

THEORETICAL ESSAY

A life story forged by successive migrations: the case of Lucia

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this article are divided in two: (i) show that life stories of migrants are currently necessary because they contemplate a discursive look that is at once social, historical and psychological; (ii) to investigate the identity “mysteries” of the protagonist and narrator of the novel Lucia, written by Olga Canllo Salomon, which tells the life of a poor Argentinian girl who, through displacements/migrations, found her place in the world after being forced to flee the military regimen that ruled her country in the 1970s. This female character fits into what I call “transclass subjects” because she went through life’s hardships hoping to find something better. The article relies on the theoretical convergence of life stories according to Machado (2018; 2019) and the Semiolinguistics proposed by Charaudeau (1983; 2006), to which I also add the ideas of Cyrulnik (2015) to explain/apply the notion of resilience, a feature of the novel’s female protagonist. I hope this article serves as testimonial of the research I have been conducting for some years and to which I now add the figure of migrants. Finally, excerpts of Lucia are cited to illustrate the imaginaries of beliefs of her homeland as well as her emotions, fears, and audacity.

RESUMO

Os objetivos que norteiam o artigo se dividem em dois: (i) mostrar que as narrativas de vida de sujeitos migrantes são necessárias no momento atual, pois, contemplam um olhar discursivo que é, ao mesmo tempo, social, histórico e psicológico; (ii) averiguar os “mistérios” identitários da narradora e sua personagem principal, no livro Lucia, escrito por Olga Canllo Salomon, que mostra a trajetória de vida de uma menina pobre da Argentina que, em meio a mudanças/migrações encontrou seu lugar no



OPEN ACCESS

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DATES

- Received: 08/14/2021
- Accepted: 08/30/2021
- Published: 07/12/2021

HOW TO CITE

Machado, I. L. (2021). A life story forged by successive migrations: the case of Lucia. *Revista da Abralin*, v. 20, n. 3, p. 136-157, 2021.

mundo ao ser obrigada a fugir do governo militar que dominou seu país nos anos 70 do século XX. Essa figura feminina encaixa-se no que chamo “sujeitos transclasse”, pois, conseguiu atravessar a vida enfrentando dificuldades, mas, sempre guardando a esperança de que algo melhor. O marco teórico do artigo está na reunião das teorias de narrativa de vida, segundo Machado (2018; 2019) à teoria Semiolinguística, de Charaudeau (1983; 2006), reunião na qual associei também ideias de Cyrulnik (2015) para explicar/aplicar a noção de resiliência, atributo da personagem feminina. Espero que o artigo possa ser testemunha do trabalho de pesquisa que realizo há alguns anos e no qual incluo agora a figura da migrante. Enfim, os excertos do livro Lucia que aqui mostraremos, têm a finalidade de ilustrar os imaginários de crença de sua terra de origem, bem como suas emoções, medos e audácia.

KEYWORDS

Migrations. Discourse analysis. Life narrative. Transclass subjects.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Migrações. Análise do discurso. Narrativa de vida. Sujeitos transclasse.

Resistiré/Cuando pierda todas las partidas/Cuando duerma con la soledad/Cuando se me cierren las salidas/Y la noche no me deje en paz/Cuando sienta miedo del silencio/Cuando cueste mantenerse en pie/Cuando se rebelen los recuerdos/ Y me pongan contra la pared/ [...]Resistiré/Para seguir viviendo/Soportaré los golpes y jamás me rendiré/Y aunque los sueños se me rompan en pedazos/Resistiré, resistiré/ (Montoro & Arcusa)

Introduction

The linguist and discourse analyst Patrick Charaudeau has developed a discursive theory (1983) in which he highlights that in every act of language there are several subjects: some are real individuals who conceive speech or written projects and are outside language; some are *paper beings*¹ created by the former to act inside the language world.

¹ In the original French: *êtres de papier*.

Nonetheless, in certain macro acts of language (texts), sometimes, the lines that separate those beings – or “voices” as Bakhtin (1970) would call them – are blurred and even slightly erased. This is very frequent in life reports and might confuse discourse analysts who wish to investigate the strategies employed in certain narratives. I first dealt with this issue in the analysis of a *transclass subject*, the main character in the novel *The first man* (1994) by Albert Camus, published after his death. In the novel, the French writer and philosopher remembers and narrates his childhood in the third person: he places himself as a character, a paper being, by the name of Jacques Cormery. This development is not problematic for discourse analysts that investigate Albert Camus’ life, for there are many reports on him and his posthumous novel that are easily found².

As a matter of fact, some questions came to me as I tried to understand what are the relationships between the main character in *Lucia* (2021) and her creator, the writer Olga Canllo Salomon. If I had more data on the latter, I could claim, doubtlessly, that Lucia’s life story, the life of a paper being, corresponds or attempts to portray the author’s life. Therefore, in the realm of literary creation, Lucia and Olga would con(fuse to) one another in the narrative. In other words, the writer would turn herself into a plural being: she is Olga, the real-life individual who prefers to assume the form of Lucia, a *paper being*, to narrate her life.

There is some information that helps to justify the overlapping of “self(s)” in *Lucia*:

- (i) Due to modesty, shame, perhaps fear of hurting friends or relatives through the writing of her life story, the author/writer prefers to call the hero of her novel Lucia instead of using her own name, thus blurring, for readers, the perception of who is who;
- (ii) Hence, the I-that-narrates-the-self avoids using the first-person singular: this role is passed onto a narrator (an entity in the paper world) that refers to the “self”, placing it in the third person singular.
- (iii) This strategy mixes the places of the entities that compose the macro utterances of the novel, diverging from the parameters of a typical autobiography. We can assume that, like in the theater, Lucia takes on the role of actress whereas Olga Canllo Salomon plays the roles of director-playwright-producer of the “play”.
- (iv) I argue that relevant data are found in the sayings³ on the back cover of the book, which mix Lucia’s *self* with Olga Canllo Salomon’s *self*. Here is an example:

A poetic and sensitive text, *personal feelings of the author*, of her childhood and youth when the unexpected arose at the turning of many roads in Argentina in the 1970s. [...] Arriving in Paris in 1977,

² For further information, see Machado (2020).

³ The comments on the back cover are signed and their content easily informed they were not by the author of the novel, Olga Canllo Salomon. To follow the French tradition, I will attribute them to the director of the collection, Jérôme Martin.

escaping from Argentina's dictatorship, Olga Canllo Salomon is firmly anchored on the landscapes and the *vicissitudes* of the lives of the Argentinian people. Here, she signs her first novel. Nowadays, she does social work and donates as much energy to the service of Other as to the search for the profound meaning of life in her writings. She also shares her imagination and impressions in colorful paintings of scenes in which characters take their rightful place (unsigned, back cover of *Lucia*, 2021).⁴

Readers, then, become aware (see the highlights in the citation) that the story in the book conveys the emotions and feelings of *the writer herself* – therefore, she is the one telling her own life and the several and unexpected *paths*, that is, “migrations” or escapes, she had to undertake to survive. I highlight that on the back cover, the word *vicissitudes*, from the Latin, originally meant “change”, but “change” with mishaps and obstacles.

