

# Learning from “becoming”, training experiences and visibility: approximations between autobiographies and education<sup>1</sup>

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## *Aprendizagens do “tornar-se”, das experiências formadoras e da visibilidade: aproximações entre autobiografias e educação*

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### ABSTRACT

Although education is a collective, historical, and circumstantial enterprise, the dynamics of the subject of learning is permeated by his/her existentiality and his/her uniqueness. Our objective, in this article, is to analyze significant biographical learning in the construction of becoming a writer, in the literary autobiographies written by Manuel Bandeira (1886-1968), Lêdo Ivo (1924-2012), and Ferreira Gullar (1930-2016). The variability criterion was crucial in the choice of these authors, since their works are marked by different generations and literary schools. Our view is based on (auto) biographical approaches to education, which interrogate the experience of training in the subject temporality, starting from an epistemological approach in which subjectivity is crucial. For this purpose, we initially consider the discussion between autobiography and education and, later, we evaluate how biographical learning is presented in the trajectories of the writers studied. The results of the analysis consider three learning dynamics in their lives: a) *becoming oneself*; b) training experiences constitutive of autobiographical writing; c) ethical and aesthetic visibility of the world. We conclude by discussing the importance of this learnings in proposing an education for

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the singularity that recovers these elements of biographical learning in a dynamic and aggregating way.

*Keywords:* Education. Learning. Literary autobiographies. Authorship.

## RESUMO

Ainda que a educação seja um empreendimento coletivo, histórico e circunstanciado, a dinâmica do sujeito da aprendizagem é perpassada por sua existencialidade e por sua singularidade. Nosso objetivo, neste artigo, é analisar aprendizagens biográficas significativas na construção do tornar-se escritor, nas autobiografias literárias de Manuel Bandeira (1886-1968), Lêdo Ivo (1924-2012) e Ferreira Gullar (1930-2016). O critério de variabilidade foi decisivo para a escolha desses autores, posto que suas obras são marcadas por diferentes gerações e escolas literárias. Nosso olhar tem como base abordagens (auto)biográficas em educação, que interrogam a experiência da formação na temporalidade do sujeito, partindo de um enfoque epistemológico no qual a subjetividade é crucial. Para tanto, consideramos, inicialmente, a discussão entre autobiografia e educação; posteriormente, avaliamos como as aprendizagens biográficas se apresentam nas trajetórias dos autores estudados. Os resultados das análises consideram três dinâmicas de aprendizagem em suas vidas: a) *tornar-se si mesmo*; b) as experiências formadoras constitutivas da escrita autobiográfica; c) a visibilidade ética e estética do mundo. Concluímos discutindo a importância dessas aprendizagens na proposição de uma educação para a singularidade que recupere esses elementos da aprendizagem biográfica de forma dinâmica e agregadora.

*Palavras-chave:* Educação. Aprendizagem. Autobiografias literárias. Autoria.

## Introduction

Biographies and autobiographies, as literary genres, always stand out, on the one hand, for their fruitfulness in the publishing market and, on the other hand, as the most scrutinized object of study in Philosophy, History and Literature. It is from the mid-twentieth century, a period called by Dosse (2015) as the *hermeneutic age*, that these writings about the other (biography) and about oneself (autobiography) gain redoubled relevance, following the *interpretative turn* in the Human and Social Sciences.

Strictly speaking, from the beginning of the 20th century, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) took autobiography as the “highest and most instructive form” for the epistemological understanding of the historical world in the social sciences,

through the perspective of experience, expression and understanding, because in it the subject would reflexively concretize the “connection in the history of his/her life” (DILTHEY, 2010, p. 178-179, our translation). The discussion about the singularity and multiplicity, typical of this interpretative turn, would have already marked the psychological knowledge, since its constitution and in several ways. Freud, for example, wrote an intellectual autobiography in 1925 in order to contribute to the history of Psychoanalysis, and presented a brief postscript in 1935 (FREUD, 1976).

