

***Corpus and Object from a Dialogical Perspective: An Analysis in Bakhtin's Works / Corpus e objeto em perspectiva dialógica: uma análise em obras de M. Bakhtin***

*Maria Elizabeth da Silva Queijo\**

**ABSTRACT**

Through the analysis of the studies developed by Mikhail Bakhtin regarding the work of Fyodor Dostoevsky and François Rabelais, this article aims to discuss the boundaries and the relationship between *corpus* and *object*. Therefore, we compared two Brazilian editions of Bakhtinian works, with the research on the French author and popular comic culture, with a set of texts involving the Russian original, *frame-texts*, translations, and other correlated utterances. The reflection is based on a dialogical perspective, particularly on the notion of *alterity*. The results show that, although *corpus* and *object* are *a priori* amalgamated, it is the essential relationship of the author-researcher with this *corpus* that gradually detached the *object*.

**KEYWORDS:** *Corpus; Object; Bakhtin; Author-researcher; Dostoevsky; Rabelais*

**RESUMO**

*Por meio da análise dos estudos desenvolvidos por Mikhail Bakhtin a propósito da obra de Fiódor Dostoiévski e François Rabelais, este artigo visa discutir as fronteiras e a relação entre corpus e objeto. Para tanto, observamos comparativamente duas edições brasileiras das obras bakhtinianas, sendo a pesquisa a respeito do autor francês e da cultura cômica popular cotejada com um conjunto de textos envolvendo o original em russo, textos-moldura, traduções e outros enunciados correlacionados. A reflexão apoia-se em uma perspectiva dialógica, sobretudo na noção de alteridade. Os resultados revelam que, ainda que corpus e objeto se apresentem a priori amalgamados, é a imprescindível relação do autor-pesquisador com esse corpus que vai, gradualmente, destacando o objeto.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Corpus; Objeto; Bakhtin; Autor-pesquisador; Dostoiévski; Rabelais*

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\* Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC/SP, Faculdade de Filosofia, Comunicação, Letras e Artes, Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados em Linguística Aplicada e Estudos da Linguagem, Campus Perdizes, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; CNPq/ Proc.n.168996/2018-9; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7459-0360>; [elizabeth.queijo@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.queijo@gmail.com)

## Introduction

In the introductory chapter of *Rabelais and His World*, from 1965, Bakhtin (2013, p.50)<sup>1</sup> explicitly manifests that the *object* of his study is the French author's work not the comic popular *culture*. Nonetheless, analyses of the book (Bakhtin, 2013), of the original Russian text (Bakhtin, 2010b), some of its translations (Bachtin, 1998; Bajtín, 2003; Bakhtin, 1984; Bakhtine, 1970), its *framing-texts* as well as excerpts from Bakhtin's dissertation (Pan'kov, 1998, 1999) as well as other correlated utterances (Bakhtin, 2014; Bakhtin, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e), which comprehend the *corpus* of this investigation,<sup>2</sup> revealed the controversy around what would be Bakhtin's study *object*.

Based on the tension that emerges between what Bakhtin (2003) enunciates regarding his own investigative process and what we observed in that book, we propose to delve into the issue of the boundaries and the relationships between the notions of *corpus* and *object*. To do so, we start with *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* from 1963 (Bakhtin, 2010a)<sup>3</sup> and *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin, 2013). Both works are taken here as concrete utterances belonging to the scientific sphere, conceived as the product of theoretical-reflective, analytical, interpretative and methodologic processes, that is, as a product of research. In the condition of *corpus*, citations are not presented as typically done in articles, but displayed in charts to establish clear boundaries in the verbal textuality, separating visually the excerpts from the works cited under the circumstances of their analysis.

These reflections aim to contribute to the theoretical discussion of notions from the dialogic thinking, that is, the propositions of Bakhtin and the Circle, the reception of these authors in Brazil, as well as the subsidies for general methodological guidelines to be used in investigations inspired by this perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Helene Iswolski. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984a.pp.57-8.

<sup>2</sup> This article is a partial result of research conducted by me as an Associate Researcher at Queen Mary – University of London, between 2019 and 2020, funded by CAPES (Process N° 88881.362209/2019-01), under the co-supervision of Professor Galin Tihanov. The sources were: British Library and Senate House Library, London, United Kingdom. In Brazil, the doctoral research was carried out under the supervision of Professor Beth Brait/LAEL/PUC-SP and counted with financial support from CNPq (Process N° 168996/2018-9).

