

The Notion of Author in and from M. Bakhtin's Work / A noção de autor na obra de M. Bakhtin e a partir dela

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ABSTRACT

Electing contrasts with other theorists, Barthes among them, as well as confluences with trends of philosophical thought, in which case we emphasize concepts of world of life and world of culture, we go back to the reflection upon the notion of author and subject in the work of M. Bakhtin. In this path, we show the relation of these notions of author as well as subject with other important concepts of Bakhtinian thought and, while examining Bakhtin's whole work, we end by emphasizing the development of the theorist's works, as well as the principles on which they have always been based, as a whole. Finally, we expect to highlight that the concepts of world of life and world of culture, which disclose an important philosophical affiliation of Bakhtin, similar to the one verified in G. Simmel, particularize Bakhtin's contributions, also in relation to the structuralist paradigm in opposition to which we started the study.

KEYWORDS: Author; Subject; Depersonalization; World of Life; World of Culture

RESUMO

Elegendo tanto contraposições a outros pensadores - Barthes entre eles -, quanto confluências com correntes do pensamento filosófico, caso em que se ressaltam os conceitos de mundo da vida e mundo da cultura, retoma-se a reflexão sobre a noção de autor, e também de sujeito, na obra de M. Bakhtin. Nesse caminho, mostra-se a relação dessas noções de autor e sujeito com outros importantes conceitos do pensamento bakhtiniano e, passando-se por quase toda a obra de Bakhtin, acaba-se por assinalar também o desenvolvimento da obra do pensador, bem como os princípios que a embasam, desde sempre, como um todo. Ao final, espera-se ter destacado que os conceitos de mundo da vida e mundo da cultura, que revelam uma importante filiação filosófica de Bakhtin, semelhante a que se verifica em G. Simmel, particularizam as contribuições bakhtinianas, inclusive em relação ao paradigma estruturalista, em contraposição ao qual se iniciou a reflexão.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Autor; Sujeito, Depersonalização; Mundo da vida; Mundo da cultura

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Barthes says: because the author does not coincide with the language of the text, he does not exist. Bakhtin says: it is precisely because he does not so coincide that we must posit his existence.

D. Lodge

Considering the epigraph as a motto and utilizing the already existing contributions (FARACO; NEGRI, 1998; FARACO, 2005; TEZZA, 2007; SOBRAL, 2012; ARÁN, 2014), in this article we seek to analyze the notion of author, which is present in the work of M. Bakhtin, and furthermore, we can also problematize the broader notion of subject. This route leads us to give emphasis to the notions of “world of life” and “world of culture,” which being recurrent in Bakhtin’s work¹ refer back to the so-called “philosophy of life”² and to theorists who made use of these concepts, mainly G. Simmel (1983; 2000).³

The instigating D. Lodge’s epitome, in epigraph, concludes his lecture *After Bakhtin*, delivered in the congress about *The Linguistics of Writing*, which happened at the University of Strathclyde in 1986, which had as a general purpose, according to the organizers, the analysis of the pertinence and development of the utilization of linguistic techniques and models in literary analysis. This took place more than a quarter of century, after R. Jakobson’s famous lecture on *Poetic Language* in Indiana in 1958 and became famous for approaching linguistic and literary studies. In the paper published in a book from the annals of the congress (LODGE, 1987) as well as in a personal book with some alterations published afterwards (LODGE, 1990), Lodge verifies “the fame and influence” that Bakhtin’s works receive at the time. In order to explain the reasons for such reputation, he points out the controversies that characterize literary studies, with which the following criticisms are familiar: formalistic-structuralist criticism to the subjectivity of traditional literary criticism, and deconstructionist criticism which

¹ V.N. Voloshinov (VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) – as well as, similarly, P.N. Medvedev (MEDVEDEV P. / BAKHTIN, M. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (1928). Translated by Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. [1928]) – works with those terms reinterpreted from the viewpoint of Marxism: everyday ideology or social psychology and ideological systems, respectively. See Tihanov (1998) and Grillo (2008). In *Discourse in the novel*, Bakhtin will also give emphasis to the term “ideology,” by using ideological world, ideological life, ideological systems, etc.

² Tihanov (1998) and Brandist (2002) have already pointed out the importance of the philosophy of life in the works of the Bakhtin Circle.

