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Autobiography and (Re-)Signification / *Autobiografia e (res)significação*

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ABSTRACT

The great profusion of different forms of (auto)biographical narrativity in contemporary society is increasingly sensitive. From what is presented by studies in different fields of language studies, the heterogeneity with which diverse forms of narration of the self in different tones of self-reference have emerged in a highly mediatized and globalized society becomes indisputable. Therefore, anchored in the theoretical propositions of the dialogic analysis of discourse along with studies that focus on life writings, we discuss re-signification as a characteristic act of the movement of self-reference, constitutive of autobiographies and some other forms of narratives of the self. Among other observations, we highlight in the discursive construction of self-referential texts, such as autobiography, a cross-linking between senses, memories and life experiences in their relation of re-signification in the light of what the subject not only was, but is now.

KEYWORDS: Autobiography; Dialogic discourse theory; Self-reference; Biographical space; Re-signification

RESUMO

É cada vez mais sensível a grande profusão de distintas formas de narratividade (auto) biográfica na sociedade contemporânea. A partir do que apresentam pesquisas em diferentes campos dos estudos em linguagem, faz-se incontestável a heterogeneidade com que diversas formas de narração do eu em diferentes tons de autorreferência têm insurgido numa sociedade altamente midiaticizada e globalizada. Nesse entrever, ancorados no edifício teórico da análise dialógica do discurso em confluência com estudos que se debruçam sobre as escritas de si, propomo-nos a discutir a ressignificação como ato característico do movimento de autorreferência constitutivo da autobiografia e de algumas outras formas de narrativas do eu. Dentre outras observações, destacamos, na construção discursiva de textos autorreferentes, como a autobiografia, um entrecruzamento entre sentidos, memórias e vivências em uma relação de ressignificação sob a luz do que o sujeito não só foi como agora é.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Autobiografia; Análise dialógica do discurso; Autorreferência; Espaço biográfico; Ressignificação*

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Introduction

The narrative is not only the means, but the place: the life story happens in the narrative. What gives shape to what has been lived and to the human experience are the narratives that they make of themselves.

DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2008, p.56¹

What would mankind be without their experiences? And what would one's experiences be without being narrated? If we take it into consideration, observing the proposed epigraph, the narrative is the locus where life makes sense for those who lead it. In this line of thought, we put it simply that what meant once *remained*, left marks and settled into the heterogeneous constitution of a given subject.

For some reason justifiable to this subject and his/her unique existence, this mark now inhabits the mnemonic thread, which discursively stitches together the relationships between the one who lived, the one with whom he or she lived, where and what this subject lived, etc. It is an endless mesh of experiences. Sometimes malleable and sometimes rebellious, this mesh is what makes room to the endless dialogue between life and the images we narratively build about living. As Bakhtin (1990)² states, life and forms of narrativity - the novel, as exemplified by the Russian theorist - are intrinsically linked, and the common meanings in everyday life are always mobilized, to a greater or lesser extent, as the matter of the most diverse aesthetic and non-aesthetic expressions.

In this sense, over the years, some forms of narrativity involved in themes of an openly *private* life have come to the surface and started to freely walk around the grounds of the communal areas. Reaching the dimension of a so-called *public* sphere, these forms of expressly personal narrativity are resounding signs of the gradual process of diluting the dichotomous barriers that have greatly influenced human social relations. As proposed by Leonor Arfuch (2010), the experiential theme was introduced in the context of literature by writers such as Goethe, who, through a writing which was considered

¹ In Portuguese: "A narrativa não é apenas o meio, mas o lugar: a história da vida acontece na narrativa. O que dá forma ao vivido e à experiência dos homens são as narrativas que eles fazem de si."

² BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The dialogic Imagination: Four essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.259-422.

intimate by many, allowed the *self* to enter a literary space in which, at the time, (auto)biographies and other forms of life writing were not widely used.

When, in the historical stream, the details related to the subject's privacy gradually tread the terrain of social life in the form of writing, we see this kind of literature gradually ascend to new horizons of contemplation, allowing the recognition of a biographical value in aesthetic perception. In this regard, we can cite various forms of artistic production that play the role of highlighting the intimacies of a subjectivity under construction, such as:

Biographies, autobiographies, confessions, memoirs, diaries, correspondence account for more than two centuries of this obsession with leaving impressions, traces, inscriptions, this emphasis on uniqueness which is at the same time a quest for transcendence (ARFUCH, 2010, p.17).³

This article, then, aims to discuss the functioning and constitution of the autobiography, with emphasis on the connections established between memory and self-writing that characterize this form of narrativity. Epistemologically, we adopt principles of the dialogical theory of discourse (DTD), a theoretical institution fundamentally integrated by the contributions of thinkers, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov and Pavel Medvedev. DTD is currently quite diffused in Brazil and included in a wide diversity of areas of knowledge.

We believe that not only in the production of autobiographical materials but also in the scope of their contemplation, apart from the report as a full capture of what was once lived, it is necessary to reflect on the condition of the resignification of the life experiences that have punctuated/punctuate a given subjectivity. We thus propose the resignification as a characteristic element in the discursive devising of this genre and also as a necessary action for the reading audience, a contemplative horizon for those who intend to tell their life experiences in the form of an autobiography.

In the foreground we present some points of transition in the history of subjectivity that have an impact on the different perceptions of autobiography in the contemporary world. We highlight, in this vein, some postulations about the autobiography theory, which influence its perception in a current context, in particular, Philippe Lejeune's

³ In Portuguese: "Biografias, autobiografias, confissões, memórias, diários íntimos, correspondências dão conta, por mais de dois séculos, dessa obsessão de deixar impressões, traços, inscrições, dessa ênfase na singularidade que é ao mesmo tempo uma busca de transcendência."

position, which is of considerable relevance to the study of autobiographies and other forms of what we nowadays can call life writings. In the dialogical space between these postulations, we set out to problematize self-reference as a constitutive element of autobiographical devising, relying on the readings of Arfuch (2010) and her idea of biographical space combined with the discursive-dialogical lenses proposed in the studies of Bakhtin and the Circle.

1 From Autobiographical Preamble to Modern Autobiography

When we etymologically observe the term autobiography, we see clearly, in an objective way, its meaning as the writing or, better yet, record of life – from the Greek, *bios*, life and *graphein*, to write, draw, record, among other possibilities (MITIDIERI, 2010), suggesting forms of report that go beyond the language on its verbal aspect. In this perspective, we observe, in the foreground, the connection between the genre under study and biography. By adding the prefix, also from the Greek root, *autos*, we see a difference that makes up one of the specificities conferred on autobiography: a life story told by the person who lived the reported event.