<sup>3</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984b.

## 1 Double-Voiced Discourse in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics

In the famous fifth chapter in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, named "Discourse in Dostoevsky," Bakhtin (2010a), after suggesting the need to create Metalinguistics as a field of knowledge that would focus on discourse, refines his definition and declares the *dialogic relationships* as object of that discipline. Based on that broad definition of what he conceives as the object to be observed from dialogic angles, the author-researcher delimits his interest:

### Chart 1

Dialogic relationships [...] are the subject of metalinguistics. And it is precisely these relationships, determining the characteristic features of verbal structure in Dostoevsky's work, that interest us here.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.208).<sup>4</sup>

The use of "precisely" indicates the accuracy of Bakhtin's search regarding Dostoevsky's work. In fact, the author-researcher seeks for "the characteristic features of verbal structure in Dostoevsky's work," interested, therefore, in *dialogic relationships* that lead him to what is inherent and distinctive in Dostoevsky's writings.

Bakhtin's claim regarding these particularities is announced since the first pages of the book. This repetition is reaffirmed in the first chapter, named "Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and Its Treatment in Critical Literature," from which we highlight:

### Chart 2

*A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels [...] rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event.*

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, pp.4-5; original highlights).<sup>5</sup>

Bakhtin points out and underscores, through italics, the fundamental peculiarity in Dostoevsky's works. The special characteristic in the whole of his works is enunciated

<sup>4</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.182.

<sup>5</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.6.

from the start. Another example can be found at the end of chapter four, named “Characteristics of Genre and Plot Composition in Dostoevsky’s Works”:

Chart 3

The aim of our entire work has been to explore the inimitable uniqueness of Dostoevsky’s poetics, “to show the Dostoevsky in Dostoevsky.” [...] Dostoevsky is the creator of *authentic polyphony*, which, of course, did not and could not have existed in the Socratic dialogue, the ancient Menippean satire, the medieval mystery play, in Shakespeare and Cervantes, Voltaire and Diderot, Balzac and Hugo. But polyphony was prepared for in a *fundamental* way by this line of development in European literature. This entire tradition, beginning with the Socratic dialogue and the menippea, was reborn and renewed in Dostoevsky in the uniquely original and innovative form of the polyphonic novel.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.206; original highlights).<sup>6</sup>

This statement is resumed by the author-researcher in the “Conclusion”:

Chart 4

the uniqueness of Dostoevsky *as an artist* [...] While continuing the “dialogic line” in the development of European artistic prose, Dostoevsky created a new generic variety of the novel—the polyphonic novel—whose innovative features we have tried to illuminate in this book.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.339; original highlights).<sup>7</sup>

Bakhtin claims that the polyphonic novel, despite being conceived by authors prior to Dostoevsky, only becomes effectively possible with that author. Nonetheless, Dostoevsky’s polyphony is not, *per se*, Bakhtin’s thesis. The very proposition of a polyphonic novel had already been elaborated by Komarovich, cited by Bakhtin (2010a) in the first chapter.<sup>8</sup> Although related to polyphony, what is placed as the thesis is, in fact, the peculiarities, “the uniqueness of Dostoevsky *as an artist*.”

The question we ask ourselves is: how does Bakhtin get to those peculiarities? In other words, how does he reach the “*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices*” (Bakhtin, 2010a, p.4; original

<sup>6</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.177-178.

<sup>7</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.270.

<sup>8</sup> Both the polyphony proposed by Komarovich and the approximation of musical metaphors to analyze Dostoevsky’s work by Ivanov are prior to Bakhtin’s discussion in his book from 1929. For details, see Grillo (2021).

highlights)<sup>9</sup>? We are interested in finding what specific dialogic relationships are established as an object to reach the “profound originality and individual uniqueness of his work” (Bakhtin, 2010a, p.206).<sup>10</sup>

Let us resume the fifth chapter, in which Bakhtin justifies his aim at the double-voiced discourse:

Chart 5

The chief subject of our investigation, one could even say its chief hero, will be *double-voiced discourse*, which inevitably arises under conditions of dialogic interaction, that is, under conditions making possible an authentic life for the word.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.211; original highlights).<sup>11</sup>