³ Being considered a Neo-Kantian, however, he is going to rework his reflections about the perspective of the so-called philosophy of life, besides being considered a predecessor of sociology (GOLDTHORPE, 1971; GIDDENS, 1971).

gives emphasis to the presence of a “transcendental signified” (LODGE, 1990, p.88) in the structures. Lodge synthesizes the issue:

The effect of structuralism and post-structuralism on traditional literary studies might be compared to that of an earthquake followed by a tidal wave, for both undermined the idea, central to such studies, of the author as a substantial historic entity, the unique and authenticating origin of the text, whose communicative intention, conscious or unconscious, intrinsic or extrinsic to the text itself, it was the business of the critic to elucidate (1990, p.88).

Thus, on one side, besides its pertinence, the limits of the propositions that Jakobson is chosen to represent in this case are also already well known. On the other side, the focus of interest is transferred from discourses, from texts, to the conditions of their production and/or to their interpretation, being, by definition, multiple and unstable. This is the domain of deconstruction, and according to Lodge, “new hermeneutics,” to which “any text is bound to undermine its own claim to a determinate meaning” (1990, p.88).

With Bakhtin, Lodge acknowledges his own homogenizing perspective through which, as a critic, he orients himself when searching for the author’s position in a denominator which is common to all the voices of the novel. Although not explicitly, Lodge also seems to find in the dialogical condition of the language an answer to the issue of text meaning, which, if not totally settled, cannot be totally changeable as well, like the “new hermeneutics.” According to the lecturer – and now he affirms that not only as a critic, but also as a novelist –, for those who, like him, are interested in literary poetics and in its analysis, and not only in the content and context, Bakhtin’s work corresponds to this scenario of crisis and controversies.

The proposal of the congress and Lodge’s conference prepare us to relate Bakhtin and Jakobson, who – it is important to emphasize – with diverse theoretical perspectives, and in a diverse way, answer to the interest in the relationships between language and literature. Both theorists approach language and literature when they adopt a general conception of language as a theoretical framework.

Once the approach is made, it is necessary to reaffirm the diversity of the basis and propositions. We should remember that Jakobson makes use of general linguistic methods and concepts in order to describe poetic language as being “directed to itself” and, thus, it is defamiliarized performing its poetic function in opposition to the

practical function of everyday language. As we already know, it is about the moment when linguistics becomes a school and sets the stage as a pilot science. In his turn, Bakhtin left us a dialogical “theory” of language, which is inferred from his work. By following his thoughts, we can understand the dialogical nature of every speech act, whether literary or not, but the particularities of literary work are predominantly analyzed.

When introducing Bakhtin’s works, which he translated and assembled in a book, Holquist (1981, p.xvii) warned us not to expect the extraordinary systematization found in Saussure, Hjelmslev, Benveniste, and Jakobson regarding the concept of language. He also compared the differences among the concepts with the difference between the novel and other more formalized styles. The equation created is suggestive: the happy meeting of Jakobson with poetry and of Bakhtin with the novel is not really by chance.

Even though it is not our purpose to look into the theoretical differences between Jakobson and Bakhtin, nor to devote ourselves mainly to the Bakhtinian criticism of the multiple movement called formalism, it is relevant, for the purpose of this work, to give emphasis to the concept of defamiliarization, and the proposition of distinction between artistic language and everyday language.

Bakhtin’s considerations are going to insist on the relationship and, being more specific, on the necessary interrelation between everyday language and literature.⁴ Thus, we should remember that, in Bakhtin’s criticism, the concept of defamiliarization is sometimes the defamiliarization of the material, of the word – “what is defamiliarized is the *word*, by way of destroying its habitual place in a semantic series” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.307)⁵ –, and oftentimes the defamiliarization of the object, but understood in a psychological manner. According to Bakhtin, this is mainly the consideration of the language of the work as if it were all of the work, the consideration of the poetics of the material as if it were all of the poetics (1981;⁶ 1986;⁷ 1990).⁸ The hypertrophy of the

⁴ This was dealt with in Marchezan, 2013.

⁵ BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal. Art. In: BAKHTIN, M.M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, translated with notes by Vadim Liapunov, supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.257–325.

⁶ BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259–422.

form of the material with the denial of the content and not the relation among content, form and material is what constitutes each and every utterance. In his investigation about the particularities of literary work, Bakhtin activates the relationship between these notions when pointing out the architectonic form which is

the expression of the active axiological relationship of the author-creator and of the recipient (who co-creates the form) to content; all the movements of the work in which we can feel ourselves, our own activity in its axiological relation to content, and which are overcome in their materiality, must be assigned to form (1990, p.306).⁹

In literary work, neither the object nor the material is the agent which captures the subject in a moment of passivity. The author-creator, with the co-creator, is the agent; he is the one who shapes/reshapes the content by providing it with a new axiology. The material and the compositional form which organizes it must be “overcome” in a way that makes it useful to the architectonic form.

