

The Question of the Author in Bakhtin / *La pregunta por el autor en Bajtín / A questão do autor em Bakhtin*

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ABSTRACT

I would like to reflect on the problem of the author in Bakhtin, who is subject to numerous sieges throughout his work: as character, as ideologist of the architectonics, as masked voice, as polyphonic ear, as interlocutor in chronotopized dialogue. I propose to explore these positions from the relationship between the intellectual history of the author-thinker Bakhtin and his theoretical notion of author (authorship), which, although it acquires different modulations, is always the question of the subject, his mode of existence and consciousness, the production of different forms of knowledge of himself and of the world through intersubjective relations. With Bakhtin we witness a process of transformation of the civilizing subject of Modernity and his replacement by an ethical subject of discourse. I conclude with a brief comparison with the text by Barthes on the death of the author.

KEYWORDS: Bakhtin; Author; Authorship; Subject; Discourse

RESUMO

Gostaria de refletir sobre a questão do autor em Bakhtin, objeto de numerosas abordagens ao longo de sua obra: como personagem, como ideólogo da arquitetura, como voz mascarada, como ouvido polifônico, como interlocutor no diálogo cronotópico. Proponho percorrer essas posições a partir do vínculo entre a história intelectual do autor pensador Bakhtin e sua noção teórica de autor (autoria), a qual, embora vá adquirindo diferentes modulações, trata sempre da questão do sujeito, seu modo de existência e de consciência, da produção de diferentes formas de conhecimento de si mesmo e do mundo através de relações intersubjetivas. Com Bakhtin assistimos a um processo de transformação do sujeito civilizatório da Modernidade e sua substituição por um sujeito moral do discurso. Finalizo com uma breve comparação com o texto de Barthes sobre a morte do autor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Bakhtin; Autor; Autoria; Sujeito; Discurso

RESUMEN

Quisiera reflexionar sobre el problema del autor en Bajtín que es objeto de numerosos asedios a lo largo de su obra: como personaje, como ideólogo de la arquitectura, como voz enmascarada, como oído polifónico, como interlocutor en diálogo cronotopizado. Propongo recorrer estas posiciones desde el vínculo entre la historia intelectual del autor- pensador Bajtín y su noción teórica de autor (autoría), que aunque va adquiriendo diferentes modulaciones es siempre la pregunta por el sujeto, su modo de existencia y de conciencia, la producción de diferentes formas de conocimiento de sí mismo y del mundo a través de relaciones intersubjetivas. Con Bajtín asistimos a un proceso de transformación del sujeto civilizatorio de la Modernidad y su reemplazo por un sujeto moral del discurso. Finalizo con una breve comparación con el texto de Barthes sobre la muerte del autor.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Bajtín; Autor; Autoría; Sujeito; Discurso

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With meaning I give *answers* to questions. Anything that does not
answer a question is devoid of sense for us.
*Bakhtin*¹

The forms of the relationship between the author and a work,² in particular the literary work, are a long-standing question which reappears in contemporary culture and which in the twentieth century marks a turning point when it incorporates as a problem the subject's relationship to language and writing, especially. In this long-running debate, Bakhtin's position illustrates a very interesting moment on which I would like to reflect on this occasion.

I would say particularly interesting, because if there is someone who can illustrate a series of dilemmas relating to what we consider author in relation to a work produced, that is Bakhtin, and from the very beginning I'm going to list those issues that involve the signature with which a text is published, the historical conditions of production, criticism disputes, translation policies (BRAIT, 2009b, p.19). Who signs an essay, who writes it, who speaks in it, with whom does it speak, who translates it? In that chain of voices, many hypotheses were put forward about which authorial function Bakhtin has fulfilled. He, in addition to having survived all the misfortunes that resulted from the ups and downs of the USSR—Bolshevik revolution, civil war, world wars, Stalinism, the cold war—could develop amid all the deprivations, alone or accompanied, a formidable theoretical project for the study of the humanities in general and of everyday language and artistic language in particular. But we already know that he published very little throughout his life, and that much of his work, sometimes incomplete or discovered much time later, has been gathered by his exegetes and interpreted in almost endless disputes.

If we set aside the first reading of Bakhtin by Kristeva in the late 1960s, when the conceptual problem of the author is intensified in France (Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 1968; Foucault, *What is an Author?* 1969), it is only after Bakhtin's death in 1975, when the Bakhtinian production starts to come to light and circulate, that controversies begin to arise because of the negotiation of an evidential truth of the

¹ In *From Notes Made in 1970-71*, 2013, p.145.

² Opening Conference for the Annual Meeting of the *Language, Identity and Memory* Group directed by Beth Brait - October 8, 2013.

authenticity of some works, especially the ones produced between 1920 and 1930, issue which, far from concluded, presents today certain sharp edges (BRANDIST et al, 2004; RIESTRA, 2010).³ So far, not intending to simplify, disputes have revolved around *the author of the work* as the real person, the individual writer, with data closer to the biography, to the epochal conditions of production, to the signing of a published work, to the legal person.

