

**A Tension in Orchestration: Dialogism and Poetry in *Lavoura Arcaica*
(Tillage Passé) / *Uma partitura da tensão: dialogismo e poesia em
Lavoura arcaica***

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at revisiting main concepts of the Bakhtin Circle, especially the notion of dialogism, in order to think about the dense thread of voices that confront one another in the novel called *Lavoura Arcaica* (Tillage Passé) by Raduan Nassar. We intend to question a determined and concrete image about the poetry in the Circle's writings, reviewed by theorists in and outside Brazil, to demonstrate how the poetic can be influenced by ideological positions, reinforcing the emotional-volitional tone that stimulates the characters' central voices in *Lavoura Arcaica*.

KEYWORDS: *Lavoura Arcaica* (Tillage Passé); Bakhtin; Dialogism; Poetry

RESUMO

*Neste trabalho revisitamos conceitos centrais do Círculo de Bakhtin, sobretudo a noção de dialogismo, para pensar o tecido tenso de vozes que se confrontam no romance *Lavoura arcaica*, de Raduan Nassar. Pretendemos problematizar certa visão construída sobre a poesia nos escritos do Círculo, e retomada por teóricos dentro e fora do Brasil, para mostrar como o poético pode estar a serviço de posicionamentos ideológicos, reforçando o tom emocional-volitivo que anima a voz dos personagens centrais de *Lavoura arcaica*.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Lavoura arcaica; Bakhtin; Dialogismo; Poesia*

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1 In the beginning *was* the poetry

Lavoura arcaica's first words seem to be an expression of a reverie; its poetic voltage isolates them as if they were a lonely cry sent to the Cosmos. A capsule shaded by lyrical tones that emulate the situation of the I. A room of intimacy, loneliness, despair. But this world that closes in, that isolates itself in a double sense – isolation of I / isolation of language - will be invaded, instigated, provoked, will have to make way for another command – to dialogize itself. The I that used to be twisted up inside himself must now turn towards the other. From that moment on, what is drawn is a continuous motion, complex, of surface curls and, why not say, from the depths of the discourse. Now the poetic tone, which seems to isolate the language within the world of the gods, to remote foundations and at times clashes with the centers of value that resonate on these themes – the disputed objects - and, more than that, the voice that refracts, which incites, provoked by the presence and responses from the other.

The tragic-biblical diction that crosses the pages of *Lavoura arcaica*, the undeniable poetic tone that pulses, incessantly can create in the reader a sense of uniformity of language. . Intoxicated by the metaphors, stunned by the force of the poetic symbols, the reader may be led to listening to one voice only – that of the author-creator – in which in fact there is a significant stratification. Our task in this paper, based largely on Bakhtin's works and those of the Circle, is "to make an egress, out of the work we face, a highly complex network of formal and evaluative relationships rooted in history and culture, which gives an extraordinary uniqueness to it" (TEZZA, 2003, p.26-27).

If the central problem of a novel, as Bakhtin argued, is the image of language, we shall begin by determining how that image is constructed in *Lavoura arcaica*. If the novel is a multi-linguistic and multi-stylistic phenomenon, it is necessary to examine how the speeches stratify in the architectural features of the work. The work of Nassar is heir and debtor to the entire evolution of the novel not only Brazilian, but European. In this paper we intend to show that, by increasing the dialogism as he does in *Lavoura arcaica*, Nassar stands as one of the best (among the few) continuators, in the tropics, of the Dostoevskian work. As in the narratives of the Russian writer, what excels in

Lavoura arcaica is not a range of jargons, of typical talk¹, but a profoundly dialogic orchestration that explicates semantic and contradictory axiological perspectives, which destroys any image of a single and centralized language. *Lavoura arcaica* becomes, in each of its compositional aspects, an arena in which voices struggle for hegemony in a clash where man's final destinies are played out. Law and desire, order and freedom, the traditions of the clan and individual autonomy are the themes that embody the threads of the discourse and achieve a dynamic aesthetic finish – they become images.

2 Images of poetry in the theories of the Circle

It remains to explain more precisely the place and role of the poetic in *Lavoura arcaica*. The discussion is not simple, especially because of the controversial definition given by Bakhtin to poetic language as being authoritarian and centralized. The established difference between novelistic language and poetics is embedded in the topic “The discourse in poetry and the discourse in novels,” which is part of the essay *Discourse in the novel*, from the decade of the 1930s.

The writer Cristovão Tezza is a Brazilian scholar who has published several articles and a book dedicated to discussing the issue of prose *versus* poetry in the works of the Bakhtin Circle. Our essay starts from some of his premises, endorsing them and/or questioning them.