Still keeping us in an etymological orientation, Calligaris (1998, p.47) initially mentions the recent nature that the term autobiography has in its use and relevance in the field of literary theory. Its etymological root is Greek, but the ancient Greeks did not use the word autobiography so much so that “in English it makes its appearance in the final years of the 18th century and is only established in the first decades of the 19th century. More mysterious (at first glance) is the fact that ‘biography’ is also an absent word in classical Greek.”⁴

As Bakhtin (1990, p.130) states, in antiquity no autobiographies and biographies are actually identified. According to the Russian theorist “a series of autobiographical and biographical forms was worked out in ancient times that had a profound influence not only on the development of European biography, but also on the development of

⁴ In Portuguese: “em inglês ela faz sua aparição nos últimos anos do século XVIII e só se estabelece nas primeiras décadas do século XIX. Mais misterioso (à primeira vista) é o fato de que também ‘biografia’ é uma palavra ausente em grego clássico.”

European novel as a whole.”⁵ He proposes then to discuss the existence of two important types of autobiography: firstly, the Platonic, clearly manifested in Plato’s works, such as the *Apology* of Socrates and *Phaedo*; secondly, the rhetorical autobiography and biography, based on the *encomium*, the civic, funeral and laudatory speech, from which the first ancient autobiography, in the Bakhtinian sense, the defense speech of Isocrates, would have emerged. Bakhtin (1990)⁶ also mentions the Augustinian works as one of those compositions that integrate what we can call preambular autobiographical forms, in which, among other aspects, the Russian thinker suggests, as a considerable mark of this preamble, the fusion of man in his internal (man for himself) and external (man for the other) nature.

Georges Gusdorf (1991), throughout his research from an anthropological perspective, describes the absence of the individual in antiquity, observing that the pretension for a cohesion of the subjects worked as an inhibiting attitude of the intimacies, divergences and diversities that potentially characterize the individual. Gusdorf argues that autobiography is a phenomenon culturally and historically located in the change of horizon marked by the entry of a Judeo-Christian ideology in the midst of the predominance of classical tradition in Western society. In addition to it, according to this scholar:

In the first place, it is important to highlight the fact that the autobiographical genre is limited in time and space: it has not always existed or exists everywhere. If the Confessions of St. Augustine offer the initial point of reference for a first phenomenal success, we immediately see that it is a late phenomenon in Western culture, and that it occurs at the moment when the Christian contribution is grafted into classical traditions. On the other hand, it does not seem that autobiography has manifested itself outside our cultural atmosphere; it would be said that it manifests a particular concern of the Western man, a concern that he took with him in his gradual conquest of the world and that he communicated with men of other civilizations; but, at the same time, these men would have been subjected, by a kind of intellectual colonization, to a mentality that was not theirs (GUSDORF, 1991, p.9).⁷

⁵ BAKHTIN, M. Forms of time and chronotope in the novel. *In*: BAKHTIN, M. *The dialogic Imagination: Four essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.84-258.

⁶ For reference, see footnote 2.

⁷ In the original: “En primer lugar, conviene resaltar el hecho de que el género autobiográfico está limitado en el tiempo y en el espacio: ni ha existido siempre ni existe en todas partes. Si las Confesiones de San Agustín ofrecen el punto de referencia inicial de un primer éxito fenomenal, vemos en seguida que se trata

From his research on the constitution of an autobiographical framework in societies outside the Western world, Gusdorf notes that self-record is a particular characteristic of the subjectivity built in the West. He mentions that, when disseminated in other societies, the autobiographical report appears as a form of endorsement to a colonizer's habit, as marks of influence of this colonization that subjects the colonized to a prestigious practice that would not be characteristic to it. Gusdorf (1991), then, defends two basic conditions for the emergence of what is understood as autobiography. They are well summarized in Calligaris's work (1998, p.46):⁸ "the basic condition for autobiographical writing is twofold: the departure from a traditional society and (therefore) the feeling of history as an individual, autonomous adventure."

In Gusdorf's point of view, these two prerogatives resulted necessarily from a change in the perception of an entire cultural community, a passage that foresees what Bakhtin (1990)⁹ also points out: the internal aspects of the subject are dissociated from the external aspects. In other words, it was necessary for the individual to go through a process in which he/she recognized the diverse nature that marks the notion of subjectivity. The subject starts to recognize him-/herself as not identical to his/her idea of him-/herself, nor to the idea he/she holds of the other. And here a more generous view of the present moments is fitting – and no longer of a transcendental hereditary value widespread in the community.

Such changes in the notions of subject gain space in Modernity, a moment in which the subject begins to discover that each individual is unrepeatable and unique, denoting an evanescent value for the experiential content, which, in turn, configures the act of narrating oneself as a form of gain for a common cultural heritage. In other words, each subject's individual perspective of the world and his/her relations with it begins to provide collectivity with the means for intellectual and material enrichment.

de un fenómeno tardío en la cultura occidental, y que tiene lugar en el momento en que la aportación cristiana se injerta en las tradiciones clásicas. Por otra parte, no parece que la autobiografía se haya manifestado jamás fuera de nuestra atmósfera cultural; se diría que manifiesta una preocupación particular del hombre occidental, preocupación que ha llevado consigo en su conquista paulatina del mundo y que ha comunicado a los hombres de otras civilizaciones; pero, al mismo tiempo, estos hombres se habrían visto sometidos, por una especie de colonización intelectual, a una mentalidad que no era la suya."

⁸ In Portuguese: "a condição básica para o escrito autobiográfico é dupla: a saída de uma sociedade tradicional e (portanto) o sentimento da história como aventura autônoma, individual."

⁹ For reference, see footnote 2.

