

Writing as a way of life: educational connections and unfoldings

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Abstract

Drawing on Foucault's main reflections about the act of writing, the present essay expounds the intrinsic correlation between ways of writing and ways of living at schools, pointing out the daily agony involved in the writing practices conducted in these contexts. This means that, within the procedures of writing, superlative forces are in battle, both in the sense of the unifying attack of the subjectivation modes implied therein, and in the direction of a radical transfiguration of these same modes aiming at their multiplication. Deepening the theoretical discussion, the text approaches the question of self writing, as formulated by Foucault, as a disproportionate sculptural effort in favor of a subjective dispersion, rarefaction and, then, elision. Next, three recurring arguments about school writing are analytically questioned: its categorization in genres, its examining function, and its subordination to reading. With this critical examination, the purpose is to destabilize the bases for justifying a kind of representational and scientificist appropriation of the school writing activities, as well as to conjure up scenarios divergent from the mainstream. Lastly, it is also an objective here to view writing as a circumstance propitious to the existential styling of the writer, having in mind, with Foucault, the indispensable effort of resistance and ethical self-creation in the face of the subjectivation games typical of school practices. It is the inextricable movement of difference and variation that a writing liberated from the pedagogical conventions of the time affords and, at the same time, demands of all those who pursue it.

Keywords

Michel Foucault - School writing - Writing processes - Subjectivation modes.

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A escrita como modo de vida: conexões e desdobramentos educacionais

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Resumo

Tomando por base as principais reflexões de Michel Foucault sobre o ato de escrever, o presente ensaio discorre sobre a correlação intrínseca entre os modos de escrita e de vida nas escolas, apontando para uma agonística em operação diuturna nas práticas escriturais levadas a cabo nesse quadrante. Isso significa que, no interior dos procedimentos de escrita, embatem-se forças superlativas, tanto no sentido da investida unificadora dos modos de subjetivação aí implicados, quanto na direção de uma transfiguração radical desses mesmos modos, tendo em vista a sua multiplicação. Adensando a discussão teórica, tematiza-se a escrita de si, tal como formulada por Foucault, como um esforço escultural desmedido em favor de uma dispersão, uma rarefação e, então, uma elisão subjetivas. Em seguida, interpelam-se analiticamente três argumentos recorrentes acerca da escrita escolar: sua categorização segundo gêneros, sua função examinatória e sua subordinação à leitura. Por meio de tal exame crítico, visa-se desestabilizar as bases de justificação de um tipo de apropriação representacional e cientificista dos fazeres escriturais escolares, bem como fabular cenários divergentes de seu mainstream. Por fim, intenta-se perspectivar a escrita como circunstância propícia à estilização existencial daquele que escreve, tendo em mente, com Foucault, o imprescindível esforço de resistência e de autocriação ética diante dos jogos subjetivadores típicos das práticas escolares. Trata-se do inextricável movimento de diferença e de variação que uma escrita não cativa das convenções pedagógicas da época faculta e, ao mesmo tempo, exige de todo aquele que por ela envereda.

Palavras-chave

Michel Foucault – Escrita escolar – Processos de escrita – Modos de subjetivação.

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I wished that words [...]
crossed walls,
made locks spring,
opened windows.

Michel Foucault

On the occasion of the reediting of his History of Madness in the Classical Age in 1972, Michel Foucault offers a second version of his preface in which the theme of unreason will no longer be mentioned, replaced by that of the tensions that shape the writing/reading of a book – this minuscule event, small manageable object, according to him.

In a few lines, the thinker outlines a kind of general picture of the forces that govern the labors of writing (and, consequently, those of reading), to which he will return many times, and in distinct manners, in his texts. It is, however, in that brief preface that one finds, in our view, the cornerstone of his writing project. He says:

My desire is that this object-event, almost imperceptible among so many others, should recopy, fragment, repeat, simulate and replicate itself, and finally disappear without the person who happened to produce it ever being able to claim the right to be its master, and impose what he wished to say, or say what he wanted it to be. In short, my desire is that a book should not create of its own accord that status of text to which teaching and criticism will all too probably reduce it, but that it should have the easy confidence to present itself as discourse: as both battle and weapon, strategy and shock, struggle and trophy or wound, conjuncture and vestige, strange meeting and repeatable scene. (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. viii)

Since his considerations on the writing/madness relation (1999, 2001a), touching here on the authoring function (2001b), and there on the writing/examination one (1987, 2003), and at last reaching the self writing (2004a),

Foucault seems to us to offer an assemblage of reflections that point to a struggle operating at a daily basis in the writing practices. This means that, within the writing procedures, superlative forces are in battle, both in the sense of a unifying attack of the subjectivation modes implicated therein, and in the direction of a radical transfiguration of these same modes with a view to their multiplication.