It is only around the last quarter of the 20th century that more subjective perspectives and more narrative approaches are incorporated into Education (NÓVOA, 1995; FONTANA, 2000). The (auto)biographical approaches to Education, since the 1980s, have contributed to a better understanding of the writings of oneself in the constitution of subjectivity and processes of human and professional education. The reflective and practical orientation in teacher training, for example, has given rise to a fruitful field of research on teaching and the identity of teaching in Brazil. However, research with literary biographies and autobiographies has not had the same growth, based on narrative, psychological and educational foundations, with explicit formative and learning purposes. The most current dialogue became more restricted to historical and literary studies<sup>2</sup>.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the most significant biographical learning in the construction of *becoming a writer* in the literary autobiographies of Manuel Bandeira (1886-1968), Lêdo Ivo<sup>3</sup> (1924-2012) and Ferreira Gullar (1930-2016). The variability criterion was crucial in the choice of these authors since their works are interspersed by different generations and literary schools. Although learning is multiple and subjectivized in a particular way by each human being, it is a question of whether we can find similar processes in such differentiated life stories.

Our view is based on (auto)biographical approaches, which interrogate the experience of training in the subject’s temporality, starting from an epistemological approach in which subjectivity is crucial, highlighting narrative reflexivity and the autobiographical subject (PASSEGGI, M., 2016), in opposition to the hegemonic scientific [and scientific] matrices (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2008). According to Delory-Momberger (2012, p. 524, our

2 For an understanding of (auto)biographical approaches in history and literature, see Vasconcelos, Cordeiro, Vicentini (2014) and more broadly see Passeggi, M. (2020). About this (auto) “enclosed”, with parentheses, also see Passeggi, M. (2020).

3 For the analysis of Lêdo Ivo, we used mainly the book “*Confissões de um Poeta*” (IVO, 2004), but we also used the books “*O Ajudante de Lentirol*” (IVO, 2009) and “*O Aluno Relapso*”. “*Afastem-se das Hélices*” (IVO, 2013). A more complete exhibition about autobiography in Lêdo Ivo can be found in Lira and Passeggi (2018, 2020).

translation), in this approach, it is not a solipsistic singularity but “[...] a crossed singularity, informed by the social, in the sense that the social gives it its framework and its materials”.

With regard to *biographical learning*, Alheit and Daussien (2006, p. 179, our translation) consider that these are not procedures for the progressive appropriation of knowledge, it refers more properly to “[...] the highly organized process of perlaboration, connection and (trans)training of the first learning processes in a biographical figure of experiences, that is, in some way a ‘second order’ of learning processes”. Unlike classical approaches to learning, literary autobiographies must be understood as a broad process that enables a complex relationship between autobiography and heterobiography, implying the active participation of the author and the reader (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2008, 2019). According to the author, in the act of receiving the narrative I relate what I hear or read with my own biographical constructs, understanding them “[...] in the relations of resonance and intelligibility with my own biographical experience” (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2008, p. 59-60, our translation).

This paper stems from previous studies and publications by the first author about the writer Lêdo Ivo (LIRA; PASSEGGI, L., 2018; LIRA, 2019; LIRA; PASSEGGI, L. 2020)<sup>4</sup> and reflections conducted by the second author in the field of (auto)biographical research (PASSEGGI, M., 2010, 2011, 2016, 2020)<sup>5</sup> and projects financed by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Before entering into the discussion of the results, we need to place autobiography as one of the educational resources, since this relationship is not direct.

## Autobiographies and Education

Technical dictionaries are fundamental resources for understanding how a concept in a given area of knowledge reveals the forces established in the

4 This work is one of the developments of the first author’s postdoctoral internship, carried out in the Graduate Program in Language Studies at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. It is also part of a broader research project, developed in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Campina Grande, entitled *Representações discursivas identitárias em Lêdo Ivo: a construção de um modelo interpretativo* (Discursive identity representations in Lêdo Ivo: the construction of an interpretive model).

5 Publications on the GRIFARS-UFRN-CNPq website. Available at: <http://grifars.ce.ufrn.br/>. The paper is linked to the ongoing research project: Passeggi, M. Narratives, education, health: epistemology and methods of (auto)biographical research with children (MCTI/CNPq Call no. 06/2019, Process no. 307063/2019-4).

scientific field. In the present case, we start from the definitions found in three specialized dictionaries: the *Dicionário de gêneros textuais* (Dictionary of textual genres), written by Sérgio Roberto Costa (2009), the *Dicionário de Termos Literários* (Dictionary of Literary Terms), written by Massaud Moisés (2013), and the *Dicionário de Estudos Narrativos* (Dictionary of Narrative Studies), written by Carlos Reis (2018).

