

LOOKING AGAIN AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF EDUCATION FOR THE DEAF IN MILAN (1880): a historiographic challenge

Olhar novamente para o Congresso Internacional de Educação para Surdos Em Milão (1880):
um desafio historiográfico

Mirar nuevamente hacia el Congreso Internacional de Educación para Sordos en Milán (1880):
un desafío historiográfico

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Abstract: In the face of the *International Congress of Education for the Deaf*, occurred in Milan, 141 years ago, a challenge is placed to us: to reexamine its documental *corpus*. Acknowledging Milan as a ‘place of memory’, as in the sense of Pierre Nora (1993), our goal is to reflect upon in what ways this congress lacks reexaminations which dare to discuss the event beyond the simple opposition between oralism and sign language. Considering the complexity of its official texts, it was of pivotal importance for us to propose a reexamination of this ‘document-monument’, taking into account its specific context in relation to the education of the deaf. Our intention was to problematize in what ways, in Brazil, there is a recurrent narrative of this congress as well as the saturation of that memory in order for us to suggest other views to help us escape reductionist readings of the very historic movement of the deaf fights. As a result, we bring forth unknown sources of Milan, such as three reports of *Corriere Della Sera* dated from the end of the nineteenth century and other unknown records which allow us to revisit and research other memories of this important congress for the history of the education of the deaf.

Keywords: education of the deaf; history; place of memory; sign language.

Resumo: Diante do *Congresso Internacional de Educação para Surdos* ocorrido em Milão há 141 anos, um desafio histórico nos interpõe: reler o seu *corpus* documental. Compreendendo Milão como ‘lugar de memória’, no sentido que dá Pierre Nora (1993), temos como objetivo refletir sobre como esse congresso carece de releituras que ousem discutir o evento para além da simples oposição entre oralismo e línguas de sinais. Ponderando a complexidade de seus textos oficiais, consideramos exigente uma proposta de releitura desse ‘documento-monumento’, levando-se em conta seu contexto específico em relação à educação de surdos. Intentamos problematizar como no Brasil há uma narrativa habitual sobre este congresso bem como a saturação dessa memória a fim de que possamos sugerir outros olhares para que escapemos das leituras reducionistas do próprio movimento histórico das lutas surdas. E como resultado trazemos fontes desconhecidas sobre Milão como três reportagens do *Corriere Della Sera* do final do século XIX e os outros relatórios desconhecidos que nos permitem visitar e revistar memórias outras sobre este importante congresso para a história da educação dos surdos.

Palavras-chave: educação de surdos; história; lugar de memória; línguas de sinais.

Resumen: Ante el *Congreso Internacional de Educación para Sordos*, que tuvo lugar en Milán hace 140 años, se nos presenta un desafío histórico: releer su *corpus* documental. Asumiendo Milán como un ‘lugar de memoria’, en el sentido de Pierre Nora (1993), nuestro objetivo es reflexionar acerca de cómo al dicho Congreso le hacen falta nuevas lecturas que se atrevan a discutir el evento más allá de la simple oposición entre oralismo y lenguas de señas. Considerando la complejidad de sus textos oficiales, se nos hace imprescindible una propuesta para releer ese ‘documento-monumento’, teniendo en cuenta su contexto específico en relación con la educación de los sordos. Pretendemos discutir cómo en Brasil hay una narrativa habitual sobre este congreso, así como la saturación de esta memoria, para que podamos sugerir otras perspectivas para escapar de las lecturas reduccionistas del movimiento histórico de las luchas de los sordos. Y como resultado traemos fuentes desconocidas sobre Milán como tres informes de *Corriere Della Sera* de finales del siglo XIX y los otros informes desconocidos que nos permiten volver a visitar y revisar otros recuerdos sobre este importante congreso para la historia de la educación de los sordos.

Palabras clave: educación de los sordos; historia; lugar de memoria; lenguas de señas.

INTRODUCTION

By way of introduction, this article does not attempt to discuss whether or not we should talk about the *International Congress of Education for the Deaf* that took place in Milan in 1880, henceforth Milan Congress¹, and the entire narrative built around it. We assume that we should, yes, make a subject of what we apparently do not need to talk about anymore, especially when we start to be suspicious of such narratives entangled in a memory. We start from the premise that nothing is given, nothing is ready to the point where it is no longer interesting to go back to it.

Thus, we understand that we have reached a saturation point. We are apparently full of many bulwarks around the ‘memories’ built on this congress; of so many intertwined, almost tangled narratives, we are fed up and tired of them. If we believe that Milan is nothing more than a saturated memory, we also believe that taking it back is playing with some bastions that support this memory, creating illusions and weaving truths that are worth doubting. In the words of Robin (2016, p. 31-32), “[...] repressions, deformations, transfers, and new connections with the legends, everything mixes. [...] how old memories amalgamate with more recent memories disassociated from their context, readapted, reconfigured, giving rise to what we could call quasi-legends [...]”.

Therefore, these ‘quasi-legends’ end up relying only partially, according to the author, on facts, but they become outdated and build standardized and fixed narratives for political, economic. and even religious purposes. “In this case, also, immediate present, near past, distant memories, and legends are woven, unwoven into each other” (Robin, 2016, p. 32).

According to Robin (2016), it is necessary to flee from memory as an object of surveillance, from museification, sacralization, judicialization, trivialization, and instrumentalization of memory. Thus, with the author, we make crucial questions:

How to develop forms of memory outside of routine and disembodied ritual? How to situate esthetics and ethics of responsibility without falling into the trap of ‘abuses of memory’ or the dichotomy that has long prevailed between a duty of memory and work of memory? (Robin, 2016, p. 21, emphasis added).

While the author deals with World War II, when reading her text, many of her questions and memory positions, and looking differently at this memory encouraged us to look again at this Congress. The search was to try to breathe the atmosphere of the attendees to understand the discussions and the movements it provoked.

¹ During the text, we will name it as it is commonly called: *Milan Congress* or even just *Milan*.

While we are not survivors of that time, we are crossed by narratives constructed historically and by the resonances of the decisions taken in this Congress. For this reason, we feel impelled to seek as many movements as possible to recount them through the mosaic built from the speeches and events described in at least four written versions about this congress and four press reports from the time of the *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper. Thus, we agree when Robin (2016, p. 31) states that “[...] the past is not free. No society leaves you to your own devices. It is governed, managed, preserved, explained, told, celebrated, or hated. Whether celebrated or concealed, it remains a fundamental issue of the present.”

The construction of Milan as a saturated memory is based on a massive set of works in deaf education, especially here in Brazil, which takes this congress as a landmark of an Audist colonization on the deaf. The vast majority of academic works in the area, such as theses, dissertations, and articles, weave at least one chapter ‘on the history of deaf education,’ before entering the research theme itself, outlining how the binary oppositions such as deaf *versus* hearing and signs *versus* orality occur.

This text deals with an essay on memory saturation (Robin, 2016) and, therefore, we insist that we must return to this memory, however different. No longer as advocates of the ‘dead monument’ built by a saturated memory, but as destroyers of these monuments so that we can call life to other memories that have been erased since such a congress stands as a ‘place of memory.’