Even though Foucault did not elect writing as a specific object of his interest, it is an issue that, we must recognize, appeared throughout his intellectual trajectory, a fact that can be observed not only in several passages of his texts, but also, and perhaps particularly, in his own writing.

Gilles Deleuze (1988) asserts that “Foucault never looked on writing as an aim or an end in itself. This is precisely what makes him a great writer and imbues everything he writes with an increasing sense of joy and gaiety”, (p. 33).

Paul Veyne (2009) also remarks that the distinctive mark of Foucauldian writing consists in a peculiar kind of effect upon the reader:

[His books] are not communicative or of a kind to raise the vital tonicity of their readers. They are written with the point of a sword or sabre by a samurai as hard as silex, with boundless sangfroid and self-sufficiency. The works are themselves swords wielded with a dexterity that assumes the reader himself possesses the requisite vital tonicity. (p. 49-50)

The disjunction referred to by Veyne happens by virtue of the fact that Foucault positions himself so as to intercept the reader’s path, solemnly offering him his back, resisting any clamor for ascendancy, for cognitive servitude, for a second-hand intellectual existence. He yearned to see his books operating as explosive artifacts – efficient as bombs and, equally, as beautiful fireworks – which,

after being carbonized by use, would leave behind nothing but a vivid trace in memory (FOUCAULT, 2006).

Added together, the piercing virtuosity of the writer and the expansive liberality contained in his writings constitute an ultimate proof of the axiomatic according to which the work of writing becomes indistinguishable from that of living or, more precisely, from an intense way of conducting one's own existence. Writing would then consist in an experience of transformation of what one thinks and, above all, of what one is; an experience, moreover, inimical to any communicative or normative appeal. Ultimately, just the surface in which life is inscribed: its setbacks, its circumvolutions, its compulsory incompleteness.

[...] my books are for me experiences, in a sense that I wished were the fullest possible. An experience is something you come out of transformed. If I had to write a book to communicate what I already thought before beginning to write it, I would never have the courage to undertake it. [...] I am an experimenter, in the sense that I write to change myself, and to think no longer on the same thing I thought before. (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 289-290)

If the hypothesis on the intrinsic correlation between modes of writing and modes of living is true, its consequences for the school-pedagogical practices are countless. This is because, following Foucault, the writing procedures taking place therein eventually play a pivotal role in the subjectivating machinery of school institutionalization, via the sedimentation of certain normative protocols connected to it. This is what the present essay intends to problematize, through the examining of three recurring arguments about school writing: its categorization in genres, its examining function, and its subordination to reading.

The daily march in favor of the stratification and automatism of their forms

notwithstanding, these routines can perchance constitute a propitious circumstance to the existential styling of the writer, having in mind, still with Foucault, the indispensable effort of resistance and ethical self-creation in the face of the subjectivating games typical of school practices. This is another aspect that this text wants to put in perspective – without, however, any prescriptive intention.

Given the double intentionality of our endeavor, this essay follows in the wake of an essentially critical approach to the present-day educational work, venturing, otherwise, the chance of other scenarios for the writing practices conducted therein. For that, it departs from the discussion of the writing under the prism of the *care of the self*, such as formulated by Foucault in his later production. Let us delve into the issue.

From self writing to the subjective elision

Aware of the inextricable association between power relations and modes of subjectivation, Foucault, especially in his last book, *The history of sexuality*, vol. 3 (1985), in the course on The hermeneutics of the subject (2004c), as in some of his interviews, unveils the broad horizon of his investigations on the care of the self.

Conceived as an ethical way of living, the care of the self, within the Foucauldian analytics, does not express a call to a metaphysical return to the old lifestyle, but rather a strategic possibility of questioning the current modes of subjectivation. Caring for oneself would appear then as a folding in the power relations, by abstaining from judging the other, or oneself, refraining absolutely from putting up a universal and exogenous moral, albeit finding its destination in the relations with the other.

Frédéric Gros (2006) will claim that the calling to the care of the self in Foucault has little to do with proselytism, spontaneism or

egolatriy. On the contrary, it represents a catalyst of an expanded form of political action, which would have the relations with one self as its prime ontological condition. This is due to the fact that, in the rigor and austerity of the care of the self,

[...] we have to call someone else, and it is someone else that has to help us to care well for ourselves: hence the figure of the master of existence. The care of the self is not a lonely activity, since it supposes always the company of an elder, and it is distributed according to eminently social activities: conversations, letter exchanges, teaching and learning in schools, individual formation etc. (p. 132)

What we have here is an example of the irreducibility of the educational work *lato sensu*, through the figure of the *master of existence*, which will take Foucault (2004c) to formulate a distinction between pedagogy and psychogogy: whilst the former would be related to the transmission of truth with the purpose of endowing the subject with knowledge and abilities he does not have yet, the latter would unfold around the practices of care with the intent of transforming one's mode of being; practices taken from among the stoic thinkers as an exercise in freedom, and as a *sine qua non* condition of the conduction of the polis.