It is in this sense that many theoreticians present the *Confessions* of Jean Jacques Rousseau as the initial landmark of modern autobiography, a categorical work in which the French thinker marks his innovation: “I am forming an undertaking which has no precedent, and the execution of which will have no imitator whatsoever. I wish to show my fellow a man in all the truth of nature; and this man will be myself” (ROUSSEAU, 1995, p.5).¹⁰

Thus, Rousseau leaves an open space for a way of painting the real that is unveiled, using confessional and intimate tones, which are marks of autobiography and other autobiographical forms. The work so widely studied, especially beyond its context of conception, presents certain aspects that end up being identifiable as the territorial specificity in which life writings in contemporary days are located. This is Arfuch’s (2010, p.48)¹¹ analysis of the previous quotation from Rousseau’s text:

The emergence of this self-referential voice (‘I, alone’), its ‘firstness’ (‘I am forming an undertaking which has no precedent’), the promise of an absolute fidelity (‘I wish to show my fellow a man in all the truth of nature; and this man will be myself’) and the acute perception of another as recipient, whose adherence is uncertain (‘Whoever you are... I conjure you not to hide the honor of my memory, the only monument of my character that was not disfigured by my enemies’), vehemently outlined the topography of modern autobiographical space.

In the above analysis, Rousseau’s attempt to be the precursor of the entrance of subjectivities in the midst of the literary narrative is tangible. It aims to legitimize the marks of the subject who was previously little evident, hidden, muffled in face of cloistering positivist precepts. This way, the characteristics observed by Arfuch in the precursory work of Rousseau originate the silhouettes of a form of autobiographical writing which is more mature, less timid in its narrativity, more robust in terms of presence. We can interpret and problematize these characteristics from the following

¹⁰ ROUSSEAU, J-J. The Confessions. In: ROUSSEAU, J-J. *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*: vol. 5. Translated by Christopher Kelly; edited by Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters and Peter G. Stillman. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1995.

¹¹ In Portuguese: “O surgimento dessa voz autorreferencial (‘Eu, só’), sua ‘primeiridade’ (‘Acometo um empreendimento que jamais teve exemplo), a promessa de uma fidelidade absoluta (‘Quero mostrar a meus semelhantes um homem em toda a verdade da natureza, e esse homem serei eu’) e a percepção aguda de um outro como destinatário, cuja adesão é incerta (‘Quem quer que sejais... Conjuro-vos a não escamotear a honra de minha memória, o único monumento de meu caráter que não foi desfigurado por meus inimigos’), traçavam com veemência a topografia do espaço autobiográfico moderno.”

summarized order: i) narration in self-reference; ii) report of something that has already happened; iii) the guarantee of veracity in the report; iv) representation of individual issues of the subject in reference.

In an initial stage, thinking about the biographical composition falls on a narration of facts, experiences lived by a given subjectivity under the narration of a third person who was not necessarily present in the moments in which the events occurred. In a way, this points to the support given by the narrator, who signs the validity of the events. In the case of an autobiographical writing, the veracity in the act of narration falls on the shoulders of the person who lived the narrated events, which suggests that, following the positivist motto, the narration aims to approach what actually happened, a supposed essence of the event.

What Rousseau undoubtedly signals and recognizes is an intention for transparency, the idea that the truth about life would then be told in its novelty under the gaze of the one who lives and recognizes oneself in the relevance of that role. Rousseau's pretension denotes a certain re-taking of a notion of the essence of living when it delegates to those who experienced the event the status of the individual most susceptible to tell/contain the truth that the narration would embody. This real voice that speaks of its own actions brings an empirical value in its report, which, in its *veni, vidi* reason, witnesses a certain event by a unique perspective and makes it a criterion in favor of the possible veracity of the report. The subject represents an event that happened in the past supposedly experienced by that same subjectivity that now narrates the story.

In a more specific manner, it is relevant for us to recognize the way in which such a work and the points observed in its characterization are used to base possible conceptualizations about autobiography as a genre in the literary canon. Such postulations are clearly identifiable in the theories of scholars such as Philippe Lejeune, a researcher with substantial propositions regarding studies on life writings and the delimitation of what was initially characterized as an *autobiographical space* (LEJEUNE, 1989).¹²

¹² LEJEUNE, P. *On Autobiography*. Translated by Katherine Leary, edited by Paul John Eakin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

2 Lejeune and the Autobiographical Space

French researcher Philippe Lejeune points to ways for our scientific incursions that are motivated, in a great tone, by the search for answers that dialogically resonate the subsequent question: “Would it be possible to define autobiography?” (LEJEUNE, 1989, p.120).¹³ As proposed by Jovita Noronha (2014) in the presentation of her compilation of Lejeune’s works, thinking about autobiography in the contemporary academic scenario cannot be done without focusing on the contributions of the French theorist. Besides, according to the Brazilian researcher, it is impossible not to confuse Lejeune with his object of investigation. From his first postulations in *L’autobiographie en France* (1971), he inventoried French autobiographical forms to analyze the functioning of this literary expression; however, above all else, it is clear that his initial project was to give legitimacy to autobiography and its singularities in the mapping of what a genre would be.

By revisiting works from the European context of the 18th century, the proposal of the French theorist is built on the reading and contrastive analysis of this corpus. His search aims to identify and establish traits that could serve as a foundation for his definition of autobiography, characterizing this linguistic form in the proposition of features for its typicality.

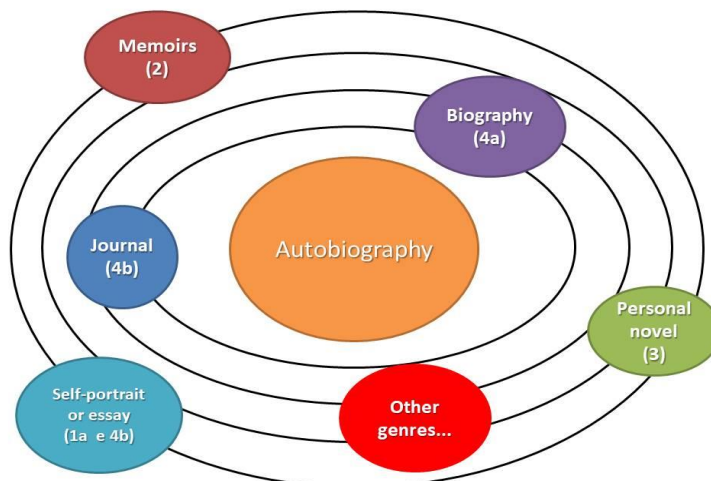
Regarding the definition used by Lejeune for the autobiographical genre, we find “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (LEJEUNE, 1989, p.120).¹⁴ As we will see in more detail further on, Lejeune presents, from the outlines of what the autobiographical genre would be, a possibility to differentiate other narrative forms in proximity, which he calls neighboring genres of autobiography, with specific mention to memoirs, biographies, personal novels, autobiographical poems, diaries and self-portraits, or essays. The contrast established between these forms, whose common interest is the narration of events that mark lives, is regarded by the concentric position of autobiography, used as a paradigm to support the whole process of description of other narrative forms of the self. In this vein, we see a

¹³ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁴ For reference, see footnote 6.

construction of a systematic elaboration that raises the autobiography and its status, with the so-called neighboring genres orbiting around it, to a composition that supports the conceptualization of the autobiographical space proposed by Lejeune.