One of Tezza's great merits is shedding light on the turf where the prose *versus* poetry discussion occurs, according to the Bakhtinian theory. One cannot ignore that all of the thinker's great concepts are developments of his language conception, which is essentially dialogical. Actually, doubly dialogical: even the most abstract thought or a "lonely" verbalized word, is performed in a double orientation - in relation to what has

¹On the novel by Dostoevsky, to which we will seek to join the prose of Raduan Nassar and the peculiarities of the dialogic relations that when boosted are born in polyphony, says Bakhtin (1999, p.182): “in Dostoevsky's multi-voiced novels, for example, there is significantly less language differentiation, that is, fewer language styles, territorial and social dialects, professional jargons and so forth, than in the work of many writer-monologists —Leo Tolstoy, Pisemsky, Leskov and others.[...] For what matters here is not the mere presence of specific language styles, social dialects, and so forth, a presence established by purely linguistic criteria; what matters is the *dialogic angle* at which these styles and dialects are juxtaposed or counterpoised in the work. Yet this dialogic angle is precisely what cannot be measured by purely linguistic criteria, because dialogic relationships, although belonging to the realm of the word, do not belong to the realm of its purely linguistic study”.

been said (there is no primordial, "adamical" word)² and directed to someone, targeting a perceptual background. According to Tezza, the concept of dialogism is the development of the notion of "value center" that could be found in one of the earliest writings of the thinker, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, an essay that still holds a huge seductive power, for it reveals that in Bakhtin, every theoretical project was founded on dimension of inalienable ethic. *Toward a philosophy of the act* does not cease to strengthen one's spirit, even the pretentious youthful writers who, in a century of scientific mythologies, sought out maximum objectivity, placed themselves as a participative thinkers; Bakhtin wanted to found a moral philosophy

that could give an account for the "event of the being", that perpetual moment, the time frontier, for which we have no alibi and whose responsibility we cannot escape from, the "here and now" without turning it into a theoretical object that excludes the subject's view, a philosophy, at last, that could sever the incommunicability of two "mutually impenetrable worlds: the world of culture and the world of life" (TEZZA, 2006, p.198).

The humanist feature, the appeal, why not say, utopianism of Bakhtin's thought, although having *given up* the project of this *prima philosophia*, appears in his first written propositions, that radiate and penetrate all concepts later developed. Tezza (2006, p. 199) argues that Bakhtin would have found in aesthetics, more specifically in literature (especially in novelistic prose), the "accomplishment of his philosophical project of nature".

Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel – a novel in which the ultimate questions of man are embodied in dialogue injunctions and in which there is a time qualified by the urgency of choices, a time that fecundates space, infusing it with life and meaning (historicity) – has similarities with the philosophical proposal of

a representation, a description of the real architectonic, concrete, form the world of experienced values, [...] with that real center, concrete, both spatial and temporal, from which assessments arise, statements and actions, and where the constituent members are real objects, interconnected by event-relations (Bakhtin cited TEZZA, 2006, p.199).

² "Only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object. Concrete historical human discourse does not have this privilege: it can deviate from such inter-orientation only on a conditional basis and only to a certain degree" (BAKHTIN, 2008, p.279).

In the development of Bakhtinian theory and in his increasing interest shown in relation to literature, the opposition between prose and poetry arises when the thinker deepens his/her understanding of the forms of language appropriation. According to Bakhtin, there was to be a fundamental difference between the writers (and here we include prose writers) that appropriate, who take completely for themselves the language of the work as a theirs (monologizing tendency) and those that make a productive use of others language, who take the social "heteroglossia" and make it the radiating center of aesthetic construction (dialogizing tendency). Note that this movement of assuming the language refers to its every aspect from the ideological-semantic dimension, tone, rhythm including lexical and syntactic choices, etc. Tezza understands these forms of language appropriation in a *continuum* that would go from "pure prose" to "pure poetry" in order to remember that justly due to the deeply stratified character of language manifestations these extremes³ are almost like abstractions; the aesthetic achievements are constituted in the broad gap that goes from one possibility to the other.