Thus, the artistic form, understood as such, characterizes autonomy, the relative autonomy of literary work, as considered by Bakhtin: art is not opposed to reality, to the world of life, which is completely found in it, as its indispensable element. However, art is not confounded with life: by giving content a new form, the author-creator penetrates, with empathy, the object, which is always axiologically saturated in order to, without incorporating it, from the outside – it is about “exteriority”¹⁰ that we are dealing here, a notion which is always present in the Bakhtinian work – (re)adapt it, axiologically, into the world of culture. In this sense, not only are artistic language and everyday language

⁷ BAKHTIN, M. *Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences*. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.159–72.

⁸ For reference, see footnote 5.

⁹ For reference, see footnote 5

¹⁰ In the Brazilian publications, this term, from the Russian *vnenakhodimost*, appears, mainly, as “exterioridade” [exteriority], “exotopia” [exotopy] – following Todorov (1981), as Amorim reminds us and uses (2006) – and “distância” [distance] or “distanciamento” [distancing], as Bezerra considers and prefers (2003). We chose “exterioridade” [exteriority] by the pertinence in signaling its opposition to “interioridade” [interiority] as well as by its relevance in distinguishing – what the term “distanciamento” [distancing] also favors – “exterioridade” [exteriority] and “empatia” [empathy], which, sometimes, are united in the use of the term “exotopia” [exotopy]. It is important to point out that “empatia” [empathy] is not a moment which is chronologically previous to the constitution of the artistic form: “the moments of empathizing and objectifying interpenetrate each other” (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.15). The full reference is: BAKHTIN, M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist, translated with notes by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

not opposed – which means taking into account only the material – but also the concrete utterances of everyday life and the literary works are not opposed either.

Therefore, we see that Bakhtin favors considerations about literary work, but he always situates the aesthetics in a more general domain of human culture, which also includes science/knowledge and ethics. Art is also not indifferent to these two domains; it welcomes them and thus provides concrete unity to culture. When doing it, art releases the content of knowledge and the ethical act from the links, determinations and interests that it has in its specific domains. It is exactly this isolation – a separation that could be quickly confused with the concept of defamiliarization – from the content of its domains which also composes the explanation for the relative autonomy enjoyed by art; it is this isolation that makes possible the non-teleological, non-instrumental, disinterested, but not indifferent activity of the author-creator; therefore, “it allows the author-creator to become a constitutive moment of form” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.308).¹¹

Thus, the content is overcome in its extra-aesthetical character when it is totally formalized, but also entirely embodied. When brought to the aesthetical domain, the content is going to correspond to the injunctions, the consents, the commitments, the dependencies and the conflicts, which are proper to this other cultural space, which also takes another temporality for granted. There, we recognize the dialogical relations that the author-creator maintains with the artistic sphere in which he is situated, through which he will also compose his own image in the work.

When identifying the aesthetics of the material in the propositions of formalism, by ignoring the content and not including historicity, Bakhtin attributes the understanding of art as “making,” and not as “creation” (1986, p.169).¹² Therefore, he does not abandon the notion of “creation,” even though he does not credit that to a sole individual.

As we have already stated, Lodge is not only devoted to the similarities and differences between Bakhtin and Jakobson; after explaining the reason why he favors Bakhtin, the author problematizes what he considers to be “an enigma or paradox” at that moment: how we can understand the existence of the monological discourse in a context which recognizes the dialogical nature of language. Lodge studies some hypothesis in order to explain his doubt and ends up understanding the Bakhtinian

¹¹ For reference, see footnote 5.

¹² For reference, see footnote 7.

proposition as a matter of dominance, either oriented for monology or for polyphony. After the debate on this issue,¹³ which leads him to reflect upon the notion of author, Lodge establishes a comparison between Bakhtin and Barthes, summarized in the excerpt written down in epigraph. Based on that, we can extract the entailment that “the author does not coincide with the language of the text”: knowledge shared between Barthes and Bakhtin, which, by the way, is already well settled in several perspectives.

