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Memory, orality and history: some reflections

Memory, orality, and history: some reflections

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SUMMARY
This article, which addresses some reflections on memory, orality and history, is an excerpt from the master's research entitled Black woman teacher between the chrysalis and the hummingbird: the invisible and the revealed, silence and the writing of si, in which a study was carried out on the life trajectory of a black teacher, from the municipal education network of Feira de Santana-BA, who died in the classroom. The objective of the research was to investigate the experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination experienced by her at school and its impacts on the teacher's life and death trajectory. The investigation was guidedin thefollowing problematizing questions: How was the life story of the black woman who became a teacher composed? What are the implications of racism, prejudice and discrimination for the teacher's life, as well as for the morbidity and mortality process of black women? Considering the nature of the investigation,in thisqualitative-based study, the methodological path was embodied in the life stories approach. In the aforementioned study, ethnic-racial, gender, teaching work and health issues for the black population were emphasized. Regarding the aspects covered here, we present reflections on memory, orality and history, based on the foundations of Benjamin, (2005), Bom Meihy (2005), (Halbwachs (1990), Hampaté Ba (1982) andLe Goff (2003), (1994). In this context, the theoretical focus on history establishes dialogue with memory, the place for recording what has been experienced, and orality as the narrative device of experience. Individual memory and collective memory are intertwined in a continuous flow of reciprocal exchanges.

Key words:memory; orality; history.

ABSTRACT
This article, which addresses some reflections about memory, orality, and history, is a clipping of the master's research entitled Black Woman teacher between chrysalis and hummingbird: the invisible and the revealed, the silence and the writing of one another, in which a study was carried out on the life trajectory of a black teacher, of the municipal school system of Feira de Santana-BA, who died in the classroom. The aim of this research was to investigate about the experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination experienced by this school and its impacts on the trajectory of life and death of the teacher. The investigation was based onthefollowing problematizing questions: How was the life story of the black woman who became a teacher? What are the implications of racism, prejudice, and discrimination for the life of the teacher, as well as for the process of morbidity and mortality of black women? Considering the nature of the investigation, in this qualitative study, the methodological path wasinstantiatedin the approach of life histories. In this study, ethnic-racial, gender, teaching workandhealth issues of the black population were emphasized. Regarding the aspects discussed here, we present reflections about memory, orality, and history, based on the foundations of Benjamin (2005), Bom Meihy (2005), (Halbwachs (1990), Hampaté Ba (1982) andLe Goff (2003), (1994). In this context, the theoretical approach on history establishes interlocution with memory, the place of the records of the lived, and orality as the narrative device of experience. Individual memory and collective memory are intertwined in a continuous stream of reciprocal exchanges.

Keywords:memory; orality; history.

INTRODUCTION

Reflect on memory, covering its concept, its historical path and its importance within the scope individual and collective, involves reconstructing a long path marked by roots embedded in Greek poetry, where poets immortalizedtheir heroes in their epics, with verses that announced the heroic cry that, engraved in memory, did not let them fall into oblivion, did not let them die (MEIHY, 2005). Therefore, to leave them alive, it was necessary to defeat Lethe, the female goddess associated with oblivion, through Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory and mother of the muses. Therefore, the memory inscribed in the epics, in the singularities of Greek poetry, was the place where the voices

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from the aedos and rhapsodes- poets, singers, narrators- echoed verses of a culture that was inventing itself, revisiting its history.

In Benjamin's thinking, memory not only has the function of preserving the marks of what was experienced and of being the corner where the experiences narrated by the poetry live, because it itself "is the most epic of all faculties" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p.210). Only when capable of extending itself does it execute two antagonistic movements in principle: it enables the composition of epic poetry that encompasses the course of things and resignation in the face of their disappearance through the action of death. In this context, reminiscence is anchored in tradition that is fed by the transmission of experiences from one generation to another, in the succession of time, it becomes the "antidote to forgetting" (LE GOFF, 2003, p. 434). In this way, the composition and poetic narrative germinatethe need to preserve experiences and consider them as an asset, as a heritage that preserves the existence of a people and a culture. This aspect is quite evident in communities with oral tradition.

African culture in its genesis, supported by oral tradition, has in memory an important reservoir of history, traditions, culture and ancestral knowledge. The transmission of knowledge, in this culture, was embodied in/by the action of public animators, the***griots.***These were in society, musicians, ambassadors, genealogists/historians or poets. In this way, they can be understood as narrators. They narrated the knowledge constructed in and through experiences. In Benjamin, experience is the source from which the narrator draws food and propagates since, "he takes from experience what he tells: his own experience or that reported by others.others''. ANDincorporates the things narrated into the experience of its listeners" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 201).

According to Benjamin, the narrator mediates between his experience and the experiences of others, which unfold into other experiences, nuanced by modes, beliefs, impressions arising from a reciprocal learning process, because when narrating his experiences and those built around it, the things that result from the encounter of the experiences of those who narrate and those who listen, are incorporated into the lives of those who listen. Thus, at the same time as they are narrators, they are also listeners because their experiences are also taken as inspiration by the narrator. Socialized experiences are full of complicity that crosses generations; that passes from person to person, feeding the narrator who preserves the tradition.

