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## School parties in Brasília: the perspective of journalist Yvonne Jean (1962-1968)

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### Abstract

The article delves into the universe of school themes covered by journalist Yvonne Jean in the *Correio Braziliense* newspaper. The aim is to analyze some school parties in Brasília, as described and commented on in the journalist's columns between 1962 and 1968. Two types of school parties were identified: 1) those that celebrated school and family characters – teachers, children, and mothers; and 2) those that celebrated traditions of Brazilian culture (June festivals). The historical-educational value of Yvonne Jean's texts becomes evident as they are read historically, based on the contextualization of the sources and their analytical-interpretive reading. It is from this reading that tends to emerge the understanding of education according to the logic of norms and practices (Julia, 2001), strategies and tactics (Certeau, 1999), behaviors and appropriations (Chartier, 2002) whether of teachers or students or other individuals who work in the intra-school educational process.

Keywords: Schools. *Correio Braziliense* newspaper. School parties.

### Festas escolares em Brasília: o olhar da jornalista Yvonne Jean (1962-1968)

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### Resumo

O artigo adentra o universo de temas escolares abordados pela jornalista Yvonne Jean no jornal *Correio Braziliense*. O objetivo é analisar algumas festas escolares em Brasília, conforme foram descritas e comentadas em colunas da jornalista entre os anos de 1962 e 1968. Foram identificados dois tipos de festas escolares: 1) as que celebravam personagens da escola e da família – professoras, crianças e mães; e 2) as que comemoravam tradições da cultura brasileira (festas juninas). O valor histórico-educacional dos textos de Yvonne Jean se evidencia à medida que se faz deles uma leitura histórica, fundada na contextualização das fontes e em sua leitura analítico-interpretativa. É dessa leitura que tende a advir a compreensão da educação segundo a lógica das normas e práticas (Julia, 2001), das estratégias e táticas (Certeau, 1999), dos comportamentos e das apropriações (Chartier, 2002), seja de professores, seja de alunos e demais indivíduos que atuam no processo educacional intraescolar.

Palavras-chave: Escolas. Jornal *Correio Braziliense*. Festas escolares.

## Fiestas escolares en Brasília: la perspectiva de la periodista Yvonne Jean (1962-1968)

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### Resumen

El artículo profundiza en el universo de temas escolares tratados por la periodista Yvonne Jean en el periódico *Correio Braziliense*. El objetivo es analizar algunas fiestas escolares en Brasília tal como fueron descritas y comentadas en las columnas de la periodista entre 1962 y 1968. Se identificaron dos tipos de fiestas escolares: 1) las que celebraban personajes escolares y familiares: maestros, niños y madres; y 2) las que celebraban tradiciones de la cultura brasileña (fiestas de junio). El valor histórico-educativo de los textos de Yvonne Jean se hace evidente en la medida en que son leídos históricamente, basada en la contextualización de las fuentes y su lectura analítica-interpretativa. Es a partir de esta lectura que tiende a emerger la comprensión de la educación según la lógica de las normas y prácticas (Julia, 2001), las estrategias y tácticas (Certeau, 1999), los comportamientos y las apropiaciones (Chartier, 2002), ya sean de profesores o estudiantes o de otros individuos que actúan en el proceso educativo intraescolar.

Palabras clave: Escuelas. Periódico *Correio Braziliense*. Fiestas escolares.

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### Introduction

With the inauguration of Brasília as the new federal capital of Brazil, schools of all levels had to be built and equipped to meet the demands of the population that would be created in the planned city. One of the first actions in this direction was taken by Anísio Teixeira, then director of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies, who designed a “set of schools” for Brasília (Anjos, 2022a). The project envisaged schooling from kindergarten to university level. Primary education – to be taught full-time – would be provided in so-called class schools and park schools. The creator’s wish was that these models “[...] could be an example and demonstration for the country’s educational system” (Teixeira, 1961, p. 195). The realization of this ideal school was widely covered by the recently created *Correio Braziliense* (Braziliense Courier) newspaper, an organ of Assis Chateaubriand’s *Diários Associados* [Associated Newspapers] (Anjos, 2022b). In particular, the subject was covered by a columnist, Yvonne Jean, a Belgian naturalized Brazilian who came to Brazil in 1940 and to Brasília in 1962, after twenty years working in the press in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

At different times in the 1960s, Yvonne Jean wrote columns in the *Correio Braziliense* that gave her an accurate knowledge of what was going on in Brasília's elementary school. With names such as "Correio estudantil," (Student mail) "Ensino dia a dia" (Day-to-day teaching) and "Esquina de Brasília," (Corner of Brasilia) the columns exposed an understanding that came from direct contact with everyday school life. From her on-site observations, the journalist extracted material to write her columns. In this way, her texts bear traces of the beginnings of a school culture that are valuable to the history of Brazilian education. They tell us about the "[...] norms that define knowledge to be taught and behaviors to be inculcated and a set of practices that allow for the transmission of knowledge and the incorporation of these behaviors; norms and practices that can vary according to the times" (Julia, 2001, p. 10). They reveal representations, practices and appropriations (Chartier, 2002), tactics and strategies (Certeau, 1999), whether of teachers or students in the schooling process.

