

Self-portrait instead of a mirror: curriculum, autobiography and difference

Autorretrato invés de espelho: currículo, autobiografia e diferença

Autorretrato en lugar de espejo: currículo, autobiografía y diferencia

Viviane Viana de Souza¹

ABSTRACT

The work addresses the question of the autobiographical subject in education research, erased by post-structural lenses, focusing on the relationships with the images of women artists in the curriculum, in an autobiographical bias, but expanded to the imagery dimension. I dialogue with the authors Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault and others in the field of education and feminist theory. I work with the concepts of framing, subject knowledge and located knowledge, arguing as to how an autobiographical approach, understood more as a self-portrait than a mirror, can make us rethink the frames/framings of reference involved in the processes of subjectivation and self-reports. I argue that a writing that is chafed with disruptive works by women artists can create dissident visualities in unpredictability, in the face of normative understandings in curriculum and teaching.

Keywords: Autobiography. Woman Artists. Difference. Curriculum. Framing.

RESUMO

O trabalho aborda a questão do sujeito autobiográfico nas pesquisas em educação, rasurado pelas lentes pós-estruturais, enfocando as relações com as imagens de artistas mulheres no currículo, em um viés autobiográfico, mas ampliando-o para a dimensão imagética. Dialogo com as/os autoras/es Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault e outras/os autoras/es do campo da educação e de teoria feminista. Trabalho com os conceitos de enquadramento, saberes sujeitados e saberes localizados, argumentando sobre como uma abordagem autobiográfica, entendida mais como autorretrato que como espelho, pode nos fazer repensar os quadros de referência/enquadramentos implicados nos processos de subjetivação e relatos de si. Defendo que uma escrita friccionada com obras disruptivas de artistas mulheres possa criar na imprevisibilidade visualidades dissidentes perante entendimentos normativos no currículo e na docência.

Palavras-chave: Autobiografia. Mulheres Artistas. Diferença. Currículo. Enquadramento.

¹Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro e Colégio Pedro II, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. Email: vivi.vianasouza@gmail.com 
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6542-9057>

RESUMEN

El trabajo aborda la cuestión del sujeto autobiográfico en la investigación educativa, borrado por lentes postestructurales, centrándose en las relaciones con las imágenes de mujeres artistas en el currículo, en un sesgo autobiográfico, pero ampliándolo a la dimensión de la imaginaria. Diálogo con los autores Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault entre otros autores del campo de la educación y la teoría feminista, trabajo con los conceptos de marcos, conocimiento sujeto y conocimiento localizado, argumentando como un enfoque autobiográfico, entendido más como un autorretrato que un espejo, puede hacernos repensar los marcos de referencia involucrados en los procesos de subjetivación y autoinformes. Sostengo que una escritura mezclada con obras disruptivas de mujeres artistas puede crear visualidades disidentes en la imprevisibilidad frente a interpretaciones normativas en el currículo y la enseñanza.

Palabras-clave: Autobiografía. Mujeres Artistas. Diferencia. Currículo. Marcos.

INTRODUCTION

All the facts presented here are true, except those that were completely made up.
(Inventando Anna, 2022)

Another school year begins. We gather in hallways, teachers' rooms, or classrooms, and whether as educators or in our (co)formation processes, we are familiar with a rather ordinary classroom ritual: speaking about and introducing oneself. Amidst icebreaker group dynamics to get to know our peers better, motivational Freirean excerpts, and hopeful speeches about the upcoming year or semester, the customary introduction is often accompanied by questions about our motivations, history, experience, and aspirations. These inquiries aim not only to define our teaching identities — akin to what scholars like Nóvoa and Finger (2010), and Tardif (2014) discuss — but also our subjectivities, the narratives of ourselves as subjects.¹