MILAN CONGRESS (1880), A ‘PLACE OF MEMORY’... THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES.

Let us digress in our catharsis translated through endless justifications of why to return to this subject. After all, we now must show how this research is progressing and how we dared to visit this basement.

Veiga-Neto (2012) titles his text using the imperative: ‘We must go to the cellars.’ The author starts from the Bachelardian metaphor about the house. Thus, he makes a beautiful reflection on our positions and attitudes towards the world. For the author: “Without the welcoming of the house and without the memories that it is the primary source, we would be uprooted beings; beings without imagination because without history, and without history because without memory” (Veiga-Neto, 2012, p. 269).

The author says that, in turn, in welcoming the house, we run the risk of living blocked, alien to the world, in the world. Mainly if we only inhabit the intermediate parts of the house that correspond to what we call immediate experiences or even reality or concrete life.

Thus, we agree with the author that, without a doubt, a constant visit to the basement of the house, where the support of the same house is found, is “[...] the

safest way to understand the origins and possible ramifications and consequences of very current and varied social and educational phenomena” (Veiga-Neto, 2012, p. 268). After all, these trips to the cellars empower us in taking attitudes concerning what we defend or even constitute us in other ways, even when we decide to go up to the attic.

In terms of deaf education, our research group’s immersion in the basement was born out of the need to get closer to the *Milan* (1880) and *Paris* (1900 – Hearing Section) *Congresses’* documents. The INES (National Institute of Deaf Education), in its Historical Series, published the Milan minutes in 2011, making it possible to contact Kinsey’s report on the event, and in 2013 it published the minutes of the Hearing Section of the *Paris Congress*.

We consider the analyzed documents as a ‘document-monument,’ based on Le Goff (1990). The text expresses an understanding of history, society, and reality. In it, intentionally or unintentionally, a series of elements appear that allow us to investigate an image chosen as the one to be used and known by future generations. In its relationship with power games, the document is a ‘monument.’ It also presents how they were used by certain groups, precisely that of the deaf, propositions that were also intended to establish a given truth. Le Goff (1990) still points us to the fact that the document has in itself numerous landmarks, not constituting an aseptic source or one capable of a positivist understanding of history:

The document is not innocuous. It is above all the result of a montage, conscious or unconscious, of the history, the period, the society that produced it, but also of the successive periods during which it continued to live, perhaps forgotten, during which it continued to be manipulated, albeit by silence. The document remains, lasts, and the testimony, the teaching (to evoke the etymology) it brings must first be analyzed, demystifying its apparent meaning. The document is a monument. It results from the effort of historical societies to impose on the future – voluntarily or involuntarily – a particular image of themselves (Le Goff, 1990, p. 547-548).

Milan’s decisions are constantly recalled in works² that address deaf education. However, mainly because there is still no translation into Portuguese of the official text prepared by Fornari, we believe that there are many repetitions of ‘truths’ without the proper consultation to what the ‘documents-monuments’ allow us to problematize.

² As we pointed out in the introduction, many works address the 1880 *Milan Congress* as a significant harmful and oppressive landmark for deaf education. In another article, we deal with some ‘un-truths’ repeated constantly about this congress, but which are not confirmed in the unknown documents. It is noteworthy that, in general, when dealing with the congress, the works do not refer to primary sources. In addition to being unknown, they are not translated into Portuguese. It is impossible to cite many of them because there are not a few, and there is no one that stands out.

Such truths, repeated in this way, without access to other documents, referring to Milan, can cause as the main consequence the erasure of all memory about other facts that also make up the history of deaf education. This erasure produces an often distorted narrative and even the oblivion of characters fundamental to the struggle of the deaf as resistance to educational methods and the defense of the use of signs in the deaf educational process.

Very succinctly, Strobel (2008, p. 90) brings in his thesis the landmarks that support the linear narrative that permeate and remain in the imagination of deaf subjects: “The year 1880 was a ‘milestone’ of the entire history of the deaf, which added to the strength of many periods of polemical duels of educational opposites: sign language and oralism.”

Also, according to the author, the didactic material of the UFSC Libras sign language course (at a distance) on the history of deaf education illustrates the occurrence of three phases in the history of the deaf:

- 1- ‘Cultural revelation’: At this phase, deaf people had no problems with education. Most deaf subjects dominated the art of writing, and there is evidence that before the Milan Congress, there were many deaf writers, deaf artists, deaf teachers, and other successful deaf subjects.
2. ‘Cultural isolation’: there is a phase of isolation of the deaf community due to the 1880 Milan Congress, which forbids access to sign language in the education of deaf people. In this phase, the deaf communities resist the imposition of oral language.
3. ‘Cultural awakening’: from the 1960s onwards, a new phase for the rebirth in the acceptance of sign language and deaf culture begins after many years of Audist oppression towards deaf peoples (Strobel, 2008, p. 56, emphasis added).

The three phases’ narrative is the starting point for numerous deaf and deaf education works. It is noticed that between the supposed ‘cultural isolation’ and the ‘cultural awakening,’ there is an 80-year hiatus in which the deaf, in theory, would be hostages of the Audist obscurantism. Then, in 1960, William Stokoe, American linguistics, considered the ‘father of sign language linguistics,’ weaves the thesis that sign languages are completely mapped linguistic systems and outlines a framework for this language.

Among so many authors who deal with this same narrative, we highlight Strobel (2008) because she systematizes the three phases and, from this work, becomes a reference for other later ones, mainly of deaf academics when this congress was being discussed³.

³ Another text often cited by these authors, including Strobel, is *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community* by Harlan Lane (1992). The author also places the Milan Congress as a landmark in gagging the deaf community in their education.

The historical tradition develops as a regulated exercise of memory, and therefore it tries to represent the past without gaps and flaws. We live today, according to the author, in the time of places that “[...] is that precise moment where an immense capital of what we used to live in the intimacy of a memory disappears to live only under the gaze of reconstituted history” (Nora, 1993, p. 12).

Thus, the author defines that

The ‘places of memory’ are, above all, leftovers. The extreme form where a commemorative conscience subsists in a history that calls to it because it ignores it. It is the deritualization of our world that gives rise to the notion. [...] they are born and live from the feeling that there is no spontaneous memory, that it is necessary to create archives, that it is necessary to keep birthdays, organize celebrations, pronounce funeral eulogies, acknowledge minutes because these operations are not natural (Nora, 1993, p. 13, emphasis added).

The ‘places of memory’ are bastions where history rests and, if the memory were still in existence, would not be necessary. The significant problem of these places is precisely the erasure of the entire course and movement of history since they are moments from that period, cut out of the movement of history and given back. If this field did not take possession of memories to deform, transform, fixate them, the ‘places of memory’ would not be necessary (Nora, 1993).