Fig. 1: Constellation of (auto)biographical genres



Source: Our formulation based on Lejeune (1989)¹⁵

The above illustration is based on the differentiation suggested by Lejeune in which, from an understanding that endorses a Manichaean perspective, genres are differentiated on the basis of their dissimilarity to the elements that make up the organization of the autobiographical genre. If we observe the figure, we will notice that the characteristics of the autobiography that the French researcher points out do not constitute the genres highlighted above. We then need to observe the table below, which lists the categories of definition and the elements used by Lejeune in his systematic elaboration.

Below are highlighted four important categories that unfold the genre characterization presented by the French theorist. For each category segmented by him, the elements that configure the uniqueness of the autobiographical genre were delimited.

CATEGORIES	1. Language Form	2. Subject matter	3. Author's Situation	4. Narrator's Position
ELEMENTS	a) Narrative; b) In prose.	individual life, story of a personality	the author (whose name refers to a real	a. The narrator and the principal

¹⁵ For reference, see footnote 6.

			person) and the narrator are identical.	character are identical b. Retrospective point of view of the narrative.
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Source: Adapted from Lejeune (1989, p.4)¹⁶

The author explains that, without the simultaneous fulfillment of the highlighted categories and elements, it is not possible to call a particular work an autobiography. At this point, our descriptive-investigative focus emphasizes the main argument that supports the definition of autobiography discussed here: the hypothesis of identification, raised by Lejeune, as a final condition of existence for an autobiography in its singularity. As we have seen before, there are characteristics in which the conceptual rigor of the author carries a lighter weight, allowing some variations here or there. However, when we question the hypothesis mentioned above, the author points out expressly:

A question of all or nothing, and they are the conditions that oppose autobiography [...] to biography and the personal novel [...] An identity is, or is not [...] In order for there to be autobiography (and personal literature in general) the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be identical (LEJEUNE, 1989, p.5).¹⁷

Lejeune clearly presents the establishing principle of autobiography as a genre in a considerably normative tone. Aligned with a vision supported by Pragmatics, the relationship of identity between the narrative instances of author, narrator and character starts to guarantee the initial terms of what would be the *contract* of a work recognized as autobiographical. To this end, the development of this hypothesis is widely based on the theories of narratology of Gerard Genette, used here in order to highlight the conditions in which we can identify this relationship of full identity.

Initially the use of the first person assures the identity between the narrator and the main character, based on the outlines of the concept of autodiegesis proposed by Genette. In other words, the voice that narrates is the voice that personifies the narrated act. This would be the ideal case for the occurrence of an autobiography according to

¹⁶ For reference, see footnote 6.

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 6.

Lejeune. We would only be left with the condition of the author affirming to be this same real subject who once lived and now narrates the actions in retrospect.

Aware of this fragile relationship of stability embodied in the use of the first person, Lejeune proposes other conditions for the identification between narrator, character and author, the latter being the most unstable rod of the tripod described here. The path followed by the scholar surrounds Benveniste's postulates about the enunciation and its relation with the referent, which Lejeune takes as part of his journey, which also considers the extralinguistic data as a possible guarantee of identification between author and narrator. However, it is the individualizing relationship that the researcher forges in relation to the subject and his own *name* that supports the key to the resolution of fragility in his hypothesis of identification.

“The precarious status of every identity, as well as of every reference, leads him to propose several alternatives until anchoring in the name, the place of articulation between ‘person and discourse’: name, signature, author” (ARFUCH, 2010, p.52-53).¹⁸ As Arfuch discusses, the answer that structures the difficulty encountered by Lejeune falls on the conversion of the first person into the proper name. The name frequently presented on the cover and/or even referenced throughout the work would represent the entire connection of the author's presence and its bond with the other narrative instances of the text.

When the author-narrator-character's identity is verified, which in Lejeune's framework would be the composition of an autobiographical work, the attitude of the reader would be somewhat contrary to his relationship with the fictional work: “When faced with a narrative of autobiographical aspect, the reader frequently tends to act like a hunting dog, that is, to seek the breaches of contract (whatever these may be)” (LEJEUNE, 1990, p.8).¹⁹ “Did this really happen?” and “Has he/she really lived this?” are recurring questions when reading an autobiography, reminiscent of what had been proposed by the text that is often taken as a *model* to the autobiographical production and even in the elaboration of the concept that we are working on, viz., the *Confessions* of Rousseau.

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “O estatuto precário de toda identidade, assim como de toda referência, o leva a propor diversas alternativas até ancorar no nome, lugar de articulação de ‘pessoa e discurso’: nome, assinatura, autor.”

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 6.

Having discussed the influence and role of the author, it is relevant to note that, as suggested by Lejeune (1990, p.7)²⁰ in relation to the movement of reception of an autobiography from the perspective of the reader, “The autobiography is not a game of divination, but exactly the opposite.” The possibility of identification encloses the name as a dialogical piece relating the subject to social roles and consequent meanings, conferring a status of reality on the autobiographical text. This proposition is unquestionably the most emblematic mark of the agreement between reader and author suggested by Lejeune as an *autobiographical pact*. It is markedly a contractual gesture of pragmatic basis between parties under which the condition of veracity, characteristic to autobiographical forms, is being negotiated. Then, “the idea of the autobiographical pact between author and reader” is established, “thus disconnecting belief and truth: Pact (contract) of identity sealed by the proper name” (ARFUCH, 2010, p.53).²¹

Based on some criteria the pact establishes, with the reader, the assertion of the identity constituted between author, narrator and character, solidified by the link with the proper name. Two great possibilities for the fulfillment of the pact are pre-conceived by Lejeune: i) implicitly, the use of titles or subtitles that relate the writings to the author and also the pre-textual sections, usually a preface, presentation or acknowledgments in which the author describes the story to be told as not only of his/her authorship, but as an event belonging to his/her own life history; ii) what Lejeune calls in a patent way, a clear and explicit correlation evidenced by the correspondence between the character and the author’s names.