This same citation informs that Salomon, in addition to doing social work, has also become an artist and her paintings depict scenes through which she symbolizes her life or the characters she has met in her home country. One example is the book cover: a painting by Salomon. The colorful image of the book cover, with a dark green backdrop, associated with the vegetation of forests, symbolizes the many steps in Lucia's life: to the back of the painting, a woman places her hands (in a protective gesture) on the shoulders of a child. According to the narrative, it is possible to imagine both images represent Lucia-child and her mother; in front of these images, once more, is the same woman, who caresses the face of another young woman (grown-up Lucia). She also has one hand on her stomach; her skirt is decorated with plants that resemble roots. In this case, Lucia-mother comes to mind. On the top right corner, we can see a young Lucia alone, leaning against a plant in the forest. More to the back of the canvas there is a man showing his back (his body hints at the young man who fathered Lucia's both daughters and soon left her). Somewhat blurred, at the center of the canvas, are the images of Lucia-girl, one after the other representing movement. The girl depicted higher on the canvas is going through a door. This last image, briefly described, is doubtlessly connected to a fantastic or imaginary journey experienced by the girl, which took Lucia to a parallel world where she felt all of her mother's love (already deceased).

Giant petals or white wings appear quite phantasmagoric at the top of the painting, under the mysterious face of a woman whose eyes are highlighted – are they a symbol for Lucia's mother's eyes, which according to the narrative would always follow her? Or would they be the eyes of the artist who commands the distribution of the characters and the events in Lucia's life on the painting? It is hard to answer these questions accurately, so we will refrain from the endeavor. Be it as it may, the style of Salomon's painting seems to oscillate between *naïf* and surrealism.

Finally, it is important to recall that the book *Lucia* is part of the collection *Rue des Écoles*, by the French publisher *L'Harmattan*. According to the publisher's website, this collection “[...] is

⁴ Original in French : “Un texte poétique et sensible, ressenti personnel de l'auteure, de ses années d'enfance et de jeunesse où l'imprévu a surgi aux détours de bien des chemins dans cette Argentine des années soixante-dix. [...] Arrivée à Paris en 1977, fuyant l'Argentine et sa dictature, Olga Canllo Salomon garde fortement ancrés en elle les paysages et les vicissitudes de la vie du peuple argentin. Ici, elle signe son premier roman. Aujourd'hui, elle travaille dans le domaine du social, et donne autant d'énergie au service de l'Autre qu'à rechercher dans cet écrit le sens profond de la vie. Elle partage également son imaginaire et ses impressions hauts en couleur, en couchant sur la toile des scènes dans lesquelles les personnages prennent une juste place”.

dedicated to the edition of *personal writings* from all horizons: historical, philosophical, political, etc. It also embraces works of fiction (novels) and autobiographical texts⁵. The book tells the story of a woman who narrates herself or who narrates another woman's life, therefore fitting the collection perfectly.

This information led me to reflect. A discourse analyst must be always careful, particularly, in regard to the identity of "self(s)" that narrate their lives: it is possible that Lucia's life, the paper being, is really a "portrait" or a transposition in words of Olga Canllo Salomon's life, the actual individual. Despite searching for evidence that confirmed this hypothesis, I could not find information on this newly-edited book by *L'Harmattan*. At least until now... This fact has prompted some decisions.

Therefore, in the present article, I analyze the female character Lucia, emphasizing the different migratory stages or hardships in her life, considering that they were possibly inspired, albeit in (small, medium or large) doses, in the author's own life. This female character is interesting to me because I consider her to be a "transclass"⁶: character: a poor illiterate girl born in a small village in Argentina, who, through migrations/displacements in her home country and escapes to Montevideo and Paris, finally found in the French capital *her place in the world*. More importantly, she escaped a life that certainly would have been more or less like her mother's or her neighbors', quite miserable. Hence, I consider Lucia's story a narrative/life story about a woman whose "well-spring of action"⁷ was gradually constructed by her resilience, which prompted her to recover after each "fall" and move on.

Usually, individuals who dare narrate their lives have been through many hardships to affirm themselves or to find relative existential balance: exposing oneself in writing is extremely difficult, but it can also mean a type of catharsis, a liberation for many authors. In this regard, the journalist and researcher Héloïse Lhérété highlights the value of *writings of the self*:

Through writing, victims become authors, they take hold of their experience, reshaping it through text organization and prosodical arrangement and the pursuit of poetic musicality. The sensuality of words, their affective resonance, allows them to reach an intimate truth, while the verbal composition grants meaning and materiality to the absurd, to injustice, to loss and to pain. (LHÉRÉTÉ, 2020, p. 48)⁸

⁵ In the original: "est dédié à l'édition de travaux personnels, venus de tous horizons : historique, philosophique, politique, etc. Il accueille également des œuvres de fiction (romans) et des textes autobiographiques".

⁶ According to Chantal Jaquet (2015, p. 13), who inspired my current investigations: "It seems right to talk about transclass to designate individuals who operate the passage from one social class to another". This claim allows the French philosopher to contest (partially) the thesis of social determinism, according to which the professional future of human beings is previously marked by the family and the social environment in which they are born. I explain more of what is a transclass subject in the book *Narrativas de vida – saga familiar & sujeitos transclasses* (MACHADO, 2020).

⁷ The word is taken from Bernard Lahire (2003) 'wellsprings of action' [2011; English edition].

⁸ In the original: "Par l'écriture, la victime devient auteure, prend la main sur son expérience, qu'elle remodèle par l'organisation textuelle, l'agencement prosodique, la recherche d'une musicalité poétique. La sensualité des mots, leur résonance affective permet d'accéder à une vérité intime, tandis que la composition verbale donne sens et matérialité à l'absurdité, à l'injustice, à la perte ou à la douleur".

In other words, to avoid shouting out their problems and pushing people away, individuals who were hurt feel a certain shame which either silences them or leads them to speak very little of their hardships. Writing about these hardships can function as a solution. In addition, difficult experiences can give rise to resilience for some types of people. As the researcher cited above claims, “it is known that prefrontal neurons are responsible for the elaboration of scripts and for our emotional balance; they can be numbed by great pain and re-stimulated by creative activities” (LHÉRÉTÉ, 2020, p. 48)⁹.