An exercise marked by zeal and austerity, the care of the self establishes itself as the voluntary, laborious, and permanent construction of an ethical stance before the world, a stance anchored in the principle that "between self and oneself, lies the span of a lifework to be accomplished" (GROS, 2006, p. 135). For Veyne (2009), "The human subject, taking himself as the *oeuvre* Upon which to work, gave himself a morality that was no longer upheld by God or tradition or reason", (p. 112). A morality without a moral, so to speak.

According to Deleuze (1988), the morality in Foucault would refer to the set

of coercive rules based on judgments tied to transcendental values, whereas ethics would consist properly in a set of optional rules employed to assess what one says and does in relation with the mode of living implied therein. Therefore, without categorical imperatives.

Now, if the ethical being is the one driven by an expansive potency for differentiation, the moral being is, on the other hand, dominated by a tyrannical interiority, marked by the relentless search for self-knowledge – something relativized by the Greco-Roman culture, re-appropriated by Christianity, and updated, in the secularized modernity, by the lay experts, particularly those designated by the psy- prefix, placed in charge of the *government of the souls* of the citizens (ROSE, 1998).

Foucault called attention to the use of certain writing practices targeted at the care of the self. According to him, there were two kinds of techniques with such end: the personal notes (the *hypomnemata*) of fragments about things read or heard, which should serve as memory and guide of conduct; and the correspondence, through which the sender narrated himself to someone else, asking for or offering advice.

In the first case, the personal notes had the function of making "of the recollection of the fragmentary logos transmitted by teaching, listening, or reading a means to establish as adequate and as perfect a relationship of oneself to oneself as possible (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 273). In the second case, the thinker reminds us that the "proper care of the self requires listening to the lessons of a master. One needs a guide, a counselor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you." (2004b, p. 271).

Through such modalities of writing, the aim was to operate a specific type of gathering of oneself onto oneself, so as to allow one to enjoy one's own company, which implies a voluntary training, considered as a requisite for an *art of living* inimical to any doctrinal or religious pressure, in an explicitly ontologizing, never psychologizing, effort: "It is not about creating in me an inner folding through which

I would constitute myself as the object of an introspective observation, but that I should focus on myself, *follow myself*" (GROS, 2006, p. 130).

We are dealing here with practices of self in which the proposition is one of a rigorous work of self-control and of self-strengthening through the processes of construction of the self by and for oneself, processes in relation to which the other appears as an indirect partner, even if the other is the ultimate target of the action. Ethics and politics brought together, therefore, at the empirical level of an existential stylistic, consubstantiated in a modality of writing in which what is at stake in the incitation of oneself by oneself, and not the subordination of one by the other, as so often happens in the writing of confessional and similar characters.

To Michel Onfray (2009), life itself and its itineraries are the raw materials *par excellence* of – in this case, philosophical – writing. Selecting examples from Saint Augustine to Nietzsche and, particularly, Montaigne, the philosopher arguments in favor of a rigorously first-person writing, asserting that

[...] starting from oneself does not imply staying in oneself, nor does it mean searching in it for a potentially culpable pleasure. Between the refusal of the self and the uncompromising egotism, it is possible to endow the self with a singular status: that of an opportunity to apprehend the world with a view to unlocking some of its secrets. (p. 63)

To him, between those who give no room to what was extracted from personal experience, and those who feed from it, it is up to the latter to show that any ontology has a physiology that precedes it. After Nietzsche, Onfray proposes that the task of thinking is nothing else than the confession of a suffering being, stuck in between the flesh that says I and the world that contains it.

If, on the one hand, there is a conceptive potency in an infinitively personal saying,

on the other hand, it is necessary to keep in mind the danger of pensiveness which, in equal measure, insinuates itself therein. A sharp double-edged sword whose wielding demands pronounced dexterity.

For that, the refusal to the narrative-*identitarianizing* Siegfried becomes crucial, starting with letting go of the authorship claim. Alien to the perspective of *communication, of expression* or even of the *revelation* of a reflective I, writing is now constituted as a radicalized effect of what Maurice Blanchot (2005) unveils with precision when commenting on the Beckettian oeuvre:

[...] that who writes no longer is Beckett, but the exigency that dragged him out of himself, that dispossessed him, dislodged him, threw him to the outside, turning him into a being without a name, the Ineffable, a being without being, which cannot live, or die, or cease, or begin, the empty place in which speaks the idleness of an empty speech wrapped, for better or for worse, by a porous and expiring I. (p. 312)

In the wake of the Foucauldian thought, the writing of the self is associated to a disproportionate sculptural effort in favor of a subjective dispersion, rarefaction and, then elision. That is because, in the duel against the forces of the authorship habit, those of the anonymity, and not just of impersonality, emerge. Pure multivocality, if we wish.