The hypothesis of the identification of these narrative instances is a primordial foundation that ensures the viability of a report in autobiographical terms. In other words, it is up to the reader, in the end, to believe or not in the possibility that what is reported actually has credibility in the perspective of the subject who claims to have played that role. The value that Lejeune attributes to the reader in his studies seems justifiable, since it is the audience that is responsible for determining, as interlocutors, the notion of *reality* with which the autobiographical discourse is imbued.

Based on the discursive-dialogical lenses that we use in our discussion, we are provoked to observe that the definition of genre proposed by Lejeune is responsive to a

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 6.

²¹ In Portuguese: “a ideia do pacto autobiográfico entre autor e leitor, desligando assim a crença e verdade: ‘Pacto (contrato) de identidade selado pelo nome próprio.’”

positivist view that resonates some currents of thought in the Western world. Consequently, his defense for an autobiographical genre in these molds reveals a *finalization stage* influenced by a perception that is confirmed in the light of a metaphysical reason. This proposition comes not only from a paradigmatic look at autobiography in relation to other forms of life writing, but also from the outlines of the autobiographical genre itself, on which the normative and biased character of an inflexible and formatted reading of the genre converges.

With the same rhythm in which we see sensitive points in Philippe Lejeune's postulates, we cannot reject the configuration of autobiography as a genre. Some theoreticians like Jean Starobinski (2006) and Paul de Man (1984), on the contrary, refute the position of autobiography as a genre. Based on the perspective of the dialogical discourse analysis, we are bound to disagree with the impossibility of classifying autobiography in its genre nature, as we take its discursive constitution into consideration. Then, it is necessary to discuss some nodes and gaps that are visible in Lejeune's theory and that, in our view, can be supplemented by the contributions of the dialogical theory.

By opening these windows, the ground is ready for Arfuch (2010) to work the land where the genres of the biographical space may later grow. Arfuch then formulates her conceptual methodology and principles of analysis considering precisely language as living matter, as heterogeneous and changing, similarly to what is proposed by the postulates of Bakhtin and the Circle.

3 The Re-signification of Self-reference

At this point, there are several questions about the functioning of autobiography as a narrative form in which the etymological root itself implies an inevitable *self-reference*. The problem stems from the impossible achievement of a conclusive return to oneself in an assertive manner. From the Bakhtinian referential mobilized in our epistemological perspective, the subject cannot establish a relation of complete identification with the self, an element advocated by the definition of autobiographical genre proposed by Philippe Lejeune (1989)²² as discussed in the previous section.

²² For reference, see footnote 6.

Starting from what Lejeune (1989)²³ attempted and noting the gaps in his proposition towards a more comprehensive reading of self-referential narrative modalities, Argentinean researcher Arfuch (2010) commits her research project to the study of a confluence space of (auto-)biographical forms, mainly due to the increasing and more diverse occurrence of these linguistic expressions in contemporary society. Observing the identity construction of the subject amidst a globalized and hypermediatic society in which social relations are no longer limited to geographical, linguistic or cultural conditions, Arfuch's studies invite us to notice how contemporary subjects increasingly make use of forms of language that seize life in direct (self-) reference.

It is a reference work that involves traditional genres such as diaries, memoirs, biography, autobiography and other genres elaborated by hypermedia relations and characteristic of this context, marked by an emptying of concrete reality, a virtual exodus (MCGONIGAL, 2011),²⁴ such as blogs, vlogs, videogames and the so famous social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.). Arfuch then highlights, among other things, the possibility of new perceptions about the (auto)biographical writing. In these more recent perspectives, the uniformity recommended as a sign of the identification hypothesis raised by Lejeune and the rigidity of his autobiographical pact are no longer considered as ultimate conditions for the existence of such literature.

The Argentinean researcher then observes the linguistic materialities in a way that also considers the subject constitutions that are perceived in language use, carrying out what Raymond Williams (1977)²⁵ states when we reflect on the functioning of language in its expressive bond with the one that produces it. Arfuch identifies and makes evident that, in the vein of language hybridity, the subject constituted by language use becomes, consequently, heterogeneously constituted. This is a factor that influences all the enunciative constructions and, concomitantly, the whole socio-interactional process. Because of this condition of heterogeneity that constitutes language and discourse, in a perspective inscribed in Bakhtinian dialogism, Arfuch's investigation highlights the crucial position occupied by the *other* in the whole of this *non-finalization* process which comprises both the linguistic act and existence itself, as suggested by Bakhtin.

²³ For reference, see footnote 6.

²⁴ MCGONIGAL, J. *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make us Better and How they can Change the World*. New York: Penguin Books, 2011.

²⁵ WILLIAMS, R. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Among the proposals explored by Arfuch, we could perceive a rethinking of what would be the identity relation between author, narrator, and character. Such proposition, discussed as a life-and-death condition by Lejeune in his definition of the autobiographical genre, is noted by the Argentinian researcher with the contribution of the propositions from Bakhtin and the Circle. Following Arfuch's reading, we seek to analyze the functioning of the autobiographical genre in a dialogical orientation. As a starting point, we have, in this sense, the identifiable gap in the hypothesis of identification that structures the conception of autobiography from the perspective of the autobiographical pact.

Up to this point, the proposal for an autobiographical narrative contains the idea that *I* establish a dialogue with *myself*, dealing with events concerning my own perception of my life and what is linked to it. However, beyond myself, I have, as a dialogical goal of my account of myself and told by myself, a *third subject* who is not necessarily me.

From the dialogical discourse theory, the subject's acts and utterances are oriented by responsiveness and responsibility, by a process of concrete signification that implies the objectification of what comes to be the aesthetic object. Such objectification is elaborated on the basis of the subject's finalization stage and, namely, the linguistic and extralinguistic conditions that compose the situation of language use. By narrating about him-/herself, the subject displays self-individualization, objectifying him-/herself evaluatively. As to concrete signification, the subject takes an *image* of him-/herself, that is, his/her own representation about him-/herself that would subsequently have, as an external axiological horizon or recipient, *him-/herself as other* and, at the same time, in fact, *other subjects*. We can synthesize this relation that re-signifies Lejeune's view of self-reference, based on Arfuch (2010), as follows: *self-reference - narrative of the self / narrative by the self / narrative to the self*.