Costa (2009, p. 38, our translation) defines autobiography as a “[...] narration (v.) about the life of an individual, written by him/herself, in documentary form, that is, it is prose, which a real person makes of his/her existence, accentuating individual life, in particular, on the history of his/her personality”, admitting that it may or may not be literary. In this definition, we observe an approximation with the first perspective outlined by Lejeune (2014), which in turn is based on language dictionaries. To Costa, what differentiates the autobiography from the novel would be the characteristic “of the author telling fact and not fiction” (COSTA, 2009, p. 38-39, our translation). He also considers that there is a coincidence in the autobiography between the author, the narrator and the character. These latter characteristics are questioned in the more specific literature in the area, including the development of Philippe Lejeune’s work (2014).

In his *Dicionário de Termos Literários*, Massaud Moisés (2013, p. 47, our translation) initially highlights the etymological and historical elements of the term. He stresses that “[...] the literary activity he designated dates back to the first centuries of Christianity, more precisely from Augustine and his *Confessions*, written in the year 400”. However, even though mentioning Augustine, Moisés disregards, on the same page, its importance, as a “historical conscience” would be necessary, while the *Confessions* would narrate “the trances of his dramatic conversion, giving primacy to God”. We may observe here a scientific reading of autobiography and truth, when listing the gaps raised: by the lack of confidence [the author distorts his past by forgetting, by amplifying or lessening facts], by the author’s narcissism and even by the style used, adapting to the “fashion standards”. The discredit towards the autobiography is emphasized once again in the understanding of its usefulness, by restricting its value to the penalty of a famous author, as it would reveal “[...] a testimony that the writer was given to witness his vital ascension” (MOISÉS, 2013, p. 48, our translation).

The understanding of Moisés (2013) and Costa (2009) when considering the dichotomous understanding between truth and fiction, is no longer supported, even in the areas to which these dictionaries are directed, as well as by the complexity of the discussion on biographical and autobiographical writing. However, the *Dicionário de Estudos Narrativos*, by Carlos Reis (2018), which is based, among other authors, on Philippe Lejeune, Georges Gusdorf, Paul Ricœur,

expands the discussion of the concept of autobiography, considering its *formal, ontological and thematic aspects*. Reis (2018) also discusses identity, structural aspects (mainly related to time) and expression of subjectivity, emphasizing the valorization of the “[...] experience of those who tell, in harmony with the exemplarity of the reported events, understood as deserving attention and even registration” (REIS, 2008, p. 36, our translation). We observed, in this sense, this dictionary diversifies the academic discussion on autobiography and points to an educational perspective as it highlights exemplarity.

The dictionaries of Costa (2009) and Moisés (2013) did not take into account, or did not deepen, the rich historical-conceptual and epistemological discussion, which arose, directly or indirectly, since the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), passing through Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) and Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), as well as in more specific works (BRUNER, 2014; DILTHEY, 2010; DOSSE, 2015; GUSDORF, 1991; LEJEUNE, 2014; LYLE, 2018). Some general considerations are necessary, in view of the construction of the perspective we have adopted, anchored in (auto)biographical research, which highlights the educational issue. We have already pointed out earlier that there are questions about the educational sense of autobiography, woven into post-structuralism and in what was called deconstruction, based mainly on the work of Nietzsche, according to Duque-Estrada (2009). Next, we will discuss authors whom approximate narrative approaches from a more educational perspective.

Wilhelm Dilthey’s work brings an epistemological discussion of the historical world in the Social Sciences from the perspective of experience, expression and understanding, highlighting autobiography as the “highest and most instructive form”, considering that in it the subject would reflexively concretize a “Connection in the story of his/her life” (DILTHEY, 2010, p. 178-179, our translation). In the autobiography, the value, purpose and meaning of life are realized and found. “We interpret life as the realization of a supreme truth, to which all particular ends are subordinated, as the realization of a supreme good” (DILTHEY, 2010, p. 180, our translation).

