

**Discussions on Dialogism Aroused by the Book *La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones* [*Bakhtin's Legacy: Reflections and Migrations*]/ *Discussões sobre dialogismo suscitadas pelo livro La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones***

*Adail Sobral\**

**ABSTRACT**

This text presents reflections on dialogism aroused by the book *La Herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones* [Bakhtin's Legacy: Reflections and Migrations], edited by Pampa Arán and published in 2016 by the Centro de Estudios Avanzados [Center for Advanced Studies] of the National University of Córdoba, and has as its focus questions concerning the dialogical conception and some of its readings.

**KEYWORDS:** Dialogism; Reflections; Readings

**RESUMO**

*Este texto apresenta reflexões sobre dialogismo suscitadas pelo livro *La Herencia de Bajtín: Reflexiones y Migraciones*, organizado por Pampa Arán e publicado, em 2016, pelo Centro de Estudios Avanzados da Universidade Nacional de Córdoba, estando centrado em torno de questões que envolvem a concepção dialógica e algumas leituras suas.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Dialogismo; Reflexões; Leituras*

---

\* Universidade Católica de Pelotas – UCPel, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; adail.sobral@gmail.com.

## To Start our Conversation

What may one say about an essay (not properly a paper or a review article) that reads readings, and even readings of readings' readings? Such a text risks having its readings contested as being hasty for not considering relevant details, etc. or for other reasons, even if the essay author is also a reader and commentator of at least some of the authors read, or at least the most important ones. But it is a relevant reading experience that of saying how author X read author Y and what the consequences of this reading are. We do an active reading of evaluative intonations contained in these readings, because it is this response that gives sense to their existence. Thus, it seems legitimate to discuss critical discussions critically. Reviews, even the so-called critical reviews, are more informative than critical; papers are demanded to carry out certain formal requisites. But that does not apply to an essay presenting critical comments about readings, migrations, analogies, explorations.

The final product, if we may say so, is what matters the least here; the process of reflecting on the texts of the book, captured evaluatively by this reflection-essay of mine, is the central point. And it is precisely that which this curious book shows. We have here a reading of readings that produces new versions of discussions about Bakhtin's legacy, evaluated by means of reflections and migrations especially Bakhtin's and of those connected to Bakhtin and vital concepts of dialogical theory and analysis, including analyses of several distinct objects – this is what *La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones* ([Bakhtin's Legacy: Reflections and Migrations] ARAN, 2016) brings.

### **1 General Presentation of *La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones* (ARAN, 2016)**

This book was published in Córdoba, Argentina. It has a printed version and a free-circulating e-book version. It is a concert / arena of voices, having multiple authorship, and it brings especially texts by the book editor, Pampa Arán, professor and researcher at the National University of Córdoba. These texts, distributed in the first two parts of the book, comprise previously unpublished texts from presentations, conversations and round-tables as well as revised versions of already published papers.

In some of them, Arán discusses texts that have read other texts (*Part I: Intersecciones y migraciones* [Intersections and Migrations]) especially Bakhtin's; in others, she reflects about important theoretical and methodological questions (in a broad sense) linked to texts by Bakhtin and other authors of the so-called Circle (*Part II: Categorías en discusión* [Categories in Discussion]). And she always does it from a given coherent point of view that culminates, at the end of Part II, in the proposition of her own categories, which she uses to understand several phenomena.

The book also brings, generously, *Part III (Campos de exploración* [Fields for Exploration]), in which the organizer gives voice (directly, not in reported speech) to special interlocutors of hers. The chapters here approach diverse topics from several perspectives, taking dialogism either as a point of departure or as a counterpoint. We see here reflections that reveal new horizons both for reading dialogism and for those who are interested in going beyond strict disciplinary limits.

All the texts contained in this Third Part explain the title "fields of exploration"; they do not apply concepts, but do exploratory reflections on many objects in dialogue with Bakhtin. These texts explore territories: feminism, memory and Brazilian military dictatorship, limitations of theories of communication and games, citizenship and the city in post-modern times. And their authors are bold. If Bakhtin loved variations, these variations I read are lovable. They do what I have been arguing for: they are inspired in Bakhtin, but are not applications of Bakhtin's ideas. And this makes them even more valuable, because applications are generally restraining, while texts inspired by relevant propositions, as is the case, are more productive contributions.

This third part brings the following texts: *La comprensión dialógica. Una ética para la teoría feminista* [The Dialogical Understanding. An Ethics for Feminist Theory] by Adriana Boria; *La escena que retorna: memoria y escritura* [The Scene that Comes Back: Memory and Scripture] by Beth Brait; *Aportes de Bajtín para una profundización analítica de la comunicación* [Contributions by Bakhtin to an Analytical Deepening of Communication] by Eva Da Porta, and *El cronotopo y la ciudad digital: Una lectura bajtiniana del videojuego Watch Dogs* [The Chronotope and the Digital City: A Bakhtinian Reading of the Video Game Watch Dogs] by Ernesto Pablo Molina Ahumada.