That said, this article delves into the universe of school themes addressed by Yvonne Jean. The aim is to analyze some school festivals in Brasília as they were described and commented on in the journalist's columns between 1962 and 1968.

In fact, according to a recent review (Oliveira; Anjos, 2022), school festivals are not only a consolidated theme, but one that has been explored extensively by recent historical research into education. Even so, the review noted the need for more studies on school festivals after 1960 – as this reflection does. Carla Chamon also referred to school festivals as an object in the history of education:

[...] their rituals and their symbolism, even if unregulated, have a lot to say to historians, who no longer simply narrate these festivals, but seek to understand the behaviors linked to them, the collective representations they contain and their social resonance (Chamon, 2002, p. 13).

Likewise, Marcus Bencostta refers to school festivals as an integral element of school cultures:

[...] they are understood as transmitters of a collective language that does not disregard its primary characteristic: the expression

of various symbolic levels that are grasped by those who participate in them in one way or another, as organizers, characters or spectators [...] [They are] productions of their daily lives, with an action, a time and a specific place, which leads to a concentration of affections and emotions around a theme that is celebrated and commemorated, whose main product is the symbolization of the unity of the participants (Bencostta, 2010, p. 248).

The consultation of the editions of the *Correio Braziliense* newspaper available in the National Library's Digital Library was one of the methodological procedures adopted for the research underlying this study. An initial search was carried out using the keyword "school." From the resulting mentions, texts were selected whose titles and subtitles indicated the theme of school parties. In a new selection, the columns subscribed to by Yvonne Jean, were located.

Based on the reading of the columns identified following the research protocol, two types of school parties were recognized: 1) those that celebrated school and family characters – teachers, children and mothers –; and 2) those that celebrated traditions of Brazilian culture (June festivals). We understand that each type has its own characteristics, but there was a common point: they both make the school its vector of propagation and celebration, marking not only the school culture, but also the other cultures with which the institution was related at the time. For example, the family culture: the ways of life, the relationship with the school and the expectations regarding the education of the offspring.

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## School and family: party characters

Elementary school teachers were the first people to be honored in Brasília's schools. The party took place at School Class 106, in a celebration commented on and summarized by Yvonne Jean on September 15, 1962.

The students of school class 106 decided, on their own initiative, to organize a series of parties in honor of their teachers. The initiative caught our attention because it was spontaneous. It was not dictated by any birthday, civic celebration, or other event, but was simply a token of friendship towards their teachers. It would not merit further comment if it did not involve the integration of the school and the home – meticulous preparation of gifts, help from

the families by offering snacks and sweets – and a planned action among colleagues with the emergence of leaders, division of tasks, organized work in a microcosm of society. Since one of the principles of Brasília's initial educational plan was the integration of school and life, we congratulate the pupils of elementary school 106 on their very successful, non-traditional and non-compulsory parties, which were a cry of joy in an atmosphere of total camaraderie (Jean, 1962a, p. 9).

As historiography has pointed out (Pereira, 2011), in the early years, the pedagogical orientation of Brasília's schools was that of the active school, advocated by Anísio Teixeira. As we know, this current of pedagogical thought valued the centrality of the child in educational processes (Carvalho, 2002) and conceived of the school as a “[...] simplified social environment [...] conducive to the development of the healthy aspects of modern life [...]”, as Teixeira (2006, p. 34) wrote, alluding to schools in the United States in the 1920s.

In fact, the party described by journalist and columnist Yvonne Jean condensed some of these central elements of what became known among us as the pedagogy of the New School. The party is described as a spontaneous gesture by pupils between the ages of 7 and 14 (Teixeira, 1961); in other words, something that was not planned or part of a regular calendar of civic celebrations or other events. But it was organized enough to unfold into parties to honor teachers. It is worth mentioning that it took place in mid-September, which rules out the idea of intentions derived from the official date of Teacher's Day (October 15). The decision to hold the party arose from relations between teachers and students, in which the latter felt – for reasons not discussed by the journalist – the need to honor their teachers without making the party an official or unofficial act, as October 15 tended to be (Vicentini, 2004).

