

**CASTRO, Gilberto de. *Discurso citado e memória – Ensaio bakhtiniano sobre Infância e São Bernardo* [Reported Discourse and Memory: Bakhtinian Essay on Childhood and São Bernardo: A Novel]. Chapecó, SC: Argos, 2014. 158 p.**

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This book by Gilberto de Castro is based on his doctorate dissertation. It provides aesthetic delight by bringing a sensitive gaze to two literary works of Graciliano Ramos; besides, it also clarifies the Bakhtin Circle's theoretical framework, especially the concept of reported discourse, which, rightly affirmed by the author, is rarely an object of studies and analyses.

Upon reading Castro's book, this gap is understood to be significant. According to the author, not only is reported discourse found predominantly integrated into the language theory elaborated by the Circle, but it is also one of the fundamental elements for the understanding of the ontological nature of language and discourse order.

The reader comes across a wide approach of what reported discourse is. It is thus characterized as an encounter of voices that forge discourse. It is through the processes of reporting and referencing the words of others that discourse is organized. In this context, the author clarifies the theoretical perspective of the Circle, whose approach does not adhere to the formal aspects of language: "[...] talking about *reported discourse* doesn't mean dealing with the mere juxtaposition of voices, ideas, thoughts, but rather with a broad approach of *voice encounter without setting aside its ideological and evaluative dimension*" (p.39; emphasis added, our translation).<sup>1</sup>

As to reported discourse, it is important to consider that the novel offers a privileged atmosphere for this subject once the novelistic texts have

[...] a strict liaison with life, manifested in the intense and sensitive absorption of the multiplicity of the other discursive genres (simple and complex) and of the different worldviews, in which the novel is transformed into the most important empirical source to the studies of reporting processes (p.43, our translation).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Text in original: "[...] falar em *discurso citado* não significa tratar de mera justaposição de vozes, ideias, pensamentos, mas antes pensar numa abordagem ampla do *encontro vocal sem que deixemos de lado a sua dimensão ideológica e valorativa*".

<sup>2</sup> Text in original: "[...] estreita ligação com a vida, manifestada na absorção intensa e sensível da multiplicidade dos demais gêneros discursivos (simples e complexos) e das diferentes visões de mundo, que o romance acabou se transformando na fonte empírica mais importante para o estudo dos processos de citação".

Castro examined two dense and acclaimed narratives by Graciliano Ramos: *Infância*<sup>3</sup> and *São Bernardo*.<sup>4</sup> In the first chapter, he presents the theoretical bases of his work, and in the following chapters, a thorough analysis of the forms of reporting typical of the autobiographical genre.

Regarding the theoretical framework, he provides a number of forms of reporting the words of others, bringing up Bakhtin's argument about the importance of reporting in the general framework of communication. According to the Russian theorist, at least half of all words in people's daily lives are words of others. In this respect, the author fully clarifies that the Bakhtinian perspective tries to expose the methodological aspect of language analysis more than anything else. This means that the main concern here is the understanding of the ontological nature of language and not the listing of schematic forms. The author intends to be faithful to the proposal made by the Circle, presenting a theory substantially based on the essence of language.

In this sense, the book didactically and synthetically sheds some light on the processes of reported discourse which finds its forms socially grammaticalized, integrating the narrative basically in two styles: the *linear* and the *pictorial*. The first establishes the contours for reported speech, fully preserving somebody else's discourse. The latter is characterized by a more subtle elaboration, offering the speaker the possibility of interference, providing the reported discourse with the narrator's evaluative stance.

Still in the first chapter, the author points to Voloshinov's analysis concerning the Russian literary texts, in which some of the variants of direct and indirect discourses are listed, situating the stylistic specificities of each.

Drawing on Voloshinov's analyses of fragments of Russian literary texts, Castro first elucidates in more detail how the variants of indirect discourse, viz., *referent-analyzing indirect discourse (RAID)*, *texture-analyzing indirect discourse (TAID)*, *impressionistic indirect discourse (IID)*, and the variants of direct discourse, viz., *preset direct discourse (PDD)*, *particularized direct discourse (PDD)*, *rhetorical direct*

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<sup>3</sup> TN. This work has been translated into English. The full reference is: RAMOS, G. *Childhood*. Transl. Celso De Oliveira. London: Peter Owen, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> TN. This work has been translated into English. The full reference is: RAMOS, G. *São Berando: A Novel*. Transl. R.L. Scott-Buccleuch. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979

*discourse* (RDD), *substituted direct discourse* (SDD), work. The latter could be considered somewhat closer to the *quasi-direct discourse* (QDD).

In the second chapter, *The Overarching Voice: The Reported Discourse in Infância [Childhood] and São Bernardo [São Bernardo: A Novel]*, Castro analyzes the forms of reporting in the novels by Graciliano Ramos. Primarily based on the theoretical path discussed by Voloshinov, he originally and clearly brings an amplification of the theory by designating some forms of reporting, especially when it comes to constitutive direct discourse (CDD) as the revealing discourse of the narrator's worldview.

The author adds that Graciliano Ramos constructs in *Infância [Childhood]* a worldview of his past, a time when brutality, despotism, and prejudice prevailed and when there was no room for kindness, generosity, and sensitivity. This is done by means of CDD. Moreover, the forms of reporting occurring in this work, i.e., quasi-direct discourse (QDD), particularized direct discourse (PDD), undetermined direct discourse (UDD), and elliptical indirect discourse (EDD), point to dialogue distancing. This means that the words of others, present in Ramos's text, are used for coloring, setting the tone of the narrator's constitutive discourse, revealing a strategy to overshadow the voice of characters, which therefore controls what they say.