Discourse is for Bakhtin, very broadly, the focus of metalinguistics. In the excerpt, however, we can observe that the author singularizes that discourse, until then an abstract notion, by defining it as a “double-voiced discourse.” This singularization is conducted in accordance with the objectives of the research Bakhtin develops and presents. Therefore, according to the title of the chapter “Discourse in Dostoevsky,” the author-researcher takes the “double-voiced discourse” as his chief *object*,<sup>12</sup> which is also characterized as “chief hero.” The approximation between *object* and *hero* is resumed in the analysis of Bakhtin’s *object* regarding Rabelais’ work, as discussed later on.

Although Bakhtin names the *object* of his investigation, we propose to observe how the author-researcher establishes a relationship with that *object* in his investigative process, whose marks are observed in the text. Let us focus on an excerpt in which the peculiarities in Dostoevsky are related to the double-voiced discourse, reinforcing not only the thesis of the multiplicity of discursive types, but their distribution:

Chart 6

What is important here, of course, is not only the diversity and abrupt shift of discursive types, nor the predominance among them of double-voiced, internally dialogized discourses. The uniqueness of Dostoevsky lies in his special distribution of these discursive types and varieties among the basic compositional elements of a given work.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.233).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.6.

<sup>10</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.178.

<sup>11</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.182.

<sup>12</sup> In the citation, Bakhtin uses “chief subject” to mention the theme of his research, which in the present article is his *object*, hence the change in words from citation to article.

<sup>13</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.203.

To discuss the “discursive types” at this point in chapter five, Bakhtin proposes a classification, claiming that:

Chart 7

The very fact of the existence of double-directed discourses, incorporating a relationship to someone else’s utterance as an indispensable element, creates for us the necessity of providing a full and exhaustive classification of discourses from the vantage point of this new principle, a principle not taken into account by stylistics, lexicology, or semantics.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.213).<sup>14</sup>

In this fragment, Bakhtin justifies and proposes a “full and exhaustive classification of discourses” from a dialogic point of view. Next, the author-researcher continues to classify the variety of discourses into three types that are synthesized and displayed schematically:

Figure 1 – Discursive types

- I. Direct, unmediated discourse directed exclusively toward its referential object, as an expression of the speaker's ultimate semantic authority
- II. Objectified discourse (discourse of a represented person)
  1. With a predominance of socio-typical determining factors
  2. With a predominance of individually characteristic determining factors

} Various degrees of objectification.
- III. Discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse (double-voiced discourse)
  1. Unidirectional double-voiced discourse:
    - a. Stylization;
    - b. Narrator's narration;
    - c. Unobjectified discourse of a character who carries out (in part) the author's intentions;
    - d. *Ich-Erzählung*

} When objectification is reduced, these tend toward a fusion of voices, i.e., toward discourse of the first type.
  2. Vari-directional double-voiced discourse:
    - a. Parody with all its nuances;
    - b. Parodistic narration;
    - c. Parodistic *Ich-Erzählung*;
    - d. Discourse of a character who is parodically represented;
    - e. Any transmission of someone else's words with a shift in accent

} When objectification is reduced and the other's idea activated, these become internally dialogized and tend to disintegrate into two discourses (two voices) of the first type.
  3. The active type (reflected discourse of another)
    - a. Hidden internal polemic;
    - b. Polemically colored autobiography and confession;
    - c. Any discourse with a sideward glance at someone else's word;
    - d. A rejoinder of a dialogue;
    - e. Hidden dialogue

} The other discourse exerts influence from without; diverse forms of inter-relationship with another's discourse are possible here, as well as various degrees of deforming influence exerted by one discourse on the other.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, pp.228-229).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.186.

<sup>15</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.199.