But paradoxically, it is the case that in Bakhtin's thinking, the question of *the author in the work* is subject to numerous theoretical sieges: author as character, as ideologist of the architectonics, as masked voice, as polyphonic ear, as interlocutor in cronotopized dialogue. This "authority" of the work, which Bakhtin will call *authorial consciousness* as dimension inherent to a text, is an abstract figure of mediation, representative of the author as a semiotic person, producer of signs. Paraphrasing Bakhtin when referring to the utterance, *authorship* would be a unique and unrepeatable event in the life of a text, significant problem which, in the case of a thought of great heuristic value such as Bakhtin's, always calls for re-reading and re-interpreting because, although we discuss the empirical author, we could never question the fact that Bakhtin is a "founder of discursivity" in the Foucauldian sense of the term, i.e., the one who generates the rules for the formation of new texts (FOUCAULT, 1977).

On this occasion, without abandoning the philological, legal and political complexity of the issue of the actual author as a backdrop, I prefer to review the questions that Bakhtin formulates on the problem of the author or authorial consciousness, because as I understand it, it is one of the pillars of the dilemma of *intersubjective alterity*, matrix of his dialogical thinking. And so I propose to incorporate the texts of my *corpus* in three great periods:

* initially, a period between 1919-1929, known as the Kantian Seminar or Bakhtin Circle, with the emphasis on the task of criticizing the knowledge of the time about language and proposing a different project, a transdisciplinary one, which considers the social function of language and the subject who produces it. From this period, I'm interested in the essay *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*, written around 1924, and the book on Dostoyevsky, whose first version dates from 1929, although we will use the version which was corrected and published in 1963;

³ The tone of some articles in these works, controversial in many aspects, does not prevent us from acknowledging their excellence and celebrating their coming to light.

* a second period of great production, despite the difficulties and moves due to exile, between 1930-1959, which Bakhtin devoted especially to the study of the genre of the novel, both in its theoretical aspect and its historical aspect, from which I will address *The Word in the Novel*, from 1934-35;

* and the last period, from 1960 until his death in 1975, in which Bakhtin intensively develops epistemological questions in the field of the human sciences, which have always been present in his works, but which now gain in depth and conceptual richness. *The Problem of the Text* is the essay I'm interested in here (1959-61).

So, I will focus on a brief path from his first essay on the problem of the relationship between author and character, then on his conception of author in a novel, to the author of the utterance. That is to say, I will approach the theoretical problem of *the author in the work*, and not that of *the author of the work*, following the developments and changes shown within the coherence of his thought, focusing on works that are indisputably his. I am interested in following an intellectual history, more attentive to the central modulations of a theory than to the tribulations of the life of an author, although the latter cannot be entirely omitted.

And I would like to conclude by making a brief comparison with Barthes' position to reveal certain differences in the breakdown of Modernity in the second half of the 20th century.

1 First Period

Hence, I divide the discussion of this first Bakhtinian production period into two issues: one, the philological-legal discussion about Bakhtin's intervention in works signed by his alleged collaborators, Vološinov and Medvedev, or supposedly signed by Bakhtin with a pseudonym. To the purpose of the path that I am following on this occasion, what can be discerned is that this dispute is about the difference between *the author's signature* and *authorship*, i.e. between legal patrimony and intellectual patrimony. The dispute involves a very sensitive issue, both legal and moral, for Vološinov, Medvedev and Kanaev were real people and what is worse, they were persecuted, imprisoned, and some of them never returned.

The true and most remarkable aspect of the work of these thinkers was that it was a group of intellectuals, artists and scientists who met to discuss religious, political, cultural and linguistic issues especially, because the function of language in a culture in the process of transformation was a dominant idea at that time, not only at the Seminar. And they use a resource which enjoys a long tradition in Russian culture, which is the study circle, in the different political variants in which it was configured. I highlight Ana Zandwais' contribution (2009, p.97-116), who, when talking about the historical environment that surrounds Vološinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, states that during the post-revolutionary period, the State sought to intervene actively in the living conditions of the people, the emancipation and literacy of workers by means of new schools and popular universities. To all this, one should add the creation of a People's Commissariat, which aimed at establishing a dialogue between bases and superstructures for the purpose of transforming the modes of production of the political relations between the people and the State. To do so, the State brings together intellectuals as part of an "organic collective", known as study circles, Bakhtin's among them—initially made up of friends from Nevel School: Vološinov, Pumpianskii and Kagan—which expands in 1920 when it is transferred to Vitebsk and incorporates Medvedev, Member of the Executive Committee of the CP, the biologist Kanaev and the pianist Yudina:

Thinking, therefore, of new conceptions of society and culture in the light of Marxist philosophy for a State which needs to deconstruct aristocratic principles in favour of the emancipation of the socially and culturally impoverished masses so that the Soviet society can reorganize itself and play another role on the stage of the East becomes one of the great challenges of the Bolshevik intellectuals during the Leninist period (ZANDWAIS, 2009, p.99).

Note that for Lenin, the revolutionary state would only be possible with the proletarian bases' support and the intervention of science on a Marxist basis to improve people's lives. These Leninist bases will differentiate Bakhtin Circle from the Linguistic Circle of Prague and the Moscow Circle, forerunners of Poetics and Linguistics studies, consisting of intellectuals from the Academy, while Bakhtin's is interdisciplinary and formed by intellectuals and artists coming from the most different areas of knowledge, on the basis of a conception of a Russian-soviet science which was essentially holistic.