In the novelistic world of words, here is the life story of a girl called Lucia. This labyrinth of light-dark carries the mystery of the game of identity, which produces an illusion of senses:

The *illusion* is a kind of knowledge that is based on the fact of being born in the game, belonging to it by birth: to say that I know the game in this way means that I have it inside my skin, my body, that it acts in me without my doing anything as when my body responds to knock without my even having perceived I as such. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 44)¹⁰

Olga or Lucia? Maybe both. Consciously or instinctively, Olga Canllo Salomon conceives, playfully, biographic writings in which *she is not but could be* the main character, as Ducrot (1984) stated in his explanation of the game of argumentation. Ironic game, illusion.

Another important element in my perspective is the seemingly simplicity of Salomon’s writing, which oscillates from poetic to colloquial. I say “seemingly” because the simplicity of the narrative and the description of memories are often intriguing; her writing gives the impressions that the narrator wishes to expose Lucia’s life, at the same time, she also wants to hide or not to dwell long on some facts, lest Lucia and Olga are seen as the same person. In addition, Salomon can introduce, in the space of the “intimate narrative”, in a symbolic way, through dreams, nightmares, visions that afflict the girl Lucia, her great sadness and the surprise in the face of the incongruencies of the world. In short, the story she tells is filled with social representations that change according to the many phases of Lucia’s life.

Following Charaudeau (2005; 2007), I shall consider these representations a process, a means to articulate many social-discursive imaginary circulating in some regions in Argentina in the 1960s/70s. Let us remember that the writer recomposes (and judges) the imaginary from the perspective of a woman-writer in the 21st century. Indeed, this is one of the paradoxes of life stories that appeal to memory.

Salmon’s writing, with its unpretentious air, does not quite reveal some of the “tricks” the character Lucia resorted to in order to survive, nor the origins (what place or country?) or how either generous people, capable of helping her to move forward¹¹, or bad people, who wished to block

⁹ In the original: “nous savons aujourd’hui que ce sont les mêmes neurones, préfrontaux, qui permettent l’élaboration de scénario et la régulation émotionnelle ; ils peuvent se retrouver anesthésiés par un malheur trop grand, et re-stimulés par une activité créative”.

¹⁰ In Lahire, Bernard. *The Plural Actor*. Tr. David Fernbach. MA: Polity Press, 2011.

¹¹ Her mother-in-law, a rich and generous woman, is an exception. She only appears in the final chapters, acting like a *deus ex machina* in Lucia’s life, better yet, as an Olympus goddess who descends to solve the troubles experienced by the character Lucia.

Lucia's path and tragically end her migrations, ever got to her. The narrative, at some points, omits events, fails to explain them, but that is not grave: readers can fill in these "silences", which contribute to the charm to the story as a whole.

Notwithstanding, when someone is willing to tell certain parts of their lives, events they have lived in the past, it is natural that they make mistakes, repeat themselves, hesitate...and the "lapses" verified in the present story grant them narrative veracity, that is, the veracity of someone who actually lived, one way or another, what is narrated.

Lucia is, thus, a "transclass" individual that gradually crosses from one point to another, in the continuous search, as she states herself, for a place to live peacefully and "rest her luggage" (SALOMON, 2021, p. 63)¹². A difference is to be noticed from other transclass individuals¹³: she is not looking for social ascension or moving from poverty to a more elevated social class. Her greatest ambition is tranquility to live in peace.

Perhaps, instead of "transclass", it is best to use the expression "class transfuges" suggested by Lahire (2003)¹⁴: Lucia always travels to run away from something or someone. Instinctively, like a forest animal, she smells danger and feels the need to flee this or that place.

According to the implicit in the narrative, the elements that prompt its development seem fortuitous, unpredictable. Nonetheless, behind the *mano de Dios*¹⁵, that is, the hand of God, according to a popular expression in Argentina, there is always an external agent (concrete or invisible) that pushes Lucia to move forward.

In short, the aim of this article is to show the migrations, travels, and displacements from one point to another, performed by a poor girl from Argentina, who challenged the social determinism that waited for her, given her social background: by escaping the regular route, she also changed her social class and built mental strength to declare herself, at the end of the story, a liberated and fulfilled woman.

After these preliminary considerations, to a better understanding of my proposition, I will present the summary of the *corpus* and explain why the syntagma *life story* is used in the place of *auto-fiction* – also possible in the present case. Then, I explore the concept of imaginaries, applying it to some cases in the narrative: dreams, nightmares, visions the character had as a girl. Finally, I approach the concept of resilience, illustrating it with actions in the story of *Lucia*.

¹² In the original: "poser ma valise".

¹³ See, for example, the books by Jaquet (2015), Jaquet and Bras (2018) and Machado (2020).

¹⁴ For references, see footnote 10.

¹⁵ I allude here to the late Argentinian soccer player, Maradona. In the World Cup final, he scored a goal with the help of his hand, which is forbidden by the rules of the game. At the time (1986) Maradona said that it was not his hand that scored the goal, but the hand of God: this utterance was affectionately mocked by Maradona's fans, since actually he was a talented player.

A final observation in this *Introduction*: because we have no intention of analyzing all the acts of language that compose the book, we operated a selection of excerpts or utterances to highlight the ones related to Lucia's migrations.

1. A summary of the corpus, followed by reflections on two possibilities to fit a life story such as Lucia's

In this section, I present Lucia's life in general terms. I have highlighted the progressive changes that guided her to her "final harbor", far from the home country. I have also divided Lucia's life story to provide a better understanding of her story and of her crossing from one social class to another.

(i) Childhood: her mother's death and Lucia's displacements

Lucia lived in poverty with her mother in an isolated village in Argentina until her mother died. She was only 5 years old at the time of her first journey, when she received the help of an old friend of her mother's, Anastasia, who takes her to live in a better place. Nonetheless, the girl is always taken by the urge to leave. Where and how? In one of her random walks through the woods, she goes on a weird trip, which is explained as an oscillation between her rich imagination and Quichua's beliefs¹⁶ mixed with Christian beliefs: she sees a man in white almost floating among the thorny plants. He tells her to always move forward, giving her the wonderful sensation of protection and peace. The second – actual – great journey takes place when the character Don Raul appears with his cart, an adequate vehicle for travelling, for moving. Not giving it a second thought and seemingly encouraged by the memory of the voice from the imaginary trip, Lucia takes a seat in the cart and travels a long way with Don Raul, a curious story teller, very ironic and political. He takes her to a city. Lucia absorbs his words of criticisms, underneath his irony, to the corruption of all the powerful men in Argentina. Don Raul takes the girl to a beautiful house where a lovely and kind family welcomes Lucia with joy. This is the first real home of her life.