For the journalist, the party deserved to be highlighted because it integrated the school and the family by presuming the preparation of gifts and the participation of family members in the preparation of food. It was also noteworthy because, although it was a spontaneous gesture on the part of the students, it presupposed the reconciliation of forces and work in the organization and execution of tasks. These demands were circumstances to awaken in the students attitudes of leadership in conducting the division of labor as a

microcosm: localized social relations that mirror the social relations of society in general.

It is significant that Yvonne Jean highlighted the role of the children in preparing, organizing and running the party, even though they were supported by their families. It was the kind of educational event that interested the newspaper as a story to be reported because it was testimony to the fact that the pedagogical principles of education in the new city were, in fact, being put into practice. Education was taking shape and making sense as Brasília developed as a city. Hence the ending given to the text by the journalist: a congratulation to the members of the school for successfully conducting parties that were neither traditional nor compulsory; rather, they were shouts of joy in an atmosphere of total integration and harmony.

It is worth noting a significant shift in meaning produced by Yvonne Jean's account: what was a party to celebrate the teachers ended up as a celebration of the integration of the family with the school and of harmonious relations between teachers and students. In this logic, the practices engendered at the Class School on block 106 South were characterized as successful; and the newspaper column functioned as a showcase for the achievements of the *brand-new* school structure in the new federal capital.

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From the children's festive tribute to their teachers, we move on to the children's tribute party, also highlighted by the journalist and columnist Yvonne Jean. This other character gave rise to the party at the Park School in Brasília, on the occasion of Children's Day, then, already celebrated in the country on October 12. The text does not focus on the party itself, but on the preparation of the school community. In that October of 1962, there were elections and this meant that the celebration did not take place on the 12th, but on the 20th and 21st. The journalist referred to the event in her September 28th column.

The Park School will be celebrating Children's Day by offering its dance party to parents and children. They are rehearsing typical dances from all countries. Traditional costumes are already being made. Due to the elections and the absence of many people in the days following, the park school has decided to celebrate Children's Day a week late. The dancers will put on a show for their parents on the 20th at 8 o'clock in the evening and another for their classmates on the 21st, at 4 pm (Jean, 1962b, p. 9).

The Park School was the apple of the Brasília schools' eye. Its teaching plan included after-school activities, as well as artistic, physical and manual education for elementary school children (Teixeira, 1961). According to the educational plan, there would be one school for every four superblocs (urban-residential division of Brasília), but only blocks 307 and 308 South had a park school (Martins, 2011) until the end of the 1960s. Even so, the one that was installed became a hub of artistic and cultural activities not only for its students but also for the entire local community, which still lacked leisure and entertainment options (Wiggers; Marques; Frazzi, 2011).

Yvonne Jean took care of this school and the party she was preparing for Children's Day. According to her, the party would be attended by the children, who were already rehearsing "typical dances from all the countries" and would be dressed in character ("traditional clothes are already being made").

Certainly, the choice of dance as a way of holding the party was linked to the curricular content of the Park School, so that the celebration was an opportunity to show the community the results achieved by the students. It was also in line with the recommendations of the physical education programmes for elementary school in the middle of the last century, organized by the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies; dance was considered to be the basis of physical and artistic expression (Anjos; Souza, 2022).

Thus, we can say that the party once again became a time not only to celebrate, but also to demonstrate what the school was doing. The celebration took place on two occasions: on the 20th, at 8pm, in a show aimed at parents, who could appreciate the results of their children's work; and on the 21st, at 4pm, an appropriate time for the event's intended audience: colleagues of the student dancers. In this way, they could honor their colleagues and perhaps feel motivated to attend the dance classes offered by the Park School.

From the children to the mothers, who were also projected as characters in the school's Mother's Day party. The event did not go unnoticed by Yvonne Jean.

The School Class 106 celebrated Mother's Day late. They did not want to forget the date, despite the strike that interrupted classes at the beginning of the month. The children presented their mothers with gifts they had made, with some delay but a lot of tenderness. "I made a little Chinese man out of soap and loofah," says Solange Gomes Fernandes. "It is beautiful. It is an ornament for the



bathroom. It is nice to sculpt soap." The key ring of José of Augusto da Costa e Silva, a Maria Helena Ribeiro's "little book" (a book that only prints one sentence of congratulations to mum), the cloth pin holder of Alcione Silva in a hat shape and the wooden matchbox holder of Ney Pereira ("I burned the word 'mum' in wood. You do not imagine how beautiful it turned out!") were some of the gifts made at school with skill and enthusiasm (Jean, 1962c, p. 5).