It is important to underline the place of instruction and example in the encounter between people, with “understanding being a reunion of me in you” (DILTHEY, 2010, p. 168). And in the inspiration of this epistemology that is not just a mere methodological or idiosyncratic individualism, Carino reflects on the intersection between history and the images of men set into motion:

[...] heroic times demand the biography of heroes, romantic times demand that the lives portrayed show romanticism; historical times governed by

the power of faith demand that biographies be hagiographies, portraying the purity and righteousness of the saints (CARINO, 1999, p. 157, our translation).

In another direction, but still highlighting the value of autobiography in its educational dimension, Gusdorf (1991) will emphasize issues of an existential nature of the uniqueness of human trajectories, of the testimony that evokes as a source of wisdom about life. According to the author, the autobiography is a “work of art”, “work of edification”, a source of self-confrontation and narcissistic fascination. Another important characteristic, according to Gusdorf (1991), is the establishment of a dynamic temporal relationship, where what matters is not the chronology, but the time experienced, thus, “[...] no podría ser pura y simplemente, un proceso verbal de la existencia, un libro de cuentas, un diario de campaña: tal día, a tal hora, fue a tal lugar... Tal tipo de cuentas, aunque minuciosamente exacto, no sería más que una caricatura de la vida real”<sup>6</sup> (GUSDORF, 1991, p. 12).

Of all the authors mentioned above, Lejeune (2014) is the most well-known and referenced author in regard to autobiographies. Lejeune’s analysis is more empirical of the text and the mechanisms that operate within it. The author started from the definitions of autobiography dictionaries, but he also presented an innovative picture, at the time, by intercrossing the character’s name with the possible pact established with the reader in the work, in a 3 x 3 type table, [ $\neq$  name of the author, = 0, = author’s name] x [Romanesque, = 0, autobiographical]. Lejeune would reconsider his work countless times, incorporating new prose texts, which were unknown to him as counterexamples, including texts of a hybrid character. Lejeune discussed extensively other texts of an autobiographical nature, about fictionality and the internet, among others. This author’s work and his sincerity in constantly reviewing it, among other lessons, shows that autobiographies, in recent years, have become more complex, including the linear relationship between author, character and the name of who wrote the autobiography.

Other approaches discuss more the dimensions of psychological and educational nature. This is the case of studies conducted by Bruner (1997), which occupy an important place in this context. The author discusses autobiography

6 “[...] it could not be purely and simply, a verbal process of existence, an account book, a campaign diary: on such a day, at such a time, he went to such a place ... Such accounts, although meticulously accurate, would not be more than just a real-life cartoon” (GUSDORF, 1991, p. 12, our translation).

within the framework of popular psychology, which takes into account the subject's point of view, committed relationships, lifestyle, interests and, above all, narrative thinking, as a founding element of the human being, who from a young age would be a true storyteller for others and him/herself. The self would be a narrative construction of him/herself as well as of the others that also constitute him/her. The narratives of oneself also mirror the image that the subject builds about his/her abilities, actions and the repercussions, of his/her place in the world.

Starting from a psychological and educational reading, Lyle (2018) conducted a research on the contribution of autobiographical narratives to the development of identity and integrity. This researcher elaborated five premises based on the knowledge about autobiographies in education, arguing that: a) teaching is an autobiographical work; b) good teachers link identity to integrity; c) we build our identity through narratives; d) we promote integrity by problematizing dichotomous paradigms; finally, e) establishes a continuity line with the discussion about *possible selves* or *alternative selves*, in the perspective of Markus and Nurius (1986), which was also appropriated by Bruner in the work cited above.

Together, these authors emphasize the value of autobiography and its link in education from a broad point of view. The education of the subject by reading novels that portray the story of a life was one of the purposes of the well-known *novels of education*, a *bildungsroman* of German tradition. Thus, autobiographies can be understood as texts that allow various possibilities of education, due to the relationship established between the processes of autobiography and heterobiography, which we have already mentioned.

