

## Women, black women and ethnic-racial configurations at the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, Bahia, Brazil (1898-1943)\*

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### Abstract

This text presents a reading about the presence of women in the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, Bahia, Brazil (1898-1943) in an effort to break with narratives, in school legislation and curricula, which describe them as submissive teachers, executing tasks prescribed by men. When resuming documents from the Municipal Public Archive, from the *Escola Normal de Caetité* and from retired teachers in a historical-discursive path located in gender studies, which involved reading copies of the *Jornal A Penna* and of photographs, the text problematizes policies of silencing in two temporalities, that of the documents of the period 1898-1943 and that of the archives that organize the narratives of the Normal School in the present time, to bring out experiences of protagonism of women in the teaching profession. This period marks the beginning of teacher training in Caetité and extends till the end of the activities of *Jornal A Penna*, one of the sources of this study. The educational scenes that the documents in the archives reveal allow us to affirm that the *Escola Normal* emerged sexist, classist and racist as a symptom of a State constituted in these same nuances. To exist as a woman and as a black woman meant resisting different oppressions. It concludes by arguing that the creative ways of the women of the *Escola Normal de Caetité* contributed to resist the silencing policies of the Upper Sertão region of Bahia from the second half of the 20th century and should appear in the local archives as a condition of possibility for textual productions sustaining forms of protagonism marked by gendered and racialized experiences.

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\* The translator and the author take full responsibility for the translation of the text, including titles of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese.

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## Introduction

Why do men occupy a prominent place in speeches about teaching, especially in science and mathematics, while the photographic records that materialize teaching in the highlands of Bahia show women as protagonists of educational events? We believe that the invisibilization of women as historical subjects in the teaching profession and in teacher training narratives is a political silencing/erasing strategy embodied in institutions that allow conditions for the production of historical male structure patterns.

The emergence and consolidation of normal schools in Bahia are directly linked to the need to train teachers to offer school education at the most basic levels of the state education system, the emerging primary school teaching profession in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazil. It refers to the Empire, more specifically to the year 1836, when the President of the Province of Bahia, Francisco de Souza Paraíso, Senator of the Empire, sanctioned Law No. 37 that created the Normal School as an institution aimed at the training of men, although it contemplated the education of girls in curricular arrangements that entangled them in activities such as drawing and domestic chores (ROCHA, 2008). Having the viscount of Uruguay, Paulino José Soares de Souza, at the head of national policies, this scenario was related to the process of forming an imperial monarchical state, centered in Rio de Janeiro and founded on slavery, and by the formulations of a conservative Brazilian thought (FERREIRA, 2009). Subsequently, the debate on political and social reforms emerged, specifically in the 1860s (CARVALHO, 2009), and the theories introduced in Brazil after 1870, such as positivism, Darwinism and evolutionism, which marked the ways of interpreting society and its individuals and offered conditions of production that enabled the emergence of different racial theories (SCHWARCZ, 1993). Thus, we locate the emergence of the Normal School in Brazil – Niterói (1835), Bahia (1836), Ceará (1845) and São Paulo (1846) (MARTINS, 2009) – and its consolidation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the same narrative matrix of the consolidation of the centralizing Imperial State, of the conservatism and radicalism of the political and social reforms after 1860, which ended in republicanism.

If, on the one hand, the legal provisions indicated that the *Escola Normal da Bahia* should mainly train teachers (thus, men), on the other hand, over the years, there was a sharp decline in the male composition in the graduating classes. Research such as Rocha's (2008) and Nogueira's (2015) has pointed out that, since the first classes, women represented the majority formed in the Normal Schools of Salvador and Caetité, respectively. Enrollment data from the *Escola Normal de Caetité* indicate that, until 1903, twenty-two female teachers graduated, in three classes, and that, in the following years, there was a predominance of women among those graduating from the normal course (NOGUEIRA, 2015).

We infer that: patterns of male historical structures, “male supremacy” in the terms of Davis (2016), “male domination” in the terms of Bourdieu (2002) or “patriarchal capitalism” in the terms of Hirata (2018a), defined the laws related to the creation of the *Escola Normal*, establishing the domination over women in the foundation of teacher training in Bahia. With the necessary naturalness in the exclusion of women, evidenced by the absence of justification and concealment of the classification criteria, such regulations were developed and sanctioned by men who occupied positions in the state apparatus at the time. The schools, their curricula, books and other documents, certainly, emerged with the marks of their creators, white men of the dominant classes who legislated, managed and taught in the nascent schools in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bahia. However, practical experiences emerged, in which women became the majority of the teachers trained at the *Escola Normal* and, therefore, in primary education establishments in the capital and in the different cities of the interior. We also infer that other elements participated in the initial contours of the *Escola Normal* in Bahia, including race, sexuality and social class<sup>2</sup>, not as simple *a priori*, but as social constructs that participate in the production of subjectivities and the social structure in practical contexts of interaction of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, marked by the slave regime (and by its overcoming) and by interpretative keys of social Darwinism. Gender<sup>3</sup>, race, sexuality and social class do not only define places that subjects occupy in the fabric of social life but are elaborations of traditions mobilized in practical and specific contexts, such as those related to the theorists who formulated the racist perspectives at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