The authors are: Adriana Boria, a full professor of Literary Theory of the School of Modern Letters at Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades of the National University of Córdoba; Beth Brait is a professor and researcher at the University of São Paulo and the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo; Ernesto Pablo Molina Ahumada is an accredited professor at Facultad de Lenguas and Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades of the National University of Córdoba, and Eva Da Porta is a professor and researcher at the Center de Studios Avanzados of Facultad de Ciencias Sociales of the National University of Córdoba.

## **2 Part I (Intersections and Migrations)**

Arán carries out, in Part I, something we may call *readings of readings*. These bring us unsuspected nuances both from the readings she discusses and from the dialogical texts read. From her critical social-semiotic point of view (which will be clear in her proposition of literary chronotopies [p.135] and cultural chronotopies [p.149]), the author reads Julia Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin (chapter *Julia Kristeva, audaz lectora de Bajtín* [Julia Kristeva, a Daring Reader of Bakhtin]), in which "daring" both praises and indicates, so to speak, that Kristeva had a certain freedom of interpretation. Stemming from the dialogical texts available at her time, her propositions, in a way, considered texts autonomous as signifying devices. I agree with Arán: this does not decrease Kristeva's merits as a pioneering reader of Bakhtin's texts, but asks for caution.

Arán shows the importance of this reading when she gives voice to Kristeva, for whom dialogism "would perhaps be the basis for the intellectual structure of our time" (p.30).<sup>1</sup> Arán's critical social-semiotic perspective implies that texts are not autonomous entities, but part of a more comprehensive sense production device. Nevertheless, even disagreeing with Kristeva on the statute of texts, Arán recognizes Kristeva's interpretation as an important contribution. This contribution is expanded by Arán when she proposes that dialogism might be thought as a possible "new critical science of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Original: "sería quizás la base de la estructura intelectual de nuestra época." This and all translations presented are mine.

text” (p.30),<sup>2</sup> understanding “text” as an enunciative device and not only as textual materiality; it requires this latter, but it goes beyond it.

In *Saussure, Bajtín, Verón: lingüística y semiótica* [Saussure, Bakhtin, Verón: Linguistics and Semiotics], Arán discusses some of the several consequences of Volochinov’s, Bakhtin’s, and Eliseo Verón’s reading of Saussure. And she does it with a bold aim in view: to show that “the migration of the thought of the Genevan linguist continues to produce new theory even today” (p.35),<sup>3</sup> as we saw in recent congresses and seminars on Saussure in Brazil and in Geneva, for example. “New theory” is understood in a broad sense, as new theoretical readings, ramifications, aspects of theories refused, re-readings, etc. of Saussure’s propositions.

The author goes to the core of the question of whether a certain reading refutes or not a given proposition, when it is opposed in some way to it, of whether it “simply” constitutes another proposition that, even irreconcilable with the first one, maintains the legitimacy of the two. It has been unfortunately common to stem from propositions whose focuses differ and demand that they respond to questions that are not theirs. If one presents proposition Y in opposition to proposition X, one does not necessarily aim to refute, but rather present elements for, so to speak, creating new objects, considering new points of view.

I cannot force social-criticism, for example, to do what it does not intend to do. But I can refuse everything social-criticism does and nonetheless I will not be refuting it. The very idea of refutation seems strange to Bakhtinian thought, based on active understanding, which is always legitimately evaluative. By comparing three readings, two done several decades ago (Bakhtin and Volochinov) and a more recent one (Verón), Arán not only shows her own reading of Saussure’s *oeuvre* but also chronotopical-evaluative differences among the readings she discusses, each one situated in a given “chronotopy.”<sup>4</sup>

*Bajtín y Lotman: paradigmas y nuevos espacios culturales* [Bakhtin and Lotman: Paradigms and New Cultural Spaces] (p.47) is a chapter in which Arán attempts to explore the possibility of a proposition integrating Bakhtin and Lotman. One

---

<sup>2</sup> Original: “nueva ciencia crítica del texto.”

<sup>3</sup> Original: “la migración del pensamiento del lingüista ginebrino continúa aún hoy generando nueva teoría.”

<sup>4</sup> Original: “cronotopía.”

of Arán's great merits is to take, as her departure point, the question of the subject and that of language in the processes of sense creation as they are understood by these two thinkers. Although many people find these authors, at first sight, distant and even irreconcilable and although in fact they differ, as Arán shows, in terms of procedures, intentions and basis of their propositions, by means of a careful reading, we may identify some points of contact or at least a possible convergence.