(ii) Teenage years and motherhood

Time passes by; in her adoptive home, Lucia grows up, learns to read and write, studies and makes friends. In that house, Lucia becomes a teenager with political awareness, angry at the country's situation. She is called by her classmates "the rebel". Then, Lucia feels attracted to a boy and,

¹⁶ The Quichua people are formed by several ethnical groups in South America. Their language is considered a dialect in Bolivia and in the North of Argentina. The novel *Lucia* brings some of these words.

inexperienced as she is, becomes a mother...twice. The young father disappears, and Lucia is forced to play the roles of both mother and father for the girls despite her young age.

(iii) The plot twist – the great frustrated scape

In charge of raising two young children (without secure financial means), Lucia's life spins on its axis. She is arrested under precarious conditions with other women wrongly accused, marginalized by life. After a few days in prison, Lucia is released and gets her children back. Afraid of another arrest, she tries to run away to Uruguay. At her arrival, she is detained in the airport customs where she is informed of her status as *persona non grata* to the country; she is given two options: be immediately arrested, stay in Montevideo, and lose her children definitely, or return with her children to Argentina. She chooses to go back, but barely after landing in Argentine territory, the military conduct her to a prison post and this time she is subjected to a hard, cruel and long interrogation by Argentinian military men after information on subversive activities that she might have committed against the "General" government (how the opposition called the regimen). Her captors hope that, as Lucia grows tired, she will confess and snitch on her friends. Then a big flash of lucidity comes to Lucia: she thinks of her responsibility as a mother: she must survive for both her daughters. She answers the questions asked by her interrogators tirelessly and without contradiction for hours: she knows nothing, she did nothing, she was too young when she got pregnant, she never heard from the children's father ever again. When tiredness takes over and defeats her, and Lucia thinks of confessing all that she knew about the life of a "subversive" student, her captors believe her innocence and decide to release her, giving back her daughters.

(iv) Come what may (*Advienne ce que pourra*)

Lucia goes into hiding to live with her daughters in a hotel on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, thanks to her meager savings. When she runs out of money, by instinct or desperation, she decides to go downtown with her daughters. An incredible miracle or a coincidence happens: in a twist of fate, she reunites (by the second time according to the narrator) with *dueña* Nora, her ex-partner/boyfriend's mother and the girls' grandmother – a rich and generous woman: happy to meet her granddaughters and taking pity on the dangers they have faced with Lucia, she decides to help them. She puts them on a plane to France, where Lucia becomes a political exile.

(v) Arriving at her safe harbor

Little by little, with good humor and enthusiasm (factors that never left her) Lucia learns French, gets a modest job, makes friends with her colleagues; she resumes her education with vigor while her children attend school. At last, Lucia begins the ascension that comes with her new life.

(vi) Changing social classes

At the end of the narrative, Lucia says that, she is currently a fulfilled young woman. She has a good social job (educator) at a psychiatric facility in the vicinity of Paris. Both her daughters are happy young women who have finished school, graduated from college and are currently employed. In addition to integrating into the French lifestyle, Lucia falls in love again: a nice young man, son of emigrants also integrated into the life in France, with whom she and her daughters live. Despite her spiritual trip, Lucia experienced other trips, filled with mishaps, to cross the “bridge” and come out on the other side. She performs a transclass journey: she uses her unhappiness to recover herself and move forward, throwing herself wholeheartedly at the opportunities that appeared before her. Thus, she ends her migrations.

In the summary, as it is possible to verify, there are certain “lapses” and some explanations are missing: this “silence” about certain characters and events is part of the book as a whole: for example, what or whose is the house to which Don Raul takes Lucia? Is it a political household? Did Don Raul live there? Was he a simple cart driver or an undercover political leader? Why did he take young Lucia to that house? Was it on Anastasia’s behalf? Was it his own initiative out of pity for the child? These are mysteries the book does not solve. There are others still: what were the political activities done by the father of Lucia’s daughters against the government/regimen in his country? Was he a left-wing activist that “disappeared” as many others? How and when – the exact moment – did Lucia board a plane to Uruguay? Where did she get the money for this trip? Afterwards, when she is released after being questioned by the police and starts living off her savings – where did that money come from? Nothing is clear. Olga Canllo Salomon’s narrative style reminds us of a movie in which black screens suddenly appear as one scene moves into the next. A lot is left to be explained in the intervals that mark the return to action, imposed by the brief coming up of the black screen. It is the reader’s/spectator’s duty to reconstruct the story. Narrative silence, as every silence, exists for a reason.

In the case of Lucia’s identity, it is possible to claim that changes in space favored mental changes. As time goes by, the young woman becomes even more lucid and aware of how to organize her words and actions in the face of an enemy and the unknown world that awaits her in her migrations.

At a certain point in the narrative, her love for her daughters, serve as “springboard” and keeps the young woman from succumbing to life’s setbacks: “She knows what she must do to protect herself, that she had to keep living to prevent the disappearance of her Rosa and her Beatriz” (SOLOMON, 2021, p. 87)¹⁷.

Lucia became a teenage mother while still attending school. She could have trusted her daughters to one of her friends or to the family that had raised her, or even to her mother-in-law, so she could have more freedom to act and travel. The *Lucia-girl-alone* becomes a plural being, *Lucia-mother-of-two-girls*. Deeply (precociously) mature, she never lets her children feel the danger

¹⁷ In the original: “Elle savait qu’elle avait pour devoir de se protéger, qu’elle devait rester en vie pour empêcher la disparition de sa Rosa, de sa Beatriz.”

hanging over their heads when the fearsome *Generals* ruled the Argentinian government and their lives could simply...be over in a matter of moments.

The children help Lucia to survive, that is true; however, the story tells us that since her childhood, whenever she found herself in trouble, Lucia would hope for something better. Due to her constant ups and downs, despite the internal pains, she became stronger. Lucia is a resilient human being because “[...] even children who were traumatized by lack of affection, war or social marginality can develop good resilience when they are offered a stable emotional connection” (CYRULNIK, B., 2015, p. 39)¹⁸. It should be considered, then, that the phenomenon of resilience (which we will discuss in detail) is both biological and emotional.

I would like to explain, now, the reasons that led me to consider the novel *Lucia* as a written space in which life story and autofiction intertwine.

2. *Lucia*: between autofiction and life story

According to studies and research that we have conducted, the term “autofiction” (MACHADO, 2020, p. 34-43) first appears in the works of the writer Serge Doubrovsky (1977) as an innovation in the literary art, but also as a provocation. The fact is that Doubrovsky did not agree with the concept of “pact of truth” suggested by Lejeune, which was well accepted by the public that investigated autobiographies. The Russian writer believed that the act of narrating the self-involved a “language adventure”, that is, an experience that included the participation of psychoanalysis and its effects on the writer (as “subject-analyzed”) in written narratives.