The poetic voice would focus more directly on the object-theme which labors aesthetically and the irradiation of the meaning would result from the dialectical character of the object-theme itself and from the *treasure* of language itself. In the novelistic prose, in turn, the writer makes the voice as it is projected towards the object, to penetrate and to be penetrated by the voice of other social discourses on the focused theme; Bakhtin (2008, p.277) uses the image of a ray to account for this process:

If we imagine the intention of such a word, that is, its *directionality toward the object*, (emphasis in original) in the form of a ray of light, then the living and unrepeatable play of colors and light on the facets of the image that it constructs can be explained as the spectral dispersion of the ray-word, not within the object itself (as would be the case in the play of an image-as-trope, in poetic speech taken in the narrow sense, in an "autotelic word"), but rather as its spectral dispersion in an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgments and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward

³Bakhtin (2008, p.274) explains why the stylistic of that time had a huge difficulty in realizing these aspects of dialogism in prose: "Linguistics, stylistics and the philosophy of language – as forces in the service of the great centralizing tendencies of European verbal-ideological life – have sought first and foremost for *unity* in diversity. This exclusive "orientation toward unity" in the present and past life of languages has concentrated the attention of philosophical and linguistic thought on the firmest, most stable, least changeable and most mono-semantic aspects of discourse – on the *phonetic* aspects first of all – that are furthest removed from the changing socio-semantic spheres of discourse.

the object; the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle.

The disputed object-themes in the novelistic prose are wrapped in this ocean of voices, which, ultimately, are points of view, ideological positions loaded with emotional-volitional tones (they can be concordant or discordant), but that create tense images, both from characters and language.

Intending on unveiling aspects of the stylistics that at time (soaked to the marrow linguistically) was disregarded, Bakhtin (2008, p.280) says yet another feature of the novelistic prose, alongside the internal language of dialogicity. it would not only in the object would it be encountered in the discourse of the others:

Every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue.

Bakhtin, however, does not want to comprehend the interlocutor figure in the mold of traditional rhetoric, in its passive receiver role. The Russian theorist argues that, in true dialogue, in every process of active understanding, the answer, the image of the other, the tone of his response affects the formation of discourse.

All this theorizing about the novelistic discourse, these intricate layers of its constitution that Bakhtin unraveled will be important in the understanding of *Lavoura arcaica*'s prose complexity, but we shall elucidate the way Bakhtin distinguishes the poetic discourse from this heteroglossia and the discourse of the other, which would be the mark of novelistic prose.

2.1 The poetic discourse: authority or authoritarian?

The poetic, in its strict sense (the maximum on the poeticity scale, of speech internalization), would be deaf to "alien utterances beyond its own boundaries" (BAKHTIN, 2008, p.285); the poet's voice is sufficient to itself, it needs to bet on

centralization, on the unification of all of its aspects (semantic ideological, rhythmical, intonational), if it does not want to implode. Tezza will aptly show that one of the problems of this thesis of Bakhtin is that sometimes, even the theorist himself lets an evaluative sense leak by this opposition. The concepts Bakhtin attributes to the poetics - centralization, self-sufficient and authoritative – did not enjoy a good reputation in the twentieth century, marked by totalitarianism of all kinds. In the authoritarian term case, we dare say that it looks like a *boutade* from the thinker, and exaggerated, to say the least, as much as that of Barthes when saying that language is fascist.

How to accept that a poem, with its marked rhythms, with the voice assumed by the bard, as *Navio negreiro* (The Slave Ship), could be authoritarian? Or, considering the dialogical relations from *Lavoura arcaica* with scenes / passages from the Scriptures, which one is the authoritarian tone of the Song of songs?

Perhaps because we are accustomed to a libertarian poetic, highly prosed as that inaugurated by the Modern Art Week in São Paulo, we may have some difficulty in accepting these statements from Bakhtin (2008, p.296-297):

The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. These ideas are immanent in the poetic genres with which he works. In a condition of actual contradiction, these are what determine the means of orientation open to the poet. The poet must assume a complete single-person hegemony over his own language, he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own, intentions. Each word must express the poet's *meaning* directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word. The meaning must emerge from language as a single intentional whole: none of its stratification, its speech diversity, to say nothing of its language diversity, may be reflected in any fundamental way in his poetic work.

We can say that, in their eagerness to implode cathedrals, models, rules, the poets learned to handle, in the land of poetry, some of the weapons and strategies that Bakhtin attributes to prose, for example, making two voices, two points of view sound polemical, without the poet clearly using *his own voice* in a rebellious way, allowing signification to emerge from shock. Or others, in which the poet incorporates the speech of professions, social classes, mocks them, approaches or moves away, as several texts from Bandeira and Drummond, for example.