This convergence, as she makes clear, is not in the texts, but in her reading, an exploratory and perfectly legitimate one. The work of the text creates its relations, inscribes ways of seeing. Arán shows we may say, from her point of view, that the two thinkers see subjects' agency, in semiotic processes, as a "historically unlimited potential open to change, to interaction, to imprevisibility" (p.47).<sup>5</sup> When different authors make analogies based on the existence of "equal" terms considering the sense these terms have in each theoretical framework, this kind of effort is extremely productive: propositions converge according to an explicitly presented point of view, not from hasty analogies.

Finally, in *Reapropiaciones contemporáneas de Bakhtin* [Contemporary Re-appropriations of Bakhtin], Arán does justice to some other relevant readers of Bakhtin's oeuvre who work in the field we might call "social studies": the social-criticism author Marie-Pierrette Malcuzinski (who, from her coherent perspective, sees dialogism as a device for text analysis in terms of intertextuality, something that Arán expands in her own proposition), the multi-function author Iris Zavala (who, according to Arán, presents "the polyphonic breadth of social imaginaries" (p.65),<sup>6</sup> which is quite an accomplishment, Brazilian theoreticians/artists Arlindo Machado (who incorporates dialogism to a multimedia poetics) and Eduardo Kac (who proposes a cybernetic dialogism). Machado and Kac explore Bakhtinian principles in order to create cultural products that emphasize or reveal, let we say, dialogical conclusions or repercussions.

Malcuzinski's perspective is present in other texts by Arán, as one of her constant dialogues, and the works of Machado and Kac are relevant to show how re-appropriations are not restricted to genre or sphere, media or theoretical perspective. I emphasize here the comments on Iris Zavala's extremely personal view. Zavala makes a

---

<sup>5</sup> Original: "un potencial historicamente ilimitado, abierto al cambio, a la interacción, a la imprevisibilidad."

<sup>6</sup> Original: "el espesor polifónico de los imaginarios sociales."

multiplicity of authors dialogue in her texts, from her point of view, with the Circle, approaching aesthetics in a way that allows her go beyond it and emphasize ethics and politics in texts concerning dialogism.

Arán shows that Zavala, by theorizing about frontiers, which are indexes of closure, makes them edges, circles that touch each other, indexes of openness, aiming to propose, also considering Bakhtin, but not only him, a study of the world in terms of “a culture without frontiers and a world of intersections” (p.71).<sup>7</sup> In Zavala’s words, quoted by Arán, the synthesis of this proposition is: “[...] the dialogical word asserts that nothing is conclusive, that everything is going to a new world, still unsaid and not predetermined” (p.72).<sup>8</sup> Ethics and politics, in addition to aesthetics, are, as Arán points out, important for denouncing “silences, exclusions, dominations, and censorships” (p.72).<sup>9</sup>

Arán concludes this part of the book, integrating, so to speak, ethics, aesthetics and politics and posing two questions to the reader: the first is how to introduce Bakhtin’s thought without contradictions in a culture that “has been weaving a new fabric in the constitution of social subjects,” which generates “new languages to refer to it” (p.78).<sup>10</sup> The other, of another kind, but equally relevant, is, “Are the several appropriations promising as regards the development of the heuristic capacity of Bakhtin’s thought?” (p.78). I will return to these questions.

### 3 Part II (Discussing Categories)

In Part II, we have the following essays: *Dialogismo y producción de sentido* [Dialogism and Sense Production], *La pregunta por el autor* [The Question of the Author]<sup>11</sup>, *Géneros discursivos y géneros literarios* [Speech Genres and Literary Genres], *Cronotopías literarias* [Literary Chronotopies] and *Cronotopías culturales*.

---

<sup>7</sup> Original: “una cultura sin fronteras y un mundo de intersecciones.”

<sup>8</sup> Original: “La palabra dialógica afirma que nada es conclusivo, que todo se dirige hacia un nuevo mundo, aun no dicho y no predeterminado.”

<sup>9</sup> Original: “silencios, exclusiones, dominaciones y censuras.”

<sup>10</sup> Original: “está tejiendo una nueva trama en la constitución de los sujetos sociales y nuevos lenguajes para referirla.”

<sup>11</sup> The Question of the Author in Bakhtin. Also published in *Bakhtiniana*, São Paulo, Special Issue: 5-27, Jan./Jul. 2014. <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/bakhtiniana/article/view/17700/14621>

*Apuntes para una categoría sociosemiótica de investigación* [Cultural Chronotopies. Contributions to a Social Semiotic Category of Research]. These texts present propositions based on appropriations and migrations done by Arán over dialogic concepts.