With Lenin's death in 1924 and the rise of Stalin, these projects will be interrupted and there will be attempts to break the Leninist orientation, installing instead a reformist politics of a nationalist nature, turned towards the construction of a national identity of unification of the Soviet States on the basis of a language, the *Great Russian*. One of the most celebrated spokesmen was the linguist and paleontologist Nicolai Marr, who formulates the Japhetic Theory departing from the hypothesis that the Semitic and Georgian languages would have a common origin, established on the basis of an Indo-European universal language. This theory gave support to Stalin to build his political project of unification and national imaginary which aimed at obscuring the ethnic in times of the rise of Nazism. I wonder if, when Bakhtin designates the centralization of language and the search for the unique language of truth in *Discourse in the Novel* around 1935, he is alluding to this theory in a veiled way:

Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the poetics of the medieval church, of "the language of truth", the Cartesian poetics of neoclassicism, the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz (the idea of a "universal grammar"). Humboldt's insistence on the concrete – all these whatever their differences in nuance, give expression to the same centripetal forces in sociolinguistic and ideological life; they serve one and the same project of centralizing and unifying the European languages (1981, p.271).

In that context, gradually becoming hostile, between 1920 and 1929, the members of the Kantian Seminar are capable of generating a number of proposals where what matters, in addition to the personal nuances and a more sociological or a more philosophical inflection, is the *shared authorship in the making up of an interdisciplinary scientific project*, a very stimulating concept in my view because it puts forward a theoretical principle we learned with Bakhtin, and that is that every word is partly one's own/ partly someone else's. On the other hand, in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1924), written at that time, Bakhtin states that what obligates me in terms of responsible consciousness is the signature on a document. In my opinion (and I say this with all modesty given the numerous contributions of scholars and witnesses), those works of the Circle, developed at a time of cultural effervescence, are paradigmatic to show the difference between legal authority and intellectual authorship which lies at the border between what is one's own what is someone else's, the self and alterity.

So, I want to highlight some of Bakhtin's concepts of that first period, especially in his long essay *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*, written approximately in 1924 when he lived in Vitebsk, mutilated text which appears to have been part of a philosophical project that would deal with the ethical domain, the aesthetic and the cognitive, the three spheres that form the life of man in culture. We have it in the posthumous collection, *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation* (1979),⁴ which was translated into Spanish in 1982 in five chapters and some notes.⁵

The essay lies in the field of aesthetics, where Bakhtin was working then, trying to find out the configuration of the aesthetic object in the work of verbal art. Hence he establishes a close relationship with another essay of the time, *The Problem of the Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art* and especially *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (both from 1921), where he presents a philosophy of participating action, as he called it, which is a critique of the Kantian transcendental subject, in order to propose a situated subject who in every act is consummated in the event of being and for which there is "no alibi."

As Faraco says, "He [author] is understood primarily as an aesthetic-formal position whose basic characteristic is materializing a certain axiological relationship with the hero and his world [...]" (2005, p.38)⁶ and it is based on that position that he will be responsible for selecting the material and choosing the compositional form. The universe of values governs the construction of the aesthetic object; this defines the artist subject from an ethical point of view. Neither does he create outside life, since the artist is responsible with his life for what he has transposed to art, although he has organized it in a new way. Art and life are not the same, but they cannot be separated in the

⁴ Translator's note: This essay in English is in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, published in 1990.

⁵ The chapters: 1-The Problem of the Author's Relationship to the Hero [The Problem of the Author's Relationship to the Hero]; 2-The Spatial Form of the Hero; 3-The Temporal Whole of the Hero [The Temporal Whole of the Hero (The Problem of the Inner man – the Soul)]; 4-The Hero as Wholeness of Meaning [The Whole of the Hero as a Whole of Meaning]; 5-The Problem of the Author, and Note Bakhtin's Clarifications [The Problem of the Author]. Translator's note: Between square brackets, we added the chapters' titles as they appear in the English version (*Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*).

⁶ Text in Portuguese: "Ele [autor] é entendido fundamentalmente como uma posição estético-formal cuja característica básica está em materializar uma certa relação axiológica com o herói e seu mundo [...]"(2005, p.38)

aesthetic consideration. The author-creator, as Faraco says, is "a refracted and refracting position" (2005, p.39).⁷

Bakhtin attempts, in *Author and Hero...*, to explain the act of artistic creation in which the author, as intrinsic creative instance, produces the spatial and corporeal image of the hero as an object of knowledge and as a completeness of meaning. It is about the consideration of the concept of author from the aesthetic experience, presented as a struggle or the artist's effort to set up one character as a different self from his own, even in an autobiography, where as I represent myself, I am someone else to myself and I objectivise myself. For this purpose, the author must "extrapolate" himself and see the intimate world of the character from the outside, having that surplus of vision that allows him to understand and evaluate from another position, inaccessible to the character. For this reason, perhaps, the notion of person underlying character (and which comes from drama), is also proposed as "hero," not in the mythical sense, but as a semantic condenser of alterity. At this initial moment, Bakhtin proposes a very rational and controlling perspective of authorial consciousness in his intention to safeguard this demiurgic attitude that allows for the creation of a character "as a new man inside a new plane of being" (1990, p.29), but with which one does not seek either coincidence or antagonism, but only its aesthetic force in which author and character would forge an intersubjective relationship and both would complement each other as in life.