Foucault himself will say it:

Writing develops as a game that goes inescapably beyond its rules, and thereby moves outside. In writing, it is not the case of manifestation or exaltation of the gesture of writing; it is not the case of wrapping up a subject in a language; it is about opening a space where the subject who writes does not cease to disappear. (2001b, p. 268)

In this perspective, "the hands that write are not his [the subject's], nor anyone's,

even less do they belong to some author, which is nothing more than an invented subject. They write an anonymous, depersonalized writing” (CORAZZA, 2006, p. 28).

Here lies the apex between writing and living, in which the former is offered as mode and occasion to the dizzying multiplication of the forms of the latter. In order to put this movement into context, there is first the need for an analytical approach to the (in this case, school) writing practices capable, at one and the same time, of destabilizing their justification bases and of conjuring up scenarios divergent from their mainstream, thus prompting them to proliferate with various bearings and directions.

Interrogating the school writing protocols

In one of his most memorable texts – entitled *Writers, intellectuals, teachers* – Roland Barthes (2004b) draws an accurate picture of the unstable relations between these three social characters. For him, there would be no necessary incompatibility between the language of the last two, whereas the first would be separate from the others. This is because “writing begins where speech becomes impossible” (p. 395).

Next, Barthes situates certain injunctions between the positions of a teacher and of a writer, and between the latter’s and that of the researcher. In the first case, speech is instantaneous and, at the same time, definitive, since it is deprived of the erasure principle inherent to the writing. Its corrective possibility would be the stammering, in an infinite distension. Deleuze does something similar when he says in his *L’Abécédaire* (2005) that “writing is clean, and speaking is dirty”, without implying with that any relation of prevalence between the two.

With respect to the positions of researcher and of writer, Barthes is accurate when he points out that “‘research’ is the cautious name which, under the imposition of

certain social conditions, we give to the work of writing” (2004b, p. 393).

For him, research, no matter what is investigated, can never push its status as language to the background. A prime example of that is the educational field itself, since all that is produced in it are solely writing artifacts – which is valid for every kind of textual production in this quadrant, at whichever levels and segments.

Writing practices, objects *par excellence* of pedagogical intervention, and therefore targets of the most implacable forms of normalization, of framing and of policing (ARTIÈRES, 2006), emerge as a continent pregnant in deconstruction, as well as a concrete locus from which we can situate ourselves critically before the current school-pedagogical situation. Said in a different manner, writing and its doings arise as an empirical battlefield for critical struggles in favor of the potentiation of the modes of existence implicated therein.

To unfold this hypothesis, we have to problematize the normative protocols ingrained in the school writing routines. For that, let us interrogate three customary arguments, all of a clearly dogmatic disposition, that constitute a kind of dominant appropriation of writing among its protagonists.

The first is the argument referring to the mandatory disciplinarization of the writing field, operated through a categorization of the genres, a reticulation of the style. This is due to the fact that, within the school-pedagogical universe, every formulation that does not present itself as representational, demonstrative, or illustrative, tends to be classified as *literary*, *metaphorical*, and such, as if it were a vast deposit for all the expressive waste refractory or opaque to the pedagogically correct jargon. A clear absurdity on the part of the pedagogical norm. More than that: a worn-out strategy of writing patrolling.

The blurring of the boundaries between discursive genres/styles aiming at a radical hybridization of the writing procedures

becomes crucial when it comes to assuming – again with Foucault – that words do not operate as correspondents of things, at times more accurate, at times less, and that the task of thinking is not, by any means, that of converting one reality into another, like the descriptive explanations stamped with the seal of objectivity, systematicity, and inclusiveness. As Foucault (2007) puts it, “if language expresses, it does so not in so far as it is an imitation and duplication of things, but in so far as it manifests and translates the fundamental will of those who speak” (p. 401); a will, it must be clear, that belongs to the realm of the power relations, and not to that of the psychological faculties.

Thus, the writing that adopts a non-representational, non-scientificist framework not only refuses to speak on behalf of things, but is devoted to problematize what is said about them, conferring to things a singular, unsuspected reason – in which only the effect of the deconstruction of the truth regimes operated by this approach matters, and not its obsession with verisimilitude or authenticity. Such mode of writing would unfold within the registry of a thing-word that resists to dissection, to the reflective verdict of that which has already been seen, to the bindings of the consecrated, to the intellectual standardization enforced by the straightjacket of the obligation to describe the *truth* of things.