Discussing sense according to dialogism, Arán concludes this part of the book proposing the notion of “chronotopy,” clearly linked to chronotope, but which has social, political and semiotic nuances that enrich our understanding of this latter concept. One must read all papers in the order they are presented in this part. Such a reading shows the meanders of Arán’s thought and even an architectonics for a dialogue between dialogism and social criticism.

Arán, in *Dialogismo y producción de sentido* [Dialogism and Sense Production], considers especially the following passages from Bakhtin’s 1970-1971 notes:<sup>12</sup>

With meaning I give answers to questions. Anything that does not answer a question is devoid of sense for us. [...] . The responsive nature of contextual meaning. Meaning always responds to questions. Anything that does not respond to something seems meaningless to us; it is removed from dialogue. Contextual meaning and formal definition. Formal definition is removed from dialogue, but it is deliberately and conventionally abstracted from it. It contains potential meaning (1986, p.145).

It is a controversial passage, which summarizes the concept of dialogical relations, but it bothers some authors when it talks about the exclusion of “formal definition.” Although Bakhtin modulates this by saying “but it is deliberately and conventionally abstracted from it” and “[i]t contains potential meaning,” showing two aspects of sense, an element pertaining to the stability of the language system [formal definition] and a resource apprehended by sense-production processes [contextual meaning], some authors see there, so to speak, the negation of the linguistic system per se.

As Arán shows, it is possible to say that Bakhtin refuses the notion of code, but not that of language system. Arán explores the potential of this passage (and of others related to it), showing poetically (and in a theoretically sound way) that in this

---

<sup>12</sup> BAKHTIN, M.M. “From Notes Made in 1970-71”. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Speech genres and other late essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986.



conception “[s]ense [contextual meaning] is ‘universal’ and ‘eternal’ when taken as an ontological foundation of humans in their ‘finitude’, but it is always renewed, in the interpretive dialogics that moves history” (p.87).<sup>13</sup> The potential for sense happens, thus, chronotopically and interactively, beyond formal definition, but incorporating it.

In *The Question of the Author*, Arán argues for the idea that, in her conception of author, Bakhtin allows substituting “a moral subject of discourse” for the “civilizing subject of modernity.”<sup>14</sup> In the present time, in which the fragmentation of subjects is seen as positive at times, making it seem that identity is so fluid we can be everyone we want to, it is highly relevant to question this civilizing subject without proposing an autarkical subject that only serves the destabilizing dynamics of capitalism’s global phase. The “moral subject of discourse” is a concrete, responsible subject, despite himself/herself. This description may serve us as a resource for resisting against the flexible and alienated subject of capitalism – the one who sells, without morals, some domesticated differences between subjects in order to achieve the homogenization necessary to maintain economies of scale that seek only to maximize profits.

The author explores several “traces” of authorship discussed by Bakhtin, that is, several ways he defines authors and their actions (the “love for variations”). Recognizing that Bakhtin is (along with Foucault) a founder of discursivity, she calls his discursivity – as she legitimately interprets Bakhtin – “intersubjective otherness.” In other words, we are all I and Others, because our otherness joins our subjectivity (such as they do in the Other) in this complex process by means of which we become subjects in life and in discourse. Thus, this highlights that I and *alter* are relational, something at times forgotten, although it is the basis of the dialogical concept: I and other are mutually constitutive, for better or worse, one way or another.

This topic is so dear to me that I have written about it in several texts based essentially on the question of architectonic form, which in Arán’s essay is only mentioned, in its relation to compositional form, and the latter’s mobilization for the architectural enunciative project and other aspects of genre. It is worth mentioning that Arán now considers again the question of enunciative relations as a relevant aspect of authorial work. In the text there are nuances and another way of seeing the question

---

<sup>13</sup> Original: “El sentido es ‘universal’ y ‘eterno’, en tanto ontológicamente fundante de lo humano en su ‘infinidad’, pero se renueva siempre, en la dialógica interpretativa que mueve la historia.”

<sup>14</sup> Original: “sujeto civilizatorio de la Modernidad”; “sujeto moral del discurso.”

of the author according to Bakhtin as well as an excellent survey of the distinct moments (and texts) of theorizing this question in Bakhtin's work.

In *Speech Genres and Literary Genres*, Arán integrates the main threads of the definition of genre in general in Bakhtin's work to discuss literary types. In a certain way, there is a convergence of elements on sense in Bakhtin's work and the question of authorship, coming from the previous essays. I think these essays were "asking for" genres to be considered, since sense and authorship imply utterances, and genres are forms of utterances.

For her social-critical aims, Arán sees Bakhtin's proposition as a kind of sociology of literary genres, but she recognizes that it is equally "the recognition of the social function of certain genres" (p.119).<sup>15</sup> From my perspective, it is a question of proposing the foundations for the recognition of forms of interlocation; genres organize speech and writing. It is not that she does not recognize it, but, as her point of view reveals a certain emphasis on their most stable aspects, I consider vital to emphasize the necessity to remember their variable aspects.