## Learning from becoming oneself

Certainly, since I was a child, I silently prepared to be myself, to become myself. It was an underground operation. I wanted to express myself, to communicate. I would like to be. [...]. I learned that this operation, aimed at converting the experiences lived into art, demanded a certain use of language, demanded a competence that could only be obtained if my life was endless learning (IVO, 2009, p. 15, our translation).

The learning path is ideally affected by the conjunction between cognition and emotion, between the will and the constitution of a personal project, which

unfolds in one doing or several doings. In all the analyzed autobiographies, the relationships woven with learning are evident in many aspects. Bruner (2008) states that we understand a lot about the human mind with the study of its deficiencies and pathologies. To the author (2008, p. 30, our translation), knowing “[...] the smooth flight of the human mind, operating at its best” is also a challenge. Our interest in using autobiographical writings is directed towards understanding this dynamic “operating at its best”.

First, the analyzed authors sought to improve their writing techniques through continuous learning. Manuel Bandeira stands out for a negative reading of his potential through the perfectionism that drives him: “my verses were nothing more than a poetic exercise, without a shadow of poetry, and where undeniably, there was nothing beautiful” (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 54, our translation), and later: “How naive of me, and I was already twenty-eight years old” (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 71, our translation). However, these limitations encourage him as lessons: “I meditated on the lesson and even today in all the poetry I write I remember it and try to pronounce only the essential words” (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 75, our translation).

In his autobiography, Manuel Bandeira describes his trajectory as a career deviated from Architecture, which is presented as a constant shadow in his poetic life, as a life that should have been and yet could not be realized. At the same time, tuberculosis, which puts him on the verge of death daily, was also a channel for the development of his writing career. *Becoming a poet* is intertwined, from beginning to end, with the emblem of the search for *Pasárgada* that is to Bandeira (2012, p. 24, our translation) “[...] all the life that could have been and was not”. *Becoming* is thus instituted as a disturbing theme to Bandeira, that of poetry and life lived and not lived. His identity as a poet is, therefore, the realization of another life.

Lêdo Ivo, however, is a wasteful poet and is situated in a positive understanding of himself, as an eternal and avid apprentice, as we can read in the title above. This project-path appears with a *prospective identity*, in the perspective in which he seeks a certification. In Taylor’s (2013) reading of Ricœur, the prospective identity is outlined in terms of expectations, future possibilities and a sense of incompleteness. The mastery of written art moves, to Lêdo Ivo, together with the learning of the technique, the reading of the great writers, the search for perfection, even if it is impossible to find. His poetic trajectory, aimed at as a child, pointed to a reality: “[...] it demanded a competence that could only be obtained if my life were of endless learning” (IVO, 2009, p. 15, our translation). The language and his work are, therefore, constitutive of himself: “I gradually became a creation of my own creation” (IVO, 2004, p. 101, our translation).

Ferreira Gullar does not show the same proximity to the feeling of poetic vocation, since childhood, it would be more properly a relationship established in youth. His journey was made up of mishaps, personal crises and setbacks to language, to the point of avoiding writing even in Portuguese at a certain point in his life. “I was so taken aback by the normal use of the language that, as I had to answer the letter from a friend of São Luís, I wrote to him in French” (GULLAR, 2015, p. 35, our translation). In his personal journey, the gradual recognition that the language in which he expressed himself “was old”, led him to new ways of writing and creating poems, including considering the materiality of poetic expression. After some struggle woven with himself and with language, the poetry that according to the author was his life regained meaning again. The words took on forms and movements in space, hence their relationship with the neo-concrete movement.

In the autobiographies analyzed, we can perceive different nuances in the way these learnings are presented by the authors. They are learnings of the self. Biographical learning. Dilthey (2010), as we have already discussed, considers that the autobiographies point to the realization of a supreme project that gives meaning to all subprojects or actions articulated to this greater purpose. It would be necessary to find that sense in them. In summary, to Bandeira, *becoming a poet* is living in the shadow of an unlived life, which makes him go in search of *Pasárgada*. To Lêdo Ivo, *becoming a writer* is to trace a path to be reached, a glorious marriage with language. To Gullar, it is a discovery in the midst of crises with himself and with language. More properly, a discovery of language beyond linearity.