Another party, held at School Class 106, was highlighted by the journalist because of the peculiar way of celebrating red dates on the calendar. She focused on the celebrations for Mother's Day in 1962, an eventful year in the city due to a teachers' strike. As a result, "School Class 106 celebrated Mother's Day late". As we know, the day to celebrate motherhood in Brazil has been celebrated on the second Sunday in May since 1918, at the behest of the Young Men's Christian Association (Amorim; Abreu Júnior, 2012). In other countries, the commemoration is older, dating back to the United States, in 1864, when Ana Jarvis, "touched by the loss of her mother", started a "movement to raise awareness and appreciation of mothers, gaining popular support and that of the Episcopal Church in Grafton, Virginia" (Santos, 2022, p. 39). The commemoration here was incorporated into the civil calendar by President Getúlio Vargas, via Decree 21.366 of May 5, 1932 (Santos, 2022), as can be read in Article 1.

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[...] the second Sunday in May is consecrated to mothers, in commemoration of the feelings and virtues that maternal love contributes to awaken and develop in the human heart, contributing to its improvement in the sense of kindness and human solidarity (Brazil, 1932, art. 1).

Based on these observations, we can say that the school celebration of Mother's Day is the result of a process of appropriation (Chartier, 2002) of an element of United States culture and a religious tradition that has been transformed into a quasi-civic date for celebrating the feelings and virtues that the figure of a mother is able to evoke in citizens. In this case, it is important to know how this date – the object of multiple representations (Chartier, 2002) – was celebrated at School Class 106.

In fact, by cutting through reality, Yvonne Jean did not focus on the rites and practices that took place, but rather on the gifts made to give to

mothers. These are objects that, when put into circulation in the school environment, became part of its culture, the material or empirical culture of the school (Escolano, 2010). In other words, they are utensils that contain their own purposes and can thus reveal the type of mother figure that the children wanted to celebrate and exalt.

The gifts can be divided into two groups: 1) those related to household chores; and 2) those related to dimensions of the mother's role as educator. In the first group, we have the soap doll and loofah, made by Solange Gomes Fernandes to decorate the bathroom in her house; a key ring, by José Augusto da Costa e Silva, and the wooden matchbox holder, with the word "mum" spelled out using the burning technique – made by Ney Pereira. In the second group, we find a little book with the word "mum" printed on it, made by Maria Helena Ribeiro, and a cloth pin holder, a gift from Alcione Silva.

Thus, we can infer that the idea of mother, which the children wanted to exalt, was not only the one who took care of, who had her home organized and who looked after the family's well-being, but also the mother who could read and sew: skills that could be passed on to sons and daughters. Above all, she was a woman for the home, for her children and for her family. Because of these qualities, she deserved to be celebrated, feted and given gifts, including treats that reinforced this desired social role. By celebrating the maternal figure, the school once again acted as a vector for the resonance of this set of representations on the wider social scene in the federal capital.

More than notions such as (abstract) representations, the school celebrations revealed more mundane problems that affected the day-to-day running of schools. This is the case with the existence of the school fund and the need to raise funds to maintain it. On the one hand, one can think of the fragility of the schools, still dependent on the school community to ensure educational opportunities for all the children in the new town. This understanding is exemplified and sustained by the events related to the traditional June festivals as part of the school calendar.

## **June festivals: between celebrating and raising money**

June festivals are part of what is known and can be called popular culture (sometimes, from rural areas), which penetrated the (urban) school

environment, just as erudite culture (books, knowledge...) penetrates. This prompts reflection on Yvonne Jean's status as a foreigner, in other words, a stranger to Brazil's more inland and rural cultural manifestations. Some conceptual-sociological considerations are pertinent to understand not only the author's position, but also her perception of this trait of Brazilian culture.

Indeed, among the conceptual sources dealing with the tradition and characterization of Brazilian festivals, Luís da Câmara Cascudo is one of the most recurrent voices. In this sense, it is worth considering his understanding of the June festivities.

Considered occasions for reuniting friends and relatives, the June festivities in Parati city are very popular. *Bonfires and fireworks* light up the nights and the population are entertained with *country weddings, square dances and fortune-telling*, always accompanied by typical food and drink. In the *streets, on the farms, in the mills, in the schools and in the homes*, São João (St. John) is very much celebrated [...] (Cascudo, 2000, p. 232, emphasis added).