**2-** Gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity and social class are concepts that have been worked on for some time in educational research. For Joan Scott (2019), gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on the perceived differences between the sexes and a primary tool of signifying power relations. Following Michel Foucault, she considers that social power should not be understood as unified, coherent and centralized, but “[...] as dispersed constellations of unequal relations constituted by discourse in ‘fields of forces’” (SCOTT, 2019, p. 66). Inspired by Stengers (2015), when handling such categories, we are as much hierarchizing concepts and the oppressions to which they refer as naming that what makes feel and think on what these names evoke. With Audre Lorde (2019a, 2019b), while considering the differences in race between women, we learn to refute the hierarchy of oppressions. And, with Scott (2019), Lorde (2019a, 2019b), Butler (2003, 2014) and Strathern (2009), we appropriate the category ‘gender’ considering the systems of kinship (anthropological heritage), the labor market (economy), education (its subjects, curricula and institutions) and the political system for thinking a peaceful future. Race, in turn, is here a concept taken as a construction that marks the differences between whites, blacks, Indians... According to Maria Aparecida da Silva Bento (2002, p. 48), “[...] race is a condition of the individual and it is the identity that, more than any other, makes human inequality appear”.

**3-** Gender identity does not predict sexual orientation (Butler, 2009; GROSSI, 1998). In view of the advancement of fascism in Brazil, with the significant increase in people who correlate gender and sexual identity in the public and mediatic space, such as the female Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights of the Bolsonaro Government, we consider it necessary to reaffirm this already consolidated formulation in the field of gender studies. Gender is here a socio-historical-cultural phenomenon that is not necessarily permanent without this implying the need of being certified by the regulatory apparatus of psychiatry and psychology, even though, in our society, it presents itself as an apparatus through which male and female production and normalization are manifested (BUTLER, 2014). In this sense, we argue that the *Escola Normal* embodied the gender regulations of the period, focusing on “male” and “female” bodies – and producing them –, which, through their development, became normalist subjects, “spirits” able to take over the literacy classes of the emerging country school. Certainly, there were people outside of this binarism, but who had to submit to it to occupy possible places. In our incursion into the empirical field, we identified the signifier *beata/beato* (bigot/churchgoer/old maid/old bachelor) which, in our view, is a useful tool for thinking on bodies and ways of life not conformed to male-female binarism. Here, again with Butler (2014, p. 254), gender is an apparatus for deconstructing and denaturalizing this binarism. “Keeping the term ‘gender’ separate from masculinity and femininity is to safeguard a theoretical perspective that allows analyzing how male and female binarism has exhausted the semantic field of gender”. Certainly, there were individualities who were not fully conformed to the gender norm embodied by the *Escola Normal*; we are talking, more specifically, of women, graduates of the *Escola Normal de Caetité* from the period 1898-1966, with whom we established a dialogue and, who, today, with more than eighty years old, live as “*beatas*”. One of them said in an interview that she did not get married so as not to submit to the social roles exercised by her married colleagues, of submission to their husbands. In other words, her condition of being a “*beata*” emerged in our dialogues as a subversion to the gender regulations of the time.

century, and, therefore, circulate and guide the warping of social experiences. Gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity and social class are related to social relationships, “[...] they are interdependent and inseparable” (HIRATA, 2018a, p. 17). Therewith, we agree with the approaches that displace such categories from any essentialism, representation and/or naturalization, which, many times, resonate historical paradigms whose contents propose the continuity between physical and moral characteristics, the distance between different peoples and the predominance of the group in the behavior of the individual, to assume them as elaborations of subjects and social groups in concrete existence situations of their individuals. Here, in a work to deconstruct the principles of male domination and/or patriarchal capitalism, we aim to elucidate historical events concerning the *Escola Normal de Caetité* to face the disguises of the plots related to the silencing of women.