In the African tradition, reports and narratives have an educational and dynamic character, as they give "life" to the meetings held by the different groups that make up society. The themes, the axis around which the narratives were constructed, were the great deeds of the country's ancestors or heroes, thus evoked. Historical narratives are preserved with extreme fidelity in the collective memory.

Narrating experiences in rich detail, bringing their totality, represents one of the peculiarities of African memory.So theAfrican memory records the entire scene: the setting, the characters, their words, the smallest details of the clothing" (HAMPATÉ BA, 1982, p.215). Therefore, its history was based on oral sources. In this context, speech is sacred, because it comes from the sacred; this, the sacred, is the source from which it draws its creative and operative power (HAMPATÉ BA, 1982), that is, speech is the sacred existence of the masters who narrate, the screams.

You***screams***that announce in speech the sacredness of a tradition, externalizing the meaning and significance of material and immaterial heritage, above all, as Hampaté Ba (1982, p.187) emphasizes, makes it possible,

> understand in what magical-religious and social context respect for the word is situated in societies of oral tradition, especially when it comes to transmitting words inherited from ancestors or elderly people. What traditional Africa values most is its ancestral heritage. The religious attachment to the transmitted heritage is expressed in phrases such as "I learned from my father", "that's what I sucked from mymother''.

two

According to this author, in societies inspired by oral tradition, the African one in particular, the word is the oxygen thatkeepsknowledge is accessed and preserved as an inheritance, because they carry ancestral wisdom and that which inhabits elderly people. It is sacred, therefore it confers authority and reflects a relationship of respect. Both ancestry and wisdom built by experience, translated by the marks of time that whiten the hair and wrinkle the skin, is a sign that tells of the paths taken and the life that continues.

From these two compositions, between**griots**,**aedos and rhapsodes**, we enter the field of history and memory ria, emphasizing its importance for the writing of Life Stories and their consequences in/and for understanding

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of historical-social processes. In this way, it becomes possible and pertinent to establish a relationship between memory and history, based on the construction of the concept of the former, as highlighted by Le Goff (2003). We therefore emphasize that this is polysemic in nature, where its richness lies. Furthermore, this author, on the conceptual polysemy of history, reflects on the existence of six problems that are linked to it, namely: the dichotomy between "lived history", "natural" and which refers to human societies and historical science; the relationships between history and time; the opposition placed between past and present; the story with the ability topremonition,therefore, capable of predicting the future; the historian's relationship with other sciences that makes him establish different historical durations, finally the conception of totalizing history, that is, "the idea of history as the history of man was replaced by the idea of history as the history of men in society" (LE GOFF, 2003, pp 7-9).

Based on this perspective, memory and history are constructed in parallel directions, but are not sewn together by the principles of antagonism and mutual exclusion. Joutard (2005) classifies them as paths that, safeguarding the specificities that compose them and individualizing the logic of each one, lead to the past, in which "memory makes history listen to other voices that shed some light on past reality scenes " (JOUTARD, 2005, p. 211).

Regarding the concept of memory, Le Goff (2003, p.419) places it as "crucial" for history, considering the structural aspects regarding its psychic functions, whose importance is consolidated becauseto update"past impressions or information, or which he represents as past".

The history of memory is, without a doubt, a long history and its entire itinerary is markedly significant, throughout which many concepts were formulated and functions were attributed to it, in addition to the many setbacks.

Reflecting on memory from the Enlightenment onwards, Horkheimer and Adorno's essay on the Enlightenment was the starting point for a series of criticisms of the modern project that imposed many dilemmas on Western man, which "enforced science for practical life and jettison memory to the field of cultural amenities" (CATANI, 2000, p. 22). It also means saying that in the space of correlation of forces, in power relations – where a group hegemonically constitutes itself as a force, appropriates the right and exclusivity of memory, forging "truths", discourses about the past, of heroes and wills – ethnocentrically, the common subject is devoid of history, of memory, since their memories are disregarded.

Catani (2000) in*Teaching, memory and gender*, presents unique reflections on memory, tracing a historical path, situating it. It presents the beginning of the 20th century, marked by the emergence of several scholars who dedicated themselves to reflections on memory, such as Bergson, James, Freud, Conrad, Halbwachs, thinkers from the Frankfurt School and researchers from the Chicago School. The author also emphasizes a movement of effervescent pragmatism that reigned after the Second World War, which interrupted the flow of such reflections until the 1980s, when the resumption of discussions and revaluation of memory began, the concept of which was associated with experience. , in which its relationship with practical life and the feeling of identity are emphasized.

Among the scholars cited, Halbwachs (1990), through the arguments articulated in his work, emphasizes that the subject participates in two "kinds of memories": individual and collective. These memories trigger attitudes that are not only different, but are supposed to be contrary.

The understanding that circulates and the concept that is structured around individual memory and collective memory, this author alludes, establishes:

> On the one hand, it is within the framework of his personality, or his personal life, that his memories would take place: those that are common to him with others would not be considered by him except under the aspect that interests him, insofar as they he distinguishes himself from them. On the other hand, he would be able, at times, to behave simply as a member of a group that contributes to evoking and maintaining impersonal memories, to the extent that these are of interest to the group (HALBWACHS, 1990, p. 53).