Whether in school through autobiographical accounts or in academia through educational research, the narrative construction about oneself is quite familiar. According to Lira and Passeggi, “self-narratives also reflect the image that the subject constructs of their capabilities, actions, and repercussions, of their place in the world” (2021, p. 8). What led me to choose to become a teacher? How did my visual arts training become part of my journey? What constitutes me as an educator? What are the subjective motivations behind certain choices in research and teaching — rather than others? Am I even capable of answering these (and many other) questions posed before me? These questions are interwoven by a certain idea of access to inner truth, intrinsic to us, supposedly accessible and decodable to construct a self-narrative, thus falling into a dichotomy between truth and fiction (Lira and Passeggi, 2021, p. 5). When looking in the mirror, do we expect (or wish?) to see a mimetic representation of ourselves?

What if we sought to decolonize this idea of the mirror, of a truth to be accessed about ourselves as students, educators, and researchers? How can one speak of oneself without evoking such concepts? In this text, prompted by an autobiography traversed by a post-structuralist perspective, I propose that we embrace illusion, accepting the image in the mirror as a reflection of something that is not truly there, but rather as a creation and invention. By engaging with curriculum practices,

1 In this text, rejecting the masculine as universal, words will be inflected in the feminine whenever possible.

teaching, and research in their uncertainties and representational games — where there are no definitive, objective answers but rather provisional and contingent writings, glimpses rather than truths captured by the mirror.

Not in search of answers but intending to dwell on the f(r)iction with questions, texts, and authors, this essay aims to explore the relationships between subjectivity, curriculum productions, and autobiography. Engaging in dialogue with Judith Butler's (2019) concept of framing and feminist theoretical productions, I propose that the friction with the images and performances of women artists, within the unpredictability of dissident visualities, serves as a powerful pathway to creating fissures in the educational context — allowing for the existence of subjectivities inhabited by difference and generating possible escape routes from normative and hegemonizing understandings within the curriculum.

To do so, I approach a post-structuralist perspective that critiques totalizing certainties and dismantles the singular, autonomous subject (historically masculine) that was central to analysis and theory in the positivist paradigm (Peters, 2000). This also implies shifting our production and approach to science and research methodologies in the social sciences and humanities, including educational and curricular theorization. Donna Haraway challenges the *modus operandi* of knowledge production centered on objectivity, universality, and scientific transparency — operated from the “standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference” (Haraway, 2009b, p. 27), in this distanced, objective, and impartial ‘I,’ understanding that the objectivity of this infinite vision — defended by this non-implicated science and its researchers — is also an illusion (p. 20). As Haraway points out, the eye “that has the power to see without being seen, to represent while escaping representation” (2009b, p. 18), marks the unmarked category of the supposed neutrality of the White Man, with capital letters signaling the proper name, the individuality of the human, and the centrality of the subject.”

WHICH ‘SELF’ DO I SPEAK OF? THE GAZE IN THE MIRROR

Not long ago, we moved away from the paradigm of *we* in academic writing, which marked the author/researcher (often masculine) distancing from the text and their research object. The first-person singular has emerged, occupying the fissures created within universalizing ideas of self and science following the linguistic turn, distorting the illusion of an objective and detached authority of the researcher. Research writing is now admitted as permeated by our subjectivities — contingent and always provisional. Distance and objectivity are increasingly understood as impossible. From those lenses, all research would, therefore, be autobiographical.

For Santos and Torga (2020), autobiography is “the account of a life by the person who lived the narrated event” (p. 122), based on the premise of the coincidence between author, narrator, and character — the so-called autobiographical pact. Within the field of education, many authors view autobiography as a possibility of self-formation through contact with others, an alterity that reads the autobiographical account. However, is this ‘self’ not itself permeated by alterity? “Thus, the story narrated in this work can be considered a mirror, a metaphor for the act of reflecting, for contemplating who we are” (Silva, Oliveira and Souza, 2018, p. 3). In this passage, the authors use the mirror metaphor to refer to the autobiographical dimension of their narrative regarding their engagement at the borders of the biological and human sciences. According to the authors, the text serves as a mirror that reflects who they are and their trajectory amid choices, points of contact, and distances between these different fields of knowledge, identities, and identifications.