In the case of professorship in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazil, despite the various motivations that guided the divestment of men in the teaching career, such as professional devaluation and low wages, we read this movement from the action of women opening up the world of work as we want to avoid reinforcing negative aspects related to women and the teaching profession. At this point, we are inspired by the reading of Collins (2016) on the relationship between *creativity* and the *outsider within* social status of black women. Thus, we do not deny the exploitation, objectification, oppression and devaluation of women in the period covered by this study, but we believe in the creative dimension of women to exist, resist and reconfigure oppressive social structures.

In this outlined analytical scenario, this text is the result of a research that analyzed, in public and private archives, between August 2018 and August 2019, the active role of women in the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, Bahia, Brazil, as students and teachers, in order to bring out forms of protagonism that reinvented the order of events, allowing the opening of the world of work and public life for women in the semi-arid region of Bahia in the period 1898-1943<sup>4</sup>, in a context marked by the hegemony of white men in the prescription of school curricula. By resuming documents from the Public Archives of Caetité and personal files of graduates of the School in an undertaking of a historical-discursive nature, the text seeks to bring out experiences of protagonism that resist silencing policies, which, in our view, is a facet of oppression, in two temporalities, that of the documents of that period and that of the archives that organize the narratives of the *Escola Normal* at the present time, in Caetité, Bahia.

## Data production trajectory

We focus here on an approach of the active presence of women (and their silencing) who were entangled in the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, Bahia, situated in the context of gender studies (LORDE, 2019a, 2019b; NASCIMENTO, 2019; SCOTT, 2019; COLLINS, 2016, 2017; DAVIS, 2016; BUTLER, 2003, 2009, 2014; HIRATA, 2014, 2018a, 2018b; HARAWAY,

**4-** We defined the period 1898-1943 taking as a reference our reflective pause of working through the archives. Thus, the year 1898 represents the start of the first *Escola Normal de Caetité* and the year 1943 represents the closing year of the *Jornal A Pena*, one of the crucial sources that allowed us to create the contours of our research and this text. In other words, the chosen time concerns the conditions of textual production offered by the analyzed documents.

2009; bell hooks<sup>5</sup>, 2008, 2015a, 2015b) understanding that, like any scientific grouping, it is constituted by several theoretical and methodological perspectives, it is always under construction and must resist any action towards (a desire for) hegemony.

The discursive event of the presence of black women in the *Escola Normal* was mapped from: statements collected in documents of the referred school, such as the teaching program, photographs, minutes, books, memorial books etc.; documents from the Caetité Municipal Public Archives, such as photographs and journals; records of meetings with female graduates; as well as documents from the female graduates' personal files. In the *corpus* fabric itself, we looked for clues on the existence of the woman subject in the hinterland of Bahia.

By imbricating with documents from the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, which compose the collection of local archives in a research related to the Teaching, Discourse and Society Nucleus (*Núcleo Ensino, Discurso e Sociedade – DisSE*), we elaborated some questions, namely: how are women shown (or not) in the collections related to the *Escola Normal de Caetité*? In which discursive regularities on the gender relations of the period were these women situated? What clues left by the local press at the time (1898-1943) could help to understand the relationship between the *Escola Normal* and gender regulations? We also invested in interrogating the archives in which we carried out the fieldwork: how does the organization of their collections, at the present time, make certain narratives about women appear and silence others from the past of the *Escola Normal* (1898-1943)?

We understand that, in this way, we could make a movement of textual production with the potential to contribute to worlds *to come*, in a movement for the future, in which the erasing/silencing/concealment of women is a overcome policy, making possible the beginning of policies of presence, recognizing the singularities of all as necessary to maintain the diversity that sustains the complex experience of existence, including, subjects situated outside the masculine-feminine and man-woman forms of binarism.

The *corpus* that offered the contours of this study was composed of documents from public and private archives: texts from the *Jornal A Penna* and minutes, notebooks, photographs, letters and memorial books related to the *Escola Normal de Caetité*. We understand that the archives' collections are produced in the tension between past and present in a double movement: the reproduction and the (re)invention of discourses. They emerge from discursive materialities of the past and the present that are modernized and/or antagonized, which makes it possible to problematize structuralizing issues that traverse and produce institutions and school curricula.

Copies of the *Jornal A Penna*, the first *Sertão* newspaper in Bahia<sup>6</sup>, created by João Gumes, on March 5, 1897, were consulted in the Municipal Public Archive of Caetité. It was organized by sections: editorials, feature articles, notices, social column and miscellaneous

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**5-** "bell hooks" is the pseudonym adopted by Gloria Jean Watkins, an American intellectual, writer, academic, teacher and black activist. She uses this pseudonym, which is her great-grandmother's name, in lowercase letters to sign her texts in order to prevent her hyperidentification with ideas, which, for her, prevents creativity.