There is an excellent survey that investigated the moments when this question is discussed in the *oeuvre* of the authors of the dialogical concept. A high point in the text is when it shows that Bakhtin's mature works maintain, with alterations, the perspective of the beginning. Arán joins here the community of commentators, amongst whom I am one, who do not see ruptures or a sudden "linguistic turn" in Bakhtin's works. In fact, in Bakhtin's *oeuvre*, starting with the text that came to be entitled "Towards a Philosophy of the Act," language in use and the idea that the basis of sense is the relation I-other are present.

From my perspective, I disagree with Arán's suggestion that Bakhtin would have proposed a typology which was developed by Voloshinov. In my reading, the authors in fact do attempt to make an inventory of genres, but they soon give up on this idea, because of their realization that there are infinite means for genres to emerge, according to the necessities of spheres. What they really do is to present criteria and parameters for the understanding of genres in terms of their stability and variation. To do so, they resort to this inventory. Perhaps what Arán suggests is an inventory, which is something perfectly legitimate. Typology has other resonances and suggests a sort of

---

<sup>15</sup> Original: "reconocimiento de la función social de ciertos géneros."

proposition for classifying genres, something that Arán's perspective does not seem to support.

Stemming from the correlation between forms of presence of genres and the reality to which genres have access and which they cover evaluatively, the author proposes her social criticism of genres, which retrieves one of Bakhtin's important formulations. For Arán, Bakhtin "wants to demonstrate that language is 'the arena of struggle of social classes', as Voloshinov emphasized, and that the possibility to represent these conflicts in the novel depends on the attentive ear of the creator" (p.132).<sup>16</sup> She then points out, masterfully, the question of authorial architectonics. It is worth underlining that Arán is showing the convergence of viewpoints in the formulations of the Circle members (Medvedev, Voloshinov, and Bakhtin), but also the different ways they formulated the question of authorial architectonics at different moments, in addition to a useful exploration of the notion of "memory of genre" and the mechanisms of their dialogization in the context of social voices.

Arán then shows and explores the relation Bakhtin establishes between "living speech" and literary genres. Her way of discussing the topic echoes the definition of social evaluation, value-attribution, as the cement of the relation between the structure of speech and the ideological life of the community, by Medvedev. Arán also shows how genres integrate centripetal forces and centrifugal forces in tension; centrifugal forces account for variation (the "relatively" of the definition) and centripetal, for stability.

In *Literary Chronotopies*, Arán dialogues with the concept of literary chronotope and develops the idea of chronotopy, which will be retrieved in the final text to support the category of "cultural chronotopy." Describing the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope in detail, something that contributes a lot to understanding it, the author shows its "huge heuristic and methodological value" (p.135), pointing out that for her, in the notion of chronotope, there is a convergence between "the notion of language as a communicative

---

<sup>16</sup> Original: "Bajtín quiere demostrar que el lenguaje es 'la arena de lucha de las clases sociales' como había señalado Voloshinov y que depende del oído atento del creador el poderrepresentar estos conflictos dentro de una novela."

materiality, of utterances as unique and unrepeatable events and of the consciousness of historical subjects as an attitude regarding sense” (p.136).<sup>17</sup>

Arán asserts that the work with chronotopes reveals

another problematic question from the methodological point of view: *the recognition and denomination of the dominant chronotope, as well as the selection of its concatenated motifs, is to a great extent the analyst’s responsibility, of his/her reading and interpretation, as well as the available corpus.* For us it is very important to emphasize it, *because we do not want concepts to be naturalized as spontaneously given, easily recognizable in its textual immanence.* On the contrary, it is an operation of interpretation, from a semiotic category, from what we consider a mediation or artistic refraction of the experience of reality by means of language (p.145; emphasis added).<sup>18</sup>

In fact, by emphasizing chronotope as an “organizing center of the narrated world,” Arán shows that if this allows analysts to discern several “chronotopized vectors” and though there are chronotopical dominants in texts, we may think that “the web of motives and chronotopical figures come from a particularized analysis” of each novel -- something highly relevant for the explorations of the concept. As she explains, it is not something given, but something to be conquered by the analytical work; it is not a question of applying categories, but of using them as parameters, respecting the specificity of the analyzed objects.

In the last essay of this part, *Cronotopías culturales. Apuntes for one categoría sociosemiótica of investigación* [Cultural Chronotopies. Contributions to a Social Semiotic Category of Research], in a certain way the author retrieves several threads that she is weaving in this part of the book and proposes the category of cultural chronotopy. It is as a “condensing descriptive category,” resulting from the integration between the concept of chronotope and social-critical principles of semiotic analyses

---

<sup>17</sup> Original: “la noción de lenguaje como materialidad comunicativa, del enunciado como acontecimiento único e irrepitible y de la conciencia del sujeto histórico como postura de sentido.”