Both Lejeune and Doubrovsky, at the time, wished to transcribe the “truth”: autobiographies, for Lejeune, due to that pact we have just mentioned, would conduct writers to say only what in fact had happened in their lives, without tricks of the imagination; Doubrovsky, on the other hand, as a psychoanalysis supporter, claimed that the only possible truth was the one that writers or subjects-analyzed obtained from themselves, after good psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, the door leading to the truth, if open, disappoints those who expect to find it whole and done; truth is ambiguous as shown by a famous Brazilian poet:

The door of truth was open, //but only let pass //half of a person each time. // Thus, it was impossible to reach the whole truth, //for the half of a person who passed by //brought only the profile of half-truth //and their own second half. //Carrying half profiles when leaving //and the half profiles, did not match the truth. //They broke the door. They knocked down the door. //They arrived at a luminous place //where the truth sparkled its fires. //It was divided in halves //two different parts. //There was a question, which one // was the prettiest. //None of the two was really

¹⁸ In the original: “[...] mesmo as crianças que foram traumatizadas por uma carência afetiva, uma guerra ou a miséria social podem desenvolver uma boa resiliência quando lhes é oferecido um vínculo afetivo estável”.

beautiful//and it was necessary to choose. And choices were made according to their whims, // their illusion//their myopia (DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE, "True", 1962)¹⁹

Who owned the "truth", in the case we examine: Lejeune or Doubrovsky? Both and neither: it depends on the circumstances of discourse that involve written texts, as claimed by Charaudeau (1983). Notwithstanding, years later, Lejeune and Doubrovsky as researchers modalized little by little their previous statements. They became more careful in their respective claims on the issue. Lejeune (1996) eventually stated that autobiographies constantly appeal to narrative and rhetorical techniques, which deserved, doubtlessly, greater reflection. Hence, he removed autobiographies from a cold and crystalized place, opening them to the narrator's subjectivity and their memories. I believe, however, that Lejeune was never naïve to the point of believing that the "pact of truth" would make biographers "write a perfect photograph of the past" (which would be impossible because even photographs are subjective), that is, writing that avoided random descriptions of feelings. The "truth" in Lejeune's "pact" should be read as *nuanced truth*, as the writers' intention to be as sincere as possible before the facts they would tell the readers.

Doubrovsky, in turn, abandoned the expression "truthful word", achieved through the introduction of psychoanalysis in one's writings, but continued to insist that the word *autofiction* should be employed in opposition to the classic autobiography: he counted on the support of several writers from the past who practiced this writing, in which, throughout the narrative, real events and imagination are purposefully intertwined.

As I see it, the word autobiography should be used in the cases of studies on an entire work, whose authors retrace their lives, in detail, from the beginning to the point where they are writing about themselves. In other words, everything that was reported must have really happened historically speaking, even if that "truth" never escapes the hands of subjectivity, or the style that changes from one writer to another. For all that I have read, I understand that autobiographies (even if good humored and derisive) are a classic genre²⁰; autofictions are more of an exercise of writing to which dreams and wonderings are more welcome than in autobiographies. Autofictions share borders with truthfulness; autobiographies search the historical real of the narrating subject.

Nonetheless, it seems that the term autofiction (that has caused so much ado in the 1970s-1980s) has also become popular. Let us imagine a book that is placed under "historical romance" on the shelves of bookshops because Louis XIV, the Sun King of France, narrates his story in it. Then, the author is putting into action a character whose existence is verified by History, surrounded by both real and fictional characters that were created to give the book more life and taste. Consequently, "historical romances" are closer to autofiction than to autobiography.

In addition, autofiction writers seem to be more connected to the ludic writing games both in the narrative of life stories and in the description of paper beings that surround the true character.

¹⁹ Translation by Mariza Góes, available at: <https://allpoetry.com/poem/8594411-Truth-by-Carlos-Drummond-de-Andrade>.

²⁰ Hence the confusion of bookshop owners to place their categories (on bookshop shelves). This is really common considering we are living in more interdisciplinary times of narrative fluidity.

Finally, it is possible to claim that autobiographies are more obedient to Lejeune's rules whereas autofictions – I repeat – are a ludic exercise of writing that aim to surprise the reader, who shall wonder at the end of story: “Did it really happened or did the writer make it all up?”. Depending on the case, both are possible.

Even using a “self” to indicate the narrator of a story, certain authors can join the autofiction game. Many critics have wondered whether the famous *In Search of Lost Time* by Proust would be more autofiction than autobiography. Perhaps, according to the stories told therein, the book could be either one thing or the other at different times: after all, Proust built it carefully like a wisely orchestrated biography.

The case of *Lucia* by Olga Canllo Salomon is harder to define. On the one hand, it is simply a life story, by a third person (the narrator), a life that *could have been* the author's. On the other hand, I believe an autobiography would not leave as many silences, so many mysteries to be solved by the reader as done in the present book: the genre would probably explain them.

That said, it is not my goal to criticize the narrative of *Lucia*, but to claim that if, sometimes, it seems “unarticulated”, that is not bad, since it functions as evidence for the fact it contains a life story at its core: when dedicated to that task, one chooses certain facts to highlight instead of others.

Given these “indecisions”, *Lucia*, the novel, can be considered either an autofiction or an autobiography. I prefer to think of it as the latter; therefore, I cite words by the French sociologist Daniel Bertaux:

In order for a narrative to tell a life story, it must be structured in a temporal sequence of events, situations, projects and actions derived from them: this sequence will somehow constitute the spine. [...] Most existences are shaken by collective forces that reroute them in unpredictable and often uncontrollable ways. (BERTAUX, 2006, p. 38)²¹

Generally, life stories do not draw harmonious and straight curves from the lines of their narrators' existence, as Bertaux (2006, p. 38) claims: the lines zigzag. This is the case of Lucia's life curve: sometimes, she hesitates to move forward, she gets lost in her mind and goes back searching for some lost happiness; some other times, she throws herself in the turmoil of life. Finally, Lucia, with the responsibilities of having two daughters, is neither a hero nor a superwoman: she is just the portrait of a human being, a migrant woman looking for a safe harbor.

I must remind readers that I write as a discourse analyst. The discourse analysis I chose to engage – Semiolinguistics – stands at a point of convergence for sociology, social psychology and anthropology, which meets discursive linguistics. Hence, life stories from the perspective of Semiolinguistic discourse analysis, unlike autobiographies or autofictions, care very little for actual concepts or truthfulness: narratives allow narrators to dive into their memories (or the memories of their

²¹ In the original: “Parce qu'un récit de vie raconte l'histoire d'une personne il est structuré autour d'une succession temporelle d'événements, de situations, de projets, et des actions et cours d'action dans la durée qui en ont résulté ; cette succession en constitue la colonne vertébrale [...] nos parcours sont conditionnés par les grands vents de forces collectives qui échappent à notre contrôle”.

collective history) to choose freely what to tell, considering their status as social and historic actors of a certain time in a certain place.