The *narrative of the self* involves the main point in common of the different forms of life writing, the piece that allows, for instance, Arfuch to base the idea of the *biographical space*: its theme of an experiential order. In a narrative of the self, the subject's theme is his/her own life, what marks and, consequently, singularizes his/her existence. Thinking of the subject and its constitutive heterogeneity, a narrative of the self

in autobiography can be done at different levels, as Arfuch observes (2010, p.133; author's emphasis):²⁶

Three degrees of analysis in life narration: *intimate, private, biographical*. In fact, if we adopt the metaphor of the 'enclosure' of interiority, the intimate would be perhaps the most remote of the self, that which rubs against the incommunicable, that which adjusts naturally to the secret. The private, on the other hand, seems to contain the intimate, but offers a less restricted space, more susceptible to be shared, a kind of antechamber or private area open to some others. Finally, the biographical would comprise both spaces, modulated in the arc of the compulsory seasons of life, including, in addition, public life.

The act of narrating the different levels of life interiority, from the most intimate, reclusive, to the most visible and public levels, can be similarly exemplified in what Arfuch suggests in the previously mentioned passage, as a certain cabinet with several drawers and compartments. The access to each different space is only granted by the one who owns the furniture, having the keys that give access to each different level and, according to his/her will, may or may not allow the circulation of certain content. At this moment, we can point to the *narrative by the self* as being depicted by the image of the cabinet's owner, making room in his/her present voice to echo the memories that dialogically resonate with the current moment, in the form of *enunciative-dialogical* marks. These marks that are highlighted in the dialogic threads of the mnemonic tapestry are constituted as refractions of the past, inevitably immersed in the gaze of the present self.

This subject, who holds the keys to his/her unique vision, acts as the one who opens the compartments and takes out what he/she keeps. These images allow us to discuss, within the context of the self-referential report, that the subject is supported by his/her life journey, his/her place of speech. Unlike biographies and, similarly, diaries, in autobiographies, the very subject who experienced the facts presents his/her thoughts on what happened to him/her. The idea of a *narrative by the self* surely evokes the paradigm

²⁶ In Portuguese: "Três graus de análise da narração de uma vida: íntimo, privado, biográfico. Efetivamente, se adotamos a metáfora do 'recinto' da interioridade, o íntimo seria talvez o mais recôndito do eu, aquilo que roça o incommunicável, o que se ajusta com naturalidade ao segredo. O privado, por sua vez, parece conter o íntimo, mas oferece um espaço menos restrito, mais suscetível de ser compartilhado, uma espécie de antessala ou reservado povoado por alguns outros. Finalmente, o biográfico compreenderia ambos os espaços, modulados no arco das estações obrigatórias da vida, incluindo, além disso, a vida pública."

of faithfulness in the experiential narrative, since a story told in the light of those who experienced the event suggests a greater guarantee of truthfulness in the narrative... or not.

We can suggest, from the considerations of Starobinski (2006)²⁷ and Vološinov (1986),²⁸ considering the use of language as a situated social act, that the subject who narrates of him-/herself does so refracting the current conditions of the moment in which the utterance is produced; thus, language use contains characteristics that denote a certain stage of finalization. When a subject needs to report an event that occurred to him/her on the previous day, that person is impelled to look at the moment of the narrated content in the light of the present moment in which the subject now is and of the place where the utterance occurs. Therefore, to expect the subject who has experienced something to have full capacity to retrieve what has happened without being influenced by the moment in which he/she finds him-/herself is contrary to the nature of linguistic use in a dialogical perspective.

Those who now utter cannot see what once happened with the same eyes as the one who once experienced this particular event. It is then up to the author in the sphere of autobiographical writing to extraposition him-/herself (BAKHTIN, 1986).²⁹ In other words, the subject distances from the current self and dives into the space of memory to bring up the events previously experienced. Then, due to his/her extraposition in relation to his/her own self, he/she allows the excess of seeing to reconstruct what has already been experienced under a re-signified perspective. In this line of thought, the experiences are conveyed in other tones, since the one that revisits them is in another finalization stage, different from the one that firstly experienced such events.

Ratifying it, the connection between the self and the *other* is an undeniable fact that the subject exists in a socio-interactional orientation and that discourse exists in dialogue, in the shared word. As Bakhtin makes clear when discussing the reworking of the book he had written about Dostoevsky's work, the subject is constituted through a relational process that not only presupposes, but requires the involvement of the other,

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 22.

²⁸ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Metejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

²⁹ BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970-71. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.132-158.

making it impossible to consider the viability of any human event within a single consciousness. At this point, we quote the Russian thinker:

[...] I am conscious of myself and I become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. [...] no human events are developed or resolved within the bounds of single consciousness. [...] A single consciousness is *contradiction in adjecto*. Consciousness is in essence multiple. *Pluralia tantum* (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.287-288).³⁰

Although physically alone, we are provoked by the existence of this voice that echoes as a representation of the subjects that inhabit the *real chronotope* in which the enunciative process is located. This alter voice is not unison; it is diverse and diffuse. It is, in fact, a plurality of voices arranged in *heteroglossia* and that, just similar to the discursive thread and also the language in this perception, constitutes us, being our search for finalization motivated by the way we relate to the extraposition occupied by the other.

Even if we seek a relationship in which the subject pursues a dialogue with his/her self, it is necessary to occupy an external, third position in which he/she can contemplate him-/herself. In order to occupy this external position, the subject must look at him-/herself with other eyes, the eyes of the other. The subject does not contemplate him-/herself with his/her own gaze; this individual is taken by the lenses of the other that is part of his/her own constitution. In the end, the subject who seeks to relate to him-/herself is *another subject*, an *alter-self*, who relates to his/her self.

In the case of an enunciation in which I take myself as the addressee of my own utterance, a reference from the I-to-myself is built, a dialogue in an *I-other-to-myself* orientation. However, how is this relationship shaped? The only viable hypothesis for this dialogue to take place is the affirmation that this individual that becomes his/her addressee ceases to be the same and looks at his/her self with the eyes of the other, as we pointed out from Bakhtin in the last quotation. Let us see, in the following excerpt of the literary work *El cuarto de atrás*, a possible representation of this movement:

So what do I do? Well, nothing, if I've lost my glasses, I'll start making simple drawings. That rests my eyes. I'll figure out that I'm drawing

³⁰ BAKHTIN, M. Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. pp.283-302.

stripes with a stick on the sand of the beach; it's a pleasure because the sand is hard and the stick sharp, or maybe it's a pointed snail. It doesn't matter. I also don't know what beach it is. It could be Zumaya or La Lanzada; it's in the afternoon and there's no one. The sun goes down red and flat, in the mist, to bathe in the sea. I paint, I paint, what do I paint? With what color and with what letter? With the C of my name, three things I imagine with my C: first a house, then a room, and then a bed (MARTIN GAITE, 2012, p.20-21).³¹

In the previous quotation, we observed the author/narrator/character asking herself about her usual routine while writing, developing a dialogue that has herself as its enunciative purpose. Let us note that this dialogue takes place in the course of the narration of actions that have already been concluded or that are now concluded, according to the narrative focus, at the moment of enunciation. It allows us to infer that this space of memory is the specific locus for such dialogue to occur. These dialogues are established in an orientation of the *I-other-to-myself* and, even if it is the same *person*, these are distinct language-use situations, which are intertwined in an encounter between the present and past that may be anchored in memory, in dream, in remembrance, or even in oblivion.