If we are not wrong, because the text is very complex, we are always a bit like characters in the consideration of others and we often respond to this external view: "I'm not looking *from the inside of my eyes* to the world, but rather I see myself with the eyes of the world, with the eyes of others; I am possessed by the other. (...) With my eyes, the eyes of the other are looking" (BAJTIN, 2000, p.156, italics in the original).⁸ In life we are always unfinished subjects, and it would seem that the creative act allows for that consummation which the resolution of the work achieves as an aesthetic object, as a completeness of meaning.

⁷ Text in Portuguese: "uma posição refratada e refratante" (2005, p.39).

⁸ Text in Spanish: "No soy yo quien mira *desde el interior de mi mirada* al mundo, sino que yo me veo a mí mismo con los ojos del mundo, con los ojos ajenos; estoy poseído por el otro. (...) Desde mis ojos están mirando los ojos del otro" (BAJTIN, 2000, p.156, itálicos no original). Text not translated to English, *Yo también soy (Fragmentos sobre el otro)*.

On the other hand, I emphasize that this concept of the search of alterity, as constituent of “I” in an inalienable manner, is part of the epistemological foundation of the anthropological orientation of Bakhtin’s theory, which begins to unfold at this time and which continues to be deepened throughout his work, a question which, in my opinion, marks the distinguishing feature of his thought in the face of other more pragmatic proposals by other important researchers of the circle, like Vološinov. Without completely agreeing with some malicious perspective which I believe to detect in his article, I think that the difference pointed out by Bota and Bronckart (2010) between Bakhtin’s phenomenological attitude and the social interactionist attitude attributed to Vološinov’s Marxism is certain and evident.

We assume, as noted, an ontological consideration of the character in the verbal creation which is almost divine. It is a consciousness creating another consciousness to which it should give, however, all the inconclusiveness of the real man, but all the wholeness of the aesthetic object.

And this apparent paradox is linked with his definition of the author’s attitude towards the hero as "architecturally⁹ stable and dynamically living" (1990, p.4), two poles that orient Bakhtin’s position towards the aesthetic fact as a place of encounter with life. However, what in life is given as an isolated fact, must gain in the work a "whole of meaning," (1990, p.5) and an evaluative, cognitive and ethical position. This entails a struggle of the artist "with himself" (1990, p.6) in order to achieve "the position of being situated outside," (1990, p.15) which means considering the eventfulness of the character as other, objectifying him, so that it results in a free conscience in its non-coincidence with the authorial consciousness.

Only in the created character can we see the creative author as a "form-giving energy" (1990, p.8) which expresses himself in "a durably valid cultural product," (1990, p.8) and only then can we consider the actual author, who expresses himself at a very different level. That is why he fights the confusion "the author-creator (a constituent in a work) with the author-person (a constituent in the ethical, social event of life" (1990, p.10).

⁹ The notion of architechtonics—quasi metaphorical—comes from Kant and it refers to the way in which the parts organize themselves in an organic totality from an a priori idea which gradually builds itself with different systems. Bakhtin borrows this abstract category to think of both the dynamic configuration of the identity structure of the subject based on alterity and the aesthetic configuration of the work of art as a totality developed through form and materials.

It should be noted that in this essay Bakhtin distinguishes the actual author, leaving him as a subject for the "literary history scholarship," (1990, p.9) from the intrinsic author, and says: "the author-as-creator will help us to gain insight into the author-as-person and only after that will the author-person's comments about his creative activity acquire illuminating and complementary significance" (1990, p.8).

A related problem for the author is the spatial form of the character, a question that has to do primarily with corporeal vision, one's own and the other's, or, as Bakhtin beautifully says, with "the totality of all expressive, 'speaking' features of the human body." (1990, p.27). And he wonders at what level of experience the aesthetic value of the body lies, since the body, irreversibly, occupies a concrete unique place in relation to the place of the other. It happens, according to his reflections, that my body is basically an interior experience, while the body of the other is, essentially, foreign to me; hence, the development of the expressive body of the character as evaluative center of a space, a horizon, and an environment is the aesthetic objective of authorial creation.

Huge problem for the author, who is to make the appearance and the ethical, cognitive, and practical actions of the hero not only be subordinate to his closest significant and vital purposes, but also come to existence as a spatialized form, which also involves an aesthetic value. This is only achieved "on the boundaries of two consciousnesses, on the boundaries of the body, that an encounter is actually realized and the artistic gift of the form is bestowed" (1990, p. 96-97), form which the author establishes as an "other." And it is also the case with the time of the hero, which is always rhythm, interior time or experience of the "soul," always created or directed in relation to an object or state of existence which entails going out of himself, which is precisely that which the author captures and realizes. There is a long way yet to the idea of artistic chronotope.