Learning to *become*, seen through the eyes of the authors themselves, therefore, implies a series of elements, such as authenticity, expansions and delimitations of the self. Several psychological approaches highlight this search for oneself as an achievement of the self, as a search for authenticity. According to Rogers (1991), personal development must necessarily involve “becoming a person”. Some principles are basic to his theory: congruence, the unconditional acceptance of the other, the full experience of affective relationships, the affection towards oneself. In general, both therapists and teachers are understood as facilitators of learning, admitting, with Rogers (1991), that the walk of personal development is an individual and unique process, which must be followed by the subject himself.

In Winnicott’s work (1990, 1996), the definitions of “true self” and “false self” are fundamental axes for the development of being. According to the author, the true self goes hand in hand with spontaneous gestures, with creativity, with integration, from the tenderest age. His understanding of human development incorporates relationships with the mother and the various environments that

can be welcoming and conducive to development. The family and the school are institutions that play a crucial role in handling and holding. These concepts are not reduced to the understanding of the child's development, because what is play in childhood, in a metaphorical relationship, will be work in the adult. To Winnicott (1990, 1996), the “false self”, in contrast, is adaptive, repeating institutionalized patterns that produce subjection; therefore, they are pathological or submissive to the ordered and imposed reality. It is worth noting, however, that, to Winnicott, the adaptive self is also necessary, as it constitutes a defense of the self. In some clinical cases, the psychoanalyst noted that this was the only way to survive.

Finally, this *becoming oneself* is related to broad learning processes with oneself, with others and with the world. To Luft (2004), this becoming/process can be seen as a transgression, since it is reinvented, an autobiographical reflection, in such a way that it is anchored in the wisdom of “Questioning what is imposed on us, without foolish rebellion, but still without too much prudence”. And in this configuration, the author continues: “Support without submitting, accepting without humiliating yourself, surrendering without renouncing yourself and a possible dignity” (LUFT, 2004, p. 23, our translation).

## **Learning from formative experiences**

But one thing is certain - he made me feel in the great writers of the past that indefinable element that is the genius of the language, to which he has always been so particularly sensitive. His lesson was and continued to be, very precious for my poetic experience (BANDEIRA 2012, p. 33, our translation).

The discussion about the relationship between experience and education is historical. Comenius, Rousseau, Dewey and Piaget, to name just the most remembered, each in their own way, discussed the place of experience in personal development. Reflections on experience occupy a privileged place in biographical approaches. According to Nóvoa (2010), adult education has always been impregnated by the school model, being understood as a preparation in the present to act in the future. To the author, a new epistemology of training has developed since the 1980s, having as one of its pillars the biographical approach, action-research and reflexivity.

Larrosa (2004, 2016) has brought the discussion between experience, narrative and identity closer, highlighting the role of literature in the construction of subjects. To the author, experiences have been neglected in contemporary times due to information overload, excessive opinions, lack of time and overworking. We agree with the author, in part. The idyllic search for another time, for experimentations of ideal experiences, is no longer the reality of most people in training, whether due to these excesses (of opinion, work, information), or because of the lack (of time, work, information) however, we believe that these excesses and absences are also part of biographical learning.

According to Josso (2004, p. 48, our translation), the concept of “formative experience” is crucial, as it refers to “[...] a consciously elaborated articulation between activity, sensitivity, affectivity and ideation”, with great repercussions to *become* who we are. The learnings, to this author, would be linked to existential knowledge: instrumental and pragmatic; comprehensive and explanatory. Knowledge that, unlike cognitive approaches, is related to the self: how I know myself as a psychosomatic being, being able to interact and being able to represent.

We, therefore, admit that *literary autobiographies* allow us to identify examples of complex and integrating experiences of learning that refer to oneself. In previous work, Lira and Passeggi propose that the educational experience in the work of Lêdo Ivo moves towards a holistic and integrating look at the experiences, combining reason and sensitivity, reading the world and reading the word, with a mutually constitutive alternation (LIRA; PASSEGGI, L., 2018). This experience integrates, in a symphony, articulated sets of elements: a) nature (sea, waves, sun, mangroves, beach, the sea mist itself and its effects); b) animals and insects (hawk, vulture, crab, tarantula, ant); c) world objects (lighthouse, ship, door).