**6-** According to Estrela (2003, p. 37), a regionalization must consider "above all the perceptions and the imaginary of the men who inhabit it", in addition to geographical, cultural and historical factors, among others, that belong to it. For the author, the use of the term, "designates a vast area of the interior of Brazil, currently located within the limits of two different states, clearly reveals the existence of an imaginary region in the geography of the extreme southwest of Bahia [...] which has its origin in the territorial formation of Colonial Brazil" (ESTRELA, 2003, p. 37).

notes. The newspaper suffered some interruptions and, even with the death of its founder in 1930, was published until 1943. The discourses of this newspaper presented women circumscribed to the roles that corroborated a position of inferiority, restricting them to the domestic world, to the private space. The first revindications of the feminist movement for the right to vote, to work outside the home and female participation in politics were attacked with disbelief and strong doses of humor (*Jornal A Penna*, 12/01/1927). Women from high social strata were mentioned in the shadow of their husbands and poor and black women and female residents of the periphery appeared on police pages when they were involved in some violence or transgression of the prescribed norms.

## **Situating the reflection**

Yannoulas (2011), when looking at studies that address the feminine in the teaching of elementary education in the period of 1870-1930, argued for the scientific and political distinction between “feminilization” and “feminization”. For her, “feminilization” is linked to the impact of women in a profession through statistical indicators and a qualitative meaning, which would be “feminization”. In her terms, “feminization” refers to:

[...] a broader and more sophisticated understanding of the processes of incorporating women into a given profession or occupation, because in addition to describing their entry into the professional or occupational field, it tries to explain the reasons that allowed this entry. (YANNOULAS, 2011, p. 283).

Taking as example the anthropological work of women like Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Marilyn Strathern, who had a qualitative impact on anthropology, creating openings for research questions or putting the same questions already posed by men in other approaches, women’s studies or, more specifically, gender studies, therefore the feminization of research and its modes of textual production, allow here to address the protagonism of women, removing them from silence and putting them into circulation, in discursive networks on the teaching profession. Besides, we believe that the feminization of the teaching profession, in the period selected by this text (1898-1943), in practical contexts of the professional performance of the graduates of the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, allowed the opening of schools nascent to issues silenced by the official discourse of the time.

In the fieldwork, we found female teachers who indicated that many of these issues circulated in the dialogues and body practices of the female students, female teachers and student-teacher interactions. One of them, a graduate of the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, reported, upon receiving us to consult her file, that, at recess, the girls removed their pantyhose, mandatory pieces of the school uniform, play games and “prohibited” sports, like football. This graduate, who at the time of our meeting was over eighty years old, organized civic parades with female students dressed in swimsuits when she became a teacher in the 1940s and 1950s. She showed photographs of civic parades highlighting the students in swimsuits and said: “do you think we didn’t transgress? Look at the photo, it was a scandal at the time”.

We claim that the feminization of teaching from the *Escola Normal* impacted the order of things and opened up possibilities with which teaching practices were developed in the Bahian hinterland as a strategy to resist the many ways of silencing that ensnared schools and their subjects.

When the *Escola Normal* appeared and for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in many locations in the State of Bahia, women were already teaching as lay teachers. It is said that some of these classes took place in improvised places and with the collaboration of students who brought their own chairs, or sat on the floor, to learn their “first letters”. Graduates of the *Escola Normal* reported that it was enough to know how to “sign their own name” to assume the position of teacher, a job often performed without pay or “paid” with donations and gifts by the students’ family members. In the specific case of the state of Minas Gerais, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Veiga (2008) identified that teachers offered classes at home due to the absence of educational facilities and that the experiences related to discrimination and prejudice from the imperial schools were still considerable in the emergence of the republic, which led to the purification of students in tests and serialization as forms of school organization, in order to select children of “good origin” for the teaching profession to stop being “indigent”. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, unlike the interethnic school of the previous century, individuals from the most favored classes started to be recruited, those who could buy uniforms, attend classes (without having to drop out to work) and get to the schools in precarious road and transport conditions.

Investments in education in the State of Bahia, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the perspective of the modernization and civilization that was developing in Europe and with a view to offering schooling to Bahians, sought to impact this scenario of teacher training and, consequently, expand the provision of primary education.

## **The Normal School of Caetité - Bahia, Brazil**

Caetité had its first Normal School founded by the Law of 1895 and inaugurated in 1898. The course lasted four years. The population of Caetité, according to *Jornal A Penna*, was very happy with the creation of the school, the first educational establishment for the training of teachers in the high *Sertão* of Bahia:

Only through these schools will we be able to count in the near future with teachers who, born among us, knowledgeable of our environment, of our living conditions, which are less tight than those of the capital and of the densest population centers, will prefer to exercise the noble and dignified profession of sharpening intelligences in these high regions submitting to housing conditions in ways they are not used to. (JORNAL A PENNA. Caetité, BA. 04/02/1926).