But to be aesthetically significant, the hero must be consummated in his semantic orientation, i.e. as an evaluative center which is distant or different from the author, which leads the author to wonder from the start of the work "who is he?" (1990, p.174). Bakhtin does something very interesting here, and that is reviewing different generic enclaves of the character, such as the confessional, biographical or hagiographic, or conventional ways of finding the "character" or the "type." In these cases, the author could think of all the oriented moments of the life of the hero as "a fate," which in the

classical way always has its anchorage in the past, lineage and family, or in the romantic way, as "an embodiment of an idea" (1990, p.180) and as its realization process, or as type which "expresses a human being's stance in relation to values that have been concretized and delimited by an epoch and a milieu" (1990, p.182).

Synthesizing. This first philosophical essay by Bakhtin on the authorship of a literary work, while it seeks to identify aesthetic activity, does not fail to link it closely to the production of knowledge that comes from the world of values created in the world of men, values which are cultural and not immanent to the conscience, as Kant states: "the aesthetic act gives birth to being on a new axiological plane of the world: a new human being is born and a new axiological context – a new plane of thinking about the human world" (1990, p.191). The hero is this new being whose attributes and actions express the ethical position of the author, a form of participatory action, the responsibility of the artist who responds with his life (and with his signature) for that which he has comprehended in art (1990, p.1).

Our impression when reading *Author and Hero...*, given the vocabulary and the general tone, is that of a humanism infused with religiosity, understood as the "I" being inextricably tied up or re-linked to the "other" as in life, but in relation to the artist, with the responsibility of giving this relationship a stable and permanent sense that may be the source of new knowledge. We are far from, at this time, a linguistic, social or historical concern of the author, but instead, near an ontologically active position, which interprets the hero from a transgradient "boundary" in the world he has created, which is independent only in appearance.

The essay on Dostoevsky he published in 1929 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* raises nuances and interesting variants to this initial aesthetic position. But it is necessary to note that, in the first place, the work deals specifically with the work of a writer, and, therefore, the conclusions would not have a generalizing character and, secondly, that the edition that I have used has been the subject of further corrections and was reissued in 1963, thirty years after the initial searches.

From the time of its first writing I have only been able to study some supplementary materials not admitted in the edition ("Del libro Problemas de la obra de

Dostoievsky” in *Estética de la Creación Verbal*)¹⁰, but which are notable, because they show the importance of the exchange of ideas with Vološinov and especially with Medvedev in the notions of immanent social assessment and formal analysis:¹¹

At the basis of our analysis lies the conviction that every literary work is internally and immanently sociological. Within it living social forces intersect; each element of its form is permeated with living social evaluations. For this reason a purely formal analysis must take each element of the artistic structure as a point of refraction of the living social forces, as a synthetic crystal whose facets are structured and ground in such a way that they refract specific rays of social evaluations and refract them at a specific angle (BAKHTIN, 2011, p.276)

Let us then try to synthesize, focusing on the second chapter, "The Hero and the Attitude of the Author Towards the Hero" from the book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and the documents referred to, some of the variations and refinements found in this delicate issue of the authorial function in Bakhtin, who never abandons, however, his philosophical-anthropological perspective and the cultural context as configurator of the subjective consciousness.

It had already been confusing for him not to find in Dostoevsky those heroes who consummate themselves, and that “unitary countenance” (1990, p.20) who conceives the beginning of his searches as a form of aesthetic finishing. And now, going deeper into the work of the great novelist, he contends that all that used to be part of the authorial perspective is moved to the consciousness of the hero, who gives his version of himself in all aspects not to show what he means to the world, but what the world means to him. The author, then, has nothing to add to what the hero says of himself: *"To the all-devouring consciousness of the hero the author can juxtapose only a single objective world – a world of other consciousness, with rights equal to those of the hero"* (2011, p.49-50, italics in the original). Therefore, the stable and firm world created by the author is destroyed, and the "Copernican revolution" that marks the end of monologic fiction takes place. A new relationship between the hero and the author is created, which "is rendered powerless in advance and denied the finalizing word" (2011,

¹⁰ Translator’s note: the text referred by the author in English is “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art” and it is the first appendix of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*.

¹¹ They also correlate with some notes “Para una reelaboración del libro sobre Dostoievski,” which were the plan for the reedition, dated 1961, also published in *Estética de la Creación Verbal*.

p.52). And this new relationship is "dialogism," a horizontal and in the present relationship with the hero, such as when one expects from the other the possible rejoinder, as in any daily communicative situation: "By the very construction of the novel, the author speaks not *about* a character, but *with* him" (2011, p. 63, italics in the original).

There appear here, with great force, the terms "voice," "word," and "discourse," used interchangeably. The hero will be a "pure voice" that will enter the speech of the author with different procedures, not as a silent object, but maintaining his independence, becoming an "ideologue," never identical to himself, and unfinished, in crisis, in the threshold, and whose words are "ideologems". This is because the author adopts a new position towards men, a dialectic of respect for freedom and non-objectification, which was the mark, according to Bakhtin, of the human condition in capitalist society.¹² And this is artistically expressed in "dialogism," "that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero." (2011, p.63), and polyphony as the artistic resource which puts social heteroglossia on the stage.