Looking at this notion, the *Milan Congress* (1880) becomes a ‘place of memory’ when it crystallizes and fixates (de)formed memories and narratives about the binary opposition between sign languages and oral language. The readings of primary sources do not support the narrative based on these three steps that sustain this obscurantist hiatus. On the contrary, it creates invisibilities. It is not the purpose of this article to rescue the other congresses of deaf and hearing people after Milan, still at the end of the nineteenth century. However, we can deduce that due to the scarcity of publications on the congresses that preceded and followed *Milan* (1880), we noticed a particular vacuum concerning the history of deaf education in a Brazilian environment. These other congresses, even destroying the idea of Milan as consensus, are made invisible due to the crystallization erected by this event⁴.

⁴ The article entitled: ‘Congress of Paris (1900): the section of deaf and its update on the education of deaf’ will address precisely how this gap can be filled with at least (between 1880 and 1900) five deaf congresses who resisted the Milan decisions and discuss other issues of interest to deaf communities. It is possible to meet deaf people who were activists but utterly unknown in our Brazilian academic context in these congresses. Retrieved from: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbhe/a/tWRy9qH9RHS3mdk7FhjNzdI/?lang=pt>.

If according to Nora (1993), it is only a 'place of memory' if it is coated with a symbolic aura, an imagination, a partial reading of the *Milan Congress* (1880) materialized in its minutes and plaques, then a narrative of the victimization of the deaf in history as if the deaf themselves had not bravely resisted the supposedly consensual deliberations about the pure oral method. It is possible, still following the author's statements, that there is memory coercion when the constant remembrance of this event is required as the foundational milestone of the opposition between deaf and hearing people. With the narrative of victimization carried by affirmation of opposition between groups, hostilities are created in affirmation of identity.

Atomizing a general memory into a private memory gives the law of memory an intense inner coercive power. It forces each one to remember and rediscover belonging, principle, the secret of identity. This belonging, in turn, fully engages him (Nora, 1993, p. 18).

The destruction of this 'place of memory' from the resumption of this congress 'documents-monuments' itself will allow another narrative about the impacts of the decisions taken in *Milan* (1880) on the education of deaf subjects. Very different from the usual narrative that suggests, among so many other truths, three that we are going to highlight at this moment: a) the extinction of sign languages with the supposed prohibition of their use in the education of the deaf; b) that the pure oral method was voted with a unanimous consensus, and c) that the deaf were only able to resume their resistance movements to these decisions in the twentieth century. With the reading of primary sources, such truths do not hold.

With each open page and rise of characters and their speeches, we were permeated by the anguish that we were facing an unexplored documentary wealth. It allows us to question much of what has been heard and taught about the history of deaf education. This also triggered the feeling in the research group that we were no longer in possession of some truths and that it was necessary to open ourselves to new possibilities that the readings suggested to us.

We find ourselves in front of 'monuments,' as suggested by Le Goff (1990), and, through them, men from the past dialogue with us, challenge us, and also allow themselves to be challenged. Historical research abandons the rancidity of something static, positivist, and begins to perceive the positivities of a time (Foucault, 2000).

PARIS (1878) AND LYON (1879): TWO CONGRESSES THAT PREPARE MILAN (1880)

The rapprochement with the docu-monumental *corpus* of the following congresses: Universal Congress of Paris (1878) and the National Congress of Lyon (1879)⁵ allows us to perceive how the strategy of the advocates of the pure oral method is organized to have its definitive victory in the deliberations of the *Milan Congress* (1880).

From September 23 to 30, 1878, the Universal Congress for the Improvement of the Fate of the Blind and the Deaf-mute took place in Paris. A group of 52 teachers and two deaf people participated in the event and held a private session that aimed to discuss the following program:

1st journey: 1st – On the need for general statistics; 2nd – Psychology of the deaf-mute;

2nd journey: 3rd – On the role of the family in the care of the young deaf-mute; 4th – Can the young deaf-mute be admitted to hearing-student schools?;

3rd journey: 1st – Methods and procedures, their unification; 2nd – Study plan; 3rd – school books;

4th journey: 4th – Admission of both sexes to the same establishment; 5th – Recruitment of teachers; 6th – Current state of teaching; 7th – What are the causes that so far have prevented from achieving satisfactory results in deaf-mute teaching?;

5th journey: 1st – How to prepare and guarantee the independence and maintenance of the deaf-mute after leaving the institutions?; 2nd – What is the proportion of deaf-mutes who, through their work, would be able to meet their needs?; 3rd – How to make beggars and vagabonds disappear? (La Rochelle, 1878, p. 27-28, our translation)⁶.

⁵ The Portuguese translation of the report of this congress can be found at: <https://seer.ufrgs.br/asphe/article/view/93873>.

⁶ “Première journée. — 1° De la nécessité d'une statistique générale ; 2° Psychologie du sourd-muet. Deuxième journée. — 3° Rôle de la famille dans les soins à donner au jeune sourd-muet ; 4° le jeune sourd-muet peut-il être admis dans les écoles publiques des entendants-parlants? Troisième journée. — 1° Méthodes et procédés ; leur unification ; 2° plan d'études ; 3° livres scolaires. Quatrième journée. — 4° Admission des deux sexes dans le même établissement; 5° recrutement des maîtres ; 6° état actuel de l'enseignement ; 7° quelles sont les causes qui, jusqu'ici, ont empêché d'obtenir des résultats satisfaisants dans l'enseignement des sourds-muets? Cinquième journée. — 1°. Comment préparer et assurer l'indépendance et l'entretien des sourds-muets à leur sortie des institutions ? 2° quelle est la proportion des sourds-muets qui, par leur travail, suffisent à leurs besoins ? 3° mendicité, vagabondage ; comment les faire disparaître?”.

As noted in the first point of the 3rd journey, there was a concern regarding the unification of methods. This theme is articulated with the 7th point of the 4th journey. Here, failures in the education of deaf-mute would be reflected.

On the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of Paris (1878) and aware of a dispute between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Public Instruction, the Pereire family, sponsor of the school founded by Jacob Rodrigues Pereire – who advocated articulation, although accepted the use of manual alphabet –, proposes the participation of deaf teachers in the event.

A combination of statistics and medicine will determine the future of deaf education. Seeking to trace the origins of deafness through statistics and to fix the deaf body through medicine, at the Paris event (1878), the attendees voted 12 deliberations: on the need for a statistic about the deaf; medical analysis of deaf marriages; deaf-mute access to education; the role of families, particularly concerning hygiene and learning about natural signs; admission of deaf people to regular schools; preference for different establishments for deaf men and deaf women; a necessary initiative by public authorities to develop adequate means for the education of deaf people; transfer of deaf education to the Ministry of Public Instruction; adequacy of studies according to intellectual level; need to train deaf teachers; periodicity of international conferences, every three years, and national, every two years (La Rochelle, 1878).

One of the deliberations demands our attention:

The Congress deliberated, after having matured, (while preserving the use of natural mimicry, as an aid to teaching, as the first means of communication between teacher and student), considers that the method known as articulation, involving the reading of the word in the lips, which aim to make the deaf-mute more complete for social life, must be decidedly preferred to all others, a preference that also justifies the increasingly general use of this method in all the nations of Europe, and even in America. However, it is the teaching recommended as applicable to deaf-mute children in general, since it cannot be suitable for subjects whose intellectual culture has been neglected or wholly neglected, it is necessary to apply the teaching that, through fast channels, through the signs common to all deaf-mutes, makes it possible to develop their faculties as much as possible (La Rochelle, 1878, p. 275-276, our translation)⁷.