3. The concept of social representation and the imaginaries of belief in Lucia's life story

I resort to Charaudeau (2006) to discuss the concept of social representation and the imaginaries they produce, since he was the first theorist to introduce them into discourse analysis. Charaudeau does not deny the sociological origin of those concepts, in particular the works of the sociologist Moscovici (1989), but he gives them a special touch by allowing them to enter discourse analysis. According to Charaudeau (2006, p. 52), "the most important for a perspective of discourse analysis is to observe the extent to which a concept born and developed in another discipline can be reused and redefined in another discipline"²². Charaudeau (2006, note 1, p. 52) will call this operation an exercise of "focused interdisciplinarity"²³.

The difference in the Semiolinguistics appropriation of these notions lies in the fact that discourse analysts will not take them as concepts, but as

[...] a mechanism of construction of meaning that shapes, formats reality into a real signifier, giving rise to forms of knowledge on the "social reality". Hence, social representations are not a set of imaginaries or ideologies, like some would propose, but a mechanism that generates knowledge and imaginaries [...] (CHARAUDEAU 2006, p. 52)²⁴

In a nutshell: the mechanics of social representations, according to Charaudeau (2006, p. 55), once adopted by discourse analysis, creates "knowledge" that can be divided into "savoirs de connaissance" and "savoirs de croyance" (knowledge of belief)²⁵. I am particularly interested in the knowledge of belief (*savoirs de croyance*), the way in which certain people or groups of people observe the world, searching for some supernatural explanation for good or bad events that happen in the course of human life on Earth.

²² In the original: "Ce qui importe ici, c'est-à-dire dans le cadre d'une analyse du discours est de voir dans quelle mesure un concept né et développé dans une autre discipline peut être réutilisé et redéfini dans une discipline autre."

²³ In the original: "interdisciplinarité focalisée".

²⁴ In the original: "mais comme un mécanisme de construction du sens qui façonne, formate la réalité en réel signifiant, engendrant des formes de connaissance de la "réalité sociale". Dans cette perspective, les représentations sociales ne sont pas un sous-ensemble des imaginaires ou des idéologies comme d'autres le proposent, mais une mécanique d'engendrement des savoirs et des imaginaires [...]."

²⁵ The difference between *savoir* and *connaissance* is not fully comprehended by the English word *knowledge*, hence the use of the original in French whenever necessary.

Charaudeau's discourse analysis owes a great deal to anthropology in this regard. He takes into account social rituals, myths and legends, considering them testimonials of the organization of certain human societies to interpret certain discourses. That is the source of an interesting operation that Charaudeau (2006, p. 55) calls "symbolization of the world"²⁶. This operation depends on the intersubjectivity of human relations: if a belief is assimilated by a group, it becomes a collective memory. "Hence, the imaginary has the double function of creating values and justifying actions"²⁷, claims Charaudeau (2006).

Nonetheless, it is necessary to consider that social imaginaries have dimensions that vary from one group to another. Therefore, there are many different imaginaries from one society to another, despite any similarities, since most of them indicate the endless struggle of good against evil and the symbolized exposure of people's deepest fears.

It is also noteworthy that the so-called social imaginary was introduced by C. Castoriadis in the 1960s and 1970s. The philosopher discusses the subject in his book *The Imaginary Institution of Society* published in 1975. Castoriadis opposed imaginary to rational only to reunite them in one single concept afterwards. Notwithstanding, social imaginaries are situated in a universe of meanings capable of connecting members of a certain group to one another.

Each human being has their own view of the world in accordance with the group they belong to. The knowledge of belief (*savoirs de croyance*), then, circulates among people in the same group and gains strength. It is not possible to say that a certain imaginary, shared by a group, represents a "true truth", rather, it can only give the impression of truthfulness.

The novel *Lucia*, the object of our analysis, contains many examples of an imaginary of beliefs, conceived by a group descendent or connected to the Quichua, an indigenous people from some parts of South America. In the book, it seems that their beliefs merge with Catholic beliefs. In this case, all evidence leads the reader to believe that Lucia's mother was Quichua or a descendent from this ethnic group due to her beautiful straight black hair; Lucia's father, in turn, was an Argentinian man, descending from a family connected to several European peoples that settled in Argentina, since he is described as tall and fair. The existence of said father, however, does not interest Lucia because he was mean and violent to her mother. Hence, the impression that Lucia was the result of a sexual violence committed by her father against her mother, who was very scared of that man's "visits".

The Quichua had their own beliefs and fears, and the women Lucia's mother neighborhood did not hesitate to compare the child, on the day of her mother's funeral, to bizarre entities: *la Telesita* and *la Salamanca*: the first is attributed to a phantasmagoric young woman that wanders through the night drinking fig alcohol until sunrise – this is a legend from the North of Argentina probably Quichua; the second, *la Salamanca*, indicates an underground cave in the forest, dark and creepy: the devil's dwelling. Women attending Lucia's mother wake say to one another: "Is she [Lucia] from

²⁶ In the original: "symbolisation du monde".

²⁷ In the original: "Ainsi, l'imaginaire a une double fonction de création de valeurs et de justification de l'action."

another world?” and “To me, she looks cursed” (SALOMON, 2021, p. 25)²⁸ because the girl would not cry; seeing her dead mother, Lucia was upset, not quite understanding what was going on. Taking pity on Lucia, Anastasia, an old friend of her mother’s, takes the girl away from the wake and gets Lucia to a party where she danced happily. Well, Lucia was only five and she knew little to nothing about life and death. She lived alone with her mother in a separate world.

But the mourners’ words in her mother’s wake seem to have follow the girl even after she left San Ignacio taken by the hand by Anastasia, with whom she would live for a few years: Lucia, then, would frequently be the victim of nightmares even if she was awake: in trance, she would see horrible beings, monsters that would take hold of her (SALOMON, 2021). This situation lasts a while and, one day, Lucia goes on an imaginary trip in the forest. In the middle of her walk (Lucia loved walking in the forest), she sees a man dressed in white who, curiously, does not scare her, rather, he conveys a feeling of peace and protection to the child. The man walked through thorny bushes without touching them, so Lucia inferred he was the carrier of good news. But what news?

The narrator describes the end of this first encounter with the “being from the stars” (as Lucia believes): “[...] that’s how in the middle of this imaginary trip, they [Lucia and Anastasia who goes searching for her] make their way back. Lucia still immersed in her dreams”²⁹ (SALOMON, 2021, p. 34).

Other imaginaries of belief cross the minds of the simple people in the village where Anastasia lived. In fact, in that village lived *Don Cristoforo*, a sort of healer who could cure diseases, bless the people who came to him etc., and who, out of cruelty or bitterness could also conjure their death. He was either a bad witch or the worst type of charlatan. When Lucia has another terrible nightmare or daydream, an acquaintance of Anastasia’s tells her to take Lucia to see him.