<sup>18</sup> Original: “otra cuestión problemática desde el punto de vista metodológico: el reconocimiento y denominación del cronotopo dominante, así como la selección de sus motivos encadenados, es en buena medida atribución del investigador, de su lectura e interpretación, así como del corpus disponible. Resulta muy importante para nosotros destacar esto porque no quisiéramos que se naturalice el concepto como algo dado espontáneamente, fácilmente reconocible en su inmanencia textual. Por el contrario, es una operación interpretativa a partir de una categoría semiótica de lo que consideramos una mediación o refracción artística de la experiencia de real por el lenguaje.”

(p.149),<sup>19</sup> developed for the studying of the phenomena of sense production in cultural environments from a social-critical perspective.

Arán stems from Bakhtin's idea of real historical chronotope and the concept of chronotope applied to aesthetics to think about chronotopies in concrete life and not only in aesthetic discourse, aiming to employ it in the semiotic analysis of culture. She develops the distinction between chronotopical formations as phenomena that appear spontaneously in discourses (and society) and the descriptive designation (or description) of chronotopical formations in these discourses (and cities) as a result of a metalinguistic work. She distinguishes, thus, the forms of aesthetic refraction of chronotopies from the concrete uses of temporalization and of spatialization in modern social life, and underlines that which distinguishes language-object from language of object description. The forms of aesthetic refraction of chronotopies are the basis of language of description, which is the way the author describes the language-object shaped in the above-mentioned concrete uses of temporalization and spatialization in social life.

The author links the category of cultural chronotopy to demonstrations of the construction of identities from the appropriation of "*places of social identity*" (p.152),<sup>20</sup> but she restricts it here to "public places re-shaped symbolically as social places by means of the intervention of groups that turn them into identitary spaces" (p.152).<sup>21</sup> And she proposes a sort of provisional classification of chronotopies: the spontaneous, not much regulated and non-official, and the institutionalized, regulated, and official. This resembles the criteria of definition of primary and secondary genres, respectively, as well as the distinction between ideology of daily life and "official" ideology.

It is relevant for Arán to characterize the spontaneous chronotopies as performative (pp.154-55), which she defines as having a double sense: from the one hand, as "enacting" and, on the other, as "speech that replicates the action it utters."<sup>22</sup> The May Square [Plaza de Mayo], for instance, was the object of different chronotopies throughout time: the Peronist October 17, the place of the Mothers of May (mothers of missing persons) and of Blumberg has been thus resignified the ways Arán defines.

---

<sup>19</sup> Original: "categoría descriptiva condensadora."

<sup>20</sup> Original: "*lugares de identidad social*."

<sup>21</sup> Original: "lugares de identidad social"; "emplazamientos públicos que se reconfiguran simbólicamente como lugares sociales por la intervención de grupos que los convierten en espacios identitarios."

<sup>22</sup> Original: "como puesta en escena y como discurso que replica la acción que enuncia."

These chronotopies both enact, in the theatrical sense, as they describe the represented actions in a way that seems a reenacting in speech of what was represented by them.

#### **4 Part III (Fields of Exploration)**

As I said in section 1, we have, in this part, texts by other authors who were welcomed by Arán. The texts were all unpublished, and most of them were written in Spanish. One, authored by Beth Brait, was translated from Portuguese by Ana Inés Leunda with the collaboration of Brait.

The first essay, *La comprensión dialógica. Una ética para la teoría feminista* [The Dialogical Understanding: An ethics for Feminist Theory], by Adriana Boria, will probably cause controversies, because some postmodern feminisms and some readers of Bakhtin consider topics and sometimes despise thematic unities and/or forget the radicality of the Dialogical Philosophy.

Boria proposes that some elements of the Bakhtinian ethics, especially the question of understanding, might be resignified in the context of feminisms and, at the same time, may be motivators for new feminist conceptualizations. The text sees similarities between Butler and Bakhtin regarding the question of radical difference, of otherness, based on the idea of suspension of synthesis as “the permanence of differences” (p.169), proposing that Bakhtin’s philosophy may be one of the foundations for the idea that “to become a man or woman is always historical, situated and, in a sense, casual” (p.169).<sup>23</sup>

I point out that few are the authors who refer to the built character of men’s condition. In this sense, Boria’s chapter brings an important contribution to the theme of gender from an exceedingly prudent feminist perspective, able to collaborate for a deeper reflection on questions for which the Bakhtinian ethics, as Boria shows, may be considered one of the support points in dialogue with other perspectives. Respect to constitutive difference and to equality of human statute of women and men has, in the ethics Boria proposes, an important ally. And this is a theme that, in my view, requires at least a search for dialogue partners, instead of discarding some and privileging others.