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On the other hand, in her study of festivals in Brazil, Rita de Cássia Amaral (1998) points to the celebration of the June festivals as an inheritance of Portuguese culture plus customs from French culture, in a mix established in Europe. In other words, they date back to the 12th century in France, where, on June 22 or 23 – just before the harvest season – the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, was already celebrated. Its version in the southern hemisphere would be the winter solstice, i.e., the longest night of the year. According to the author, these festivals – “of pagan origin” – were incorporated and assimilated by the Catholic-Christian logic, so that they became associated with the religious calendar as the saints' days.

Once they were brought to Brazil by the clergy and held regularly, the June festivities became associated with three dates: June 13 – St. Anthony's Day; June 24 – St. John's Day; and June 29 – St. Peter's Day. “From the north to the south of Brazil, the saints of June are celebrated with bonfires and typical foods,” in a month-long celebration, not just on the day of the saint. But it is especially on the eve of the date that the festivities take place with

[...] *sorceries and sympathies*, the magical part of the festival, typical of popular Catholicism. Countless *divinations* about love and the future (who you are going to marry, if you are loved, how many

children you are going to have, if you are going to die young or make money, etc.) are made on the eve of the saints' day, usually at dawn (Amaral, 1998, p. 160, emphasis added).

This passage also suggests that the author characterizes June festivals by their practices and rituals, such as oral interactions on a given day and at a given time (which indicates the partygoers' dispositions, since the festivities last until dawn). Behind them, there is "the popular imagination" that expects the action of "miraculous powers," divine intervention that can "[...] bring the sexes closer together, impregnate women, protect motherhood, like St. Anthony, St. John, St. Peter, the Child Jesus, Our Lady of Good Delivery, etc." (Amaral, 1998, p. 162).

Quoting Gilberto Freire, Amaral (1998, p. 164) endorses the argument that the June festivals are part of different cultures and, at the same time, bring together manifestations of different cultures. In this sense, they are open to "[...] the insertion of multiple rules, the mediation between cultures and moving them towards the common goal of building Brazilian society." In some places, their importance even exceeds that of celebrations such as Christmas, as is the case in the Northeast, where "[...] the June festivals prevail as the most attractive and with the greatest popular investment."

In fact, for Amaral (1998, p. 166), more than religiosity, what attracts everyone - even non-Catholics - to celebrate the June festivities "[...] are, in fact, the bonfires, roasted sweet potatoes, canjica (a degermed corn kernels cooked with sugar and milk), mulled wine, roasted green corn, popcorn, square dances, bumba-meu-boi (a traditional folk dance from north-eastern Brazil, which brings together human, animal, an ox, and mythological characters in a theatrical performance), magic rituals, fireworks, firecrackers and games, in short, all the joy that surrounds these festivities". The author refers to the relationship between the "development of the media" and the "great Brazilian popular festivals," which have been discovered by the media and projected in such a way that they now receive subsidies from the states to be held "as an official event." This is the case of the June festivals in regions of the Northeast, such as the cities Caruaru (Pernambuco state) and Campina Grande (Paraíba state), where tradition undergoes transformations that "modernize" them. In other words, that make them absorb new requirements as mediators of the

"[...] relationship between tradition and modernity, urban and rural, among many others."

In this logic of a more analytical understanding of the June festivities, the square dance is relevant because it is part of the June festivities as a fundamental feature, but it is not part of their origins. Cascudo (2000, p. 587) treated the square dance in a way that is relevant. He highlighted it as a practice of the elite classes, of social prestige – the aristocracy. In other words, it was a "protocol palace dance of the 19th century, which opened court balls in every European and American country, preferred by the whole society".

The square dance was danced everywhere in Brazil [...]. It appeared at the beginning of the 19th century and, at the time of the Regency [1830-1840], it was all the rage in Rio, brought by masters of French dance orchestras, such as Milliet and Cavalier. [...] It was cultivated by our composers, who gave it an accentuated Brazilian flavor, starting with Calado. [...] Today it is a dance that has disappeared almost everywhere, with its English variants, "lancers" and "English solo." Not only has the square dance become popular, but several other dances have been derived from it in the interior: the "countryside square dance", in the interior of São Paulo state; the "sifilito ball", in states of Bahia and Goiás; the "sarue" (a misrepresentation of *soirée*), in Central Brazil (Cascudo, 2000, p. 577-578).