Tezza makes a tremendous effort to maintain the coherence of Bakhtin's thought (not all great scholars of the works of the Russian thinker continue to do so, some have even boldly punctuated inconsistencies or some incompleteness)⁴. Where he tries to justify the "need" of this centralization of the poetic voice, a *sine qua non* condition for his survival, Tezza uses arguments that are tangent to contradiction; initially an apology of the prosaic world in which we live:

The issue is that we live in a prosaic time, resuming Bakhtin's literary architecture. It does not happen because there is an exact universal arbitrary preference for prose, but because, perhaps more than in any other time, awareness and appreciation of the languages of others - considered not as an object, but let's say democratically and multiculturally, as active subjects in the world of meanings - is present, and, it seems, is getting increasingly difficult for the poetic authority to find echo, namely, to find reception and resonance to a centralized intonation, the absolute mark of the poetic style in its highest voltage. Thus, what we call "prosaic contamination" is the contemporary mandatory hallmark of all poetry (2006, p.206-207).

And then, at the end of the text:

For Bakhtin, the poetic is the complete expression of a worldview that claims to itself the full responsibility for its words. In a fragmented and prosaic world like ours, sustaining the power of this language without surrendering to the common places of mass culture or the poetic-religious universals, which, it seems, is the hegemony left to us, is not an easy task. (2006, p. 215).

⁴ Note Morson and Emerson's observation (2008, p.2-3), interesting, especially, for it brings a *mea culpa* from the author of *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* about the incompleteness of some of his thesis: "some of his changing ideas cannot be subsumed even by an open, nonmonologic, plan. Not only does Bakhtin appear to alter his ideas in the course of working them out, but, it must be admitted, at times the simple contradicts himself. At other times, he goes off on tangents; at still others, he pursues weak ideas to a rapid dead end. In a rare meditation on his own work near the end of his life, Bakhtin attributed some misunderstanding of his ideas to his non-monologist habits of thought and writing: "My love for variations and for a diversity of terms for a single phenomenon. The multiplicity of focuses. Nudging distant things closer without indicating the intermediate links" (N_{70-7x}, p. 155). But in that same note, Bakhtin also admits to a less exalted form of inconsistency, the failure to think an idea through or to express himself clearly. One kind of open-endedness is both intrinsic to his thought and desirable, but the other is a shortcoming: "The unity of the emerging (developing) idea. Hence a certain internal open-endedness to many of my ideas. But I do not want to turn shortcomings into virtues: in these words there is much external open-endedness.... Sometimes it is difficult to separate one open-endedness from another" (ibid). To appreciate Bakhtin's strengths without apologizing for his weaknesses, we must try to distinguish between these two kinds of ambiguity and openness".

We are left in the dark not knowing whether the writer-critic deplores the "prosaic world" where we live in or if he is optimistic about multiculturalism. We think his first statement is overly generous and positive regarding the hearing that is given to the languages of others in our time. There is, in certain social and intellectual circles, a genuine effort to listen to the "foreign" voice, the other's speech; in different circumstances, it appears (pure irony) in the mouth of rulers, leaders, a politically correct speech that says it is aware and sensitive to difference, to the heteroglossia, but in practice what is observed is the overwhelming power of massification, an homogenization of the discourses, a flattening of the desiring forces. The argument that the poetic voice finds no resonance, audience, because it is centralized, seems quite insufficient; the polyphonic novel also, with all voice *democracy* and points of view that it carries, if it is from a Dostoevsky, if it is the philosophical work of a Camus, it does not have a large audience in our time. In another paragraph, Tezza (2006, p. 207) makes an even more negative binding about the poetic discourse:

But it is clear that this "poetic impulse" continues most alive in the background, or even invading (or recovering) genres that it had lost throughout history, such as narrative genres, by removing their essential internal dialogicity, the languages' fractures, and varnishing them with a thematically spiritualizing centralization.

This statement is accompanied by the following note:

In this sense, it is understandable perhaps, for example, part of Paulo Coelho's work phenomenon; it would accomplish this "poetic" prose in at least one of the aspects emphasized by Bakhtin - a centralizing voice reduces the whole world to its own authority and finds in its audience the exact acceptance, the echo that makes it breathe (TEZZA, 2006, p.216).

Binding "poetic impulse" with the platitude of ideas, with the spiritualizing veneer of uplifting "literatures" seems rather pointless. We could invert the argument and say, sure, that the "poetic impulse" is alive and recovering ground in a very powerful way (not necessarily in the sense of finding a large audience, if the measurement is done using these criteria, we would get bewildered), but enhancing senses, magnetizing every word, every polysemy phrase, as Guimarães Rosa or Raduan Nassar did.