The artistic procedure of the author is then interpreted as carrier of an ideological position and not as a mere formal resource, a position which consists in releasing the consciousness of the characters for them to establish deep, conflicting, or tense relationships, while the authorial consciousness, which is the consciousness of the whole, manifests itself at an angle, in an indirect way, on the semiotic border. An authorial consciousness that is ideological, then, because all signs are, as Vološinov had argued, a way of expressing oneself in relation to those social values in conflict in the present when the novel is written, an "arena of struggle," but which also admits that the vision and conception of the world that it proposes is not the only possible one.

We have then rescued at this early stage of the path designed the change from an abstract and universalizing aesthetic position to one with a strong historical and social orientation of the authorial function in the work of verbal art, while maintaining the extrapolation needed for the aesthetic finishing. And, from an authoritarian and

¹² "Capitalism created the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness. Dostoevsky exposes all the falsity of this consciousness, as it moves in its vicious circle. Hence the depiction of the sufferings, humiliations, and *lack of recognition* of man in class society. Recognition has been taken away from him, his name has been taken away" (2011, p.288).

controlling stance toward his characters, to an egalitarian and dialogical position, which does not have the last word because this, perhaps, is that of the reader.

2 Second Period

Much of the proposal about the work of Dostoevsky becomes part of *Discourse in the Novel* (1981), a long work by Bakhtin written between 1935-36 and linked to his project to develop a stylistics of genres in prose. Around this time, Bakhtin is in Kustanai developing a formidable theory about the origin and evolution of the novelistic genre and its thematic compositional units, in the long period of exile and transfers.

This is not the time to review all the properties that he describes in the genre of the novel, but only to emphasize that which responds to the axis of the social philosophy of language which the Bakhtin Circle had been developing since the mid-twenties, which argued for the importance of the speech genres with the forces of verbal ideological control. And the novelist is responsible for the way in which he displays the verbal universe, whether he controls it in a monological orientation, closer to the official language, or whether he frees it polyphonically in its diversity and confrontation, collecting in addition marginal languages.

Because if the novel is the artistic representation of social multilingualism, the creative consciousness is that which administers and directs the consciousness of these voices and, of course, the intentional choice of procedures for representing the word of the other, analysed from his refractive distance. The creative author is the one “who has the gift of indirect speaking” (2013, p.110) and he does so from a border, as “hidden or double-voiced word”, who has the characters speak freely, but expresses his position through the discursive areas where he focuses his attention and refracts his tense dialogism. That is why the novel ends up being a discourse on discourse which, rather than telling a story driven by characters, shows the historical vicissitudes of the life of language and the dialogue between different social languages.

The real authors that Bakhtin most admires—English humorists, Dostoevsky or Rabelais—are those who have been able to break the myth of the sole language and show the hybridity of each utterance, full of nuances and others’ inflections, traces of class, gender, age or profession, or from incorporating the languages from the fair and

the square as well as the carnivalized genres. And these are the authors whose ethos embodies the authorial consciousness, situated in a present, but projected towards the future.

The other important category of the novelistic genre, developed around 1937-38, is that of the chronotope, a category of the form and content, in which the authorial consciousness is able to capture, as a sensitive antenna, the representations and imaginaries of the social order and of history, which culture expresses in multiple ways or chronotopic motifs.¹³ The author is this consciousness chronotopically situated on the tangent, holistically reading the conflicts of a culture in the material nature of reality. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the different chronotopes are but displays of the interpretation of the identities that different cultures provide in cumulative processes, so that in them it is possible to read the crafting of the socio-historical image of man, which is never a homogeneous image. In their polyphonic records, literary works realize these tensions and contradictions, and their "motifs" are the concrete representation of such abstractions. The author of a novel is always an interpreter of his time because he knows how to read "in everything signs that show time in its course, beginning with nature and ending with human customs and ideas (all the way to abstract concepts)" (BAKHTIN, 2013, p.25).

Polyphony and chronotope are the two major categories that Bakhtin strongly incorporates at this stage to show the creative work of the authorial consciousness of the novelist, which allows him to *listen to* and *read* the present, projecting it in all the compositional moments of the architectonics of the novel.

3 Third Period

While it is in verbal art discourse where Bakhtin has privileged the analysis of the dynamics of the authorial position, it is interesting to examine "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and Other Human Sciences" because in this essay he

¹³ Refer to ARAN, Pampa, "Las cronotopías literarias en la concepción bajtiniana. Su pertinencia en el planteo de una investigación sobre narrativa argentina contemporánea." *Revista Tópicos del Seminario 21*, BUAP, Mexico, 2009, pp 119-141, special edition "Monologismo, dialogismo y polifonía" coordinated by F. Perus.

seems to extend the concept, expanding it to any text in which an utterance is materialized, and to any speaker as an author.

It is in Bakhtin's late stage, from 1960 onwards, when, with a more stable situation in Saransk, he goes back to his concerns about the theoretical and methodological project to advance his Translinguistics,¹⁴ which would be the inter, trans-disciplinary, or "border" quest for knowledge depending on how it is understood, but whose aim would be the discourse analysis of the texts in their historical, anthropological, philological, literary and linguistic aspect, especially in its "junctions and interconnections."