Despite acknowledging the layers, multiplicity, and fantasies that coexist in the self-image accessed through the mirror, the role of accessing a pre-existing self still falls upon the reflection. However, from post-structuralist lenses, we confront the impossibility of this reflection capturing the

totality of who we are. The self-image we contemplate is not static; it is also constructed, fragmented, crafted in the bricolage of our memories, impossible to be captured.

For Judith Butler, one of the challenges of the narratives we construct about ourselves is precisely the impossibility of speaking solely about oneself. When I speak about myself, it is always through the interpellation of the other — there is no transparent, fully accessible truth, but rather another illusion. Butler speaks of an opaque subject, one that is neither translucent nor completely knowable to itself (2019). We can thus ask how much of ourselves has been fictionalized, given that, when we narrate an experience, engaging in the retrospective exercise of recounting something we are no longer living, its contours are altered in this narrative effort. Every memory, then, becomes a fiction of sorts.

From a post-structural perspective, autobiographical narratives are a continuous process of disillusionment with the self and detachment from a linear and truthful narrative. It is important to emphasize, however, that in discussing the fictions and illusions mobilized in the research I do not intend to align with the notion of falsehood as opposed to reality. Therefore, I do not invoke a specific desire for truth, as Foucault (2021) discusses, nor do I divide access to memories and the research writing process into categories of true or false. Juan José Saer states that we write fiction not to escape truth but to avoid being limited to that which is verifiable (2009, p. 2). The aim is not to discover truths but to blur the rigid contours surrounding the issues discussed here, complicating the understanding of words and concepts. As Thiago Ranniery suggests, the desire is “to friction” and to produce writing and research in education, “[...] as one who grazes bodies, blurring the boundaries between the self and the other, between any territory called ‘self’ and the alterity that inhabits and seeks to obscure it” (Ranniery, 2018, p. 16).

Therefore, adopting a post-structuralist and post-foundational perspective means from the outset rejecting any fixed notion of the subject — delineated and separate from its exteriority, existing in a self-contained manner and subject to (self)reflexive analysis, as if standing before a mirror. Here, I return to this object, mentioned at the beginning of this section, and its subjective meanings, which are commonly tied to its function of reflecting what or how we are. Frequently evoked in the autobiographical genre, reflection is activated as the act of self-observation, encountering oneself, and, from there, formulating and conjecturing about that / — their choices and paths roamed, an approach widely utilized in educational research that considers teachers’ discourses as empirical data. This self-analysis once again presupposes a transparent and accessible subject, much like an image reflected in a mirror.

The mirror as an announcer of reality is embedded in the Western logic of coloniality, incessantly framing the single truth while simultaneously producing its excesses. Illusion is expelled in favor of a faithful mimetic reflection of what is reflected. As a Western invention reproducing sameness, the mirror cannot contain what does not belong to the logic of representation and the metaphysics of presence. Haraway proposes abandoning reflection as a trigger to the truth as an artifact of the white male gaze that frames our bodies, research, and subjectivities. The very verb ‘to reflect’ ceases to make sense in capturing the act of speaking about oneself, whether in research or teaching.

However, how can one engage in self-narration beyond mimesis? The mirror itself — far from being an exclusive Western artifact — provokes consideration of other epistemologies that relate to subjectivity differently. Writing about the orishas Yemoja and Osun, who carry mirrors in Yoruba religiosity and epistemology, Cibele Silva (2020) discusses different symbolisms and uses of this object, pointing to a relational subjectivity that is not confined to the individual. Through non-Eurocentric framings, other relationships with the mirror become possible, where the focus is not on capturing truth or a faithful image but on the hetero-subjective construction of the one gazing into the mirror — a deeper dive than one that is interested only in the surface:

