility of a research theme, also serves as the communication of a statement that is perhaps quite obvious (at least for more attentive social scientists), but necessary: that the case in question stands out for its relative **strangeness**. In fact, a point outside the curve in a Country that has been constituted for centuries under the historical bonds of slave-owning and paternalistic societies, where the number of poor, peripheral black women (whose sociological profiles resemble Beatriz's) is still quite large and expressive. Although numerically representative, this part of the Brazilian



population has not yet unrestrictedly achieved respect for the conditions of social equality, cultural and material opportunities, a dignified life, protection and guarantees that should be obligations of a State based on the rule of law.

My work in the academy, as a professor and researcher, has taught me that every class and every investigation always has many different (and sometimes even antagonistic) interpretations of a given reality. And Beatriz's case is, in this sense, quite exemplary: *Bia Alighieri* is as much the product of understandable social phenomena as the fruit of the dimension of social chance, its dynamism and its unpredictability, the detail of unplanned and random social gatherings, such as the access opportunities for free concerts or the actions of the Secretary of Education aimed at training new readers; the realization that history also happens in the unforeseen events that any human experience carries in social conditions of causality that are imponderable and for which it is necessary to recognize that no scientific method has yet been able to apprehend these occurrences and their regularities.

Despite all interpretative possibilities, my experience also points to the reflection that no individual can be regarded as the ultimate expression of a *self-made man* type of construction. Even Beatriz's investments and mobilizations, and her notion of merit, can be explained not only scientifically but also understood as the result of dispositions taught and learned. It is this dynamic of the experience of social life that makes no individual feel a complete outsider of themselves in their own trajectory.

Beatriz, a reader of literary works of social prestige, kept her reading practices secret for almost 16 years, acting **in silence**. A year after the interview, the poor and peripheral black woman resigned from work at the cafeteria. With some savings, (and with luggage and courage!) she traveled to the coast of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

At the age of 30 years **Bia** finally met the sea^{xvii}.

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NOTES

ⁱ Translation: Ana Paula Raposo, Belo Horizonte/MG, Brazil.

ⁱⁱ In order to preserve Beatriz's identity, I adopted in this text only her first name, in all truthful form. I also chose to omit all other references that might make her known.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the writing of the article in Portuguese, I adopted the language of the male always preceded by the feminine when referring to both men and women, since our gender designations qualify both nouns and adjectives as male or female. This is an attempt to escape the traps of linguistic and discursive processes that rank different social constructions of gender between the subjects. More than a semantic question the option is intentionally political.

^{iv} As a way to make the text more readable and to highlight Beatriz's speeches in relation to other citations, the "testimonials" were always marked in italics and in quotation marks.

^v **The great poet**, as he became known. Dante Alighieri may be considered representative of the forerunner modern Italian language, breaking away from medieval Latin.

^{vi} Available at: CARDOSO (2013).

^{vii} *Translator's note*: All citations were partially translated by me from works published in Portuguese/Br. These translations do not necessarily correspond to the works published in English Language.

^{viii} Regarding individuals and society, *check it out*: ELIAS (1994), LAHIRE (2002; 2006), MARTUCCELLI (2002) e MARTUCCELLI; SINGLY (2009).

^{ix} I am referring, for example, to some studies in the field of Sociology of Education, which focused on research topics that considered social class **in relation** to other analytical categories such as **age group** (FANFANI, 2000, CORSARO, 2011), **gender** (CARVALHO, 2004); **race** (HOOKS, 2015) and **territory-effect** (BATISTA, CARVALHO-SILVA, 2013, BURGOS, 2014).

^x Intersectionality presupposes understanding social phenomena in a multidimensional way. It is not just an attempt to find out the relative importance or frequency of a specific analytical category (eg, **or** class, **or** gender, **or** race), but rather to analyze and understand to what extent, in between each intersection, the structuring aspects of ways of acting, thinking, being and being in the world that favor the reproductions of social and school inequalities materialized in cases of exploitation or oppression are configured.

^{xi} Here are resonances of the film "*Sociology is a martial art*" by Pierre Carles, produced on the works and the trajectory of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Available at: *La sociologia est um sport de combat*.

^{xii} The choice of variables in the process of constructing poverty indicators involves many debates, due to the controversies in what is considered to be really important for the construction of an indicator. As it was not the object of this article to discuss such an issue, I would like to point out that the information presented is available, in the form of public consultation, in electronic websites such as the *Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics* (IBGE) and the *João Pinheiro Foundation* (FJP-MG). Available at: <<https://www.ibge.gov.br/>> and <<http://fjp.mg.gov.br/>>, respectively. Accessed on: jan. 12 2018. According to the results found, the poorest areas of Belo Horizonte are located in areas that are favelas and villages located in several agglomerations and communities scattered throughout the Capital of Minas Gerais. However, if we consider only the contrasts between the South Zone *versus* North Zone vectors of the City, it is possible to state that the first vector concentrates the best family income *per capita* indices, while the second, the highest weighted poverty indices.



^{xiii} Marília Pinto de Carvalho has produced several studies, in the articulation between the gender marks and the school environment, demonstrating how differences in performance between boys and girls and the analytical categories social class, gender, and race produce school inequalities (ZAGO; PAIXÃO, 2013).

^{xiv} The NGO helps children and adolescents in situations of deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability. Available at: <<http://www.fundocrisiao.org.br/>>. Accessed on: Aug. 05 2017.

^{xv} At this moment of the interview Beatriz recited the poem "Sorriso Interior", by the writer Cruz e Sousa, the "Black Dante" (JUNKES, 2008).

^{xvi} According to data from the *Synthesis of Social Indicators* (SIS) produced by IBGE, in 2004, 16.7% of students between 18 and 24 years of higher education in Brazil declared themselves to be black or brown. In ten years this percentage reached 45.5% of the students. During this period (between 2004 and 2014), affirmative action policies and different forms of financing produced conditions for access and permanence of the black population in Brazilian higher education, something unprecedented in Brazilian educational history. Social achievements such as these are currently at risk in Brazil. Following the outbreak of a corporate, legal-parliamentary, and media coup, which was supported by conservative religious segments, a defeated government program in the 2014 presidential election seeks to scorn and erase the efforts of generations of activists, intellectuals and activists from various social movements that have historically engaged in the struggle for autonomous, secular, inclusive, democratic, free universities, with quality for all. (About SIS/IBGE, available at: <<https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas-novoportal/sociais/trabalho/9221-sintese-de-indicadores-sociais.html?=&t=o-que-e>>. Accessed on: Mar. 11 2018).

^{xvii} I could not finish this article, and the last note, without presenting the reader a part of the e-mail I received from Bia. Among other things she revealed: "I was impressed. The sea is really beautiful as Machado de Assis described it. It's wonderful, as I imagined!"

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