If the understanding of the agency of voices in prose novel, the multiple forms of reflection and refraction between them, allows an explanation of the potentialities of the novel, it seems that the issue of centralized voice appropriation in poetic speech does not account for the complexity of poetry. You need to ask yourself what role the poetic speaker operates in this centralization. In this line of reasoning, we fully agree with the Tezza's second assertion. What the poet does is take the responsibility for the words. The resounding voice of Castro Alves raising himself before the official, religious speeches that once justified the horror of slavery, an ideological positioning was taken. Even the self-absorption of certain modern lyricism, affirmed by Adorno, who says that it is often a resistance to the processes of reification, and not deafening towards the social gibberish:

The work's distance from mere existence becomes the measure of what is false and bad in the latter. In its protest the poem expresses the dream of a world in which things would be different. The lyric spirit's idiosyncratic opposition to the superior power of material things is a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities that has developed since the beginning of the modern era, since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life. Rilke's cult of the thing [as in his Dinggedichte or "thing poems"] is part of this idiosyncratic opposition; it attempts to assimilate even alien objects to pure subjective expression and to dissolve them, to give them metaphysic a credit for their alienness. The aesthetic weakness of this cult of the thing, its obscurantist demeanor and its blending of religion with arts and crafts, reveals the real power of reification, which can no longer be gilded with a lyrical halo and brought back within the sphere of meaning. (ADORNO, 1991, p.40)

3 The (other) voices of poetry

A quick overview of modern poetry would give us an optimal spectrum of how the lyrical voices established different strategies in the way they are formed and, consequently, the way they relate to the world, to the reality, to other voices. In general, the hermeticism of post-baudelairean poetry is exaggerated, which becomes "empty transcendence, pure movement of language, lack of communicative purposes, escape from empirical reality, foundation of a time-space without causal relationships and dissociated from psychology and from history" (BERARDINELLI, 2007, p.21).

The Italian critic makes a stunning contrast to the famous work of Hugo Friedrich, *The structure of modern lyricism*, which he argued being this kind of "depersonalized poetry" the essence of modern lyricism. Bringing up names that Friedrich excludes from his *canon*, such as Whitman, Brecht, Antonio Machado, Mayakovsky, among others, Berardinelli (2007, p.28) points out that more "than an escape from reality toward empty transcendence" in many modern texts and authors it is possible to observe an opposite procedure. "In these cases, they are empirical reality, communication, the report or a parody that guides the construction of the text." Mayakovsky (1972, p.261-267), the poet of the Revolution, in a poem symptomatically called "Aloud and straight" after ranting against "the manor garden of Poetry" against the "caress" blown to the "the maiden auricle that nestles in it curls" (his poetry is an open controversy against "poetic thugs and crooks"), it is assumed as a poet with "the rough tongue of posters". His poems are compared with guns, his verses are "built in battle for all time," which will also forge another reality.

Note that our efforts so far have been questioning a certain image (somewhat hegemonic) of poetry as cloistered speech, as if the usually mobilized resources in its constitution were only to serve their isolation. This whole argument is now going to be used to show that *Lavoura arcaica* poetics works in different ways depending on the context in which André's speech is constituted⁵. Sometimes André's lyrical babbling insulates himself, as if his lips pronounced an orphic chant, the universal and timeless pain of man expelled from paradise. They are *lyrical islets* emerging from the torrential discourse of the character and if they could be separated, they would well deserve some of the qualifications given by Paz (1973, p.3-4) for poetry:

⁵The speech genres theory might provide a framework to understand the composition of *Lavoura Arcaica*, specifically the complete blend between poetry and prose. The changes and the incorporation of different genres in the novel have already been pointed out in Mota (2002, p.21-22): The *speech genres* are 'relatively stable types' produced in the inner aspects of the language use. The primary(simple) speech genres consist of the most spontaneous verbal exchanges (dialog lines, family discussions). Now, the secondary (complex) "speech genres - novels, drama, all kinds of scientific research , major genres of commentary[...] – arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion." (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.60, 61). An insightful analysis of *Lavoura arcaica* can show the degree of complexity in the development of the narrative discourse. Not only primary genres were assimilated and transmuted (serving a 'last resort semantics' – that of the author), but others also, complex, as the biblical discourse, psychoanalytical, the one from the Mediterranean traditions".

Poetry is [...] power, abandonment. [...] a spiritual exercise, it is a means of interior liberation. [...] Bread of the chosen; accursed food. It isolates; it unites. Invitation to the journey; return to the homeland. Inspiration, respiration [...] Prayer to the void, dialogue with absence: tedium, anguish, and despair nourish it. Prayer, litany, epiphany, presence. Exorcism, conjuration, magic. [...] Experience, feeling, emotion, intuition, undirected thought. Result of chance; fruit of calculation. Art of speaking in a superior way; primitive language. [...] Madness, ecstasy, logos. Return to childhood, coitus, nostalgia for paradise, for hell, for limbo. [...] Confession. [...] revelation, dance, dialogue, monologue. [...] language of the chosen, word of the solitary. Pure and impure, sacred and damned, [...] collective and personal [...].