Thus, the importance of Osun's mirror, which allows for self-reflection, differs from Iemanjá's mirror, which looks outward and reveals one's relationships with others and the world. One completes the other, for it is through the gaze of others, through what they show and tell us about ourselves, that we form our vision of who we are. (Silva, 2020, p. 80)

By displacing the mirror — situated in Western epistemology as an apparatus yearning for sameness and capturing what or who stands before it — it is possible to suspend the act of reflection, a verb so frequently employed in research. This resonates with Donna Haraway's (1992) provocation, which invokes diffraction rather than reflection. For Haraway, diffraction consists of interference patterns that embrace difference: "(...) a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear but rather maps where the effects of difference appear" (Haraway, 1992, p. 300).

Alongside these authors, I believe it is possible to conceive subjectivity in an autobiographical perspective with its blurred boundaries. The mirrors of Yemoja and Osun invite us to look inward, toward the other, and toward the world (and here I refer to a world inhabited not only by humans). Afro-Indigenous cosmologies open pathways for questioning what or how Osun sees in the mirror: man, woman, youth, love (Goldman, 2021), crystal-images that inhabit Deleuzian indiscernibility. A gaze that, together with the mirror as a technological apparatus, produces something unprecedented rather than mere repetition "in the pleasure of the confusion of borders, territories of the production of reproduction and imagination" (Haraway, 2009a, p. 37).

In the inventive re/creation of the self-image, diffraction rather than reflection, "the subject leaks from all sides" (Haraway, 2009a, p. 8), and I am particularly interested in not losing sight of the fact that the image framed in the reflective surface excludes difference. Abandoning the idea of truth and transparent access to oneself and focusing instead on the diffractive construction of this image, in an attempt at methodological bricolage, the impossibility of speaking of oneself or being captured by the mirror leads me to open myself to other narratives of the self that do not fall into the supremacy of voice as truth (St. Pierre, 2008). This path also reminds us to consider the mirror as a gendered apparatus, which, operating alongside the language of the *self*, has long denied and limited who could speak about themselves, making autobiography a literature genre predominantly associated with masculinity (Rago, 2013). As Haraway reminds us: "Feminists never tire of reminding us that the canonical portrait of the subject posing as abstract, universal, rational, and reflective evokes — coincidence? — a typical member of a particular subset of the male gender" (Haraway, 2009a, p. 10).

Thus, questioning the making of science and the possibility of a preexisting researcher identity, we come to understand the subject as an ever-unfinished project, with its meaning always deferred. Certainties such as science, identity, self, education, and rational thought no longer serve — if they ever did — as foundations for shaping our worldviews (Lopes, 2013). Here, I ask: how can we re/think of the mirror as an apparatus that participates in our processes of subjectivation? How can we (not) de/limit the four borders of the plane of reflection so that difference emerges in research and teaching practices mediated by autobiography?

SELF-PORTRAIT INSTEAD OF A MIRROR

Mirror. A vitrified surface that completely reflects the light that falls upon it. Sand, sodium, and calcium, which, along with the eye, create images as techniques of the self (Rago, 2013), circumscribing the mirror as a technology of subjectivation. However, given the impossibility of reflection folding back on itself, as I have argued so far, how can we think of subjectivity in an

autobiographical perspective in a diffractive manner, traversed by difference? How can one speak of oneself beyond sameness and the capture by what we access through reflection? In this section, I want to introduce another image, another apparatus that operates techniques of the self but which I believe can help us escape mimetic imprisonment or make the illusion of mimesis and reflection more perceptible as false promises — because they are impossible: the self-portrait.