Now, when Bakhtin says text, what is he thinking of? At first, it seems that he is thinking of any expression, oral or written, from a riddle to a novel, given the privilege granted to verbal language. However, at the beginning of the above mentioned essay, he extends this concept to all works of art, such as music and figurative arts and to "any coherent complex of signs" (2013, p.103), an interesting definition which he does not retake.

Given the fact that these are notes written between 1959-61, there is much ambiguity in some definitions, but what seems quite plausible is that although Bakhtin phenomenologically considers that the text is the primary data for the study of the Social and Human Sciences, his concept of text points at its material and repeatable aspect, while the utterance would be the unique and unrepeatable event in the life of the text, i.e. what makes it the object of study in itself, and, therefore, we think, the aspect of the text where the question of authorship is raised. For the purpose of a research study, what matters is the text as utterance.

Let us not forget that the aim of the study of a text is the interpretation of the meaning in a dialogical way, an issue which he raised in another programmatic essay of the same era, perhaps the last one he wrote ("Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences", 1974). The truth is that in this dialogism, the researcher is an author of text in second degree, producer of a discourse about discourse, on the particularities and the meaning of the speech of the other, from the sacred books, laws to everyday speeches. "Where there is no text, there is no subject of study, and no object of thought either." (2013, p.103). And this fact draws the border—certainly not absolute—between the

¹⁴ Translator's note.: Caryl Emerson's translation of *Problems of Dostoevsky's* employs the word "metalinguistic" (2011, p.181).

sciences on Culture and the sciences on Nature—an extremely interesting topic, but which Bakhtin does not develop.

Highlighting that authorship is not always a decisive element in the text, and providing a typology of the constructed text as an example of a class, he seems to precisely establish the difference between text and utterance, given the fact that the latter, or better said, the semantically creative nucleus of the text, the product of a hard realization, is what needs the notion of author. And here is where the researcher intervenes, that second subject who approaches the text from his own point of view, as in quantum physics, and not as an object which can be kept neutral in his reading.

On the other hand, the text is pierced by other texts (and this is the idea of intertextuality coined by Kristeva in 1967) "of a given sphere" (2013, p.105). That is to say, a text gathers everything that has been said about an issue at a given time; it is never isolated from the whole of the social discursivity around a certain ideologem; it is a sounding box of what is socially said but, we now add, it takes sides in that saying. And here, it seems to me, he emphasizes the dual plane and the double subject discussed above, for there is no symmetry between these planes and these subjects of discourse. It is a dialogic operation, key concept upon which he established his theoretical and methodological proposal.

And there is something very interesting and clear. When Bakhtin speaks of the two poles in the texts, the repeatable and the utterance, he clarifies at the end of the paragraph (2013, p.105) that the relationship among texts is dialectical if it is abstracted from the author, because when the analyst takes into consideration the text as utterance, a dialogue takes place. This analysis will require a new science of the text because "the event on the life of the text, that is, its true essence, always develops *on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*" (2013, p.106), this would be "the transcription of thinking in the human sciences" between the given text and that which is being created in reaction to the first. The issues in which the researcher is interested about a given text will determine the position in the field of humanistic disciplines, history, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, or any of their junctions.

And he adds something else: the free and unpredictable core of the text, its creative side, makes it indeterminable a priori, outside normativity, generalization or universality, to which natural scientific research aspires. So, in fact, Bakhtin rejected the

idea of textual models, a potential text of texts that had been postulated by structuralist currents:

Any truly creative text is always to some extent a free revelation of the personality, not predetermined by empirical necessity. Therefore, it (in its free nucleus) admits neither of causal explanation nor of a scientific prediction.

[...]

A human act is a potential text and can be understood (as a human act and not a physical action) only in the dialogic context of its time (as a rejoinder, as a semantic position, as a system of motives). (2013, p.107)

Then appears the central notion, which Bakhtin had already used in the theory of the novel, that of the "double-voice" or second voice, and with it the problem of the author, who would always be that second voice in an utterance every time he borrows words whose resonance is wide, but which in this new utterance are articulated to serve a new perspective.

And to finish with the analysis of this fragment: the author—Bakhtin will say adapting Juan Escoto Erígena's four modes of being—is *natura creans* and *non creata*. It is a *pure voice* that is never objectified, i.e. that it casts no shadow; it is not represented, not even in an autobiography or in a first person narrator. Even in painting, if we see the painter on the canvas, he is part of what is represented. That is to say, if we understand correctly, the author, that second voice, permeates the whole text, he impregnates it, but the forms of his self-representation are misleading, because they are part of the staging of a speech, *whose origin is not in that same speech*. And this is so because to create—and this applies to art above all, but it extends to all utterances as creative and original acts—the intrinsic author, the second voice, the pure voice, needs to extrapolate himself, to get himself out of his own language, enter the language of others, which is a social voice, needs *to put himself on the tangent*. He cannot see the whole if he is within it.

It seems to me that it is the same operation restated from language which he already raised in "Author and Hero..", and which is part of the construction of the dialogical subject as a way of knowledge: learning and understanding the language of the other, not to merge in it, but to be able to create one's own voice from it, a personalized dialectical operation: "The writer is a person who is able to work in a

language while standing outside language, who has the gift of indirect speaking" (2013, p.110). And the observation that Bakhtin makes about rough double-voicedness (2013, p.110) is very subtle; rough double-voicedness only consists in bringing the word of the other to quote it, to parody it, or to accentuate it intentionally in any way. Because in fact what he suggests is that when we objectify the other word critically, we do the same with our own word.