As Bakhtin anticipates to the reader – even before presenting his discursive classification –, abundant material from Dostoevsky’s work will be mobilized and related to each of the discourses in the classification.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the classification, defined as “somewhat abstract in character” (Bakhtin, 2010a, p.228),<sup>17</sup> the author-researcher returns to Dostoevsky:

Chart 8

Let us return to Dostoevsky.  
Dostoevsky’s works astound us first of all by their extraordinary diversity of types and varieties of discourse

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.233).<sup>18</sup>

Bakhtin, then, makes commentaries quoting rather long excerpts at times. For instance, he examines fragments of the Russian author’s first novel *Poor folk*<sup>19</sup> from 1846. In one such citation, we can verify that Bakhtin refers to the excerpts and analyzes them considering his *object*:

Chart 9

In *Poor Folk* Dostoevsky begins to work out the “degraded” variety of this style – discourse that cringes with a timid and ashamed sideward glance at the other’s possible response, yet contains a muffled challenge.  
This “sideward glance” manifests itself above all in two traits characteristic of the style: a certain halting quality to the speech, and its interruption by reservations.  
[...]  
After almost every word Devushkin casts a sideward glance at his absent interlocutor: he is afraid she will think he is complaining, he tries in advance to destroy the impression that will be created by the news that he lives in the kitchen, he does not want to distress her, and so forth. The repetition of words results from his trying to intensify their accent or to give them a new nuance in light of his interlocutor’s possible reaction.  
In the above excerpt, the reflected discourse turns out to be the potential words of the addressee, Varenka Dobroselova. In most cases Makar Devushkin’s speech about himself is determined by the reflected discourse of another, “other person,” a stranger. Here is how he defines this stranger.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, pp.236-237).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For details, see Bakhtin (2010a, p.213) [Bakhtin, 1984b, p.266], precisely Bakhtin’s note 1.

<sup>17</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.199.

<sup>18</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.203.

<sup>19</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *Poor Folk and Other Stories*. Transl.: David McDuff. London: Penguin, 1988.

<sup>20</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.205-206.

The author-researcher continues to quote *Poor folk*, examining and relating excerpts to one another, such as the first and the third, considering his research goals:

#### Chart 10

In the first excerpt cited, where Devushkin is casting an anxious sideward glance at Varenka Dobroselova while he informs her of his new room, we already notice the peculiar interruptions in speech that determine its syntactic and accentual structure. The other's rejoinder wedges its way, as it were, into his speech [...]. But sometimes the other's rejoinder, quite apart from its influence on the accentual and syntactic structure, leaves behind in Makar Devushkin's speech one or two of its own words, and sometimes a whole sentence: [...]  
The embedding of words and especially of accents from the other's rejoinder in Makar Devushkin's speech is even more marked and obvious in the second of the quoted passages. The words containing the other's polemically exaggerated accent are even enclosed here in quotation marks: "He's a copying clerk..."

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.239).<sup>21</sup>

In this passage, we observe that Bakhtin's comments rely on the materiality of Dostoevsky's novels, the traces of which are verified in the following indicatives: "the first excerpt cited" and "in the second of the quoted passages." Therefore, *Poor folk*, for Bakhtin, is the *corpus*, which the author-researcher analyzes and interprets aiming at the double-voiced discourse, his research *object*. Traces of the interpretative work are the relationships established between different passages to show the gradual intensification of "The other's rejoinder [...] into his [Devushkin] speech."

Bakhtin (2010a, p.240) risks a "descriptive definition" of the phenomena, converting one of the citations in a way of showing Devushkin's *other*. Then, he concludes:

#### Chart 11

Of course this imagined dialogue is extremely primitive, just as the content of Devushkin's consciousness is still primitive. [...]  
The phenomena which we have examined here, the result of a second and alien discourse functioning inside the consciousness and speech of the hero, are presented in *Poor Folk* in the stylistic garb of the speech of a petty Petersburg clerk. The structural characteristics we have noted —"the word with a sideward glance," discourse concealing a hidden polemic, internally dialogic discourse —are refracted here in a strictly and skillfully sustained manner that is sociotypical of Devushkin's speech.

Source: Bakhtin, (2010a, pp.241-242).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.208-209.

<sup>22</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.210-211.