In visual arts, the self-portrait is the pictorial translation that the artist makes of themselves — not as a mirror, but as a creation that encompasses many nuances, including the language chosen by the artist, their poetics, their references (from other artists, works, times, and spaces) that they wish to be seen alongside their image, the position they assume, the background they reveal (and what they exclude), among many other aspects. Materiality and subjectivity converge to create a record of the otherness of oneself. Certainly, in postmodernity, the self-portrait disrupts the notion of an object to be represented. Mobilized from the avant-garde to contemporary art, the work is not the artist, nor even the one's face representation who paints or draws it, as René Magritte provocatively suggested in 1929 with *The Treachery of Images*² (is the artist an illusionist?). It is paint, graphite, support, materiality, and language orchestrated under their poetics provisionally — since, with each glance and brushstroke, one is no longer the same as a few seconds ago.

Rather than being a mirror, then, could we say that research can learn from the autobiography by examining the processes of subjectivation of the self that writes? Understanding oneself as an opaque subject, as Butler suggests, means recognizing that we are not fully accessible to ourselves — neither in our preferences nor in the causalities behind our research topic choices or our trajectory as educators. Looking at myself as a woman, researcher, teacher, and artist entails acknowledging the never-ending bricolage of my being and becoming in school, in the curriculum, and in the world. Not all educational research needs to be autobiographical, but research can benefit from its author's autobiographical process as a technique of the self, recognizing their implication in writing and research, in the dispossession of their perspective as uniquely their own. Thus, research writing is traversed by processes of subjectivation and haunted by the impossibility of accessing a closed and defined history (Butler, 2021). Autobiography has a relational nature, existing only in the act of reading by another, signifying the importance of the other in constituting oneself: “One can only tell an autobiography to another, and one can only refer to an ‘I’ concerning a ‘you’: without the ‘you,’ my narrative becomes impossible” (Butler, 2021, p. 46). The self-portrait thus constitutes itself as a relational otherness that destabilizes identity as something to be possessed in a finalized and closed form.

I approach the self-portrait with interest in a non-anthropocentric alterity that also inhabits the ‘I’ that writes, as well as a spatiotemporal rupture in the very act of self-narration — one that diffracts more than it reflects, producing the effects of difference. What we call identity, I propose to view as an effect of performativity that encompasses our processes of subjectivation. When attempting to give narrative form to the conditions of my emergence and recounting the possible meanings that this ‘exposure to the other’ may have had on me, autobiography, as a technique of the self, acquires a prismatic character. I pursue the colorful and multiple rays that emerge from the prism. In vain, as I cannot capture them. However, as they multiply and escape, they lead me to other images. Here, I choose three works in different media and formats as visual texts that, in my view, operate with the self-portrait as a diffractive writing of the self.

The artist Élle de Bernardini asserts that *The Empress is Among Us*.³ By occupying museum spaces in an imposing, strategic, and provocative manner, where bodies like Élle's are rendered abject within

2 Magritte (n.d.).

3 Bernardini (2019).

their collections. Considering the place of alterity, recognizing singularities and encounters in the I-you relationship within the curriculum against normative dichotomous frameworks — between the absence of women as artists in art and the abundance of representations of female bodies by male artists — becomes crucial for questioning which frames of recognition are deemed possible in the curriculum.⁴ As Luzia Margareth Rago (2013) elaborates, who has space to speak about themselves? In the self-photographic record, the red mass of Élle’s dress stands out, capturing attention within the frame, even amidst the architecture and artworks of significant and traditional art institutions. The meticulous attention to aspects such as symmetry, contrast, and balance in the eponymous photographic series highlights Élle’s body, not through what is framed but through what is left out — its excesses. To some extent, curatorial choices — whether in museums, educational spaces, or even theoretical references, shaping academic bibliographies — admit only what mirrors dominant narratives. Much like Oxum’s mirror, Élle invites us to look diffractively, within the indiscernibility of a prismatic gaze that does not merely reflect its own image but is traversed by difference, by another temporality, making the present speak to both past and future.