The approach between Bakhtin and Barthes made by Lodge is supported by the understanding that both theorists do not consider the author, according to the already quoted words, “the unique and authentic origin of the text.” It is an approach which can also be granted by refusing to consider the author as an empirical individual, whose biography provides an explanatory principle to the created work (HANSEN, 1992). However, we know that Barthes will go further.

As the remainder of the epigraph shows, for Lodge, the reflection of Bakhtin and Barthes are not only similar; they are also antithetical. In this sense, also now, after making the approach, it is time to distinguish how Bakhtin and Barthes conceive of and develop this non-coincidence between author and work. Starting with the epigraph words, we find that the non-coincidence distinguishes, in one of them, the author’s existence, and in the other, the inexistence.

According to Barthes, from the famous and exalted text *The Death of the Author* (1989),¹⁴ from 1968, the author is an “invention” of modern (post-medieval) society, linked to the prestige attributed to the individual. In Foucault’s words, in the conference *What is an author?*, from 1969, “the coming into being of the notion of ‘author’ constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences” (1998, p.205).¹⁵

In his text, Barthes recognizes the power of “invention,” which still exerted its fascination over criticism, literature teaching and even the literates. However, inspired by the linguistics of enunciation, it is about its death that he is going to theorize, but not

¹³ Even if quickly, we will recapture it later on.

¹⁴ BARTHES, R. *The Death of the Author*. IN: *The Rustle of Language*. Translated by Richard Howard. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989. Available at <http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf>. Access on: 01 May 2015.

¹⁵ FOUCAULT, M. *What is an Author?* IN: FAUBION, J. D. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. Translated by Robert Hurley and others. New York: The New Press, 1998, pp.205-222.

without previously studying it in the anticipatory writing of Mallarmé and, even if in different ways, of Valéry, Proust, and the surrealists.

Barthes ends up witnessing that the discredit of the author is manifested in at least two domains: literature and the theoretical studies about language; yet, he is not interested in pondering the possible historical reasons for this perception. Instead, he considers that the invention of the author is an interstice. The literary work of the mentioned writers would, in this sense, once again renew the impersonality that had always existed: “in primitive societies, narrative is never undertaken by a person, but by a mediator, shaman or speaker, whose ‘performance’ may be admired (that is, his mastery of the narrative code), but not his ‘genius’” (BARTHES, 1989, p.01).¹⁶

Even though Barthes praises the general character of the linguistic theory that he adopts, he does not prioritize any and every enunciation, but he addresses “writing,” which has an “intransitive” character, once its function is not the action over the real, but the practice of the symbol. The writing is “the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin” (BARTHES, 1989, p.01).¹⁷ It is the neutral space of the loss of identity and also of the body. Therefore, it is necessary to give language what belongs to it, to let language speak in this place, which belongs to it, and not to an individual. “It is language which speaks, not the author” (BARTHES, 1989, p.02).¹⁸ Then, the work is not the place of expression, of uniqueness of meaning, but that of constant actualization of writings that constitutes cultures.

Once the sacralized author is suppressed – and, with him, the consecrated critic to decipher his secret, his ultimate sense – sense is released. Thus, the reader is also released from the task of searching for a biography, a mind, a heart, a subjectivity, in search of an explanation, a desire to speak, a transcendence. The father disappears, but the work remains in order to have its sense defined, its stitch “threaded” (BARTHES, 1989, p.04).¹⁹

The self, registered in the work, has no origin, no past, and no future outside the work, and it does not belong to any place outside it: “[...] every text is eternally written

¹⁶ For reference, see footnote 14.

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 14.

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 14.

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 14.

here and now” (BARTHES, 1989, p.03).²⁰ The categories subject, time and space are, consequently, empty enunciative instances, without any relation to the interlocutors: the writer and reader come to light along with the text. Barthes states that at the end of his text – which is analytical, but also propositional: “the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author” (1989, p.05).²¹

For Barthes, we repeat, “the invention of the author” is an interstice; on the other hand, for Foucault (1998), in the lecture mentioned above, the emergence of the concept of author coincides with the origin of the concept of literature.