We emphasize that, based on Bakhtin's explanation and on what we observed materially in the text, from a methodological perspective, the material from Dostoevsky's work constitutes the research *corpus* and the double-voiced discourse, in fact, is built as the *object*. Bakhtin also analyzes several other works such as *The Double*<sup>23</sup> and the famous *The Brothers Karamazov*,<sup>24</sup> Dostoevsky's last novel, associating the analysis of the narrative structure of both texts:

Chart 12

we shall quote the passage immediately following this dialogue, Ivan's agitated story to Alyosha. Its structure is analogous to the previously analyzed structure of *The Double*. The same principle obtains for combining voices, although to be sure everything here is deeper and more complex.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.254).<sup>25</sup>

Later on, Bakhtin analyzes Ivan Karamazov's ideologic discourse:

Chart 13

Ivan's ideological discourse, the personal orientation of this discourse and its dialogic addressivity toward its referential object, stand out with extraordinary clarity and vividness.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.288).<sup>26</sup>

In the following paragraph, Bakhtin proposes the analysis of another variety of discourse:

Chart 14

We shall touch briefly upon one other variety of discourse in Dostoevsky – hagiographic discourse. It appears in the speech of the cripple Maria Lebyadkina, in Makar Dolgoruky, and finally in the Life of Zosima.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, pp.288-28).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *Notes From the Underground and the Double*. Translated with introduction by Jessie Coulson. London: Penguin, 1972.

<sup>24</sup> DOSTOEVSKY, F. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated from the Russian by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky with an introduction by Malcolm V. Jones. London: Penguin, 1992.

<sup>25</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.221.

<sup>26</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.248.

<sup>27</sup> For references, see footnote 3, p.248.

Bakhtin, thus, develops his analyzes by focusing on novellas and novels that are effectively examined by resuming and citing a series of excerpts to support his arguments. In his path, the author-researcher demonstrates, through Dostoevsky's material, the multiplicity of discourses according to the varieties proposed before (see Figure 1).

Finally, Bakhtin demonstrates how Dostoevsky gathers a multiplicity of discourses, defending that his peculiarity lies in the way he organizes and distributes these multiple discourses. This is, precisely, the originality of the so-called polyphonic novel. Bakhtin's attentive look onto these marks leads us to identify this *object*, observed and built through the *corpus*. This movement provides the author with support to his thesis.

At the end of chapter five, Bakhtin comments on Dostoevsky's *object*, referring to a literary art different from doing research, reaffirming his understanding of polyphony given the distribution and the interaction of voices in Dostoevsky's novels:

#### Chart 15

The object of authorial aspirations is certainly not this sum total of ideas in itself, as something neutral and identical with itself. No, the object is precisely *the passing of a theme through many and various voices*, its rigorous and, so to speak, irrevocable *multi-voicedness* and *varivoicedness*. The very distribution of voices and their interaction is what matters to Dostoevsky. [...]

A dialogic feeling for the world, as we have seen, permeates all Dostoevsky's other works as well, beginning with *Poor Folk*. Thus the *dialogic nature of the word* is revealed in his work with enormous force and with an acute palpability. Metalinguistic research into the nature of this dialogicality, and especially into the diverse varieties of *double-voiced discourse* and its influence on various aspects of the structure of speech, finds in Dostoevsky's creative art extraordinarily rich material.

[...] For the main object of his representation is the word itself, and specifically the *fully signifying* word. Dostoevsky's works are a word about a word addressed to a word.

Source: Bakhtin (2010a, p.310; original highlights).<sup>28</sup>

In short, we identify in the investigative process conducted by Bakhtin (2010a) how the double-voiced discourse is built as an *object* through Dostoevsky's novels, taken by the author-researcher as the research *corpus*. The boundaries between *corpus* and *object* and the relationship the author-researcher establishes with (and between) *corpus* e *object* can be verified in the materiality of the text, which we see under the condition of an utterance.

<sup>28</sup> For references, see footnote 3, pp.265-266.

## 2 Rabelais' Work: *Corpus* or *Object*?

The claim made by Bakhtin (2010a) regarding his *object* in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* seems to rely on the observations we made on his analysis and on the way the author-researcher develops and leads his argument. The latter leads to the elaboration of the thesis regarding the peculiarity of the polyphonic novel in Dostoevsky's works.

We observe a similar process in *Rabelais and His World*:

### Chart 16

the immediate object of our study is not the culture of folk humor but the work of Rabelais.

Source: Bakhtin (2013, p.50).<sup>29</sup>

This is also mentioned by Bernardi (2012, p.76): “[...] the object of Bakhtin’s study is the work *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, a four-book novel published by Rabelais inconsistently, starting in 1533, in the middle of the Renaissance.”<sup>30</sup>

Is this really the *object* of Bakhtin’s investigation in *Rabelais and His World* despite the claims of both the author and the interpreter? We claim that François Rabelais’ work, just like Dostoevsky’s, should be understood as *corpus* not as *object*, as we will attempt to discuss.