⁷ “Le Congrès, après en avoir mûrement délibéré (tout en conser-vant l’emploi de la mimique naturelle, comme auxiliaire de l’enseignement, en tant que premier moyen de communication entre le maître et l’élève), estime que la méthode dite d’articulation et comportant la lecture de la parole sur les lèvres, qui a pour but de rendre plus complètement le sourd-muet à la société, doit être résolument préférée à toutes

As per the above resolution, there is a desire to expand the method based on articulation worldwide. However, a place is reserved for mime as necessary for the teacher-student relationship. There is also the recognition that the articulation method would not be effective with everyone. Therefore, the possibility of using signs is preserved. In other words, what was proposed was a mixed-method, which leads us to realize that the trend was not towards the prohibition of signs (called mime).

Paris (1878) seems to have been the occasion of the first organization in favor of the oral method, but it did not immediately reach this end in its deliberations. It also becomes an important event for the understanding of *Milan* (1880) because it defines the meeting strategy in congresses. Given the deliberations, the group advocating for the articulation, in the person of Abbot Balestra, will use this idea to bring forward the international congresses – which should take place every three years – to the year 1880 in the city of Côme, Italy.

Between *Paris* (1878) and *Milan* (1880), another French national congress contributed to the understanding of what would happen on Italian soil. From September 22 to 24, 1879, in the city of Lyon, the *1st National Congress for the Improvement of the Fate of Deaf-Mutes* took place (Rodrigues & Vieira-Machado, 2019). The documentary record of the event was published six years later in the *Revue Internacionale de l'Enseignement des Sourds-muets*. In this congress, Hugentobler's thought predominates, founder of an institution for the education of the deaf and user of the articulation method. Despite this, throughout the event, there are several claims to maintain the use of mime and choose the mixed method.

Attendees voted in favor of reserving much of the teaching for mime and wanted the methods of signs and articulation “[...] always to support each other and work together towards the same end, namely: instruction and education of the deaf-mute” (Hugentobler & La Rochelle, 1885, p. 223, our translation)⁸. Natural mime is suggested as the basis of teaching for the deaf. Perhaps, due to this congress deliberation, the French representatives choose the Milan Congress at the end of the event. The French delegation would have Messrs. Vaïsse, Houdin, E. Grosselin, Abade Bourse, E. La Rochelle, J. Hugentobler, and Abbot Goyatton. An analysis of the biographies of this group reveals that they are sympathetic to the method of articulation. Opponents of the method, such as Guérin, will not do so as an official representative although participating in Milan.

les autres, préférence que justifie d'ailleurs l'usage de plus en plus général de cette méthode chez toutes les nations de l'Europe et même en Amérique. Toutefois il émet l'avis que l'enseignement par lui préconisé comme applicable à la généralité des enfants sourds-muets, ne pouvant convenir aux sujets dont la culture intellectuelle a été négligée ou complètement délaissée, il y a lieu d'appliquer à ceux-ci un enseignement qui, par des voies rapides, au moyen des signes communs à tous les sourds-muets, permette de développer leurs facultés dans la mesure du possible”.

⁸ “Se soutiennent toujours mutuellement et concourent ensemble au même but, savoir : l'instruction et l'éducation du sourd-muet”.

We believe that, once again, a particular frustration with the decision of the Lyon Congress leads to a strategy aimed at *Milan* (1880) to determine the pure oral method as an ideology to be followed and assumed by public institutions. Possibly, it is because of Paris (1878) and Lyon (1879) that the city of *Milan* (1880) will be chosen (where there were 02 institutes with oralization practices) and not Côme (as voted in 1878) and that attendees should reserve time to follow the examinations of deaf speakers, and invite the Society for the Diffusion of the German System to present papers at the event.

WHAT *MILAN* (1880) HAS FOR US: A MONUMENT WITH MANY DOCUMENTS

A monument makes itself known to us in different ways. *Milan* (1880) became a traditional reference for the Audist domination over the deaf when it was decided that the oral method would be ideal for the education of the deaf, suggesting an abandonment of the use of signs. However, can an event that decides such action be reduced to it alone? What else can we find in Milan? It is up to us to reread Milan as a task demanded by the history of deaf education. It is not intended to rehabilitate it, but to escape the polarization placing it as a villain and the single event that exterminates the use of signs in the education of the deaf without understanding the plot that involves its event.

The *Milan* monument (1880) can be read from at least seven documents, pointing us to a docu-monumental *corpus*. In Brazil, we have free access to the only version translated into Portuguese by INES, the English-language report prepared by Alfred Kinsey. It is a text that brings Milan's deliberations, a synthesis of the discussions of the event sessions, and reserves a large part of the report for the texts presented at the congress by the Society for the Diffusion of the German System, which has Kinsey as a member.

For this article, in addition to the official minutes, we highlight a few points from two more reports: one addressed to the French Minister of the Interior, and the other addressed to the Pereire family, primary sponsor of the event. These are the reports of Adolphe Franck and Ernest La Rochelle. In addition to these four documents (Kinsey, Franck, La Rochelle, and Fornari), we have a report prepared by Dr. Peyron and published in the *Annales des Maladies de l'oreille*, the German report by Treibel, and the report to the President of the Council for Public Instruction and Fine Arts by A. Houdin. These three documents have similar characteristics as, in concise reports, the authors take up what was practiced in deaf education, the discussions held during the congress, and present Milan's deliberations.

Adolphe Franck presents his 'Report to the Minister of the Interior and Religious Affairs' of France, whose subtitle points to his perception of Milan: "On the international congress held in Milan from September 6 to 12 for the improvement of

the fate of the deaf-mute, and on the state of instruction for deaf-mutes in the main establishments devoted to them in Italy” (Franck, 1880).

The Ministry of the Interior had sent Franck to offer an opinion on the definition of oralization as a method to be practiced in French public establishments after verifying Italian positions on deaf education and participating in the congress. It should be remembered that Adolphe Franck had already carried out a similar mission in 1861 at the request of the same Ministry. Franck evaluated the methods used in the French institutes and wrote an opinion putting the oral method into ‘quarantine.’ It is a concise text of approximately 20 pages, published in the *Journal Officiel*, No. 346 of December 18, 1880.

However, there are indications that Franck declares himself a convert based on the public exhibitions of oralized deaf people prepared by the congress organizers through the exams described in detail in the official report written by Pasquale Fornari, general secretary of the event. The ‘deaf people’ whom Franck would have attended as evident proof of the effectiveness of the oral method would not be totally deaf or have become deaf after mastery of speech. Therefore, the ‘deaf-speakers’ exposed in the visits of the institutes did not speak just because they had been oralized.