In such manner, upsetting the veracity of truth (what has been said and done about things), dueling with the arbitrariness and contingency of its statutes, encapsulates, within the Foucauldian scope, the larger commitment of our faculty of thinking.

Now, if the work of writing, in its founding potency, has nothing to do with mimesis, but with the will of fiction and with the courage of creating, it is then the case of, within the sphere of thought, abdicating from taking the word as representation. Therefore, one can but join voices with Deleuze and Guattari (1995) when they propose that “writing is not

about signifying, but about land measuring, about cartography, even if of regions yet to come” (p. 13).

It is, therefore, about unfolding words upon words, words whose existences surely do not aim at scrutinizing the words they came from, but aim, in the limit, at insisting for some time in the world so that they can metamorphose into so many other words. Jorge Larrosa (2001) understands such design in the following way:

One has to be up to the words one says and that are said to one. And, above all, one has to continually make these words shatter and explode the preexisting words. Only the struggle between the words not yet said and those which have already been said allows the breaking up of the given horizon, allows the subject to invent himself in a different manner, allows the I to be other. (p. 40)

It follows from this that a writing of such reach refuses vehemently any attachment or privilege to a given narrative genre/style. Foucault (2006) might agree with that, if we consider one of his statements on this issue:

I would like to escape from this solemn, closed activity, folded upon itself, which is to me the activity of committing words to paper. [...] I would like it [the writing] to be something that passes, that is thrown just so, that one writes on the corner of a table, that one gives away, that circulates, that could have been a leaflet, a poster, a fragment of a film, a public speech, anything... (p. 81)

As one can glimpse from that, the potency of writing can happen through any expressive path or medium. More important than its previous narrative affiliation is the awe that it may cause through the way in which it fulfills what it engenders, operating only through the effects of unpredictability and of

the dilation of the experience in those who are touched by it. Put differently, its performativity is worth more than its fidelity to the canon and its constrictive artificiality. In this sense, refusing openly the disciplinary-pedagogizing trapping that ravages the modalities of school writing represents not only a tactical resource, but an ethical-political direction to those devoted to it.

So understood, writing could perhaps offer support to the materialization of another type of *experience*, similar to the one conceived by Larrosa (2004): neither information, nor opinion, neither speed, nor excess of activity, but that which affects us, “which passes us, or touches us, or happens to us, and, in so passing us, forms or transforms us” (p. 163). We might add: a nontransferable experience, indiscernible and always ready to remake itself, to such an extent that, more than just avoiding hindering the emergence of the new, it actually lends itself precisely to germinate more writing, other writings. In short: a writing-blossoming.

The second argument proposes a deeply rooted tradition of school writing: that its primordial use would refer to the gauging of pupils’ competences. Through a verifying writing, it would be possible to establish the cognitive adhesion of the students to the truth regimes disseminated therein. Now, it is a writing-inquiry.

The examination function of the school writing practices amounts to one of the pillars of the reproductionist servility typical of modern school; a servility animated by the repeating movement of endless explanation and recognition which, with very rare exceptions, informs the pedagogical practices thoroughly since their foundation; a servility subsumed in the logic of school learning as a mechanical transposition of knowledges, mostly encyclopedic, professed therein (either in the classic form of the copy, or in that of striking out); a servility heir to an indelible pedagogical enlightenment and its eminently recollective, exegetic and laudatory substrate,

despite self-claims to being secularized, anti-obscurantist and scientific.

Hence the pedagogical maxim that dictates a supposed ideal progression from the more informal and brief writings to the more complex, dissertating ones, more similar to the presumed truth of the things at play here. Here, the primacy is given to the tachygraphic, fragmentary or aphoristic procedure as a possibility to effect the potent writing.

The underlying logic that sustains the minimalism of the writings is that, at the level of the thought, there is a potency inherent to the *short ideas*, as put forward by Deleuze and Guattari (1992). Under the perspective of these French philosophers, thinking implies disinflating what is already thought, so that the yet not thought may find ways of being accomplished, also and foremost, in the scriptural surface itself. For that, it will be necessary to warp the words up to their breaking point – something akin to what Graciliano Ramos, in his own way, dispenses:

One should write in the same way that the laundry ladies of Alagoas do their craft. They begin with a first washing. They moist the dirty laundry by the shore of a lagoon or river, wring them, wet them again, wring them again. They put in the whitening, soap them, and twist them once, twice. Then they rinse them, damp them once more, now using their hands to splash water onto the clothes. They pound them onto a flat stone or onto limestone, give them another wringing, and then another. They wring them until not a single drop of water drips from the fabric. Only then do they hang them to dry on a rope or other kind of clothes line. Now, anyone who sets out to write should do the same thing. (*apud* BRITO, 2007a, p. 125)