According to Amaral (1998, p. 180), square dances combine tradition and modernity and have become "[...] the spectacle par excellence [...] of every São João (St. John) in Brazil". Similarly, they have become as relevant to festivals as, for example, "the Bahian afoxé (Afro-Brazilian carnival procession) blocks" at Carnival. As such, the square dance has become a "typical dance of the June festivities," although it has "an inheritance from French folklore plus typical manifestations of Portuguese culture." The author reiterates the inspiration "in the French contradanza" and the origin in Brazil, located in the "arrival of the Portuguese royal court," in 1808, which was included in the "fads of European life, of which one of the favorites was the square dance, directed by French contradance masters". The author also reiterates the idea that the dance was transformed in such a way that it developed into modalities such as "the 'countryside' quadrille," in her words,

[...] having become popular [the square dance was] reinterpreted by the people, who added new figures and commands, constituting the dance in its long and exclusive execution, composed of five parts or more, with lively movements and always ending with a gallop (Amaral, 1998, p. 180).

These observations create a basis for conceptual understanding on which to contrast Yvonne Jean's texts about schools in Brasilia in terms of festivities. By focusing on schools and their internal practices, the columnist not only delved into school culture, but also with manifestations of the meeting of cultures that is the June festival, especially at school, a place of erudite culture. As school celebrations, the June festivities involve requirements, attitudes and gestures that, for example, are not repeated until the following year, as they are linked to the festival and its day. Therefore, by seeking out information about the festival *in loco* and recreating it through a description, the foreign journalist immersed herself even more in Brazilian culture.

In fact, in June 1962, Yvonne Jean became deeply involved in the school celebrations. She dealt with the subject between May 20 and June 20, during which time she wrote four columns giving her impressions, comments and information. The following passages are expressive in this sense.

School Class 403 (previously called School Class No. 1) is enthusiastically preparing a *kirmess* (bazaar fair) [...]. The students are cutting out colored paper and preparing festive decorations. A washing machine will be raffled off. The Music Band of the Police Station will play during the four days of festivities; games, toys, stalls are being prepared; 100 tables have been lent to the school. The festival is being organized jointly by the school and Father José Bertolo (Jean, 1962c, p. 5).

[...]

The children of School Class 114 are learning songs and dances while the teachers are preparing stalls and everything else for the feast [...]. Every day, the children wait impatiently for teacher Julimar Nunes Leal and her accordion, because they love the joyful singing rehearsals (Jean, 1962d, p. 9).

[...]

Large bonfires have already been set up in the gardens and the same bonfires, in miniature, will adorn the tables. Wooden sticks and red, shredded paper will set the mood. Each garden room in

the beautiful school will have its own stall [...]. Ten “child waiters” will each take care of five tables. The boys and girls have already prepared their order books and notes so that there are no mistakes. Everyone is active and restless. They want a party worthy of Wilson Reis’ fine school (Jean, 1962e, p. 9).

As can be seen from the dates of publication, the columnist may have started visiting the schools in the last ten days of May and finished her visits in the second ten days of June. Although it is possible that she used the telephone to obtain information, her texts show that she made in loco observations. She saw the preparation and organization of the party up close to get to know and describe the environment – decoration and furniture – and details of the actions carried out – see the information about students cutting out paper. We can also assume that the journalist may have spoken to people, from the school management, to find out about the raffle prizes and the music band. She may also have asked students to find out if they wanted the party to have a particular outcome.

14 Therefore, Yvonne Jean’s texts therefore suggest that she went to schools and observed with a multifocal gaze: panoramic, close-up, attentive to the environment and its composition, focused on people, their actions and the results. She talked and listened to find out about intentions and expectations, desires and wishes, as well as other feelings and factual information. This multi-focused view seems to suggest a desire to portray the whole of the school event and its collective construction; at least we can read this in her impressions.

While the columnist was interested in the background to the celebrations, taking part in the festivities was also part of the journalistic coverage. The following passage is expressive in this sense of a visit to a school at the time of the June festival, but already in 1968.

Anyone who arrived in the courtyard at the height of the party [at School Class 308 South] was dizzy and infected by the joy of what seemed like a thousand children, jumping, dancing, singing, shouting, handing out sweets, calling for fishing and ring toss, and everything else in between. All this in a school full of colorful frescoes on the walls, multicolored flags hanging everywhere and amid children dressed up with taste and without ostentation. No masquerade costume for the competition, which prevented

them from jumping around and making themselves at home (Jean, 1968, p. 14).

The description hints at a sense of sensory apprehension, typical of those who would have been at the party. She refers to the effects on the disposition of those present, especially the spontaneity of the children, playing with each other and interacting with other participants, as well as the distribution of sweets and invitations to play games. At the same time, the atmosphere stood out in the journalist's eyes, especially the decoration of the place, which she called "frescoes." Likewise, the children's masquerade costume, consistent with the festive-children's occasion, as they were dressed so that they could act like children, in other words, jump around and be at ease.