In 1903, the School was closed due to political conflicts. Its reopening took place in 1925, after many demands by the population of Caetité. Thus, the second School began its activities on April 21, 1926, with the entry of fourteen male and female candidates, who passed the entrance exam. Anísio Teixeira, who held the position of General Director of

Public Instruction for the State of Bahia, was responsible for the recreation of the *Escola Normal* and, subsequently, for the creation of the Anísio Teixeira Institute in the 1960s.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the State was not much present in the interior of Brazil and the action of the churches was relevant in these places. The Catholic Church, for example, maintained strong relations with local education and tutored school institutions, following the examples of the *Colégio das Freiras* and the *Gynasio de Caetite*.

We found a document dated 1928 from the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, entitled *Programas do Ensino* (teaching programs), which describes the subjects that were taught at the School and the contents of each one of them. For the third year, specifically, three female teachers were members of the faculty: Esther Borges de Barros, Zulmira Bastos Pitangueira and Irma Pimenta Barros, teaching Music, Domestic Economy and Physical Education, respectively. The subjects related to the natural sciences were: Physical Sciences, General Hygiene and Agriculture, taught by two men; the first two were taught by Dr. Luiz Sena and the third by Engineer Antônio Ramos. The school's only black teacher, Alfredo José da Silva, taught Portuguese and Literature. The trajectories of the teachers Luiz Sena and Antônio Ramos through medical and engineering courses inform the racial cuts for accessing the Faculties of Medicine and Polytechnic Schools of Imperial Brazil.

Black slaves, men or women, for not being recognized as subjects of law, were prevented from attending schools, of any level of education, in the slave society (ROCHA, 2008). The country's socio-historical conditions were strongly marked by an explicit silencing policy (ORLANDI, 2007) that prevented the access of black men and women to education; they could not be students and, therefore, they could not be teachers in the Normal Schools. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, access to school was denied to slaves and even in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Brazilian public school was attended by people from the middle and upper classes, due to the early insertion of individuals from the popular classes in the working world. (VEIGA, 2008).

The educational reforms of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, even under the apparent sign of universalization, democratization and free education, did not create effective conditions for black men and women, formerly enslaved, and their descendants to be included in the educational setting.

## **Scenes from the *Escola Normal de Caetité***

Upon entering the Public Archives of Caetité, in August 2018, we came across photographs of different local historical-political moments. Similar situations occurred in visits made by the researchers from the Teaching, Discourse and Society Nucleus (*Núcleo Ensino, Discurso e Sociedade – DisSE*) to female teachers from cities in the hinterland of Bahia. In the Public Archives of Caetité and in the residences, the photographs, in most situations, are not presented in albums organized by periods. In one situation, in the house of a retired teacher, the photographs appeared in boxes that also stored other materials such as books, notebooks and images of Catholic saints. In this residence, a graduate of the School, which we call Margarida (fictitious name), presented us with some photographs and described, for the three researchers present, the characters and episodes

related to them. When describing one of the photographs. (Figure 01), Margarida asked us to guess who she would be on the scene and, to her surprise, one of those present got it right on her first attempt, even with the distance of more than seventy years that separated that encounter from the photographic record, which, according to our interlocutors, was common at the time, they all had photographs with their classes. Such guessing activity was repeated in other interlocution situations with other graduates.

**Figure 01** – Students of the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, in the 1940s.



Source: Personal Archive of egress from *Escola Normal de Caetité*.

In photograph 01, we can see the students of the *Escola Normal de Caetité*, in the 1940s, and a high presence of the female public. This image situates and reaffirms what Yannoulas (2011, p. 277) asserts, that “normal school studies and the exercise of teaching by women are a major exception in Latin America: it was not only tolerated but promoted by the public authorities.”

When reopened in 1926, the *Escola Normal de Caetité* proposed a mixed education system, that is, an education aimed at people of both sexes. However, the School continued to separate the boys from the girls and, when it was not possible to form classes grouped by a single sex, the boys sat in front of the girls. “19<sup>th</sup> century society considered coeducation as a morally dangerous issue” (ROCHA, 2008, p. 07).