Thus, individual memory takes on a personal character, while collective memory is constituted by reference to experiences constructed and lived in/with the group. Reflecting on the aspects that outline conceptions about memory also involves understanding and reflecting on the concepts attributed to it, the factors that interfere in its organization and its various classifications.

In this sense, Bom Meihy (2005) conceptualizes memory as memories that are organized according to

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a logic of a subjective nature, in which its elements are selected or articulated and do not always correspond to the facts, objectives and materials. Regarding its types, memory is classified as individual, social or collective. In this aspect, Bom Meihy, corroborating Halbwachs, emphasizes that such memories present an interdependent relationship.

As for individual memory, it is personal, biological and psychological, whose meaning refers to individual examinations of isolated people; Group or collective memory, on the other hand, is not restricted to the sum of individual memories, "it is a phenomenon constructed by the force of external factors that circumstantially affect a given group, marking its identity" (BOM MEIHY, 2005, p. 64).

As for the factors that interfere in the organization of memory, according to this author's arguments, these elements are important: cultural factors, people's biological capacity and events considered milestones in the individual, social or collective trajectory and physical weakness, and the traumatic circumstances that directly affect narratives that are based on memory.

Another aspect emphasized by Bom Meihy (2005) refers to the necessary definitions for what should be consider memory.Firstly, the definition that relates memory to the brain, which is the organic, material and corporeal, biological base that individually stores memories; the second is that of the mind, conceived as a set of representations, of cognitive plans articulated by the collection of memories stored in the brain. Furthermore,

> the past contained in memory is dynamic like individual or group memory itself. While the memory narrative is not embodied in a written document, it is changeable and undergoes variations ranging from emphasis or intonation to silences and disguises (BOM MEIHY, 2005, p. 61).

Remembering means revisiting the paths taken, the steps taken and many others that remained in place, as well as feeling at our fingertips, in the melody of different sounds, the marks we left along the way and many others that we carry in our tastes, affections, perspectives , propositions and narratives of stories that contain many, that mix with our skin, our smell, the other that we are, after so many reflections, after looking inside ourselves, after listening through the silence of our body, the voice announcing what is to come. We listen to what we say about ourselves, what our surroundings say and what we say about this constructed imaginary.

Reinventing who we are represents the challenge of understanding who we are in our singularities, in the subjectivity of understanding the place we speak from, where we build identity and feel like we belong, territorializing ourselves, making history, weaving memories. Remembering is feeling like we belong to a rich harvest of affection. Belonging does not mean the imperative of possession, but presence, complicity and authorship.

Speech that recalls lived experiences and their interpretations with the marks of the present make memory the space of meaning and construction, resignification and reconstruction of what has been experienced, opening up opportunities for the composition of history in the plural. It is in this context that oral history is inscribed, as

> By privileging the analysis of the excluded, the marginalized and other minorities, oral history highlighted the importance of underground memories that, as an integral part of minority and dominated cultures, oppose "official memory", in this case national memory (POLLAK, 1989, p. 4).

Therefore, this "new story" that hears those who are hungry, the betrayed, the banished, without the pretension of being the path, truth and life, will allow us to read new messages, listen to subjectivities and dialogue with different perceptions about the world.

Thus, life stories recognize otherness, because subjects narrate their experiences; they interpret why they are historically, politically, socially and culturally inscribed; produce and self-produce at the intersection between life individual and social context. This is made up of the intertwining of subjectivities and symbolisms that reflect their contradictions, their feelings, values, beliefs, etc.

Therefore, studies on Life Stories open up possibilities for intertwining between individual lives and the social context, paths where it is possible to remove from invisibility the stories cunningly unnoticed and/or faded by retinas addicted to official, ethnocentric, monochromatic history.

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CONCLUSION

Memory, orality and history are intertwined, intersected by experiences and the senses and meanings attributed to them by the subjects constituted and referenced in/by culture, as one is not without the other.

The subject modifies and updates culture as he is also constructed, modified and updated by it in the remembrance of what has been experienced, in the preservation of traditions through oral narratives, in the re-readings and resignifications of practices and discourses, in the dynamic context of history, of the relationship time-space-subject, hence why we understand and reflect on the importance of discussing memory, individual and collective, as a source for understanding history based on the subjects' interpretation of themselves and their surroundings, revealed in their narratives. Individual memory and collective memory are intertwined in a continuous flow of reciprocal exchanges.

Studies that focus on memory, orality and history, highlighting approximations and peculiarities, open paths for the consolidation of polyphonic history, history narrated by multiple voices, overcoming the hegemony of history imposed as official.

Another relevant aspect refers to the recognition of orality as a device for the historicity of subjects, expression of representations about these subjects, about culture, history and societies, constituting a source in the context of literate societies, which only recognized the written document as a valid source.

In this context, the theoretical focus on history establishes dialogue with memory, the place for recording what has been experienced, and orality as the narrative device of experience.

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