According to Castro, *São Bernardo [São Bernardo: A Novel]*, with a regular plot and simplified form of reporting, presents a narrative incongruous with *Infância [Childhood]*. Nevertheless, the way constitutive direct discourse (CDD) was organized, revealing workmanship and creating the impression of the narrator's worldview, is somehow similar to that which occurs in *Infância [Childhood]*. In addition, in *São Bernardo [São Bernardo: A Novel]*, the narrator returns to the past to reconstruct his history, and his affective-boulomaic tone expresses the profile of a cold, hardened, and manipulative man of unscrupulous manners.

Also *São Bernardo [São Bernardo: A Novel]* presents the prevalence of direct discourse, coined by Castro as dialogic direct discourse (DDD), having rare moments of indirect discourse. However, according to the author, an interleaving of indirect discourse in the dialogic direct discourse can be seen. It is chosen by the essayist as dialogic indirect discourse (DID) as it promotes a dialogic function in the dialogic direct discourse in which it is inserted.

Confirming its analytical and theoretical nature, the book by Castro also clarifies, in a unique way, that there are other forms of reporting in dialogues, which he calls repeated direct discourse (RDD). In this perspective, the narrator repeats the character's explicit direct discourse so as to express a crisis or a conflict, especially in moments when he experiences jealousy feelings towards his wife Madalena.

Another form of reporting described by Gilberto de Castro, also present in *São Bernardo* [*São Bernardo: A Novel*], is the so-called particularized direct discourse (PDD), which occurs as a form to set the context, an expression of a feeling or a cry. This strengthens the narrative tone and appears more emphatically, just as repeated direct discourse (RDD), in moments of crisis lived by the narrator and his wife Madalena.

The author closes the second chapter concluding that, despite all the differences between the two novels, there are some similarities in the way the narrative is conducted in both utterances, for both reveal a narrator who holds the floor and sets the tone of his account, evidencing the centrality of his narrative. In both *Infância* [*Childhood*] and *São Bernardo* [*São Bernardo: A Novel*], “all forms of reporting are therefore at the service of this centralizing narrator – author/narrator, in the first case and narrator/character, in the second case” (p.125, our translation).<sup>5</sup>

In the third and final chapter, the author revisits the Bakhtinian theory of polyphony, assuring that when Bakhtin considers Dostoevsky the creator of a new novelistic modality, he does not set the polyphonic novel above all other literary works, that is to say, he does not reduce the value of novels that do not fit into the polyphonic category. In such a context, both *Infância* [*Childhood*] and *São Bernardo* [*São Bernardo: A Novel*] are autobiographical discourses that are constructed as first person narratives, whose perspective and prevailing worldview, contrary to the polyphonic novel, are those of the narrator.

Since both narratives are autobiographical, the form of reporting, promoting the narrator's centralizing perspective, is inevitably the condition of such genre of literary prose. “The autobiography is therefore self-centered upon the figure of the narrator, making his voice echo far louder than all the others, not only dominating but also

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<sup>5</sup> Text in original: “Todas as formas de citar estão, assim, a serviço deste narrador centralizador – autor/narrador no primeiro caso e narrador/personagem no segundo caso”.

submitting them to his evaluative monopoly” (p.131, our translation).<sup>6</sup> It is Castro’s belief that the narrators’ objective is focused neither on discussing the theme, nor on dialoguing with the supposed reported speech. Instead, it seeks to construct a narrative analogous to a personal confession, establishing a different perspective from that which occurs in a polyphonic aesthetic.

Taking into account the difference between the two novels, and considering the concept of fictionality, strong evidence that *Infância* [*Childhood*] refers to the author’s life can be found, says the essayist; however, such evidence is not enough to show the difference between the autobiographical narratives of the two works. Once seen, “[f]rom the perspective of the constitution of the genre autobiography, it seems that what is most significant is not the reality effect that may be created [...] but, rather, a narrative perspective assumed by whoever tells the story” (p.144, our translation).<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, the analyses of the forms of reported discourse of Graciliano Ramos’s selected works are resumed with remarkable synthesis and clarity. Here the author reiterate that, firstly in *Infância* [*Childhood*] and then in *São Bernardo* [*São Bernardo: A Novel*], all the occurrences of reported discourses are a strategy to overshadow and restrict the liberty of reported voices, delegating part of the responsibility of reported words to the narrator, since it is he who, on his own, tells events of the past. It is upon this positioning, expressing both the author, Graciliano Ramos, and Paulo Honório, the character/narrator’s forged worldview, which emerges from experiences and rises from memories, that Castro calls constitutive direct discourse (CDD).

Finally, Gilberto Castro’s essay brings for language scholars, researchers, and readers interested in discursive issues and genres a potent theoretical contribution about reported discourse and, above all, discursive genres, most specifically the autobiographical genre. The reader will find an efficient approach that casts light over the Circle’s theory, surpassing it by providing an original and instructive nomenclature.

The book will certainly please lovers of Brazilian literature through the essayist’s keen and sensitive gaze upon Graciliano Ramos’s works, providing not only a pleasant

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<sup>6</sup> Text in original: “A autobiografia é, portanto, uma narrativa autocentrada na figura do narrador, fazendo com que a sua voz ecoe mais forte do que todas as outras, dominando-as e submetendo-as ao seu monopólio avaliativo”.

<sup>7</sup> Text in original: “Do ponto de vista da constituição do gênero autobiográfico, parece que o que é mais significativo, não é o efeito de realidade que se pode criar [...] mas muito mais a perspectiva narrativa assumida por quem conta a história”.

read, but also theoretical knowledge. In this sense, the work is outstanding for bringing borders between the studies of language and literature closer and making them less dense and demarcated. It therefore promotes an opening, which indubitably contributes to the general understanding of discursive processes, with special emphasis on reported discourse, which we all are inexorably submitted to, immersed in and which leaves us with no alibi.

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