In Figure 02, referring to an image/commemorative board fixed in the main room of the Public Archives of Caetité, we have the teachers of the *Escola Normal de Caetité* and the graduates of the year 1929. We can read the composition in three stages: in the first, there is a photo of the people in an oval shape floating in the center; in the second, there is

**Figure 02** – Graduates of the year 1929.



Source: Personal Archive of egress from *Escola Normal de Caetité*.

a photograph with a general view of the city of Caetité; and in the background, traces of a parchment and a woman surrounded by two children and a book can be seen. It is organized in three levels: at the top, we see the photograph of three teachers and authorities. From left to right, we have: Professor Alfredo José da Silva<sup>7</sup> (teacher of Portuguese and literature and honored by the class), Professor Dr. Edgar da Silva T. Pitangueiras (responsible for pedagogy and paranymph), Professor Dr. Antônio da Silva Ramos (teacher of agriculture and honored by the class), the governor of Bahia Dr. Francisco M. de Góes Calmon and Dr. Anísio Spínola Teixeira, both with honorable mention of merit. Below, are the ten women and one man who graduated: Brasília Trindade Cardoso, Ena de Castro Mesquita, Eponina Zita dos Santos Gumes, Evangelina Neves Lobão, Dalcy Moreira Silveira, Joaquim da Silveira Souza, Judith Moreira da Cunha, Altamira Anizia de Souza, Maria Julieta de Castro, Bellanisa Lima, Myrtes Uzeda Costa.

In the face of these photographs, we evidenced, with Gregolin (2006), their emergence as a discourse in its nature of a discursive event produced by enunciators at a

**7** - The training trajectory and professional insertion of teacher Alfredo José da Silva, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, explains an exceptionality that caused us to try to understand his distinction and individualization as a black man, teacher and director of the *Escola Normal* in another work front that is outside the scope of this text.

certain historical moment. To understand this event that made it possible to establish and crystallize meanings about gender relations in this period, we reflected on what is shown and how it is shown. In the words of Pêcheux (2002, p. 44), reading should “[...] multiply the relations between what is said here (in such a place), and said in this way and not otherwise, with what is said elsewhere and, in another way, in order to put oneself in a position of ‘understanding’ the presence of the unspoken within what is said”. Or even, with Foucault (2007b), why this discourse and not another one in its place?

In the reading of Figure 02, there is a chain between the three stages marked by the drawing in the background, making the connection between teachers, normalists and the city. This design, much more than filling and decorating the picture, marks a historical perspective and indicates a type of closing bonds between the sets of knowledge and powers, which have diffuse functions in society, but act directly on individuals, pointing out the place of each. Thus, the drawing of the woman accompanied by her children and the open book constitutes a cohesive statement and can be understood in the set of sayings and discourses that nominate, designate and describe what a woman’s practices should be.

In this case, we seek to reaffirm how the composition of the described utterances fabricates and crystallizes the meanings of women and the feminine in our society. It is a visual presentation that highlights a certain model, from which normalists should be produced. Women are reaffirmed as dedicated caregivers, whether as the primary school teacher who will take care of the students as if they were her own children, or as the caring mother who will take care of her offspring, husband and household chores. We can add to this series of utterances the sacred image of *Nossa Senhora de Sant’Ana*, patron saint of the city of Caetité, whose statue is central in the Catholic cathedral, located a few meters from the building where the *Escola Normal* functioned. Worshipped in the Catholic universe, she is shown as a lady who teaches her daughter Maria with a book. This reinforces the production of meanings about women, dedicated to the care of their family and children. This is the woman legitimized by the discourses in circulation in that society of the first half of the twentieth century and has left its mark until today.

Historically, motherhood is a marked feature of women’s existence and determinant in some societies. This reinforces the functioning of binary and opposing roles, in which practices are openly divided between women matters and men matters. The crystallization of tradition can be seen in the painting, which is still posted on the wall of the Public Archives of Caetité, giving a character of truth to this existence of women as the only possible one.

Based on the assumptions of Pêcheux (2002), we point out that, like any discourse, its meaning is neither transparent nor obvious. It is produced in the fabric of other imagery and verbal discourses that circulate on the place of men and the place of women in society and in the world. On the surfaces of language, it is as if what one sees is exactly what one sees, in a quiet and revealing transparency of what one should know about the object, especially in the image. However, far from being evident, the meaning is in the game of relations between utterances, discourses and truths in a given era.

Thus, by resuming the traditional image of the woman of the time, the caregiver, the painting articulates its discursive event with tradition, feeding on and feeding the idea of other formulations that historically produce meanings about what it is to be a woman and future discourses that will mention it, to reinforce or reject meanings delegated to women, to the feminine. We perceive the emergence and reaffirmation of the patriarchal discourse (cisgender, white and heterosexual), saying exactly what the role of each one is and vehemently rejects the questioning of its norms.