We use the term lyrical islets in a figurative sense in order to speak of passages in which the tone of the metaphorical language is highly potentiated, in which the verb seems delirious⁶. But if we use other terms from Bakhtin, the truth is that almost every particle of *Lavoura arcaica*, every atom of language, is infected with poetic voltage. Even the father's speech, a little stiffer, has in its own way a poetic tone. In a dialogical perspective, it is possible to show how Nassar built the father's voice through the resumption of a *poetry of wit*, it is how Alter (1985) refers to the poetry of *Proverbs*.

Paz (1973, p.4) says that "the poem is a shell that echoes the music of the world". In *Lavoura arcaica*, due to André's memorialistic narration character, sometimes his voice gets this connotation, instead of progression, the image of the gear that would be characteristic to prose, what we have are twists, a reflective self-absorption, a painful howl that echoes in every fiber of his body, and lessens on the wall of the cocoon-bedroom. Let us return to the opening lines of *Lavoura arcaica*, quite illustrative in this regard:

The eyes on the ceiling, the nudity inside the bedroom; pink, blue or violet, the bedroom is inviolable; the bedroom is individual, it is a world, bedroom cathedral, where, in the intervals of anguish, it is harvested, from a rough stem, in the palm of the hand, the white rose of despair, for among the objects that the room enshrines are the first objects of the body. (p.9).

⁶"And so. / In poetry that is the voice of the poet, which is the voice of making / births - / The verb has to get delirium." (BARROS, 1993, p.15).

This speech, of intense lyricism, a multicolored bubble (pink, blue or violet), simulates loosening up, as sometimes it seems to be the poetic speech's pretension, beyond (or before?) human communication, raising up to the spheres of pure sensation, in the attempt to translate, using only the appeal of the images, the ineffable / inexpressible of certain states of mind. With Paz (1973, p.46) we could say that, in this fireball of images, each "rhythm-phrase evokes, resuscitates, awakens, re-creates" more than presents or describes the room; its occupants and objects appear as a "instant and total presence". In the Bere'shit⁷ of this crop, of this novelistic world, the perverse Nassarian Adam gets a poetic voice that experiences and enshrines the moment, "in this here and in this now it begins something": in *Lavoura arcaica*'s case, the explosion of a river of words, a powerful gush through which we witness how the genesis/formation of the character's conscience was.

The narrative progression allows the ear, tuned by Bakhtinian concepts, to sense that this rhythm-poetic cell is already an anticipated response to other voice, the other's order of saying. This bedroom in a provincial boarding house is refuge to a prodigal whose persistent hunger (that which besets him is insatiable) has not matured toward any resolution to return to the parental home. The cathedral, an expensive image to state the order erected by his father, with its stone-weight reverberations, foundations, solidity, is here transmuted into a metaphor of his own body-pulsing materiality upon which André will found his private church. The lightness, kinesthetic feature of this speech that betrays a certain melancholy, is the antechamber that prepares the explosion of the libido and of the voice (as masturbatory gush) that is to taint the parental prayer book.

What we want to argue is that it is almost impossible to disentangle poetry and prose in *Lavoura arcaica*. In this poetic cell of the beginning, as in several others scattered throughout the book, sometimes you hear an internal dialogism, even more interesting in general, according to Bakhtin, than the compositionally expressed dialogue. The bedroom in which the prodigal son took refuge becomes a small cathedral

⁷"This is the first word of verse. 1 from Chapter I and also the title of the first five books of the Torah ('Law', 'Teaching'), in the *Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)*. The book that corresponds to the *Pentateuch* of the *Old Testament* in the Christian tradition, it is the *Genesis*. More simplified transcription: *Bereshit*. [...] For my part, basically tuned to the possibilities of poetic recreation derived from the ambiguity of the linguistic structure of the original, I use a construction with the infinite noun ('In the beginning') and with the verb in the gerund ('creating'). This allows one to trace the scene of the origin (as in syntactic flash-back), to the circumstance of creation, recapping in the 'done' your 'in doing it.' "(CAMPOS, 2000, p.17, 27).

officiated by intimacy. It is the unfolding of the narrative thread that allows us to see that the words "cathedral" and "consecrate" focus, more than the dual meaning characteristic to poetry, on a polemical tone, for these terms, and others that approximate them semantically, will be, throughout the novel, the arena of ideological struggle.