Foucault also considers today’s writing: freed from the theme of expression, from the gesture of writing (1998, p.206),²² and from interiority, the writing refers to itself, points to its own meaning; it directs itself to the very space that is manifested by it, which is consolidated with the erasing that the own writer makes of the signs of his individuality (1998, p.207).²³ “The writing subject constantly disappears” (1998, p.206),²⁴ in today’s writing, “the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality [...] the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence” (1998, p.207).²⁵

With the distinction between author and writer, Foucault identifies the writer as being the agent of the author’s disappearance; hence, it is also different from Barthes, for whom, despite also referring to the writer, the agent is the writing. In his way, Foucault also emphasizes the common origin of literature, of writing, with death: “the work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author’s murderer” (1998, p.206).²⁶ However for him, if in today’s writing the subject is always disappearing, in its reception and circulation, the authors, their names, keep on exerting influence: in his words, “the name seems always to be present” (FOUCAULT, 1998, p.211).²⁷ It is by examining the conditions of historical operation of the notion of author that Foucault bases his reflection on “the author function” and, in this context, he problematizes the “death of the author,” the rule for the author’s

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 14.

²¹ For reference, see footnote 14.

²² For reference, see footnote 15.

²³ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁶ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 15.

disappearance. Nevertheless, when answering L. Goldman's question at the end of his lecture, he does not affirm that the author does not exist.

Therefore, Foucault's interest and angle of analysis are different from that of Barthes: Foucault does not settle his reflection on a linguistic theory; he is mainly interested in the outside of the work, the historical-social functioning of the concept of author, and of the author's name in the significance system. Foucault includes, in his lecture, a criticism – the same remembered by Lodge – to the transcendental subject that emerges from writing, from the author's death. Thus, under what he considers to be an apparent rupture, Foucault identifies similarities in the propositions of writing with the very historical-transcendental tradition of the 19th century. Consequently, he conjectures that writing “keeps alive, in the gray light of neutralization, the interplay of those representations that formed a particular image of the author” (FOUCAULT, 1998, p.209).²⁸

The death of the author, for Barthes, is based on the structural approach of enunciation. As for Bakhtin – we are still following the reason for the epigraph –, his place for reflection can be reconstituted in some measure based on his own criticism regarding structuralism:

My attitude toward structuralism: I am against enclosure in a text. Mechanical categories: “opposition,” “change of codes” [...] Sequential formalization and depersonalization: all relations are logical (in the broad sense of the word). But I hear *voices* in everything and relations among them. [...] Structuralism has only one subject – the subject of the research himself. Things are transformed into *concepts* (a different degree of abstraction); the subject can never become a concept (he himself speaks and responds). Contextual meaning is personalistic; it always includes a question, an address, and the anticipation of a response, it always includes two (as a dialogic minimum). This personalism is not psychological, but semantic (1986, pp.169-170).²⁹

The quotation above, which will allow us to amplify the focus of our reflection about the author in order to enclose the subject, in the dialogical perspective, clearly exposes Bakhtin's criticism to what he considers “a formalization and a systematic depersonalization” of the structuralist task, from which he infers an unintended subject, “the researcher himself.” A criticism that does not seem very different from the one –

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 15.

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 7.

resumed here with Foucault and with Lodge – which stares at the death of the subject as the revival of a transcendental subject. A similar criticism is also made by Bakhtin, from his first works, to the reproduction, in human sciences, of the theoretical-abstract methods of natural sciences,³⁰ a domain in which, for him, there is only one subject: “epistemological consciousness cannot have another consciousness outside itself, cannot enter into a relation with another consciousness, one that is autonomous and distinct from it” (1990, p.89).³¹

Hence, for Bakhtin, to assume that sense is always personalistic means that it cannot be reduced to a thing, or to an abstraction. It still means not to consider it a result of subjectivity, or of an inner condition. Sense assumes the relation between two subjects, two consciousnesses, two appreciative centers, which is also assumed from the first works and afterwards, considering language, understood in dialogical terms: “the concretely affirmed value of a human being and my own value-for-myself are radically different” (BAKHTIN, 1993, p.73).³² The value is only “concretely affirmed” by means of language, which is performed in situations of interaction. The word is “the actualizing of consciousness” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.110);³³ “within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.354).³⁴

In this manner, the relation between two consciousnesses, which is defined and operated by the notions of exteriority and empathy, and, in a next decisive step for the Bakhtinian contribution, the acknowledgement of the dialogical nature of this relation, is going to have multiple developments in the reflections about the world of life,³⁵ the ethical act, and literary work. This happens, surely, because the dialogical relations that

³⁰ He recognizes, however, that there is no “insurmountable barrier” between human and natural sciences (BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970–71. IN: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, p.146).

³¹ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, translated with notes by Vadim Liapunov, supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

³² For reference, see footnote 10.