The minimalism posited here does not claim an overall parsimony of syntax in the direction of a counter-rhetoric, but a strategic dislodging of the discursive context that

conforms and contains the potential multiplicity of signification of the used language itself. In this way, writing would imply looking closely not to a supposedly more adequate use of the lexicon, but to the remains, to the breadcrumbs and refuses of meaning that crisscross it – that which in the Foucauldian outlook would refer precisely to the field of the heterotopias, which

[...] secretly undermine the language, because they prevent naming this and that, because they fraction the common names or shuffle them, because they ruin beforehand the “syntax”, *and* not just that which constructs the sentences – but that, less manifest, which authorizes to “keep together” (next to and before each other) the words and the things. (2007, p. xiii)

From this follows that in a writing of heterotopic nature – therefore, non-finalistic –, nothing would want to be necessarily announced, defended or rebuked, so as to make triumph the veridicity of what is inscribed therein, but only to uprise in the plane of the thought, to uprise suddenly and for a brief interval of time.

Those who dared to do it would see themselves turned into tormented beings: someone bent over himself, warring against that which he or she no longer thinks, or thinks that no longer thinks, even without having full command of what he or she now thinks. Something similar to that makes Foucault (2002) state:

I think to forget. Everything I said in the past is completely irrelevant. We write something when it has already been much used in the head; the thought is drained, we write it, that is all. What I wrote does not interest me. What interests me is what I could write and what I could do. (p. 295)

Along the trail of the Foucauldian experience, it would be necessary to admit a

kind of budding excrescence immanent to the work of writing, since the writings peel away from those who gestate them, never to return. The foregoing word weighs, dodges, refuses to be restored, losing its worth precisely as it appears. Dead letter, it talks of what we no longer think, never of what today we are, perchance, capable of doing, or of what we may be able to do with our thinking.

Writings are the offspring of writing and, at the same time, their tormentors. Frozen in time, they end up opposing the seminal force of the writing adventure, congealing it into the already said, capturing it; sterilizing it, in short. Hence memory as the enemy of the generative power of writing.

On the other hand, the vitality of a writing porous to forgetfulness would reside precisely in its ability to embrace the bounty of happenings over which it peers without causing them constraint or coercion. On the contrary, it merely allows itself to be traversed by them – impregnated by them, perhaps. Clarice Lispector (1994) will have said it well:

The process of writing is made of mistakes – most of them essential – of courage and sloth, despair and hope of vegetative attention, of constant feeling (not thought) that leads nowhere, leads to nothing and, suddenly, that which one thought to be “nothing” – was nothing but the scary contact with the fabric of living – and this instant of recognition (akin to a revelation) has to be accepted with the purest innocence, with the innocence out of which one is made. (p. 483-484)

Writing, understood as a double stroke made of vegetative attention and conceptive innocence, turns into vapor, liquid matter, pure impermanence. Hence its inclination to found improbable worlds, as dazzling as they are fleeting, since it wishes itself to be only metastatic, fosterer of more writing. It is the unstoppable aspiration to become, itself, writing

matter – this amazing ability it has of self-fecundation and endless self-multiplication. Hence, also, its propensity to germinate more life in those who write it and, who knows, in those who take hold of it. A writing-encounter of two incommensurate solitudes, at last.

The third and last argument refers to the alleged subordination of writing to reading. This is because, in the habitual pedagogy primer, the ability to read appears as the causal reason of competence in writing, establishing itself, along with repetitive training, as its necessary and sufficient condition.

Scrutinized by a Foucauldian look, the practices of reading will, however, turn out to be the privileged means of submitting the pupils to the wide range of truth regimes conveyed through teaching. The latter, tied to the logic of recognition, is responsible for this feedback within a closed intellectual universe, which denies the principle that “each and every writing exercise is, in fact, a contingent exercise, always destined to rewriting. [...] Everyone writes from vestiges and fragments of other writings” (Ó; COSTA, 2007, p. 111).

Faced with the multiple assaults of which school writing practices are the target, but also the instrument, Jorge Ramos do Ó defends a stimulating alternative:

[...] to produce within the school culture mechanisms in which writing can be a daily life practice, where the wish to write can be installed, where the wish to understand and imagine the world expands. It would be a change of paradigms: substituting writing for reading. (Ó; COSTA, 2007, p. 111)

Operating a transmutation of reading and writing paradigms in school practices, as suggested by the Portuguese author, would require giving up the hypothesis of affiliation and linear and progressive dependence between writing and reading, whose connection would take place through links of coherence and convenience. On the contrary, if anything

happens between them, it is, in the limit, a dispersion, neither contingent nor accidental, but perennial and necessary. Thus, a discontinuous dialogue is what, at best, unfolds here; a dialogue which is not harmonious, but marked by a bristling heterogeneity. Better to say, what is established between them is a deliberate chasm, a strategic chasm that, paradoxically, supplies the conditions for the emergence of the novel.

