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## Pereira da Silva, Gastão



Born *in São José Do Norte or Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on 1896 or 1898*

Died *in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), on May 25, 1987*

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Gastão Pereira da Silva was one of the first and main promoters of psychoanalysis to the general public in Brazil. However, the few sources of biographical information on him are often contradictory, beginning with his memoirs, published in 1959, and the book written by his son Helius (H. Silva, 1993), which contain little chronological data of a precise nature and are narrated in a romanticized style. The difficulty begins with the details of his birth, about which different sources disagree. Some say that he was born in São José do Norte, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and others that he was born in Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, both 1896 and 1898 are given as his birth year.

Pereira da Silva said he obtained his medical degree in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1910s. However, no evidence has been found to confirm this. From the late 1910s to the early 1920s, he practiced medicine “on the back of a donkey” in small cities in the countryside of the states of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais. Beginning in the second half of the 1920s, his articles began to appear in Rio de Janeiro newspapers; in addition to some texts on psychiatry, he published literary narratives and articles on other cultural topics. In 1928, he published a novel entitled *Sangue* [*Blood*] and sent a copy to critic Medeiros e Albuquerque, who said that the author had no literary talent, but was “a latent psychoanalyst.” From that period on, Pereira da Silva, already established in the city of Rio de Janeiro, turned to psychoanalysis and began to publish a series of books for the general public, beginning with a book about Freud in 1931.

His books dealt with a variety of subjects, always in combination with psychoanalysis: for example, criminology (*Crime e psicanálise* [Crime and psychoanalysis], 1932), education and childcare (*Conheça seu filho* [Understand your child], 1942), animal psychology (*Os bichos amam assim* [This is how animals love], 1944), and religion (*O ateísmo de Freud* [Freud’s atheism], 1966). However, the most famous books among his many publications, referred in selected works, involved pedagogical, accessible explanations for the general public of Freud’s theories.

Although he began his dissemination work by publishing books, Pereira da Silva soon diversified in order to reach the general public. In 1935, he began publishing a column in the weekly magazine *Carioca*, entitled *Psychanalyse dos sonhos* [Psychoanalysis of dreams]. In the column, he analyzed dreams sent via letter by people from all over Brazil. The column lasted almost 2 years and published more than 2000 responses to letters. In 1936 and 1937, the author published a series of ten columns in the magazine *O Malho* entitled *As curiosidades da psicanálise* [The curiosities of psychoanalysis] (Marcondes, 2015), and from 1939 through 1943, he published several columns in the magazine *Vamos Lêr!*, such as *Uma página para as mães* [A page for mothers], *Psicologia da vida cotidiana* [Psychology in daily life], *Doentes célebres* [Famous patients], and *Criminosos célebres* [Famous criminals]. He also published in other magazines such as *Dom Casmurro* and *Seleções sexuais*, the latter in the 1950s.

Beginning in the 1930s, Silva also participated in radio programs, and beginning in the 1940s, he presented a program on National Radio entitled “In the World of Dreams”; at the same time, according to Silva himself in an interview in 1985, he wrote “100+ scripts on National Radio, all with a psychoanalytic basis” (Silva, 1985). He also wrote plays that were staged by the company of actor Procópio Ferreira (1898–1979), and he wrote a psychoanalytic biography of the actor in 1934. In the 1950s, he began offering a psychoanalysis course via correspondence.

All of this activity to disseminate psychoanalysis was done outside official institutions, such as medical schools and academies linked to psychoanalysis or psychology. According to Silva himself, he refused to take exams in order to be considered a psychoanalyst, which began to be a requirement of candidates at the psychoanalysis institutions recognized by the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). Consequently, he always adopted a discourse that valued independent learning and his personal reading of Freud, in addition to a letter he received from Freud in 1934, as his principal sources of legitimacy. Nevertheless, in 1978, near the end of his life, he was a founding member and the first

president of an institute of psychoanalysts, the *Associação Profissional dos Psicanalistas do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* (APPERJ) [Professional Association of Psychoanalysts of the State of Rio de Janeiro]. Also due to his career outside official institutions, the name Gastão Pereira da Silva has been little cited by Brazilian historians of psychoanalysis, with the exception of the work by Elisabete Mokrejs (1993) and Jane Russo (2002, 2007).

## 1 Cross-References

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