The framing plays that differentiate between the lives that we can apprehend and those that we cannot structure our visual experience and generate specific subject ontologies (Butler, 2019) in the meanings they produce and the selections and exclusions they operate. Race, gender, and sexuality emerge as effects of difference, captured in terms such as cis woman, trans woman, Black, white, etc. Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí (2021) argues that the gendering of bodies as a social hierarchy map is also a Western invention. Élle, as a trans *woman*, reminds us that ‘woman’ is not a given but a relational and contingent existence, formed through reiterated crossings and affectations that constitute us. In Judith Butler’s (2018) elaboration of embodied and multifaceted performativity, the inscriptions and interpellations of the other not only produce us but also inform the lived modes of embodiment in gender attribution — a fantasy formed by others and integral to our formation. It is within this relational and discursive yet embodied constitution that we become gendered subjects.

Black, fat, disabled, Latin, and trans bodies, as Beyoncé and Jay-Z remind us in *Apeshit*,⁵ are often excluded from the hegemonic Western universal pretensions of art history, which, until the early 20th century, upheld an extremely narrow canon. This exclusion delineated the boundaries of what could be considered art and, consequently, shaped curriculum practices and what is recognized as legitimate within visual arts education. This is not to say that the expanded possibilities of representation seen in recent decades are sufficient. More than broadening boundaries, it is necessary to question and blur them. Beyoncé plays with normative frames of art, body, gender, and race by positioning herself within one of the world’s most famous collections, the Louvre Museum. Rap, moving bodies, and provocative verses wield the authority that wealth and fame afford, mingling with iconic artworks such as the *Mona Lisa*, *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, and *The Raft of the Medusa*. The shapes and skin tones of dancers in second-skin garments recall the nude female figures that populate museum collections — figures that are overwhelmingly white, as the Guerrilla Girls have pointed out. Race and gender permeate and influence framing mechanisms, shaping our visual repertoires and participating in our processes of subjectivation.

Frames that continue to operate totalizing significations of what constitutes art are also embedded in subjectivation processes within the curriculum. By framing “Art” with a capital ‘A’ — white, European, and male — as the only possible narrative, we risk the single-story fallacy

4 “Do women have to be naked to get into MASP?,” asked the Guerrilla Girls collective in 2017 regarding the presence of female artists in the collection of the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP). Nearly 50 years earlier, Linda Nochlin, in her article “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” questioned why no female names appeared in the list of great artistic geniuses. See: Nochlin (2016).

5 Kowles and Carter (2018).

(Adichie, 2019) and the erasure of subjugated (Foucault, 2005) and localized knowledge (Haraway, 2009b) in contrast to hegemonic art discourses that determine what enters the classroom. In her analysis of photography, Butler underscores how images and media are not merely awaiting interpretation but actively, and at times forcibly, interpreting the world (Butler, 2019).

In the pathways of self-constitution, recognizing alterity beyond what the mirror reflects, I return to the self-portrait in contemporary art as a phantasmatic visuality that exposes — but necessarily also excludes — the framings that enable and produce an artist's notion of self. In her photographic self-portraits in the *Glass on Body (Imprints)* series, Ana Mendieta⁶ invites blur, unpredictability, and the abject into the photograph decisive moment, capturing her body not as it is seen or expected by others but activating an illusion/fiction of the body. From Mendieta's series, we understand that representation cannot be reduced “to its explicit content. Since it is fundamentally constituted by what is left out — what remains outside the frame in which representations appear — we can consider framing as an active process” (Butler, 2019, p. 112). To take the image and its animated productive character as discursive is to understand it as embedded in subjectivation processes in the curriculum and social life, constituting fields of possibilities and subjectivation. Framings that present themselves as truth shape what is perceived as reality, fulfilling, in a way, “the task of understanding the operation of a norm that circumscribes reality by its very framing” (Butler, 2019, p. 127), marking its excess as unintelligible and unrecognizable. Thus, I argue that the process of pedagogical curatorship — through the continuous selection and exclusion of images, artworks, artists, and other visual manifestations — inscribes gender and sexuality onto bodies as legitimate (Louro, 2018) and expected within the school environment, shaping possible framings and subjectivations in the becoming of self in relation to alterity. As Ranniery states: ‘Fiction allows me to assume the non-transparency of writing without, however, discarding alterity — whether due to the risk of self-encapsulation or by erasing the various ways in which difference distorts, displaces, and constitutes research writing’ (2018, p. 4).