The novelty of Ramos do Ó’s proposal is definitely not related to the suppression of the labors of reading, but exactly to their transubstantiation by writing. To put it differently, it is about taking other people’s writings as points of passage or of anchoring of the work of ruminating one’s thoughts, endowing them with a status of a point intervention. Reading, therefore, never with lowered eyes.

Germinated in the interval, abyssal and always vacant space of the coming together of the one who reads and the one who writes, reading would then establish itself as the construction of a transitory place for the common between them, so that, then, the unheard of can emerge beyond them both. It is precisely a relationship of (in)fidelity (VEIGA-NETO, 2006) with those who wrote before, never of spoliation. An orphaned gratitude, perhaps.

From this follows an uncertain play between reading and writing, according to which the former will only guarantee its share of legitimacy insofar as it becomes a springboard to the latter, and the latter turns into a catalyst of modes of thinking in a permanent state of experimentation and (re)composition.

In this way, he who writes would transmute himself into a wandering collector of ideas, moving along a haphazard and unsuspecting itinerary, marked by choices largely adventitious and fragmentary in the face of what he happens to read. With that, the mystifying aura around the reading practice would perhaps be broken as something virtuous *per se*, as well as that around writing

as something ceremonial and reserved only to initiates or those gifted by nature.

So conceived, writing turns into the exact point of irruption of forces that refuse to bend over before the established, the already said, the already thought by someone else; temporary shelter, therefore, of the potency of thinking, not as it is presented to us in school tradition (in general, as reverence to the legacy, via the mechanism of the commentary), but as a work still to be done, in whatever time and space, should we wish to so do it.

If the Foucauldian premise holds, that wherever there are power relations there will also be resistance and, perhaps, creation, it must be equally true the assumption that, amidst the school writing practices, there will be gaps, folds, spasms, inventive becomings. How can we size them? Or rather, how to put in perspective school writing in its heterotopic, non-finalistic, strand?

Writing as a way of living in schools

Roland Barthes, one of the contemporary thinkers of Foucault that dedicated more energy to problematize the act of writing, offers a detailed picture of the possible reasons for such act. Arbitrariness and gratuity would be, according to him, birthmarks of writing. Here is, in full, one of his manifestations on the theme:

Since writing is not a normative or scientific activity, I cannot say why one writes or *what for*. I can only enumerate the reasons why I imagine writing:

1. for a need of pleasure which, as we know, is not unrelated to erotic enchantment;
2. because writing decenters the speech, the individual, the person, it carries out a work whose origin is indiscernible;
3. to put in practice a "gift", to satisfy an instinctive activity, to mark a difference;
4. to be recognized, gratified, loved, contested, observed;

5. to fulfill ideological or counter-ideological tasks;

6. to follow the injunctions of a secret typology, of a warring distribution, of a permanent evaluation;

7. to please friends, to annoy enemies;

8. to contribute to fissure the symbolic system of our society;

9. to produce new meanings, that is, new forces, to take hold of things in a new way, to shake and modify the subjugation of the meanings;

10. finally, as a result of the deliberate multiplicity and contradiction of these reasons, to deceive the idea, the idol, the fetish of the Unique Determination, of the Cause (causality, and "good cause") and thereby grant the superior value of a pluralist activity, without causality, finality or generality, as the text itself is. (2004a, p. 101-102)

Without an *a priori* foundation, nor finality of any kind, the work of writing is solidary to the task of living, in its immanent multiplicity. A writing-subsistence, in other words.

It is writer Doris Lessing, however, who offers one of the most touching justifications for such gesture: "I write because I am a writing animal" (apud BRITO, 2007b, p. 75). One writes because one cannot avoid the extraordinary forces that present themselves therein, that insist for a while and, then, vanish never to return.

Attitude of constant watchfulness to what surrounds us, from now on writing will not be defined by any transcendental calling, by no extra-natural inspiration, no genius nor its opposite, ancestry. No inclination, no mystery. Rather, bewilderment, overflowing, disfiguration and, one hopes, dissolving of oneself. Likewise, no attachment to any kind of transcendent or restorative mission. No humanist/humanizing trace, therefore. No redemption, nor damnation; solely transmutation. Power to exist.