³³ For reference, see footnote 5.

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 6.

³⁵ These terms have already been introduced in this text, when we recaptured the Bakhtinian criticism to formalism.

one consciousness establishes with another, which is “external” to it, explain, precisely, the constitution of consciousness itself:

I am conscious of myself and I become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. [...] Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the *boundary* between one’s own and someone else’s consciousness, on the *threshold* (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.287).³⁶

Brandist (2002) and Emerson (1997)³⁷ relate the notion of exteriority to the Kantian proposition about consciousness: the consciousness of the self is possible only because it is established by something which relates to the self, but is outside the self. Notwithstanding, Bakhtin emphatically rejects Kant’s “consciousness in general,” the understanding of consciousness as a universal abstract. For both scholars of Bakhtin’s work, it is the “reassessment” of Kant in the light of phenomenology which allows Bakhtin to substitute the principle of transcendence with the more leveled perspective of the interaction and of the excess of vision (EMERSON, 1997).³⁸ With N. Bonetskaia, Emerson³⁹ still emphasizes Bakhtin’s disagreement with the Kantian proposition that “knowledge, being limited to personal experience, could never adequately or reliably be extracted from another person’s soul. Information [...] could be gathered solely ‘from the inside out,’ that is, by self-observation” (1997, p.212).⁴⁰ And she concludes: Bakhtin “insists that it is precisely our own selves that we cannot know, since the human psyche is set up to work ‘from the outside in’ [...]” (1997, p.212).⁴¹

This same relation I/other is present in the field of art, in literary work: the architectonical form – a notion which has already been introduced in this paper – manifests the consciousness of consciousness, the active and appreciative relationship of the author with the hero, of the author with the reader, of the author with his object, of one hero with another one. The dialogical relation between the author’s voice and other voices composes the hero, the reader, but also the author. It forms the poet, who in

³⁶ BAKHTIN, M. Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp.283-302.

³⁷ EMERSON, C. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

³⁸ For reference, see footnote 37.

³⁹ We should remember that, in this work by Emerson, published right after the centennial of Bakhtin’s birth, one of the main objectives was to compose the scholar’s image among Russian scholars.

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 37.

⁴¹ For reference, see footnote 37.

a centralizing tendency manifests one voice in spite of or even based on the other voices that constrain him. It composes the novelist, who in a decentralizing tendency accomplishes the polyphony of voices, the stratification of discourses and languages, the diversity of styles and genres (BAKHTIN, 1981).⁴²

In studying authors thus formed, Bakhtin finds out an author in crisis: he is the one who, without a *we*, without solid ground to establish himself on (1984, pp.280-281),⁴³ because “all those forces which consolidate or give body to a life from outside are seen as unessential and fortuitous” (1990, p.203),⁴⁴ is sheltered in interiority, loses his external position in relation to the hero, the surplus vision that would compose an aesthetical unit and provide it with a final touch. However, Bakhtin will change his perception: extracting more consequences from the dialogue and the position of exteriority, instead of reaffirming this author who is shaken, introverted, he is going to be perceived as an author who, without being indifferent, without being incorporated to the hero, follows him closely, intimately. Without *we*, without the *I* that would join a third person in the dialogue, which would provide him with a consistent, steady and stable exteriority, the dialogue is more horizontally developed. Within this other perspective, Dostoevsky’s work would not bring an author in crisis anymore, but an author who does not talk *about* the hero but *with* him (BAKHTIN, 1984).⁴⁵

Bakhtin will suggest that in literary prose, especially in Dostoevsky’s novel, the crossing of voices will show all of its complexity, will artistically exhibit equipollent consciousnesses, multiple voices (1984)⁴⁶ and the incomplete character of life, onto which, in the development of his life and his studies, he seems to hold: the “man in man” (1984, p.252),⁴⁷ without the steady ground, the certainties that can also muzzle him, but, even then, without the axiological emptiness, without the skepticism that can relieve him. In the reformulation of the book about Dostoevsky, he comments:

⁴² For reference, see footnote 6.

⁴³ BAKHTIN, M. Three Fragments from the 1929 Edition *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art*. In: BAKHTIN, M.M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp.275-282.

⁴⁴ For reference, see footnote 31.

⁴⁵ BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁴⁶ For reference, see footnote 45.

⁴⁷ For reference, see footnote 45.