*Beautiful girls with pigtails in printed cotton clothes and proud Johns whose most important ornament was the huge moustache that made them look like big people. In the whirlwind of voices, walking and laughter, I felt good, excited, because it was a real party, a party for children who had prepared it at school [...] (Jean, 1968, p. 14, emphasis added).*

As well as endorsing Yvonne Jean's ability to observe, the passage reveals a vocabulary that indicates she has assimilated Brazilian culture well, as she recognizes the pigtails and the boy with the painted moustache. These expressions are related to the semantic field of the June festival, but above all to the square dance and its movements, such as the formation of pairs and the countryside wedding. The reference to the print of the clothes seems to evoke the image of *chita*, a fabric whose characteristic is that it is printed and spread among rural populations and other strata considered to be part of popular culture (Duarte, 2021). So, rather than the pigtail hairstyle and the fake moustache, the columnist seems to have been referring to characters from the square dance: children ready to dance.

In fact, the journalist does not use the word square dance to describe what she saw. She only alludes to what caught her eye. In this case, since her visit may not have taken long, one possibility for understanding the lack of reference to the traditional dance is that the journalist may have captured a moment of the pre-dance party, i.e. when the children, dressed in character, were engaged in other activities. It could also be that, although she knew a lot about Brazilian culture, the *Belgian* columnist had not yet grasped many



nuances of the spectrum of Brazilian culture, especially more inland, more localized manifestations, such as the square dance and its tradition. It is worth remembering that from 1940 to 1960 she lived in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where her circulation in more literate and aristocratic environments was intense. It is also worth mentioning that, according to Campos (2007), the June festivities were only integrated into school festivities in the state of São Paulo in the 1970s. If this is the case, then, we can consider the possibility that the square dance was still a somewhat alien manifestation to the foreign journalist, even after almost three decades of cultural immersion in Brazil. If the festivities in June were familiar to Yvonne Jean as a European, the same cannot be said of the square dance.

In fact, the challenge of getting to know Brazilian culture was one that Yvonne Jean had sensed since 1941, about a year after arriving in Rio de Janeiro. Her integration was already such that she spoke and wrote Brazilian Portuguese fluently. Such ability was even emphasized in an editorial-introductory paragraph of her article, the intention of which was to introduce her to the Brazilian readership. In this article, she refers to the idealized way she saw Brazil as a European and how ashamed she was to see how distant were her imagination and the reality she saw. At the same time, she was aware that it was not easy to grasp it without giving it time: the experience of living in the country, immersing herself in the culture and letting herself be absorbed by it, as we read below.

We [the exiles] cannot get to know Brazil in a year. At most, we can be on the way (starting to love it), but we cannot touch with our fingers the cause of so many apparent contradictions. We can observe, for example, the neighborhood, or rather, the promiscuity of luxury and poverty, of palaces and favelas. We cannot talk about it. We do not think about it so much after a while, because here the magic of the tropical sun melts everything together, removes fear, dispels ugliness (Jean, 1941, p. 1, emphasis added).

As if the challenge of getting to know the culture was not enough, she had “crises of homesickness” and resisted believing that the homes of origin – the “*chez nous*” – “were destroyed”. Everything generated a mixture of feelings in which “[...] nostalgia periodically fills us and puts a screen between our soul and life, makes what is only different seem incompatible” (Jean, 1941, p. 1). One consequence of this resistance may have been the longer assimilation of

Brazilian culture. But in twenty years, Yvonne Jean did a lot to become more and more immersed in the country that had welcomed her. Not only did she marry a Brazilian, but she also started working on various fronts. At first, in medical laboratories as a histologist, then writing extensively for various press outlets in Rio de Janeiro, where she dealt with issues related to literate culture, the arts and, in particular, education in the federal capital.

In fact, if it has been clear so far that Yvonne Jean visited schools in Brasília, this fact is further reinforced by information about her work in the Rio de Janeiro press. In the *Diário de Notícias* (Associated Newspapers) in the 1940s, she published a series of reports – “Visiting schools...” – where she reported (critical) impressions of the city’s schools after seeing them with her own eyes and talking to people (Amaral, 1998). Therefore, what she did in Brasília was a reflection of her previous experience in gaining knowledge about education and schools, especially their precariousness. In the first text of the series, she set the tone for her observations, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

Some problems are common to several countries. Others stem from the way of life in each region. There is a lot to be done here, because it is not just a question of improving the education system, but also of creating it from scratch in many places. [...] These quick reports [...] suffice to point out glaring shortcomings that call for urgent action (Jean, 1947, p. 1).