Franck’s ‘conversion’ to the pure oral method is notorious. From that moment on, there was a remarkable turnaround in discussions about this method and the French position at the Milan Congress. We also highlight that Franck’s position is mentioned in almost all the reports, thus showing similarities. Franck himself denotes this moment in his report to the French interior minister.

La Rochelle reproduces Franck’s speech:

‘If so, I would like this process to be introduced in France, starting with the National Institution, because after all, the word is the universal means of communication.’ Remembering the unfavorable opinion he had held in 1861, he added: ‘I am quite ready to change my mind in the face of efforts crowned with lasting and general success.’ Well, the promise which he made at Paris, in 1875, Mr. Franck kept at Milan in 1880, and we will hear him, at the last session of the Congress, eloquently explain his loyal and precious adherence to the method of speech (La Rochelle, 1880, p. 16, emphasis added by the author, our translation)⁹.

⁹ “S’il en est ainsi, je désire que ce procédé soit introduit en France, à commencer par l’Institution Nationale, car la parole est, après tout, le moyen de communication le plus universel’ ; et rappelant l’opinion défavorable mise par lui en 1861, il ajoutait : ‘Jesuis tout prêt à changer d’avis devant des efforts couronnés d’un succès durable et général’. Eh bien, la promesse qu’il avait faite Paris en 1875, M. Franck

Franck himself ends his report recalling the past moment when he objected to the use of the articulation method:

Mr. Minister, I do not forget that the proposals I have the honor to present to you are very different from those I presented in my 1861 report. They distance themselves from them, but they do not contradict them. As it was then taught to deaf-mutes, the word was not what it is today. Only informal examples were presented to me, and I thought it prudent not to ban it but to quarantine it. Now, I make a point of calling it my most ardent desire. Furthermore, it is allowed to change your mind when it comes to doing good and serving the truth (Franck, 1880, p. 26, our translation)¹⁰.

Fornari, Fornari, in the official minutes of the event, records Franck's conversion by a metaphorical and, at the same time, clearly proselytizing language:

As for the oral method, the state I found twenty-one years ago inspired doubts and reservations. It was imperfect in the French schools I visited at the time. It gave the destitute deaf-mutes such an inhuman appearance that I did not hesitate to declare that it should only be used with exceptional students. However, the written language taught according to the intuitive method was preferable for most. I never banned the oral method from schools, especially from schools I did not know; I have never given him a sentence of death, nor a perpetual exile. I just quarantined it until I was given proof of its health. Today, after having examined the admirable schools of Milan several times; today, after seeing their teachers working, [...] after having seen and observed all this and having listened carefully to the learned conversations that took place here among so many experienced teachers, I can only repeat, from the bottom of my heart and with unshakable conviction, the cry that resounded here two days ago: *Vive la parole!* Let us banish the incomplete methods, the illusory methods, which for so long pretended to take its place or serve as a complement to it! Gentlemen! Gentlemen! It is said that Muhammad while preaching the worship of one God in Mecca, went with a hammer in his hand through the temple full of idols and, standing in front of each one,

l'a tenue à Milan en 1880, et nous l'entendrons, dans la dernière séance du Congrès, expliquer éloquemment sa loyale et précieuse adhésion à la méthode de la parole”.

¹⁰ “Je n'oublie pas, monsieur le ministre, que les propositions que j'ai l'honneur de vous soumettre s'écartent beaucoup de celles que j'ai présentées dans mon rapport de 1861. Elles s'en écartent, mais ne les contredisent pas. La parole, telle qu'on l'enseignait alors aux sourds-muets n'était pas ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui. Il ne m'en avait été présenté que des exemples informes, et j'ai cru qu'il était prudent, non pas de la proscrire, mais de la mettre en quarantaine. À présent, je me fais un devoir de l'appeler de mes vœux les plus ardents. Au reste, il est permis de changer d'opinion quand c'est pour faire le bien et pour servir la vérité”.

hit them on the head and shouted: Disappear, you deceitful pretenders! The true God revealed himself. We say the same to signs: 'Give place to the word!' (Fornari, 1881, p. 176-177, emphasis added by the author, our translation)¹¹.

Franck's relevance to the event is also manifested in Treibel's report:

On the other hand, the rapporteur cites, with detailed justification, the requirement that special grammatical instruction is given in the two upper classes of an eight-year course, although, of course, a purely methodical, scientific treatment is foreseen. Notably, Franck supported this view (Treibel, 1881, p. 16, our translation)¹².

Ernest La Rochelle, sent to the Milan Congress by the Pereire High School, established in France, also prepares a report on the event. In almost 40 pages, the author takes up some of Milan's debates and records the deliberations.

Eugène Pereire, great-great-grandson of Jacob Pereire, managed an institute for the deaf in Paris that used the articulatory method. He was one of the organizers of the Milan Congress, even sponsoring the trip of a delegation of the Brothers of St. Gabriel, a group also sympathizing with the oralist proposal.

In this report, also not translated into Portuguese, the reactions of satisfaction with Milan's decisions seem to be evident, pointing to the fact that the entire Congress was orchestrated for the decision in favor of oralization.

¹¹ "Aujourd'hui, après avoir examiné à plusieurs reprises les admirables écoles de Milan ; aujourd'hui, après avoir vu à l'œuvre vos instituteurs et vos institutrices, non moins dignes d'admiration par leur zèle, par leur caractère et par leur patience angélique que par leur habileté dans l'enseignement; aujourd'hui, après avoir entendu ici notre vénérable Président, un maître dans l'art, non seulement de faire parler, mais de parler; après avoir entendu l'éloquent et lumineux commentaire que nous a donné de son discours mon compatriote, l'abbé Guérin ; après avoir vu exalté votre zèle par tant d'hommes que le feu divin de la charité a embrasés, entre autres par l'abbé Balestra, qui est venu généreusement offrir à la France le concours de son zèle, de sa fougue apostolique et de ses vigoureuses espérances; après avoir vu et observé tout cela et avoir prêté une oreille attentive aux savantes discussions qui se sont engagées ici entre tant de maîtres expérimentés, il ne me reste qu'à répéter, du fond du cœur et avec une conviction inébranlable, le cri qui retentissait ici il y a deux jours: Vive la parole! Bannissons les méthodes incomplètes, les méthodes illusoires, qui pendant si longtemps eurent la prétention de tenir la place ou de lui servir de complément! Messieurs! On raconte que Mahomet, lorsqu'il prêcha à la Mecque, le culte d'un Dieu unique, parcourut, un marteau à la main, le temple peuplé d'idoles, et s'arrêtant devant chacune d'elles, il la frappait à la tête en s'écriant: Disparaissez, simulacres trompeurs! le vrai Dieu s'est révélé. Nous en disons autant aux signes: hors d'ici, et place à la parole! "

¹² "Dagegen tritt der Berichtstatter auf und stellt unter ausführlicher Begründung die Forderung auf, dass bei einem achtjährigen Kursus in den beiden oberen Klassen auch besonderer grammatikalischer Unterricht erteilt werden müsse, wobei jedoch selbstverständlich von einer wissenschaftlichen, rein methodischen Behandlungsweise ganz abzusehen sei. Diese Ansicht wird noch besonders durch Franck unterstützt".