Fortunately for Lucia, Anastasia mistrusted that type of person. And before deciding, she meditates on the people’s belief in *don Cristoforo*. She knew it was delicate going against the law of God, against their religion (Catholic, I assume): “They do say: ‘small city, big hell’” (SALOMON, 2021, p. 37)³⁰. For Anastasia, the weirdest thing was that everyone knew that the witch “[...] took people’s prized possessions in exchange for his services. Anastasia remembered and would expose the manipulations of such a healer, who took advantage of people’s good faith”³¹.

Anastasia had lived in Buenos Aires once. She was not that gullible and ingenuous as her neighbors, although she feared the man. She saves Lucia a second time from being asphyxiated by popular beliefs.

Finally came the day when Lucia recovered from her last vision, no doubt because of Anastasia’s good influence and of Anastasia’s mother’s, an old lady. She goes back to singing and playing and leaves, so to speak, her mourning, her sadness and the fear caused by her mother’s death.

²⁸ In the original: “Serait-elle d’un autre monde?”; “Pour moi elle est envoûtée...”.

²⁹ In the original: “C’est ainsi qu’au milieu de ce voyage imaginaire, elles reprirent le chemin du retour. Lucia était toujours avec ses songes”.

³⁰ In the original: “On dit bien, petit village, grand enfer”.

³¹ In the original: “Tout le monde était au courant que don Cristoforo s’appropriait facilement la richesse des autres en échange des services rendus”.

Lucia is doubtlessly a special, smart and clear-headed girl, lost in wildlands. She sees or feels the weight of the poverty that sticks to those people's skins, symbolized in the bent back of Anastasia's mother. And she wishes to leave, to find a way to change her life.

The narrator anticipates this change by announcing that soon a long path would open for Lucia and she would take it (SALOMON, 2021). Then, finally, in another walk in the forest, she meets the man in white for the second time, and he tells her what she expected: "Don't look back, Lucia, look always forward and you'll find your way" (SALOMON, 2021, p. 45)³².

Sometime afterwards, she goes on another journey, she runs away, we do not know quite how, with the talkative and political *don Raul*, in his cart, toward another life.

Then, after her first move, Lucia continues migrating in her country, and later, goes abroad as reported in the summary of the book.

4. The phenomenon of Resilience in a transclass subject

Lucia, as the reader might have noticed, takes the transclass way always on the run to find her place in the world. And how hard it is to find that way!

In the household of the kind family that welcomed her, in the outskirts of Santiago Del Estero, Lucia was able to study. Then, she became aware of the social inequality, the concentration of power in the hands of corrupt politicians and worse: when the military took over and began a "witch hunt" on their opponents. Lucia, already a mother of two (despite the young age) is persecuted by these men just like her colleagues and her daughters' father.

Lucia's sudden arrest separates her from her daughters and makes her go through terrible things. She finds herself face to face with the worst that is happening in her country and with the fate that waits for her. She also becomes aware of the sad life of her cellmates.

The phenomenon of resilience comes to Lucia after her release and the reunion with her daughters. She feels relieved, happy and able to dedicate herself to her children and to dream of a better future for all of them. Lucia had just gone through great suffering in her life. Her time in prison, the uncertainty, the fear of losing her daughters forever left permanent scars. And the disasters continue: Lucia tries to run to Uruguay, they reject her and send her back to Argentina, where she is arrested again and goes through a terrible interrogation conducted by police officers in the military regimen. After hours or days of misery, they realize she really is a poor student (and mother) and unexpectedly release her and her daughters. Then, she takes shelter in a simple hotel in the periphery of Buenos Aires and stays there, not thinking about it, just living and enjoying every minute with her daughters. She stopped acting, she stopped running, to live half-in hiding.

According to the journalist and researcher Héloïse Lhéréte (2020), in all monotheist religions, it is believed that God sends difficult tests, existential drama, catastrophes, to confirm the faith of His

³² In the original: " Ne te retourne pas Lucia, regarde toujours devant toi et tu trouveras...".

followers. In her opinion, through existentialist philosophy and psychology, these expiations are released from their transcendental part. She mentions a book by the philosopher Claire Martin (2003) in which she claims that many are the beings that, involved in these cruel incidents, still feel it is possible to take other paths and improve their respective existences.

Lhéréte also recovers some of the reflections by the sociologist Vincent de Gaulejac (2009). Gaulejac studied people who, after unpleasant experiences, fall into a sort of “disconnection” with the world around them (like Lucia in the aforementioned case). This allows people to:

not to [...] turn themselves to their past or their future, but to live the present, without asking any questions. Their only concern is “how to survive”, dismissing the question “why live?” (GAULEJAC, 2009, apud LHÉRÉTÉ, 2020, p. 34)³³

In my opinion, the neuropsychiatrist Boris Cyrulnik was the one who actually developed the notion of resilience in a book published in 2002 and in several others that followed as well as in his conferences and interviews. It is noteworthy that Cyrulnik became an orphan at the age of six, when his parents were taken to a German concentration camp during World War II.

The word “resilience”, very popular nowadays, is frequently used to express “courage”, “bravery”. It is not exactly that. Cyrulnik resumes the origin of word:

The word resilience was born in Latin countries – *re-salire* –; it is regularly used in metallurgy, and, in agronomy, resilient land is used when, after a fire or flood, life returns with new vegetation. In psychology – field in which psychochemical metaphors abound (*depression* originally meant absence of pressure; *cleavage*, the segmentation of a crystal in two; *sublimation*, changing from solid to gas etc.) – the metaphor of resilience symbolizes the process of resuming a new development after trauma (CYRULNIK, 2015, p. 22)³⁴

The concept became widely used in several countries and cultures, which led Cyrulnik to refine his definition: “[...] we consider that the traumatized subject recovers another type of development, which we call *resilient process*” (CYRULNIK, 2015, p. 38) because resilience comprehends the “[...] biological, psycho-affective and sociocultural processes that allow a new development after psychological trauma” (CYRULNIK, 2015, p. 38)³⁵.

³³ In the original: “ne pas(...) à se tourner vers son passé ou son avenir, mais vivre juste le moment présent, pour ne plus se poser de questions. Juste se préoccuper de savoir “comment survivre” en abandonnant la question du sens : ‘pourquoi vivre’”.

³⁴ In the original: “A palavra resiliência nasceu nos países latinos – *re-salire* –; é regularmente utilizada em metalurgia e, em agronomia, fala-se de terra resiliente quando, depois de um incêndio ou inundação, a vida retorna, com uma nova vegetação. Em psicologia – campo em que as metáforas psicoquímicas são numerosas (originariamente depressão significa ausência de pressão; clivagem, segmentação de um cristal em duas partes; sublimação, passagem do estado sólido ao estado gasoso etc.) – a metáfora da resiliência simboliza os processos de retomada a um novo desenvolvimento após um traumatismo”.