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The passage suggests that the journalist saw education as a question of the whole: of the educational system (even though the history of education rejected the existence of a system at the time). What is more, she focused on the part, on the school unit: the building, the pupils and the teachers. In other words, he referred to archaic, inappropriate and uncomfortable facilities, children with minimal dietary needs and maximum school absences due to work support for their parents and teachers with low salaries. In this sense, her following comments on the June festivals held by schools in Brasília as a way of raising funds are significant.

The principal only dreams of ways that will allow her to fill her school fund so that she can buy everything she needs for a perfect school and help all the pupils who need clothes and materials (Jean, 1962e, p. 9).

[...]

School Class 403 (previously called School Class No. 1) is enthusiastically preparing a *kirmess* (bazaar fair) to raise money for school meals. Thanks to an intense campaign, the school is receiving milk from the Ministry of Education, sugar from the Educational Foundation and flour from the students' families. We need to buy a blender, containers, crockery, cutlery, etc. (Jean, 1962c, p. 5).

[...] a party whose main purpose is to raise funds for the school fund, which will first and foremost buy a stove (Jean, 1962d, p. 9).

The quoted passages set the tone for the journalist Yvonne Jean's view of the ills of Brazilian public schools. Even in the planned federal capital, with schools designed by one of the greatest intellectuals and major public figures, one the most active of the development of Brazilian education, the shortcomings revealed the needs that Yvonne had seen and described in Rio de Janeiro fifteen years earlier. School meals continued to be a serious problem, to the point of forcing the school community to react in the face of minimal state action. Although they were festive celebrations, capable of delighting the columnist, the motivations were not praiseworthy, as they denounced the very precarious state of education. It was as if the students, lacking clothes and materials, were equivalent to the group of students lacking food who arrived at schools in Rio de Janeiro at the time the journalists visited them (Jean, 1947).

More than notions of (abstract) representation through Yvonne Jean's journalistic eyes, the school celebrations revealed more mundane problems that affected the daily life of schools. This is the case with conditions such as the existence of the school fund and the need to raise funds to maintain it. It would be a case of thinking about the fragility of the group of schools in Brasília, which still depended on the school community to ensure educational opportunities for all children.

This aspect has been addressed by scholars of the June festival, such as Campos (2007, p. 592), who endorses the understanding that "[...] the purpose of holding these festivals, in addition to their playful aspect, has acquired other objectives, such as raising money so that the school units can finance their projects". In other words, given "[...] the lack of resources passed on by the state or local authorities [...]," organizing festivals would be a way for educators to solve the problems of a lack of financial resources.

## Final considerations

The aim of this article is to analyze some school celebrations in Brasília as they were described and commented on in the columns of journalist Yvonne Jean between 1962 and 1968.

A cursory reading of her texts on schools in Brasília in the 1960s reveals a journalist who was delighted with what she saw, especially the spontaneity and cultural authenticity of public-school festivities. There are no words in her texts that suggest a critical or prescriptive judgment. Rather, the tone is one of praise and recognition of efforts that the press should highlight. However, a more contextualized reading in a diachronic sense, so that we can grasp the origins of Yvonne Jean's interest in school education, shows how much her texts must be read with historical-interpretative rigor if they are to be taken as relevant historical documents. They must be read with the intention of learning about and critically reviewing the past, with a view to the present. This is because, on the surface of the texts, the columns hint at a somewhat peaceful situation in the school environment. Even in the face of structural problems, it is as if these were smaller than the desire to carry out festive-commemorative actions.

Read in context and between the lines (in the background), the texts of the columns contain information reiterating the real reasons behind the commemorations and celebrations: to raise funds for school maintenance. In the literal reading of the text, such motivation can even be seen as praiseworthy, but in the historical-interpretative reading, the insistence on saying the reasons for the party seems to reveal an attempt to expose the problems of the functioning of the *new* schools in the *new* federal capital, problems that Yvonne Jean knew closely. Thus, when she entered the new schools, she did so with a preconceived idea of what the schools in the old federal capital were like, which led her to see that they faced similar problems, such as a shortage of food for children at a critical stage in their development.

Therefore, the historical-educational value of Yvonne Jean's texts as a representation of school culture is evident as they are read historically, based on the contextualization of the sources and their analytical-interpretative reading. It is from this reading that comes the understanding of education according to the logic of norms and practices, strategies and tactics, behaviors and appropriations, whether of teachers, students or other individuals who act

in the intra-school educational process and comes from a representation of the school culture.

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