The poetic word has had the most distinct uses and functions in different historical periods and, even at the same time but in different places and circumstances, the role played by the lyrical diction may change. Let us consider what is the poetic speech in a liturgical ritual, in a praising poem, or a revolutionary pamphlet from Mayakovski, for example, just to name very distinct forms of poetic impulse embodiment. Therefore, in *Lavoura arcaica*, the resources used in the poetic genres will be mobilized in order to produce multiple meanings - sometimes the intimate peek, the escape, the reverie⁸; in others it reinforces a positioning, gives turgidity, unnerves the verb. To second Koshiyama (1996, p.87), or "the chant flows back to itself, mimicking and reinforcing the social and psychic splitting, or it is constructed as a response to this split." It is as if *Lavoura arcaica*'s speech was generated as a raging sea in the complementarity of these two movements; in the deep seas, it is split and torn, but at times this inner rage rises as a powerful wave and it destroys itself on the walls that want to curtail it - troubled waters against the stone – in this clash not only the levees of repression are eroded, but its composite, brittle character, the heterogeneous matter of which they are made is shown.

4 *Lavoura arcaica*'s dialogizing poetics

A mixture of the poetic and of the prosaic, of lofty fragments and of speeches from familiar contacts, the contrast of distinct axiological perspectives in *Lavoura arcaica* echoes Bakhtin's statement that the novel is composed of "heterogeneous stylistic units" (BAKHTIN, 2008, p.261). A whole range of discourses that populated other socio-ideological contexts is submitted to dialogizing in *Lavoura arcaica*. The "parable of the hungry," central in Iohána's argument about the consolation reserved to

⁸The lyrical is stated in the same movement that animates the plot - *re-cordare* - bring back to the heart. The role performed by Mnemosyne in the fabric of *Lavoura arcaica* led to the Gallimard Publishing House to poetically translate the title of the novel to *La maison de la mémoire*.

patients, is the stylization of a stylization. The story was taken from *The Arabian Nights*, this "garden of arabesques" that haunted Borges's brain, resulted from centuries of settling of the oral narratives from the Middle East.

Dictations and biblical images are dialogized in *Lavoura arcaica*, as well as moral writings, about traditions, about virtues; and philosophical, be it of ancient wisdom, be it of poets-thinkers-rebels, they are artistically arranged and become individual voices of the novel.

The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master. Therefore the intentions of the prose writer are refracted, and refracted *at different angles*, depending on the degree to which the refracted, heteroglot languages he deals with are socio-ideologically alien, already embodied and already objectivized. (BAKHTIN, 2008 p.299-300)

All these preexisting discourses, as they went through the paternal lips or through André's palate, assume different emotional-volitional tones. *Lavoura arcaica* is a novel full of quotation marks; transforms of direct discourse to indirect and to quasi-direct discourse happen several times. A closer look at the changes, the cuts, the identification or removal of the narrator in relation to quoting, reveals the controversial dialogical character that informs this book.

Nassar does not ignore it, quite on the contrary, he fashions artistically the social and historical stratification of the language. The family institution is one of those language trade places, which due to its longevity and the sacred aura that surrounds it, has allowed a special stratification and saturation of discourses that occur within it⁹. In the case of more rural and traditional households, such as the one we have in *Lavoura arcaica*, the word of the elder resounds from a privileged position and has a tone of authority to which his wives and children must submit. There is a theatricality of the discourse that imposes places and restricts how something is said and what is said. According to Bakhtin (2008, p.293), because "of the work done by all these stratifying forces in language, there are no 'neutral' words and forms – words and forms that can

⁹It is worth mentioning here a touching confession from Raduan Nassar about the family place, including in literature: "The family is still a great lode for a fiction writer. There is not a single person who is not touched, that does not blaspheme against the family, who does not cry of nostalgia." (NASSAR, 1996, p.29).

belong to 'no one'; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and fully accentuated".

Nassar has welded with rare competence, in the figure of the main characters, the tone of their voices, the intentionality of their sayings and even aspects of physique from those embodied consciousness (see the gestures, postures ...). The grandfather, after he died, or even when he was still alive, looked like a ghost whose footsteps haunt the house; his language was concise, elliptical, a rough belch, an infallible *Maktub*. The ancestor, with his hook-shaped watch - perhaps remembering the violence with which the young were hooked by the force of immemorial sayings - seems to merge to the contours of his own body the certainty and dryness of what he professes. It is worth adding that the old man is almost an entire fulfilled destiny; in the novel, young people such as André, Ana and Lula want the adventure of inventing themselves. Each wrinkle on his skin, every white hair is a scar and outcome of the I-world melee. If this old man could (or believes that he had done it) keep the *mark of the ancient ones*, he seems to embody the slim and mineral body the amalgamation of nature and culture in their design, the amalgamation of nature and culture, in its conception, concurring. Attempting to escape the sting of the hook of traditions, André leaves on his lips a tang of blood, mangling his own flesh.