As a matter of fact, the point we make about the notions of *corpus* and *object* in Bakhtinian research rises from the attempt to answer questions related to Bakhtin’s notion of “author.” We have found, in this trajectory, some controversial data that, at first, presented themselves as “noise,” but which began to take the form of a difficulty in establishing, theoretically and methodologically, precise boundaries between research *corpus* and *object* in Bakhtin’s study on Rabelais. That “noise” was not present in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Is it possible to claim that such “noise” would actually be the reflection of a confusion regarding Bakhtin’s *object* in the aforementioned book?

According to Bakhtin (2011, p.5):<sup>31</sup> “the actual work of creation is experienced but this experiencing neither hears nor sees itself; it sees and hears only the product that

<sup>29</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.58.

<sup>30</sup> In the original: “o objeto de estudo de Bakhtin é a obra *Gargantua e Pantagruel*, um romance de quatro livros publicados por Rabelais de maneira irregular, a partir de 1533, em pleno período renascentista.”

<sup>31</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Art and Answerability*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990. p.6.

is being created or the object to which is directed.” Hence, we verify in Bakhtin’s conception the importance of consulting the author’s work (as a created product) and its *objects*, but not the artist, in our case, the researcher. That is how we intend to conduct our reflection, considering Bakhtin’s study on Rabelais, to verify whether what the author-researcher enunciates as its *object* is confirmed in his analysis as well as in the development of his argument.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, to discuss issues of stylistics related to the discourse of both narrator and characters, Bakhtin analyzes the title of the novel as well as the title of its chapters illustrated with the titles and four chapters of *The Brothers Karamazov* (Bakhtin, 2010a, p.291).<sup>32</sup> In his investigation, Bakhtin (2010a) uses Dostoevsky’s novels as *corpus* to analyze the development of the narrator’s discourse, including comments on the title of those works as well as their respective chapters. By selecting *The Brothers Karamazov* and the titles of chapters, he aimed to explain, in and through the text, the argument developed in the process of research.

In his study on Rabelais’s work, we also find procedures that confirm his research lenses. Bakhtin (2013) questions, for example, the moralist tone dispensed to Rabelais’ text by a part of his interpreters and illustrates this tendency with the German translation of the *title* for *Gargantua* by Fischart (Bakhtin, 2013, p.54).<sup>33</sup> He argues that the title provided by the translator expresses the idea that Rabelais’ grotesque images were negative, therefore outrageous and reproachable, twisting the absolutely positive nature of the exaggerations present in the entire book. Bakhtin (2013) also claims that Fischart’s version is incapable of mastering the Rabelaisian images.

Firstly, we highlight how, in his analysis, Bakhtin uses the title and the subtitles of the utterances that constitute his *corpus* to illustrate the development of his reasoning and to show the constitutive traces of what he discusses. It is the investigation of texts in dialogue with the totality of the utterances that lighten the researcher’s path.

Next, we point out the fact that looking at the translation of Rabelais, which is part of his *corpus*, especially at the translated title, allowed the researcher to identify fundamental traces of the process of downgrading of Rabelais’ work over time. Ultimately, these traces justify the descent of Rabelais and, consequently, the incapacity

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<sup>32</sup> For references, see Footnote 3, p.250.

<sup>33</sup> For references, see Footnote 1, p.63.

of interpreting his work in his own terms, as proposed by Bakhtin in his analysis. Similarly, we aim to analyze and to interpret the title of the Bakhtin's study on Rabelais as well as some of its translations.

Added to that is the dialogic notion of concrete utterance, which comprehends “texts that approximate the original, such as the title, subtitles, dedications, epigraphs, foreword, afterword, etc. and that, according to many scholars, make way for the reader into the turns of the main text” (Brait, 2019, p.251),<sup>34</sup> paratexts that we call *frame-texts* (Brait; Pistori, 2020).

Concrete utterances convey conventional characteristics through the social-historical-cultural practices of the spheres of human activity and communication in which they are produced, received and circulated. Dissertations, books, articles and symposiums (some of the types of utterances from the academic-scientific sphere or, in the words of Bakhtin (2016a, p.12)<sup>35</sup> for speech genres, “the diverse forms of scientific statements” – typically involve, in addition to what could be classified as the main text, other adjacent parts that equally compose these utterances.