Other reports also identified the Brothers of St. Gabriel delegation, as their stance in favor of the pure oral method denotes the importance of the Pereire family's financing in Milan's decisions. In his report, Edward Gallaudet mentions that

A majority of the French delegates were members of an ecclesiastical order called the Brotherhood of St. Gabriel. Many of these brothers expressed the opinion freely in private conversation that signs could not be dispensed with in the instruction of deaf-mutes, and also that not all deaf-mutes could succeed under the oral method. They took no part, however, in the debate until towards the close, when Frère Hubert, inspector of the schools under the direction of the Brothers, rose and announced his conversion to the 'pure oral method', closing his little speech by giving thanks to M. Eugène Pereire, through whose liberality the members of his brotherhood had been enabled to visit Milan and attend the Convention. And not a brother of St. Gabriel voted against the method of Pereire (Gallaudet, 1881, p. 8, emphasis added by the author, our translation)¹³.

James Denison, one of the deaf participants in the event, also indicates how the presence of the religious group of St. Gabriel had a predominant factor in the decision. However, it did not fail to manifest an internal contradiction since many religious would have affirmed the importance of using the signs.

My surprise, however, was extreme when I understood that his speech was a recantation of the errors of the French system, and an unreserved acknowledgment of the superiority of the Italian. I could see that he was not accorded the unanimous concurrence of the others of the St. Gabriel brothers; but no one spoke. It is possible that their etiquette enjoined silence on account of his superior age and his possibly higher rank. The eloquence of the articulationists, and the results they exhibited, must have seemed more astonishing and convincing to him than they seemed to us transatlantics. I cannot otherwise account for so radical and

¹³ "A majority of the French delegates were members of an ecclesiastical order called the Brotherhood of St. Gabriel. Many of these brothers expressed the opinion freely in private conversation that signs could not be dispensed with in the instruction of deaf-mutes, and also that not all deaf-mutes could succeed under the oral method. They took no part, however, in the debate until towards the close, when Frère Hubert, inspector of the schools under the direction of the Brothers, rose and announced his conversion to the 'pure oral method', closing his little speech by giving thanks to M. Eugène Pereire, through whose liberality the members of his brotherhood had been enabled to visit Milan and attend the Convention. And not a brother of St. Gabriel voted against the method of Pereire".

unexpected a change of opinion in the face of life-long experience
and observation (Denison, 1881, p. 48, our translation)¹⁴.

Despite all these reports, the official text of Milan's minutes was prepared by the Italian Pasquale Fornari and can be accessed in its Italian or French version. Without a doubt, it is a complete report exceeding 450 pages. It allows for an understanding of the discussions on each of the questions proposed at the congress. Its appendices include several texts presented during the sessions or that supported them.

We do not believe that this is a report free from the oral influences that Fornari also shared. However, the text allows us to understand the event's organization and how each debate unfolds step by step. This allows us to know the characters who acted in Milan, their positions, how they argued, how they reacted to criticisms of both the oral method and the use of signs. An arena of fruitful debates is outlined there, exposing several issues related to deaf education, despite assuming oralization as a prior decision.

AND THE PRESS? LOOKING AT MILAN BEYOND THE REPORTS...

Every time we go around Milan, we find other indications of the importance of this 'document-monument' and how it constitutes itself as a 'place of memory.'

The sources we will look into here are from four articles in the *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper published at the congress and after it. Such articles are dated September 4, 1880, September 7, 1880, August 7, 1885, and finally, November 10, 1890.

Why do we look for information in newspapers? Considering the magnitude given to Milan, we wondered if the press at the time would have registered about the event. The trigger for the survey was to find out which newspapers at the time could have reported to Congress. Two of them stood out: *La civiltà Cattolica* and *Corriere Della Sera*. The collection of the first one is not available for consultation online, making it impossible for us to verify the incidence of news about Milan.

Corriere Della Sera makes its historical collection available, allowing us to deepen our research and, thus, we come across four articles that specifically put us in

¹⁴ "My surprise, however, was extreme when I understood that his speech was a recantation of the errors of the French system, and an unreserved acknowledgment of the superiority of the Italian. I could see that he was not accorded the unanimous concurrence of the others of the St. Gabriel brothers; but no one spoke. It is possible that their etiquette enjoined silence on account of his superior age and his possibly higher rank. The eloquence of the articulationists, and the results they exhibited, must have seemed more astonishing and convincing to him than they seemed to us transatlantics. I cannot otherwise account for so radical and unexpected a change of opinion in the face of life-long experience and observation".

contact with how society was informed about Milan. Initially, we chose to search for news from 1880, using the descriptor ‘congress of deaf-mute teachers,’ and, later, keeping the descriptor but expanding the search year by year. Thus, we arrive at the newspaper’s texts in this investigative process.

The initial movement, motivated more by curiosity than by evidence that we would find something published, gave us contact with other texts unknown to the Brazilian public. Reading the texts in Italian and their subsequent translation to make them an object of work showed us that the articles are interconnected not only because of the Congress’ theme, but because it is possible to perceive in them the desire to give visibility to what would happen in Milan, to what was happening, to its retrospective five years later, and also to exalt one of the most important characters for the achievement of Milan’s goals, Abbot Tarra.

The first article aims to report on events prior to the congress itself. The article announces the importance of public exhibitions of the success of deaf students from Milanese institutes to guide the discussions at the event.

Two works by our institutes precede the opening. One of them took place this morning, at 10:12 am, by students from the men’s boarding school for the destitute deaf-mute in Milan’s countryside. It was a brilliant, moving event. Another activity will take place tomorrow, the 5th, at noon, for students of both sexes at the Royal Institute, which welcomes civilian deaf-mute people throughout Italy. At the end of the congress, on the 13th, in the same room as the men’s boarding school, the deaf-mute in the country who are dependent on the same administration will be examined and instructed by the same oral method by the daughters of charity in the boarding school of San Michele alla Chiusa (Congresso de Maestri dei Sordo-muti, 1880, our translation)¹⁵.

Crossing the reports with this newspaper advertisement, we realized the importance of the exams publicly displayed by the students of the institutes in directing the discussions so that the approval of the oral method was guaranteed.

In Louis-Ernest Peyron’s report, it is clear that these tests shaped several of the opinions, and the author reports particularly on Adolphe Franck’s ‘conversion’ to the

¹⁵ “L’uno ebbe luogo già questa mattina, alle ore 10112 dagli allievi del convitto maschile dei sordo-muti poveri della campagna milanese, Riusci brillantissimo, commovente. Un altro avrà luogo domani giorno 5, al mezzodí per quelli d’ ambo i sessi del regio istituto, che provvêde pei sordo-mutti civili di tutta italia. A chiusura del congresso. il giorno 13 nello stesso locale del Convitto Maschile, daranno il loro esame le sorde mute povere di campagna dipendenti dalla stessa amministrazione e istruite collo stesso metodo orale dalle figlie di carità nel convitto di San Michele alla Chiusa”.

oral method from the public exhibitions of the deaf at these institutes, demonstrating the success of the articulated method.