We also reflected on the way in which the practices of producing images about women in that period, codified as a prescription or norm, perhaps even as a moral standard, sought to justify themselves from a body with social and natural impediments. The collection of the images above is in a network of other prior and posterior discourses that builds the context of meaning, making it possible to perceive their meaning as a continuous and relational construction with the discourses on its margin (FOUCAULT, 2007a). In the photographs, we see uniformed female bodies that are grouped and homogenized, whether on the steps of the stairway captured at the right frontal angle (Figure 01) or on the set of faces that record the success in training (Figure 02). It is a scenario of female predominance that, at times, when looking more carefully, can show one or another man who could dedicate himself to a public career in education, journalism and/or politics. The ordering of the bodies highlights the discipline that would be necessary to achieve the ideal of *ordem e progresso* (“order and progress”, branded on the Brazilian flag since 1889, after the Proclamation of the Republic). Such discourses are produced under the conditions of possibility of that moment and reverberate this image of an orderly and disciplined woman who writes the history of the female body, producing other images that materialize the docilization of the body through discourses of power. In this context, thinking about being a woman seems to permeate through delicacy and fragility in the face of disciplinary control.

Ordering the body and practices according to the norms of the *Escola Normal* seems to be part of the common sense of how to be polite and obedient. In this sense, these controlled and docilized bodies convey a body spatialization that distributes them in the correct position for themselves. In the compositional structure of the photos, it is latent that each one knows his place: be it on the stairs crowding on the lower steps, being framed by the presence of the men at the top and on the left; or even on the board that registers the newest future teachers in the backcountry cities.

We also point out that these are some of the statements that have been recorded for future generations on the existence of the *Escola Normal*. Except for Professor Alfredo, the only black director and professor at the institution, we have the materiality that white men occupied the roles of teachers and school managers, but women were the ones who took an interest and graduated as teachers. Consequently, teaching was carried out by women at the most basic levels.

Data from the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflect that, in 2009, women represent the majority among education professionals in Brazil, except in higher education, whose percentage is 45.7%. Among other data, Rosemberg (2012) points to the Northeastern reality with lower salary levels – although this situation is repeated in other regions of the country – confirming the predominance of female teachers in the initial grades of education.

At the Department of Human Sciences, *Campus VI*, of the State University of Bahia, an institution that locally succeeded the *Escola Normal de Caetité* in promoting teacher training, when analyzing the current number (in 2019) of the teachers who make up its teaching staff, we identified: 72 teachers, among which 47 are women and 25 are men. With this data, we were able to verify the feminization in teaching, since women started to have representation and protagonism in this space, five of them reaching the highest level of management, the Department's Directorate. With creativity and protagonism, they reverted interdictions related to teaching and management posts of teacher training in the high *Sertão* of Bahia.

## Final considerations

Understanding how women questioned their times, here the period 1898-1943, and how they responded to them with practices, even subtle or hidden, that transgressed the relations of domination, would help us to understand and resist the impositions of the present time, trampled upon by anti-democratic projects like the *Escola Sem Partido*. Visiting archives and following the women who experienced teaching in periods of marked conservatism can be a fertile possibility to elaborate reflections and actions to open worlds, those of staging bodies and those of textual productions, and to weave the resistances to come.

Gender ideology, a deception invented and reified by conservative segments of society, such as right and extreme right parties and religious groups, establishes a regularity with the reactionary positions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whose marks resonated in the publication *A vindication of the rights of brutes* (anonymous at the time). According to Singer (2010), this text was a response by Thomas Taylor to a text by the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft, a forerunner of current feminists, entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which advocated gender equality and claimed for the recognition of women's rationality. Thomas Taylor understood that if women could be subjects of rights, nonhuman animals (brutes) could also be understood in this way. Here we are in line with Mary Wollstonecraft, with the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s and with today's feminists: men and women must be treated equally as subjects of rights. The denial of the right to access school, for example, has an effect on the way women appear in the social fabric. In other words, it is an issue situated in the conditions of existence that are constantly reified or reinvented and so it must also be understood in our modes of textual production.

If conservative fascists associate women with emotion and passion, we will say with Despret (2011) that "emotion" and "passion" concern the political relations (therefore, power relations) of men and women who organize life and allow for the creation of bonds. We will entangle men in the words that mark the inferiority of women, reframing those same words in textual endeavors, which are also practices of resistance. As bell hooks (2008) teaches us, through words and thoughts, language, situated in the power relations of racial hierarchies, as well as desire, speaks even against our will; it rejects border circumscriptions. We will face our own concealments in the effects of the naturalization of the exclusions in our texts and in the archives organized by us to bring up experiences from the past.