The father evokes the grandfather figure as a kind of anchor for the "ark of his words"¹⁰: "none of us is to erase the memory of his disembodied discretion in ruminating on the time in his wanderings through the house" (p. 60). Iohána, foreman-father, tries to operate the suture strands of tradition that threaten to break through, solemn is the tone of the sermons, the "old brochure" from which he reads, the texts are engraved with a "large handwriting, angular, hard [. ..]" (p.63), same materialization of the rough verbal bread that is offered to the family.

Pedro, solid extension of the trunk, foundation from which the right side of the family branch extends, echoes the emotional-volitional tone of the paternal word - "solemn voice [...] booming voice of reprimand" (p.17) The hug, early in the novel, within which the "lost sheep" is entwined has "the weight of the soaked arms from the

¹⁰The term is taken from the author of *Flores da escrivantina*. The criticism refers to the attempt by the Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš, to "preserve, in the ark of words what is his work, a sampling of everything that surrounds him, supports and qualifies the existence of the last men." (PERRONE-MOISÉS, 2006, p.153). In *Lavoura arcaica* a rescue operation is also at stake, to keep, at the heart of the family ship, the cultural heritage of the ancestors.

entire family" (11), after all affection is another powerful force dividing the clan, but it does not take long to emerge the "authoritarian" call from the guardian of the law: "button the shirt up, André" (p.12).

We point out that there are volitional and emotional tones in the voices of the different characters that interact in *Lavoura arcaica*, but if we want to pursue the complexity of the overlapping of those, it is necessary to question through the dialogical "angle at which these styles and dialects are juxtaposed or counterposed in the work". (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.182). From the moment he is awakened from his niche of absorption, every look, every movement of André, every atom of his speech casts glances around, suffers the influence of the other, roughens up before the brother who embodies the law. The advance and recoil of his speech, the pauses, the prevarication of the thought are the results of the influence exerted by the eldest brother's *bright eyes*.

Nassar's acuity is in making the logical relations and concrete-semantic materialize, "become utterances, become the positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relationships might arise among them" (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.183). The role of the author is to distribute the voices and make them conflict. In this novelistic discourse arena, the idea itself is placed as an object of contention - the idea of union, the importance of family duties, the strength and validity of paternal sermons. But André's speech cannot refer directly to this object, not even his inner discourse is fully convinced regarding the daring perspective he takes. It actually refers to the conquest, the affirmation of voice/place on the discourse stage. By referring to the object, André's speech aims at his interlocutor(s). There is a look toward the brother's stony figure, but as the violent wave of his words echoes modern ideologies of revolt, the battery of his attacks is also led against the force of tradition, against religious discourses, ultimately it provokes the reader, inciting him to take a position.

Virtually all forms of word appropriation from the other, which Bakhtin lists on the works of Dostoevsky (stylization, parody, dialogical replica, veiled and open controversy, etc.), can be found in *Lavoura arcaica*. The interference of the word/image of the others in the threads of André's narrative discourse produces interesting phenomena both in tone as well as in the syntactic construction of discourse.

Final remarks

It is the highly complex game of dialogical constitution of the subject and its acts what *Lavoura arcaica* offers. It can be seen that André's positioning regards ultimate issues such as the value of family, the validity of traditional landmarks, the question of incest, hitherto hidden, in a direct confrontation with the older brother who embodies the traditional values. At the same time we witness the genesis of a conscience subjected to the powerful forces - the seal of parental authority and the drives of affection and of desire transfigured into desire for freedom. As in many narratives from the author of *Crime and punishment*, in which the voice of the other is active and reaches *from within* the discourse of the narrator or hero, in *Lavoura arcaica*, in André's discourse:

the author's thought no longer oppressively dominates the other's thought, discourse loses its composure and confidence, becomes agitated, internally undecided and two-faced. Such discourse is not only double-voiced but also double-accented; it is difficult to speak it aloud, for loud and living intonation excessively monologizes discourse and cannot do justice to the other person's voice present in it. (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.198)

Like most of Dostoevsky's characters, the actors in *Lavoura arcaica* are placed in coterminous situations, *they have no alibi*, they need to take responsibility for their actions and all this creates an impressive tension before which the reader is not able to be unscathed. Of *Lavoura arcaica* perhaps one could say what Nietzsche expressed about *Notes from underground*, whose finding caused him extreme joy, a work in which is heard "la voix du sang" (TODOROV, 1978, p.135).

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