Therefore, we are content to say in this place what Mr. Franck observed in these schools: by the lip reading of the marvelous results and, by the articulation, the results so satisfactory that he declared himself a convinced adherent of the pure oral method; so much so, and this was not one of the less singular aspects of the Congress, that he drafted and adopted, in the form given to him, the second resolution voted by the Congress, declaring that the pure oral method should be preferred (Peyron, 1880, p. 305, our translation)¹⁶.

In the official report of the general secretary of the event, Pasquale Fornari (1881) reports the tests, how they were conducted, and their contents. We can reaffirm the importance of these tests in ensuring that voters favor the oral method. For the first class of the preparatory course, the first year of education, for example, the content is the following:

Practical exercises for the test. – Repeat the syllables and words read on the lips, then write them on the blackboard or compose them on the alphabet table. – Count one by one, two by two, etc. – Name an object shown; or designate it if it is named. – Perform simple speech-driven actions. – Make the sign of the Christian saying: in the name of the Father, etc. – and recite the angelic greeting (Fornari, 1881, p. 60, our translation)¹⁷.

The article clarified the importance and grandeur of a kind of ‘pre-congress’ and the importance of this event.

This triple test is crucial for foreign masters in order to establish their discussions on the eloquent matter of facts or, together, to recognize the prosperous state of our institutions of this kind, whose good name caused Milan to be chosen as the seat of the

¹⁶ “Contentons-nous donc de dire à cette place que M. Franck a constaté dans ces écoles : pour la lecture sur les lèvres des résultats merveilleux, et, pour l’articulation, des résultats si satisfaisants qu’il s’est déclaré partisan convaincu de la méthode orale pure ; si bien même, et cela n’a pas été une des moindres singularités du Congrès, qu’il a rédigé et fait adopter, sous la forme qu’il lui avait donnée, la deuxième résolution votée par le Congrès, qui déclare que la méthode orale pure doit être préférée”.

¹⁷ “Exercices pratiques pour l’examen. — Répéter les syllabes et les mots lus sur les lèvres ; — ensuite les écrire sur l’ardoise, ou les composer sur le tableau alphabétique. — Compter un à un, deux à deux, etc. — Nommer un objet montré ; ou bien le designer s’il est nommé. — Faire des actions simples commandées par la parole. — Faire le signe du chrétien en disant: au nom du Père, etc. — et réciter la Salutation Angélique”.

congress, among approximately three hundred cities that have an institute for the deaf-mute (Congresso de Maestri dei Sordo-muti, 1880, our translation)¹⁸.

The second article in *Corriere Della Sera*, dated 09/07/1880, deals precisely with commenting on the official opening of the congress and greeting the commission that organized it. The article entitled ‘Inauguration of the Congress of deaf-mute teachers’ tells us:

Yesterday, in the vast hall of the Santa Marta Technical Institute, the international congress of deaf-mute teachers was inaugurated. It was a solemnity. The hall was packed with French, German, English, and American attendees. The director and mayor presided over the inauguration, and several senators and deputies, provincial and municipal councilors also attended. Among the speakers, we note Cesare Cantu, the Hon. Fano, Correnti, Gorla, Visconti Venosta, Giulio Bianchi. The band played the royal anthem. After the hymn, the president of the preparatory committee, Augusto Zucchi, gave a speech that to us and everyone seemed splendid (Inaugurazione del Congresso dei Maestri dei Sordo-muti, 1880, our translation)¹⁹.

The article describes the Congress in a concise and summarized way extolling Italy for hosting such a grand and majestic event. The article brings a statistic on the number of deaf people educated by the institutes.

Deaf-mutes (according to the statistics mentioned above), deaf-mutes currently in the 36 Italian institutes to be educated, are in all 1,500. However, do you know how many of our deaf-mutes are between 5 and 21 years old, which is, in general terms, the most

¹⁸ “Questa triplice prova torna importantissima ai maestri stranieri per istabilire le loro disussioni sull'argomento eloquente dei fatti o insieme per riconoscere il florido stato delle nostre istituzioni di tal genere, il cui buon nome meritò che milano avesse l'alto onore d'essere la prescelta a sede del congresso fra forse trecento città ch'hanno un'istituto per sordo-muti”.

¹⁹ “Nella vasta sala dell' istituto tecnico a santa Marta s'inaugurò ieri a mezzodi il congresso internazionale dei maestri dei sordo-muti. Fu una solennità. La sala era affollatissima di congressisti, la più parte, francesi, tedeschi, inglesi, americani. Presiedevano all'inaugurazione il Prefetto e il Sindaco, oltre a vari senatori e deputati, consiglieri provinciali e comunali. Fra gli intervenuti abbiamo notato Cesare Cantu, gli on. Fano, Correnti, Gorla, Visconti Venosta, Giulio Bianchi. La banda suonò l'inno reale. Dopo l'inno, il presidente del comitato preparatore, Augusto Zucchi, pronunciò un discorso che a noi, e a tutti parve splendido”.

suitable for education? There are 15,000 (Inaugurazione del Congresso dei Maestri dei Sordo-muti, 1880, our translation)²⁰.

Furthermore, in addition to publicizing the speeches of some of the most important participants, the article shows how the event was conducted brilliantly and exalts the decisions made.

The third article, dated August 7, 1885, entitled 'The education of the deaf-mute in Milan: about a plaque' deals with the institution of a distinctive plaque of the place where the Congress was held.

The other day, in the final examination of the destitute deaf-mute in the rural area, Mayor Negri was proposed and asked for permission to place a plaque where the Institute is to be demolished for the continuation of road works in the district of Porta Genova (L'istruzione dei sordo-muti a Milano, 1885, our translation)²¹.

The "[...] commemorative plaque, which must serve as a historical document, must first of all accurately relate the historical truth" (L'istruzione dei sordo-muti a Milano, 1885, our translation)²². The text of the plaque inscription says, according to the story:

Here, the teachers of the deaf-mute from both worlds – the first time they met in congress – on September 4, 1880 – in the example of Milanese schools – voted to teach their students – the word and only the word (L'istruzione dei sordo-muti a Milano, 1885, our translation)²³.

The article praises the event and describes some of the decisions, the main one being the teaching of the word to the deaf-mute: "The vote – the word and with only the word – was pronounced in the congress room in Santa Marta" (L'istruzione dei sordo-muti a Milano, 1885, our translation)²⁴.

²⁰ "I sordo-muti (cel lo apprende la citata statistica) i sordo-muti che oggi si trovano nei 36 istituti italiani per esservi educati, sono in tutto 1500; ma sapete voi quanti sono i nostri sordo-muti fra i 5 e i 21 anni, età, che presa largamente, è la più propizia per l'istruzione? Sono 15,000".

²¹ "L'altro giorno, all'exame finale dei sordo-muti povori de campagna, fu proposto, e fu chiesta l'autorizzazione al sindaco Negri, di collocare una lapide dove ora sorge l'Istituto destinato ad esseres demolito per la continuazione dei lavori stradali del rione di porta Genova".