³⁵ In the original: “[...] consideramos que o sujeito que foi traumatizado retoma outro tipo de desenvolvimento, ao qual chamaríamos *processo resiliente*.”; “[...] os processos biológicos, psicoafetivos e socioculturais que permitem um novo desenvolvimento após um traumatismo psicológico”.

Because of said traumas, which happened again in different degrees culminating in the interrogation with the military, we witness the character Lucia as a transclass subject who moves forward thanks to the resilient process. Naturally, she had to adjust to new cultures and expectations with each new migration, especially the last one, which took her to a safe harbor. On the other hand, according to Cyrulnik (2015, p. 49), if adaptation or “adaptiveness” (*adaptétude*)³⁶ allows for survival, “disadaptation” is also necessary, because it gives the ones who experienced trauma and migration the hope of “resuming their development despite adverse circumstances” (CYRULNIK, 2015, p. 39)³⁷.

This is Lucia’s perspective for France, her country of arrival. She does not speak the language, does not know anyone and she needs to raise two daughters. Without forgetting her beloved mother and home country, she faces the process of “disadaptation” that allows her to integrate into the French life and to go back to work and to school.

Examining Lucia’s trajectory in the book written by Olga Canllo Salomon and what was said in the Introduction about the possibility of narrating a depiction or scattered images of the author’s life, I wish to conclude this segment by highlighting the importance of “narrative re-elaboration” through the words of Cyrulnik:

Narrative re-elaboration allows this work that psychoanalysts aim to trigger – as well as novelists, film makers, philosophers, and all who can be involved in the effective work of language. The intimate representation of trauma becomes bearable from the moment it becomes historicized; thus, it can grant coherence to the world and generate in the subject the feeling of being able to handle it. When narratives are accepted through family and culture, the resilient stitching becomes solid. (CYRULNIK, 2015, p. 52)³⁸

I have mentioned that life stories can be of great help to transclass individuals, who move from one social class to another and try to become a part of the latter (MACHADO, 2020). Nonetheless, Cyrulnik’s citation adds to the ideas I have tried to build/communicate on narratives in general, and here I also add the narratives of migrant individuals. Thanks to the neuropsychiatrist, I realized that the “resilient stitching” becomes stronger when the narratives of these subjects, who run from themselves, their families, their enemies, their home country, etc., are dealt or told to those who were not part of their past, that is, the family or who represents them, in each case. I had not realized that yet. Now, thanks to Cyrulnik, I realize that this approval is always a goal for narrators of the self.

³⁶ The word in French is a neologism: *adaptétude* is formed by blending *adaptation* and *adaptabilité*. The Brazilian Portuguese version (by Sandra Cabral, 2015), *adaptatividade*, is also a blend of *adaptação* and *adaptabilidade*. However, in English the word is not formed by blending two other words.

³⁷ In the original: “retomada do desenvolvimento, apesar das circunstâncias adversas”.

³⁸ In the original: “A reelaboração narrativa permite este trabalho que os psicanalistas procuram provocar – mas também os romancistas, os cineastas, os filósofos, e todos os que conseguem se envolver em um trabalho afetivo da palavra. A representação íntima do trauma torna-se suportável a partir do momento em que ele é historicizado; ela pode, então, dar coerência ao mundo e criar no sujeito o sentimento de poder novamente gerenciá-lo. Quando as narrativas são aceitas pelo meio familiar e cultural, a costura resiliente pode se fazer solidamente”

Even when not necessary – as in childhood – the approval of a single family member brings the narrator an incredible sensation of peace and happiness. My own experience supports this claim.

5. Some remarks by way of conclusion

In July 2021, after a lecture on life stories of transclass individuals, a participant presented me with an interesting question: they wanted me to explain the benefits investigating life stories had brought to discourse analysts. I remember saying that life stories, in a way, were little investigated by discourse analysts compared to histories of life (by historians), life reports (by sociologists) among others. Why not give a chance for life stories to constitute, in DA, a new discursive materiality? Afterwards, this question led me to a more comprehensive reflection.

The fact is that discourse analysts work with discourses, hence, with language. Telling parts of our lives, if we come to think about it, is a part of our language production either written or spoken. More than that: the wish of narrating oneself is part of our cultural activities as human beings: one must remember this is intrinsic to the exercise of communication and, above all, it characterizes *Homo narrans*³⁹, distinguishing it from the other species according to the French psychologist Lani-Bayle (2012, p. 132).

In addition, the act of narrating can trigger the feeling of wholeness to the narrator, especially if they dare telling their lives in a book, something that will reach sets of eyes other than their own. It is of little importance if the first or third-person singular is used to describe the important parts of one's life. In narratives, lives are unraveled, dug out from the labyrinths of memory, reconstituted. Therefore, owning this expressive ability, which leads them to sublimate their fate on Earth (being born, growing up, getting older and dying), the *Homo narrans* throws themselves in the adventure of telling their adventures in life, bestowing upon them a dimension that will be redone forcefully, because, by throwing themselves into the adventure of narrative and bringing the past into their present time, of writing, the subject-narrators cross temporal borders and lend their own subjectivity and life experience to narratives. They see themselves again: an inexperienced or clear-headed young man, a shy or bold girl. By narrating, narrators talk about themselves and, at the same time, they talk about someone else, themselves yet no longer themselves.

That is what I felt reading *Lucia* by Olga Canllo Salomon. In this book, there is a great wish to tell oneself as well as to tell the world where the main character lived, the world discovered through migration. Salomon takes us with Lucia, lends her political, sociological, and often ironic perspective on the world.

³⁹ Bernard Victorri coined the word to characterize what is typical of humans: narrating what happened and what might come to happen. According to Victorri, "it is not intelligence that distinguishes [humans] from other species of *Homo sapiens* that came before them, but their ability to narrate their own story, source of new founding 'knowledge' of human societies." (VICTORRI, 2002, p. 112-125 apud LANI-BAYLE, 2012, p. 132).

Only now I can fully answer that question cited in the first paragraph of this Conclusion: life stories are important for Discourse Analysis because one of their aims is to look at the society in which a certain discourse circulates. Then, they represent solid sources of knowledge on the world, on the other and on oneself: they can help to shape our personalities.

I conclude with the reminder that life stories, such as the one presented by Salomon, due to Semiolinguistics discourse analysis, allowed us to explore places and societies that we ignored, err through magic forests, learn words in Quechua and fearlessly walk in a forest side by side with an anaconda! More importantly, we understand the emotions felt by Lucia, our “little sister” in this strange South America.

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