In the previous example, we see that the author/narrator/character intersects moments in which she seems to be transported to places of her affection, as she mentions the beach, with moments in which she sets her narration at the present time of her writing, as she mentions her house, her room, and later on her bed. The memory is then seen here as the possibility of a narration that confers extreme sinuosity on the flow of events. It is not very committed (especially in *El cuarto de atrás*) to a chronology or linear sequencing when retelling the facts.

In this idea of narrating of the self / narrating by the self as constituting moments of autobiographical narrativity, we intend to highlight an essential element that integrates it: memory, remembrance. Memory is not subject to the rectilinear trajectory that the subject may want to impose. It is not a terrain that allows us to fully decide the path to take; each incursion has different triggers and different possibilities even if they are the

³¹ In the original: "Entonces, ¿qué hago?... Pues nada, si he perdido las gafas, me pondré a hacer dibujos sencillos, eso descansa los ojos; me voy a figurar que estoy trazando rayas con un palito sobre la arena de la playa, da mucho gusto porque la arena es dura y el palito afilado, o tal vez sea un caracol pontiagudo, no importa, tampoco sé qué playa es, podría ser Zumaya o La Lanzada, es por la tarde y no hay nadie, el sol descende rojo y achatado, entre bruma a bañarse en el mar. Pinto, pinto, ¿qué pinto?, ¿con qué color y con qué letra? Con la C de mi nombre, tres cosas con la C, primero una casa, luego un cuarto y luego una cama."

same people and/or the same events. As presented by Beatriz Sarlo, in relation to memory and the links between past and present:

Beyond any public or private decision, beyond justice and responsibility, there is something intractable in the past. Only psychological, intellectual or moral pathology can repress it; but it remains there, distant and near, stalking the present as the memory that bursts into moment the least thought, or as the insidious cloud that surrounds the fact that one does not want or cannot remember. The past cannot be discarded by the exercise of decision or intelligence; nor is it summoned simply by an act of will. The return of the past is not always a liberating moment of remembrance, but an advent, a capture of the present (SARLO, 2007, p.9).³²

For this reason, the concluded event becomes part of the mnemonic data that is understood here in a different perception from that which thinks the re-living, since the action that took place is now situated in a different temporality from that of its happening: the temporality of its remembrance. Whether in relation to what is/is not possible or is/is not wanted to be remembered or forgotten, the re-signification of what was experienced is inevitable. For such condition, we take that, when using language, the subject refracts the different enunciative-axiological positions in which he/she finds him-/herself, assuming various finalization stages along this eternal *come-to* to be also called life.

Considering that the initial prerogative of the utterance is an external evaluative horizon to which it is destined and which, at the same time, gives it finalization, it is up to us to reflect, on this basis, about the *narrative to the self* as an integrant part of the self-reference process. The act of remembering a past event which now occupies the fabric of memory requires from the subject, in the present finalization stage, the pursuit of a dialogue with the self, the other who once had been in the course of the action intended to be remembered. In this sense, when we consider the hypothesis of narrating to the self, we do it in a way that implies a dialogue between the subject that utters and an *alter-self* through the mnemonic course. This alter-self is the one that personifies the action in

³² In the original: “Más allá de toda decisión pública o privada, más allá de justicia y de la responsabilidad, hay algo intratable en el pasado. Pueden reprimirlo sólo la patología psicológica, intelectual o moral; pero sigue allí, lejano y próximo, acechando el presente como el recuerdo que irrumpe en el momento menos pensado, o como la nube insidiosa que rodea el hecho que no se quiere o no se puede recordar. Del pasado no se prescinde por el ejercicio de la decisión ni de la inteligencia; tampoco se lo convoca simplemente por un acto de la voluntad. El regreso del pasado no es siempre un momento liberador del recuerdo, sino un advenimiento, una captura del presente.”

reference, the subject that is narrated with whom the subject that describes the events does not coincide in finalization stages. It is a dialogue between different consciousnesses that belong to the same individual, but that do not fully identify themselves because of the discursive charge that constitutes them in different ways. In this tone that refutes the identification between author-narrator-character, Arfuch (2010, p.54; our emphasis) proposes:

[...] the narrator is another, different from the one who performed what will be narrated: how to recognize oneself in this story, accept the faults, *be responsible for this otherness?* And at the same time, how to sustain *permanence*, the living arc that goes from the beginning, always idealized, to the ‘witnessed’ present, assuming the self under the same ‘me’?³³

These positions are well clarified by Bakhtin in the proposal of a dialogic enunciation. The narrator, in fact, must be conceived of as another, other to the self, both portions of a fragmented identity and in a constant pursue of finalization through the contact with the other. The notion of permanence inherent in the idea of experiential report, already discussed here, is, as Arfuch well proposes, taken as idealized since it is impossible to narrate a given event exactly as it firstly occurred, especially since it is not the same subjectivity that witnessed it in the first instance. Thus, this alter-self, which is at the same time another in relation to the self, (re-)signifies the once lived experience, sewing, under the lights of its enunciative moments, new meanings, new views and previously unexplored perceptions to this discourse once taken as concluded and therefore impossible to be changed.

This stage in which the dialogue between the subject of the narration and the subject that narrates takes place is a key part of the elaboration of a self-referential report in dialogical perspective. Leonor Arfuch justifies the use of the Bakhtinian input in order to work with what we think is the main gap left by Lejeune’s postulation regarding autobiography and its genericity, because according to the Argentinean researcher,

³³ In Portuguese: “[...] o narrador é outro, diferente daquele que protagonizou o que vai narrar: como se reconhecer nessa história, assumir as faltas, se responsabilizar por essa outridade? E, ao mesmo tempo, como sustentar a permanência, o arco vivencial que vai do começo, sempre idealizado, ao presente ‘testemunhado’, assumindo-se sob o mesmo ‘eu’?”