Our data allow us to affirm that the *Escola Normal* emerged as racist, sexist and classist as a symptom of a State constituted in these same nuances. The retired female teachers highlighted, in interview situations, the requirements to study at the *Escola Normal* and the needs that arose from this choice. One of these needs was the setting up of a trousseau, with the proper uniform and other clothes necessary to live in Caetité, since many male and female students lived in municipalities other than the school, which implied having financial conditions to travel from their homes to school and dedicate themselves exclusively to their studies. Another female graduate said that the school's activities started at nine o'clock in the morning and ended at seventeen o'clock. At the end of the day's activities, the girls from other municipalities went to the boarding houses maintained by their families and continued their studies at tables around oil lamps.

When looking at the *corpus* to which this text refers and confronting it with crucial texts from our theoretical framework (LORDE, 2019a, 2019b; COLLINS, 2016, 2017; bell hooks, 2008, 2015a, 2015b) we were left with a question: where were the black women? In the photographs and in the narratives of the archives, they were erased. At the Municipal Public Archive, the only black woman featured in the exhibition is Maria Afra, who was presented to us as a black woman, former-slave and mother of Professor Alfredo. This explains that the black women's erasure/silencing in the spaces of schooling and the in construction of narratives about schooling was and is even more accentuated than that of white women. In our experience as researchers, we recognize that the contemporary actions of female black researchers, which make us question the silencing of black women in our empirical fields and in our writings and teach that "black feminist thinking", in terms of Patricia Hill Collins (2016), are a powerful theoretical-political possibility to face the codes of these silences. Which would be the material impositions of this erasure of black women and men at the *Escola Normal de Caetité*?

The families of black girls and boys certainly had many difficulties in accessing the material conditions to send their sons and daughters to study at the *Escola Normal*, leaving the black women with jobs related to the care of the School and the homes of the normalists' families, since the latter were prevented from assuming the functions of caring for their homes due to the geographical distance between the latter and the school. Even in the homes of less affluent families, in which the presence of girls meant labor force for domestic work, black women assumed the condition of care workers, often being paid with food and/or gifts, as once lay teachers were paid. Exceptions allow us to think that existing as a black body, and, more specifically, as a black woman, a student at the *Escola Normal*, meant resisting the classist and racist impositions that exploited the black population at the time. In 1976, Beatriz Nascimento (2019) considered that the Brazilian society is founded on an economic system that defines the spaces in the class hierarchy and the mechanisms for selecting the people who will fill them, with the racial criterion being one of those selection devices that places black men and women in the lowest places of the hierarchy. For her, the black woman represents the crystallization of this structure of domination. Maria, from the short story by Conceição Evaristo (2015), illustrates the shameful scenario of inequality and oppression against black women.

From the readings of bell hooks (2008, 2015a, 2015b), we also question: did women trained at the *Escola Normal* become part of a male, phallic and white economy that made women and black men and women invisible and oppressed? Upon returning to the schools after completing courses as primary school teachers, did the female graduates from the *Escola Normal* act to reduce gender and race asymmetries or did they reproduce models of racism and educational elitism? The social impositions of the 1898-1943 period on black men and women made access to school very difficult and, when these subjects entered the school space, the possibilities of failing in their studies reverberated over them, which was mistakenly interpreted by racists as a condition of racial *status*. And, finally, there is still another question: which inventive ways elaborated by black women and men challenged the sexist, classist, racist and religious (Catholic) social structure to include themselves in primary and secondary education in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? There is a huge open research agenda. Let us move forward!

In sum, we argue that the creative ways of the women at the *Escola Normal de Caetité* contributed to changing the educational scenario in the high *Sertão* of Bahia, from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and should appear in the local archives as a condition of possibility for textual productions that sustain forms of protagonism marked by gendered and racialized experiences.

In the face of this, *Ensino, Discurso e Sociedade* (Teaching, Discourse and Society – DisSE), nourished by black feminist thinking, especially by the contributions of bell hooks, Judith Butler and Patricia Hill Collins, reaffirms its commitment to studies on gender, sexuality, race, religion, social class and education to train teachers as researchers in the high *Sertão* of Bahia. In its study agenda, there is also the need to understand, even with the diverse deletions of black women and men in the archives, the creativity and protagonism of black women and men who were educated in Caetité, even in the present time, in which we must carry forward the possibility of a diverse school that actually represents the lives and modes of existence of the various subjects that make up the generalized social structure as the high *Sertão* of Bahia.

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