The completely new structure for the image of a human being - a full blooded and fully signifying other consciousness which is not inserted into the *finalizing* frame of reality, which is not finalized by anything (not even death), for its meaning cannot be resolved or abolished by reality (to kill does not mean to refute). This other consciousness is not inserted into the frame of authorial consciousness, it is revealed from within as something that stands *outside* and *alongside* and with which the author can enter into dialogical relations. [...] Our point of view in no way assumes a passivity on the part of the author, who would then merely assemble others' points of view, others' truths, completely denying his own point of view, his own truth. This is not the case at all; the case is rather a completely new and special interrelationship between the author's and the other's truth. The author is profoundly *active*, but his activity is of a special *dialogic* sort (BAKHTIN, 1984, pp.284-285; emphasis in original).⁴⁸

The relation among voices conceives the author's image in the work – monophonic or polyphonic. In other words, it forms the image of the author-creator: an element which constitutes the artistic form, a component of the work, which Bakhtin differentiates from the author-person, a component of life (1990).⁴⁹ In this manner, the author-person (the reader) and the author-creator (the co-creator and the hero) respectively occupy the “world of life” and the “world of culture,” more specifically, one of its fields, the artistic one, moreover, the literary one.

The notions of author-person and author-creator, life and art, are also related to the concept of “double refraction.” In order to understand it, it is necessary to point out that, from Bakhtin's point of view, we never have “direct” access to the world: the object we perceive is always saturated with ideologies, which we apply to it; in other words, the object of our utterances admits refractions from different voices, which are a result of the social forces acting in a specific time. Then, the work of art admits a second refraction, in which the world, already saturated with senses, is represented once again. The author's voice experiences a new refraction in the dialogues produced: “our own discourse becomes an object and acquires a second – its own – voice,” an indirect voice: “the writer is a person who is able to work in a language while standing outside language, who has the gift of indirect speaking” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.110).^{50 51} The

⁴⁸ For reference, see footnote 36.

⁴⁹ For reference, see footnote 31.

⁵⁰ Lodge also took this quotation into consideration.

⁵¹ BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.103-131.

second voice, the indirect voice, is that of the author-creator's that can be inferred from the work.

Art does not defamiliarize daily life and other cultural domains;⁵² turning them into its object, taking them to another sphere, which has its own rules, art exerts its (relative) independence in relation to them. Thus, double refraction manifests the relation among life, art, and other cultural spheres.

For Bakhtin, every utterance, daily life, literary one, or one from other cultural spheres, is never a repetition of another existing one, but it is also not totally new. If it were, communication would be impossible. As they are components of the verbal communication chain, of the socio-historical processes, utterances reiterate values, reaffirm feelings, and repeat linguistic structures.

Yet, it is in the world of life, in every utterance, in every reading, which is unique and unrepeatable, dialogically accomplished in a determined time and space, in a certain society, that literary work is produced. And it is also there that literary work is taken from the bookshelf and is (re)actualized, reiterated, or transforms senses which have already been established. In this way, the work is incorporated with the author's experience, with that of the reader, and participates in their constitution. Therefore, in the Bakhtinian reflection, the importance of art becomes outstanding as well as the importance of the world of life.

Hence, all this dynamics reveals that there is no radical rupture between author-person and author-creator, or a complete alienation between author-person and his work. It would be like admitting, in Bakhtin, what he criticizes in structuralism, in formalism.⁵³ In this sense, even criticizing the use of the author's biography to understand the work, Bakhtin considers:

All this is not to deny the possibility that the juxtaposition of the author's and the hero's biographies and their world views *could* be productive for literary history as well as for aesthetic analysis. We are merely denying the validity of the completely unprincipled, purely factual approach to this matter that at present prevails over all others, which is based, first, on confounding the author-creator (a constituent in a work) with the author-person (a constituent in the ethical, social event of life), and second, on failing to understand the creative

⁵² As mentioned previously.

⁵³ It would be better to remember Foucault: as already quoted, "the name seems always to be present." For reference, see footnote 15.

principle in the author's relationship to a hero (1990, p.10; emphasis in original).⁵⁴

The author must be understood first of all from the event of a work as a participant in that event and as an authoritative guide for the reader in that event. To understand the author in the historical world of his time, to understand his place in a social collective, his class position: here we go outside the bounds of an analysis of the event of a work and enter the domain of history; a purely historical study cannot but take into account all of these moments [...] The individuation of the author as a human being is no longer a primary but a secondary creative act performed by the reader, the critic, the historian, independently of the author as an active principle of seeing – an act in which the author himself is rendered passive (1990, pp.207-208).⁵⁵

Now, we could return to our epigraph and rewrite its last extract in order to specify, in Bakhtin's approach, the non-coincidence of the author with the language of his text: Bakhtin assumes the existence of the author-creator, precisely because he does not coincide with the author-person. We could summarize it as long as we consider all previous reflections.