---

<sup>23</sup> Original: “permanencia de las diferencias”; “el hacerse varón o mujer es siempre histórico, situado y en un sentido, casual.”

In *La escena que retorna: memoria y escritura* [The Scene that Returns: Memory and Scripture], Beth Brait analyzes the book *Retrato Calado* [Silent/Silenced Portrait],<sup>24</sup> by Salinas Fortes. The book refers to the so-called lead years, the years of the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985). The book by Salinas Fortes deserves consideration not only due to this but also because of its special, complex architectonics. Brait discusses questions about the relations between memory experienced in life and reported memory, individuality and social coercions, and about how eternal return (as quotation, inspiration and a more general dialogical presence) shapes, in a specific work, the relations between memory and scripture, or how to say oneself by saying others. Considering the question of retrieval, resurrection of senses, the article shows that the construction of the text's architectonics, which subtly and substantially alters the book genre, "memory embodiment" as its bases (p.173).<sup>25</sup>

The tone of individual memories does not prevent the author from evoking numerous other voices, social voices, in a process in which philosophical discourse, for example, "by *speaking*, making itself a voice, it tries to make emerge that which it *silences*" (p.186).<sup>26</sup> *Retrato Calado/Falado* [Silenced/Spoken Portrait] brings memories that integrate "the diversity of social discourse" and the "individual dissonance" that is installed therein (p.188),<sup>27</sup> and not simply memories or autobiography. The book analyzed evokes the need to take texts not simply as instances of this or of that genre, and examine their architectonic construction to see how genres are destabilized, recombined, altered.

The same applies to authorship: who is the book's author-creator? As Brait shows, authorship is built from something apparently obvious when an author writes about himself/herself, the "[author's] difficulty in being a subject and an object of enunciation at the same time" (p.198).<sup>28</sup> However, as Salina Fortes is impelled to resort to several enunciative strategies, Brait is able to identify the bases according to which denominations are redefined, such as "book of memories," "autobiography," etc., by transcending the text materiality without disregarding it.

---

<sup>24</sup> TN: In Portuguese, "composite sketch" is rendered as something such as "spoken sketch." The author uses "calado" (silenced) in opposition to "falado" (spoken), exploring sonority and sense: talk to create a sketch x be silenced.

<sup>25</sup> Original: "corporificación de la memoria."

<sup>26</sup> Original: "al *hablar*, al hacerse voz, intenta hacer aflorar aquello que *calla*."

<sup>27</sup> Original: "diversidad de discursos sociales y de la disonancia individual."

<sup>28</sup> Original: "la dificultad de ser, al mismo tiempo, sujeto y objeto de la enunciación."

Eva Da Porta, in *Aportes de Bajtín para una profundización analítica de la comunicación* [Bakhtin's Contributions to an analytical Deepening of Communication], explores possibilities for theories of communication to dialogue with the dialogical theory and, who knows, to gather data for a useful reformulation. The author treads on an unstable terrain by proposing a Bakhtinian reflection on communication or by discussing theories of communication and proposing a reformulation or even the abandonment of some presuppositions of the area. Da Porta's proposition to study communication aims to free theorization from the focus on strictly linguistic mechanisms and to see communication processes as dynamics for establishing discourses in the heart of society.

Da Porta's reflection brings a new perspective both to think communication and to rethink possible contributions that the dialogical theory may receive from theories of communication studies. This courageous reflection makes dialogism have a tense dialogue with theories of communication. In my opinion, both areas have something to benefit from this dialogue, but this proposition may also make some people, to use an old expression, frown.

Ernesto Pablo Molina Ahumada, in *El cronotopo y la ciudad digital. Una lectura bajtiniana del videojuego Watch Dogs* [The Chronotope and the Digital City: A Bakhtinian Reading of the Video Game *Watch Dogs*], uses Bakhtinian concepts, especially the chronotope, and successfully analyzes a "discourse" which, based on other resources, makes us remember Orwell's book *1984*. The object is the videogame *Watch Dogs*, which brings a gloomy perspective regarding the life of citizens in the city in the screen and in life.

This article also refers to the question of chronotopy. Ahumada defines chronotope as a great contribution "to read the complex connections between artistic work and social context" (p.221)<sup>29</sup> or between the architectonics of work and ideology. He examines the chronotope both in its concreteness in the city and in its virtualization in the game, showing the paradoxes there created or introduced.

The study of *Watch Dogs* is centered on the question of the "instability of the contemporary urbane experience" (p.221).<sup>30</sup> The game is, so to speak, considered both a

---

<sup>29</sup> Original: "leer las conexiones complejas entre obra artística y contexto social".