In literary autobiographies of different generations and from different fields of knowledge, it is possible to understand the importance of the other in the constitution of oneself, to some authors, a teacher, to others the wife or husband, a friend, parents or characters from the literary or artistic life with whom they related. These other constituents of oneself can still be figures known for their stories, writings, attitudes. Bandeira (2012, p. 27, our translation), recalls, for example, his father: “So, in my father’s company, I was soaking up this idea that poetry is in everything - both in love and in slippers, both in logic and in discharge”. When analyzing the street of Curvelo, which is part of his poetic experience, it is with a certain hopelessness that he interweaves the memories of the street and his father, inviting the reader to think about his own history and the history of the family.

My father’s death and my residence in Morro do Curvelo from 1920 to 1930 just matured the poet that I am. When my father was alive, death or whatever might happen did not concern me, because I knew that by putting my hand in his, there would be nothing that I did not have the courage to face. And it was just that I would have to face poverty and death (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 82, our translation).

On the other hand, the experiences of others and with the objects of knowledge can also prove to be life lessons in the positive and motivational sense. This is perhaps why the biographies and autobiographies of people who stand out for their genius in different fields of human activity are highly desired. When studying high-performance professionals, Csikszentmihalyi (1992) discusses the autotelic self, through which the individual enters the process of flow as an aggregating experience that combines goals, immersion in the activity, concentration on what is happening and satisfaction with the experience. This experience is made by playfulness, as exemplified in Ferreira Gullar’s biography, which, at various times, reflects on the movement of his poetic construction and of himself:

[...] I gave myself up to a kind of unpredictable adventure, in which the poem was taking shape and meaning, much to my surprise and joy. [...]. Sometimes he would write verses that were structured in combination with the blank of the page, play on words and silence; sometimes he would abandon that course and would write prose poems, defying the logic of the discourse; then he would go back to the verse but at another stage of experimenting with the adventure. It must be understood, however, that this is the view I have today of what happened then; at that time, I just lived the experience without worrying about understanding it (GULLAR, 2015, p. 25, our translation).

Gullar and Lêdo Ivo highlighted the importance of their primary teachers in recognizing their potential. Gullar sees in the teacher’s mirror, which illuminated him, a taste for language, and how he realized that he could write even better. Lêdo Ivo, for being an outstanding student, was taken to talk to Graciliano Ramos, who then held the position of teaching director at his school in Maceió. This encounter between young Ivo and a great exponent of Brazilian literature would never be forgotten in his life as an author: “The *sertanejo agreste* [a person from the hinterland of the Northeast region of Brazil] put his hand on my head.

To this day, this surprising gesture of affection follows and pursues me, as if it were anticipation, and the announcement of a destination” (IVO, 2009, p. 276, our emphasis, our translation).

However, experiences, as we have already stated, can manifest themselves in several ways. To Gullar (2015, p. 23), Hoffman’s reading, in a book covered in mold, found in a bookstore of used books, in São Luis, served to reflect on himself: “But the conclusion was curious and, apparently, has no relationship with him: ‘Literature will only make sense if it changes anything, even if it is my own life’”. This relation of Hoffman’s reading in the poet’s self-reflection reminds us of the links between autobiography and heterobiography, although history does not always evoke a direct and immediate relationship with those who read it, it can lead to reflect on oneself indirectly, as Delory-Momberger (2008) suggests.

## Visibility learnings

A teapot. An apple. A vase of flowers. The eyes of a dog. The spiritual exercise of vision is essential for poets who only learn to see as long as they know how to focus on the most banal and everyday things. [...]. Knowing how to see is a poetic duty. And life requires a lot of eye in order to be seen (IVO, 2004, p. 28, our translation).

Photography is such strong writing because it can be read worldwide without translation (SALGADO; FRANCO, 2014, p. 58, our translation).

As we saw earlier, experiences with others are fundamental in the task of building our own experiences and it is in this sense that Manuel Bandeira highlights the importance of his father in visibility learning. This learning of the gaze, which is transposed to a “making see”, is not necessarily imagery transformed into words. It can be a feeling, a smell, a sensation to be transmitted. Gullar (2015) worked, for days, to convey, in the form of a poem, the sensation he had when he came across the smell of a tangerine, which his son peeled in his living room. For that, his inquiries on how to write the poem led him to study tangerines, and only after this study he was able to write.