“Without the contribution of this Bakhtinian formulation, Lejeune’s attempt to define the specificity of autobiography turns out to be fruitless” (ARFUCH, 2010, p.56).³⁴

Final Considerations

As presented in our discussion, the autobiographical account emerges, preliminarily, affiliated with chronotopes of Antiquity. It is only during Modernity that the subject comes to recognize, in him-/herself, his/her own differentiations, divisions, in relation to the *one for oneself* and the *one for the other*. At this point we see the beginning of the appreciation of the individual and his/her particularities in the culmination of the romantic period. In a relevant way, the Rousseauian *Confessions* is considered a landmark of evidence in the recognition of the subject as heterogeneously constituted.

Consequently, we see the birth of a different form of self-referential narrative that guides subjectivity to reveal intimacy, to share with others the concerns, beliefs and experiences that result from the marks of the action of time, history and social interactions in the everyday life of individuals in their uniqueness. Then, we begin to realize that with this understanding of a narration of the self and by the self, a promise of faithfulness remains, a certain claim of sincerity imbued in the account. Since the person who experienced the prospective actions is the same person who tells them, we can infer that this subjectivity will be able to report the facts as they truly happened.

This reading is coined in the immanence of the experiential, under the perspective that experience can subsist immutably in one’s memory and thus be transferred to other subjects in order to maintain its integrity as an event. It alludes to the golden, unreachable idea of metaphysical orientation that separates discourse from the ground of social interaction, from the everyday-oriented relationships in which we see heterogeneous subjectivities, coherent in their multiple features, changeable and unrecognizable to themselves tomorrow, yesterday, today.

This view was partially endorsed by theorist Philippe Lejeune in his conceptualization of the autobiographical genre and the materialities that are based on a self-referential narration. In conjecturing about the functioning of the autobiographical

³⁴ In Portuguese: “Sem a contribuição dessa formulação bakhtiniana, a tentativa de Lejeune de definir a especificidade da autobiografia se revela no final das contas infrutífera.”

work, Lejeune highlights the formation of an autobiographical space in which autobiography is embodied by the normative contractual reading of the autobiographical pact. These postulations conceptualize autobiography and neighboring genres with the use of exclusionary and limiting paradigms, not favorable to an appreciation of language in its plural, diverse richness and changing condition.

Based on an understanding of *subject* that is more coherent with the heterodiscursivity that composes all language materialities, we position ourselves to rethink self-reference as a necessary element of the autobiographical genre. We perceive this path in the gap highlighted by researcher Leonor Arfuch so that we may (re-)think the previously mentioned issues, observing the constitution of identity of the subject in a journey to contemporary society with the confluence of varied forms of life writing that consider the different shades of the self.

In the *biographical space*, we find grounds for undertaking a new conceptualization for autobiography, anchored in the founding discursive dialogicity of language, as Bakhtin and the Circle present us in the discussion proposed throughout this article. In this sense, the main consideration we have in this less rigid and more horizontal reading of the autobiographical genre emphasizes the role of the other in the constitution of the self. The need of finalization on the contemplative horizon of the other highlights the traces of a subjectivity, a view of language and experience in its evanescent and never fully *finished* nature.

By observing the functioning of self-reference in autobiography as a genre, we could see, from the perspective of discourse, that the report that was intended to faithfully account for what once was also deals with what is now. It deals not only with this subject who once was, but also with this subject that is nowadays, who recalls what was experienced through present lenses. This mnemonic exercise then has the understanding that the subjectivity that narrates is not the same that is said to have lived a certain event. By the flow of social interaction and the constant revealing of the self to the other, however, the subject is now also *another* and establishes a dialogue with the self to give room to express what *marked* his/her life.

We deem that the autobiographical utterance is always oriented towards a process of reinventing that which dialogically speaks to the enunciative moment of a given subjectivity. The dialogical relations that were outlined throughout this paper show a re-

signification of the data given as finished, centered on a notion of present as a result of a revisited past. Therefore, the experience is not revived, but *re-signified*, through the eyes of the one who (re-)tells them, once he/she is no longer the same as the one who lived them, as well as the eyes of those who act in the understanding of a particular utterance, co-creating and giving it finalization under the lights of their own interlocutive contexts.

The representation of the experiential in the whole of autobiographical production does not occur in a relation of faithfulness, but – as all representation thus do – in a relation of reflection / refraction of what once happened and marks the current story of a given subjectivity. When it comes to representational activity in its aesthetic content, it is necessary to understand that the effect of stylization itself prevents faithful reproduction from happening. Thus, we have a work open to interlocutive possibilities due to the linguistic and extralinguistic factors in which it was conceived and, especially when dealing with life writing, to the conditions in which the uttered act occurred. Therefore, a self-reference relation that proposes the full resumption of what it once meant is impracticable because of the nature of the enunciative gesture. That is, any life account cannot be expected to be faithfully reproduced from past events, either due to the relation that this account establishes with the differences between the moment of narration and the moment narrated or even to the already proven relation of otherness between the subject that narrates and the subject of the narration (*me* and *I-other-to-myself*).

We can then conclude from the functioning of the autobiographical genre that this stage is the confluence of multiple voices/voices that are multiple. They are other voices that constitute the self, identity portions that dialogically retrieve some subjectivity and interact, bringing to light the experience that permeates that subject in a re-signified way. Such re-framing, described by us as an integral act of self-reference in the process of autobiographical existence, is necessary in our readings of autobiographical works.

We should not seek the absence of faithfulness in the autobiographical account, but rather think of *how* the one who once experienced the reported event now looks at this moment and dialogues with him-/herself in that narrated context. It is a dialogue that does not advocate the essence of what happened, but that implies that the past event moves through memory in the waters of the present and thus ceases to be a full capture of what it was in order to be its re-semanticization in the light of the one that comes to be. In other words, if we advocate not the lack of truth, but the re-signification of the event

as a present condition of the exercise of autobiography, we will counteract the binary thought and have an understanding that sees autobiography and other life writings that claim self-reference as this encounter of voices that dialogically constitute a fragmented subjectivity.

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Statement by the Authors

As authors of the article Autobiography and (Res)Signification, we declare that we had access to the research corpus, actively participated in the discussion of the results of the study and proceeded to the revision and approval of its final version. We attribute credit to what has been submitted and are responsible for the published content. We have authorized *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* to publish this article in its two versions, Portuguese and English.

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