<sup>30</sup> Original: "inestabilidad de la experiencia urbana contemporánea."



metaphor and metonymy of the modern paradox of the reproduction, by means of space construction, of “urbane logics which are both global and particularized by the very interaction of the player [citizen] in this space” (p.221).<sup>31</sup> This particularization, as the author shows, is not, in the game or in life, as free as it seems to be.

In analogy with the strangeness of life in the modern global city, which uproots subjects while giving them the illusion of being freely integrated to a community, Ahumada shows that, in the game, the player (citizen) is in fact placed in the condition of tourists, strange people, foreigners, mere accessories (because what people have is necessary, but not enough for them to be full citizens), depersonalized objects. People may go to safe and adequate places for those who do not know the city or know not enough to go without a guide. They can go where they want, provided they do not go beyond itineraries prepared in advance for them.

In my opinion, what we have in the game is an interpellation of subjects that at times is violent and at other times is subtle (but it is always deceiving) by the city’s structure, a structure that induces them to overvalue their role precisely to be integrated in the general order. As Ahumada says, the game, *similar to* the modern city, is paradoxical because it supposes the immobility of players (citizens) just to present them “an overstimulating city with a protagonist in constant movement” (p.221).<sup>32</sup>

### **Finalizing, But Not Ending**

As I sought to show, *La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones* [Bakhtin’s *Legacy: Reflections and Migrations*] is a book that present a multiplicity of different essays whose connecting threads do not come from the texts’ linearity, but from the senses that are established between them, from their dialogical relations around the dialogical theory and analysis. These relations are presented, foreseen, silenced, and emphasized, and they engage the texts of the editor, these latter and those of other authors which are directly mentioned or implicitly included in the several articles, and even between these latter texts - not to mention other dialogues involving the

---

<sup>31</sup> Original: “lógicas urbanas globales pero particularizadas por la propia interacción del jugador en ese espacio.”

<sup>32</sup> Original: “una ciudad hiperestimulante con un protagonista en continuo movimiento.”

foundational texts themselves, which are commented, explored and mobilized in different ways.

To use a cliché, perhaps resignified: this is a stimulating book, since it creates new links in the universal chain of dialogues about which the dialogical theory theorizes, following what Bakhtin practiced: they value variation, variety, radical difference as a factor which enriches experiences in life and their evaluated account.

I return here to the two questions posed by Arán:

How to introduce Bakhtin's thought, without contradictions, in a culture that "has been weaving a new fabric in the constitution of social subjects" and, with it, a "new languages to refer to it" (p.78).<sup>33</sup>  
Are the several appropriations promising as regards the development of Bakhtin's thought heuristic capacity? (p.78).<sup>34</sup>

For a very brief discussion of the first one, let us begin by examining the meaning of "without contradictions." It is a question not of normalizing Bakhtin's thought, but of inserting it in our own theories and works in a coherent, not contradictory or inconsistent, way. I emphasize "a new fabric" for the constitution of social subjects, who constitute themselves as moral subjects of discourse, opposed to almighty or submissive subjects.

Bakhtinian subjects are not almighty or incompetent: they are responsible, situated, and capable of agency. And a new form of conceiving them requires new languages. The book gives answers to the question of how to integrate Bakhtin's thought without contradictions: by interpreting this thought and questioning it, respecting the authors' chronotopy and the chronotopy of the moment of these actions of interpreting, questioning etc., and always making clear the point of view from which this thought is interpreted and questioned.

It also answers the question "Are the several appropriations promising as regards the development of the heuristic capacity of Bakhtin's thought?" We see, above all, the use of "heuristic capacity," which does justice to the Bakhtinian ethics of not proposing ready-made solutions, but always exploring parameters. Heuristic capacity is, as we

---

<sup>33</sup> Original: "está tejiendo una nueva trama en la constitución de los sujetos sociales"; "nuevos lenguajes para referirla."

<sup>34</sup> Original: "Son promisorias las diversas apropiaciones para el desarrollo de la capacidad heurística del pensamiento de Bajtín?"

know, the capacity of describing and analyzing, instead of establishing fixed categories and trying to identify them in objects. We saw that the appropriations done by the book are promising, demonstrating, in practice, legitimate forms of appropriation of this thought - in tension, but without irreconcilable contradictions.

#### REFERENCES

ARÁN, Pampa Olga (Org.) *La herencia de Bajtín: reflexiones y migraciones*. Córdoba: Centro de Estudios Avanzados. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2016. Prólogo de Silvia N. Barei. 253 p. Edição impressa e Edição digital. ISBN 978-987-1751-40-2.

BAKHTIN, M. M. Apontamentos 1970-1971. In: \_\_\_\_\_ *Estética da criação verbal*. Trad. Paulo Bezerra. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003, pp.367-392.

Translated by the author.

*Received September 30, 2017*

*Accepted March 25, 2018*