However, the reiteration of normative framings is neither predictable nor closed, as Butler (2019) warns, and within framing itself, unpredictable excesses emerge. In the interpellations of my being as a woman-teacher-artist, I acknowledge the excess, embracing the impossibility of transparency in any narrative I construct about myself and my research text. The challenge at hand is to create a situated investigation of curriculum practices, attentive and open to difference in a continuous, unfinished becoming. Engaged with the frictions between images beyond representation, working with the woman artist, the agentive and insurgent body — subversive like the very uncertainty of art that disrupts the demarcations between life, subject, truth, and illusion — also entails erasing normative framings, expanding ways of signifying the world, and playing with the boundaries that refuse to stay still (Barad, 2007). These acts disrupt and reconfigure framing, inventing new and unpredictable terms that “reactivate overlooked possibilities for the curriculum” (Lopes, 2015, p. 141).

NON-VERNISSAGE OR PROVISIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The era of artworks that Beyoncé engages with in *Apeshit*, the vernissage, was the event marking the completion of an artwork, sealed with the varnishing of the painting. After months, years, or decades, the work was finished, nothing more could be done or altered, and the varnish was applied to protect the brushstrokes and also mark the conclusion of its creative process. Here, there is no varnish or conclusion. I perceive the self-portrait in an expanded sense — whether photographic, painted, or audiovisual — more as a language than as a traditional

⁶ Mendieta (1972).

artistic genre. A language used by the artists with whom I engage in this article as a process, as a technique of the self, to re/think the limits of self-representation. They seek not merely to create realistic images of themselves, as reflected in a mirror, but rather to autobiographically explore the writing of their subjectivity in a way that is traversed, provisional, and blurred — one that, upon materializing in an image, already becomes something else, speaks of another person who is already different, no longer the same, transformed by the very act of doing/being. A process-image that does not fit varnish because it never arrives, never ends, in the eternal journey of becoming.

Embracing the de/illusions that a blurred autobiography can offer appears as a pathway to constructing research and writing that aspire to be non-normative. Another f(r)iction that we construct along the way as we research, regardless of our research topics, in the production of curricular practices committed to difference. Again, letting go of humanist certainties to put my body in movement and to dance, as Élle de Bernardini invites me to, becomes necessary: thus, we embrace a practice of situated research, an implicated teaching carried out by a relational self — traversed and constituted by many voices, temporalities, relationships, events, and interactions that participate in an ongoing, never-ending process of subjectivation. We can learn from autobiographical writings to dance with the provisional nature of what one is (or one is becoming), never fully accessible due to the opacity of the self. Embracing illusion as a researcher-teacher-artist, utilizing different resources, experiences, theories, times, sketches, authors, images, brushes, data, spaces, paints, words, and mediums in a diffractive bricolage — with its poetics and language, arising from experience in the curriculum, in research, and in the world.

The works I bring here provoke us to take writing as a stitching of scraps/fragments of memories and events, f(r)ictionalized, entangled in the layers of the image I present and continuously create when I am called to speak about myself — more as a self-portrait than as a mirror, or even, in another kind of mirror, one that diffracts instead of reflecting. I believe that by assuming research and curriculum as performative self-portraits entangled through/with/from the visualities produced by women artists, we can create and invent fissures for living in meanings and bodies capable of re/framing a more livable future within the school.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VIVIANE VIANA DE SOUZA is a PhD student in the Postgraduate Program in Education at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (ProPEd-UERJ). She is a professor in the Department of Visual Arts at Colégio Pedro II/RJ, on the São Cristóvão I campus.

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Responsible editor: Edla Eggert  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1980-7053>