Tomaz Tadeu (2007) is one of the authors who, within the educational arena in Brazil, displays a set of directions as vigorous

as audacious with respect to the procedures of writing and, above all, to the ethical-intellectual craft implied therein. Let us hear him:

[...] 90. Don't cite. Vampirize. 28. Don't embellish. Dissolve. 39. Don't ornate. Soil. 89. Don't decorate. Blur. 55. Don't clean. Stain. 145. Don't flower. Deflower. 18. Don't regulate. Fable. [...] 10. Don't narrate. Distort. 66. Don't discourse. Evade. 200. Not order, nor inversion. Diversion. 22. Don't explicate. Complicate. 9. Don't pile. Dig. 69. Don't plaster. Scrape. 33. Don't line up. Derail. 88. Don't follow the path. Leave the tracks. 301. Don't focus. Disperse. 15. Don't organize. Shuffle. 78. Don't give shape. Deform. 35. Don't fuse. Confuse. 101. Don't centralize. Distribute. 102. Ruler, what for? Shove your fingers. 38. Divider, what for? Stick your feet in. (p. 309-310)

Such perspective on the intellectual/writing work would have its roots in a kind of procedure more akin to the installation of ideas than to the scientific demonstration; a procedure sympathetic to a conduct that challenges and, perhaps, destabilizes the pedagogical imperatives that give support to the writing automatism; a procedure similar to the one evoked by Deleuze and Guattari (1992):

The painter does not paint on an empty canvas, and neither does the writer write on a blank page; but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision. (p. 262)

The work of writing becomes, therefore, indistinguishable from that of creation. Setting up a *temporary autonomous zone*, as proposed by Hakim Bey (2004), this kind of writing refers to small upheavals, not to safe-conducts; to small festivals, not to revolutions. A writing-

combat that challenges determinations of multiple orders, that alters destinies already traced, that transforms lives indelibly. A writing-breaking, so to speak.

This is what this essay takes as its concluding argument, in consonance with the proposal of a *writing-artist*, such as conceived by Sandra Mara Corazza (2006): "A writing that creates an uncertain and dangerous world is the only force that makes the teacher differentiate himself, that is, to become what he is, beyond what has been made of him" (p. 22).

The act of writing is now defined as the encouragement to displacement, without a prearranged destination, of the lives passing there; lives surely constrained by four secular walls, but equally avid for the intensification of the nomadic forces that compel them to move towards the never-ending novelty which is their requisite; lives carried out amidst the crossfire of turbulent, immoderate, roving ideas and bodies; lives as open ended works, in short.

Thus considered, the act of writing becomes thoroughly indistinguishable from the tireless labor of living life in all its possible exuberance: surfaces of contact; fleeting intensities; power to exist, once again.

The writing-artist is never simple. It does not normatize, does not present, does not tell histories, does not illustrate nor narrates what happened. Something runs through it. [...] The writer-artist is a janitor: he empties, scrapes, brushes, cleans. He writes about the codes, slogans, regimes of signs, in order to refute them, to shuffle them, to invert or subvert them. However, he distinguishes what sprouts there: that which favors writing, what hinders it, what blocks it, what lets intensities pass. (CORAZZA, 2006, p. 35)

If there is a type of inhuman grain in this kind of appropriation of school writing, it is due to the fact that the ethical-aesthetical self-creation implied therein carries itself as host to

the plurality of formless and, at the same time, colossal forces that traverse us at each moment. Discontinuous, spasmodic forces, prone only to the communion with difference. Forces that “simply effect themselves, radiating wills to power, acting upon other things, resisting to others, wanting to extend itself to the limit, manifesting a wish-to-become-stronger” (CORAZZA, 2006, p. 28). Forces contrary to what one already thinks, to what one already knows: that ingested, digested and expelled matter. Forces akin to what made Clarice Lispector (1975) declare masterfully:

I know very little. But I have going for me all that I do not know and – since it is a virgin field – is free from prejudice. All that I do not know is the larger and better part of me: it is my vastness. It is with it that I would understand everything. All that I do not know constitutes my truth. (p. xvii)

If, on the one hand, the inconstancy and unpredictability constitute the gravest risks of this kind of endeavor, on the other hand, its

vigor would reside precisely on the opening to the encounter with hitherto unforeseen events, even now only vaguely sketched, in the style of the Lispectorian not *knowing*. It is the inextricable movement of difference and variation that a writing free from the pedagogical conventions of the time affords and, concomitantly, requires of all those who pursue it. Writing as unimpeded approximation to freedom, in short.

A writing that opens itself to reading without chains, without barring clauses, without subjecting the reader to extortion or enticement. A roving, lonely writing, stray from light. A writing imbued “of a nocturnal, free, disgraced and useless passion that disrupts for one moment, rendering empty and insignificant all security, all stability, all happiness and all meaning of the day” (LAROSSA, 2004, p. 28).

Writing-happening: limiting gesture of a wandering creature that howls before the long, disconsolate night of men, in the face of which nothing is left to him but to throw signals at random in the attempt to elicit a reply far away, in the changeable infinite of the present time.

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Received 14.11.10

Accepted: 18.03.11

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