Barthes and Bakhtin reject the concept of author as “the unique and authentic origin of the text.” However, their reasoning is quite different: Barthes, interested in the scientific study of language, finds in the linguistic of enunciation the theoretical basis for his rejection; Bakhtin considers literary work with priority; however, with a philosophical interest, his reflections are not enclosed in it.

As we have already observed, Bakhtin emphasizes the relation I/other, which is necessary not only in artistic creation, but also in the constitution of one's own consciousness, which is always performed by means of language. In the same manner, he discloses the importance given to the dynamics of everyday social life for the explanation and circulation of forms of artistic creation – in fact, in the explanation and circulation of forms of cultural creation as a whole, which constitute the domains of aesthetics as well as of ethics and cognition.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ For reference, see footnote 31.

⁵⁵ For reference, see footnote 31.

⁵⁶ In a way which is similar to that dynamics, Bakhtin also signals the interrelation between primary and secondary genres, a distinction which is linked to the world of life and the world of culture. The utterances of the world of life and those of the world of culture register and actualize, respectively, primary and secondary genres (BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. (1952–53) In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp.60-102). In Marchezan (2006), this link was shown, even if only intuitively.

Thus, despite the similarities to Simmel, Bakhtin seems to debate against the “tragedy of culture,” announced by the German scholar (SIMMEL, 2000). Simmel detects an unsolvable conflict between life and form: The cultural objects, when producing their own significance systems, tend to self-refer to each other, to self-create; they start to have an internal purpose and are separated from the subject who creates them, whom they should serve.

Bakhtin recognizes these cultural and ideological forces that intend to automatize and depersonalize man, but he points to an overcoming of the division between life and culture, through communication and decentralizing forces. In this manner, he affirms the importance of the world of life, in which communication takes place. He also affirms the function of art. As we have seen, it is in the domain of art, especially in the novel, that we can find, in a way which is similar to the world of life, the relation between personified subjects who are concretely situated.

The reflections about the author and the subject, developed here, emphasize, as we have noticed, Bakhtin’s interlocutions with the philosophy of life. Gumbrecht links this philosophical thought to the rejection of the subject/object paradigm, according to which the meaning of world is something “given” and the man situated outside it has the responsibility of interpreting it – and we should add, the critic is responsible for elucidating the literary text. The scholars who defend this perspective, even with different propositions, align themselves in the consideration that the meaning of the world is dependent on the human mind (1993).⁵⁷ It is clear, with the notion of refraction, that this proposition is adopted by Bakhtin, who, in answer to the crisis of the subject/object paradigm, proposes, at least for human sciences, the dialogical procedure, the subject/subject relationship.

Therefore, in the crisis of subject/object paradigm, Bakhtin does not allow the space of the subject to become vacant.

Without the distance between subject/object, without the guarantee of objectivity, and with the consideration that the subjects operate differently in diverse spheres of the world of culture – we should remember the distinction between author-

⁵⁷ GUMBRECHT, H. U. Everyday-World and Life-World as Philosophical Concepts: A Genealogical Approach. *New Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 4, Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change, Autumn, 1993, pp.745-761. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/469390?origin=crossref&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>. Access on: 01 May 2015.

person and author-creator –, from the viewpoint of relativism, Bakhtin could be considered the fragmentation of the subject. No. This can be refuted, again based on the world of life, a place of responsible act,⁵⁸ in which without alibi, the subject must be responsible for the unity of his acts in the different spheres in which he acts. Thus, we emphasize that the Bakhtinian subject, which is socially constituted, in the relationship with the other, also bears an ethical stance.

At the end of these deliberations, it seems to be possible for us to affirm that, in Bakhtinian studies, the necessary relevance to the concepts of world of life and world of culture has not been given yet. Only when we make use of them can we understand the Bakhtinian notions of author and subject, which are present in the world of life and in the domains of culture. The presence of those philosophical concepts, all over Bakhtin's works, also allows us to confirm the assertion of his unity and coherence.

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⁵⁸ Especially mentioned in Bakhtin (1993), but not only there. For reference, see footnote 10.

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