²² "[...] lapide commemorativa, dovendo servire di documento storico, deve prima di tutte riportare esattamente la verità storica".

²³ "Qui i maestri dei sordo-muti dei due mondi - la prima volta adunati in congresso - il 04 settembre 1880 - sull'exemplo delle scuole milanensi - votarono d'insegnare ai loro allievi - la parola e cella sola parola".

²⁴ "Il voto - la parola e colla sola parola - fu pronunzito nell'aula del congresso a santa marta".

Therefore, a plaque similar to the proposed one should be placed on the façade of the Technical Institute instead, and it is undoubtedly worth remembering an event of great importance for the history of solidary humanity and the progress of enlightened philanthropy (L'istruzione dei sordo-muti a Milano, 1885, our translation)²⁵.

The Milan Congress as a 'place of memory' is erected with its minutes, headstones, and inscriptions that establish Milan with its aura and its discursively constructed grandeur.

When we briefly return to this atmosphere of the late nineteenth century, we point to how Milan (1880), an event with universalist pretensions concerning deaf education, is also inserted in this broader context. Milan also brings with it, in addition to discussions related to the methods of educating the deaf, an understanding of the human marked by the possibility of statistical verification, the veridiction given by science, the growing insistence on linguistic unification, and the missionary appeals based on speech.

Thus, we suggest that rereading Milan (1880) is also rereading that time, understanding its complexity of change in different areas, intertwining of issues and problematizations. In this universe, one can meet Milan, willing to go beyond that threshold open to a dialogue with the world where the monument took place and how we find and interpret it today.

Finally, the fourth article in the newspaper, dated 1890, deals with a monument to Abbot Giulio Tarra, host of attendees in Milan and for 34 years in charge of the Institute for the Deaf in Milan. As a result of the Abbot's death, a monument was erected in his honor and memory.

Today, at the country's institute for the deaf-mute, the monument erected to Fr. Giulio Tarra by the Commission for the Education of Destitute Deaf-mutes will be inaugurated. Today is precisely the year that poor Tarra died after 34 years of rectoring the Institute, which he attended with the true passion of a philanthropist. Tarra brought significant innovations to the teaching of deaf-mutes. He understood from the beginning of his career how the orientation of this teaching was wrong since it began not with the known but with the unknown (Il monumento a Giulio Tarra, 1890, our translation)²⁶.

²⁵ "Una lapide simile a quella proposta dovrebbe dunque essere collocata invece sulla facciata dell'istituto tecnico, e certo merita che si conservi memoria di un avvenimento di grande importanza per la storia dell'umanità soliereute e dei progressi della filantropia iluminata".

²⁶ "Oggi nell' Istituto dei sordomuti di campagna verrà scoperto il monumento eretto a don Giulio Tarra, dalla Commissione per l'educazione dei sordomuti poveri. Compie com oggi appunto l'anno da che il

It is noteworthy that, in addition to being the president of the Milan Congress, Abbot Tarra, is cited in all documents as a staunch and enthusiastic professor and advocate of the pure oral method. We are not surprised by the monument to this figure so crucial to conducting the congress, guaranteeing the votes in favor of his ardently advocated pure oral method.

Abbot Tarra, director of the Institute of the Destitute Deaf-Mute in Milan, was named president. All members of Congress will retain the memory of this marked type of Italian grace, whose expressive countenance underlined every aspect of a word, which, always abundant, always natural, rose eloquently, without effort. Abbot Tarra obtained all the votes with his excellent reason, his ingenious ideas, and his high eloquence (Peyron, 1880, p. 302, our translation)²⁷.

Such monuments erected allow us to realize that the Milan Congress was built with much enthusiasm to be grand and powerful. After the defeat at the congress of Lyon in 1879, in which the combined method was chosen, *Milan* (1880) was fundamental in ensuring that the oral method was victorious.

With the sumptuousness with which it was built and designed, the Milan Congress stands as a place of memory. Without proper reading of the sources and the care based on rigorous documentary research over the years, its decisions' repercussion was producing truths according to which dichotomies were created. Deaf *versus* hearing; sign language *versus* oral language, for example, as the only discussion, impoverishing the reading of this 'document-monument' from a mosaic of sources. Consequently, it erases the historical process and its characters.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The *Milan Congress* (1880) was not a consensus. Its awareness can bring another narrative regarding the discussions advocated in this space. A whole political articulation of those interested in the pure oral method was necessary for the congress not to occur in Côme, as defined in Paris (1878), but in Milan. There, they could get

povero Tarra moriva dopo 34 anni di rettorato di quell'Istituto, a ui egli attendeva com vera passione di filantropo. Il Tarra portò nell'insegnamento dei sordomuti delle innovazioni importanti. Egli comprese dal principio della sua carriera come l'indireizzo di tale insegnamento fosse sbagliato giacchè partiva no dal noto ma dall'ignoto”.

²⁷ “L'abbé Tarra, directeur de l'Institution des Sourds-Muets pauvres de Milan, a été nommé président. Tous les membres du Congrès garderont le souvenir de ce type accompli de la grâce italienne, dont la physionomie expressive soulignait chaque trait d'une parole qui, toujours abondante, qui, toujours naturelle, montait souvent et sans effort à l'éloquence”.

around several obstacles and vote, finally, for the pure oral method, which was in the total interest of a group.

As much as Milan characterizes itself as a saturated memory and, in the end, a 'place of memory,' look to other aspects, other documents to produce another narrative of the history of deaf education, fleeing from the sign language opposition and oral language allows us to understand the political aspects for choosing the oral method as the most suitable method.

This text had the challenge to open other narratives through the reports dedicated to reporting this congress and through the press's narrative at the time. Looking at these documents not translated into Portuguese caused us anguish with each open page, as other possibilities of escaping Milan's reductionist narrative were unveiled.

Indeed, the decisions made in Milan regarding the choice of a unique method for educating the deaf have had a profound impact on deaf education to this day. However, reductionist narratives based only on the oppositions of deaf vs. hearing or sign language vs. oral language, for example, prevent us from thinking about other details about language teaching methodologies for deaf people.

The creation of monuments as an ode to Milan (such as the plaques, monument to Abbot Tarra, for example) appears as a sumptuous congress construction. Its consolidation as a landmark was successful. Thus, Milan constitutes itself as a 'place of memory' in our times. It becomes a period of history and, therefore, erases history movement and is later placed there as a landmark.

Escaping the binary opposition between languages produces a broader memory and brings plots and characters back to the center of the discussion. The shortened history ends the potency of the broader perspective of the history's movement. To understand, for example, that in previous congresses, the perspective was not given to the oral method is to realize that Milan was not a consensus makes much difference when we look at the debates of the time. Destroying Milan's (de)formed memory allows us to 'trans-form' the very history of deaf education.

We understand that the lack of documents from other congresses and even from the *Milan Congress* (1880), translated into Portuguese, substantially contributes to Milan occupying this central place that distorts the memory of deaf education. Therefore, it is noteworthy that all documents used here to support our argument are unpublished in Portuguese and translated to enable further readings about this event.

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