This is, as you can see, a very complex idea that is made even more complex when Bakhtin talks about the third voice in speech, what we would call an ultimate recipient, or someone who is made the depositary of the speech in the future: truth, history, people, science, etc. It is interesting to discover and examine where that third voice that the author summons in the intricacies of his speech aims at, and which is not merely the common reader but a qualified value object.

And to conclude with something more disturbing. In "From Notes Made in 1970-71", Bakhtin says that it is impossible to think of a discursive act without an author (not to be confused with the writer, who is the primary speaker), but who can be interpreted as a *mask*, (2013, p.152), which is placed according to the genre, the situation, the subject matter. The same speaker adopts different authorial masks, which have also been professionalized: the journalist, the novelist, the teacher, the lecturer, etc. I wonder once again about the heuristic value of this Bakhtinian observation, which strongly points at the discursive act as a staging where the "I" tends to adopt a social place, a role, a speaking position, to speak, to construct one's own speech, to plunge as a consciousness in act, but always in tension with the word of others, with the other voice, with another consciousness.

And we are closing. The hypothesis that we have tried to outline in this presentation is that the authorial subject as potential creator of an utterance, artistic or otherwise, that Bakhtin constructs throughout his oeuvre is a *historically moral subject*, understood as the singular action of the real man in all his manifestations and practices, referring to certain values and social norms, which are contextualized, historical, never absolute nor universal, and which in semiotics we call modes of meaning production, meaning produced from a *situated subject* and which Bakhtin calls *responsible subject*.

All human action is potentially a text. And it is consciousness the regulator of the responsibility of an authorial subject, who expresses in any text his position toward

someone else's thought. While there is no idea of progress in the civilizing and positive sense of enlightened Modernity, Bakhtin holds the idea of man developing in Great Time in close connexion with actual historical time. There is no transcendental subject; the individual becomes a person and transforms a culture insofar as it interacts with the other, because the *intersubjective difference* is a value that creates the possibility of knowledge of reality. If every man is a potential creator of text, *the notion of author is extended to all subjects as architects of social discourse. It is authorship then what gives the utterance its character of decisive historical event.*

But in Bakhtin, consciousness is materialized in language, and the latter is under the subject's command, who has power over it and is responsible for his discursive action. This point marks the profound difference with Barthes' notion in the "The Death of the Author" (1968), in which, evoking Nietzsche's dictum "God is dead," he declares the death of the author as Father of the Text, modern myth that falls when the performative notion of writing, the notion of text as a mosaic of quotations, and that of the reader as the decoder par excellence are put forth: "[...] to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (1977, p.148).

At first sight, there would seem to be some points in common between Barthes' position and that of Bakhtin's: the rejection of the biographical link as a determinant factor of the work; the rejection of the notion of origin and closure of meaning, to which Bakhtin responds with the Dialogic chain; the notion of performativity, which is somehow equated with the Bakhtinian notion of event; the text as mosaic of quotations with the polyphonic text and the role of the reader as a radical activity of rewriting or critical reinterpretation, for Bakhtin, in the Great Time. However, we state that there is an unbridgeable break-up between the two due to the very different political and intellectual conditions of production: in Stalinist Russia, the signature on a text could derive in death or exile, and several of Bakhtin's friends paid with their lives.

This difference is related to a conception of the relationship between language and both the speaking subject and the subject of the act of writing. For Barthes "it is the language, which speaks, not the author" (1977, p.143), while for Bakhtin man is responsible for his word and this always involves a social judgement that in the case of the literary text adopts the border place of authorial consciousness. For Bakhtin, it is the

voice that expresses a consciousness; for Barthes it is a writing which is "that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (1977, p.142).

In Bakhtin's conception of language, it is impossible to think that someone would speak without immediately taking a stance developed intersubjectively in the struggle of social discourses; in contrast, for Barthes, language is an object of desire that institutes the desiring subject; it is, perhaps, a loving object. Here opens the breach between language as a social event and language as a potential infinity whose productivity responds to another logic, which escapes conscious control and the unitary and homogeneous consciousness.

The authorial-speaking subject in Bakhtin is a moral subject because, as Ponzio says,¹⁵ "Bakhtin wonders about the meaning of man"¹⁶ and demonstrates that this problem "must be dealt with the category of the other and not of the I",¹⁷ if particular interests are to be avoided (2008, p.26). Only then will speaking make sense in spite of the catastrophes of history since, stubbornly committed to the regeneration in the Great Time, he states that "nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival." (2013, p.170).

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¹⁵ Translator's note: There is still no translation of Augusto Ponzio's book *A revolução bakhtiniana. O pensamento de Bakhtin e a ideologia contemporânea* for English language.

¹⁶ Portuguese text: "Bakhtin se pergunta sobre o sentido do homem" (2008, p.26).

¹⁷ Portuguese text : "deve ser tratada sob a categoria do outro e não do eu" (2008, p.26).

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