The authors studied here consider that visibility is a privileged form of “communicated observation”, which can highlight both an “aesthetic” of

the invisible world and “ethics” for the world. The aesthetic dimension is not necessarily accompanied by political ethics, but it can envision an ethics for life, for good living as a bridge for existential reflection. Bandeira (2012), reflecting on a common journey that has become singular, combines aesthetics, reflexivity, a sense of finitude and completeness in a single moment:

The trip there, still in the dark of the night, was the most beautiful trip I took in my life. Venus shone on us so big, so intense, so beautiful, that it even seemed scandalous and made me want to die (from that moment the title of my next book would come out: *Estrela da Manhã* [Morning Star] (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 116, our translation).

This ethics and aesthetics also mark Sebastião Salgado’s life, when he affirms in the book co-authored with Francq (SALGADO; FRANCO, 2014), that told photographic stories through his work. These stories were marked by his autobiography, his point of view, and what he considered a mission: to reveal the ills and injustices of the world and against the world. What can go unnoticed for an unsuspecting look, Salgado explains the marks of narrative reflexivity, his sensitivity and the autobiographical dimension itself, behind the photographs he took throughout his life.

All my photos correspond to moments intensely lived by me. They all exist because life, my life, took me to them. Because there was a rage inside me that took me to that place. [...]. My photograph is anything but objective. Like all photographers, I photograph according to myself, what goes through my mind, what I’m living and thinking (SALGADO; FRANCO, 2014, p. 47, our translation).

After years of toil with these photographic stories, his autobiography (SALGADO; FRANCO, 2014), illuminates his imagery work. In this sense, Lêdo Ivo, reflecting on artistic creation, pondered: “Poets, like other creators, have the task or mission of proceeding with the visibility of the universe. Poetry is an art of seeing - of seeing and knowing how to see what, even under our eyes, can only be distinguished by the use and illumination of language” (IVO, 2013, p. 129, or translation). These learnings of visibility lead to a pedagogy of the gaze. A teaching mediated by images and words, which express in different ways

artifices of human subjectivity and uniqueness as well as their indignation: “My photos were taken because I thought the whole world should know. I took these photographs because I had a moral, ethical obligation to do so” (SALGADO; FRANCO, 2014, p. 94, our translation).

## Provisional considerations

Throughout this paper we have considered the value of literary autobiographies to understand biographical learning in its “best flights”, according to Bruner (2008). This type of learning has the advantage of showing a set of aspects commonly treated in an isolated and dichotomized way of human development. Would it be possible to pin down, on the narrow path of human uniqueness, the biographical marks of learning and to reflect on their potential for education?

The learnings of *becoming* a poet, writer, or simply of *becoming human*, are made through formative experiences and the aesthetic look that lead to challenges and tensions in the school environment. An education of *becoming* should be directed towards processes that mobilize *biographical learning*, processes of recognition of singularities, processes of encounters in the I-you relationship. Generalist education is unlikely to contribute to individuals recognizing themselves on the other and recognizing themselves as subjects who elaborate their thoughts, emotions and trajectories in different ways. An education of formative experiences would contribute to learning that develops knowledge in a continuous relationship with life itself. In this sense, a series of aspects must figure in the understanding that despite its importance, it is not only the disciplinary contents that become indispensable for the human to become who he/she is.

The relationship with knowledge is permeated by the relationship with the objects of knowledge, mediated by the other and with the other. An education of visibility, which sharpens the eye, cannot be learned without continuous work of observing the world, the other, and oneself in a long time of learning. This learning of the gaze is a crucial task for education of singularity because it decentralizes the self from its idiosyncrasies. The education of the gaze is an architectural approach that allows seeing and glimpsing life and learning from the lived experience.

So, what would be the place of literary autobiographies in an education on becoming? They can be an important contribution to be explored in order to

understand the place of experiences, narrative reflexivity, biographical learning, the I-you relationship, visibility through the education of the gaze. Obviously, it is not a panacea or a single path. It is just one of the possible paths that we ventured to go through here.

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