According to Brait (2019), paratexts, in general, more than waving at and inviting to read, operate strategically in anticipating issues in the main text, potentialized by the peculiar characteristic of synthesis required by the titles. Therefore, the title of a work in the academic-scientific sphere, but also in the editorial market for books from that sphere, demands, by convention, clarity and concision from the author. Notwithstanding, it is expected that, once properly formulated, the title is also capable of revealing the essence of the text that follows it. Consequently, we can assume that the title condenses traces which, submitted to analysis, are revealed as paths to the depth of the main text and its work. From this perspective, we observe the title of Bakhtin's work dedicated to Rabelaisian writings.

In the chart below, we compare the title of Bakhtin's doctoral dissertation (DD), the original title in Russian *The work/creation of François Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages and in Renaissance* [*A cultura popular na Idade Média e no*

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<sup>34</sup> In the original: “textos que se avizinham do texto principal, caso do título, subtítulos, dedicatórias, epígrafes, prefácio, posfácio, etc. e que, segundo vários teóricos, abrem caminho para o leitor adentrar os meandros do texto principal.”

<sup>35</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas University Press, 1986, p.61.

*Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais – CPIMR*],<sup>36</sup> and translations into other languages, including the Brazilian Portuguese present in a footnote of *Rabelais e Gogól (Arte do discurso e cômica popular) (RG)* [Rabelais and Gogol (The art of discourse and the popular culture of laughter)].<sup>37</sup>

Chart 17

Reference	Title	Title in Portuguese <sup>38</sup>
DD (Russian)	<i>Rable v istorii realizma</i> <sup>39</sup>	<i>Rabelais na história do Realismo</i> <i>Rabelais in the history of Realism</i>
CPIMR (Russian) (Bakhtin, 2010b)	<i>Tvortchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa</i>	<i>A obra/criação de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento</i> <i>The work/creation of François Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages and in Renaissance.</i>
CPIMR (Portuguese) (Bakhtin, 2013)	<i>A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais</i> <i>The folk culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance: the context of François Rabelais</i>	
CPIMR (Portuguese, RG) (Bakhtin, 2014)	<i>A Obra de François Rabelais e a Cultura Popular da Idade Média e da Renascença</i> <i>The work of François Rabelais and the folk culture of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance</i>	
CPIMR (Italian) (BACHTIN, 1998)	<i>L'opera di Rabelais e la cultura popolare. Riso, carnevale e festa nella tradizione medievale e rinascimentale</i>	<i>O trabalho/A obra de François Rabelais e a cultura popular. Riso, carnaval e festa na tradição medieval e renascentista</i> <i>The work of François Rabelais and the folk culture. Laughter, carnival and festival in the medieval and in the Renaissance traditions.</i> <sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> T.N. The Portuguese translation is preserved since this article was first written in this language.

<sup>37</sup> An article from Bakhtin's dissertation. BAKHTIN, M. Rabelais and Gogol: The Art of Discourse and the Popular Culture of Laughter. Edited by Patricia Sollner. *Mississippi Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Essays Literary Criticism (Winter/Spring, 1983), pp.34-50. Published in Brazil as a part of BAKHTIN, M. *Teoria do romance III: o romance como gênero literário*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2019. 144p.

<sup>38</sup> The Brazilian Portuguese titles were translated by the author (TA), except for the Portuguese translation. For English-speaking readers, the author also provides the corresponding English translation.

<sup>39</sup> In this article, the titles and original terms are presented in transliterated Russian.

<sup>40</sup> TN. We use "work" due to the author's argument on the words "oeuvre" and "opera," which are translated into Portuguese as "trabalho/obra."

<p><i>CPIMR</i> (French) (BakhtinE, 1970)</p>	<p><i>L'oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance</i></p>	<p><i>O trabalho/A obra de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média durante o Renascimento</i> <i>The work of François Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages during the Renaissance</i></p>
<p><i>CPIMR</i> (Spanish) (BAJTÍN, 2003)</p>	<p><i>La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento: el contexto de François Rabelais</i></p>	<p><i>A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais</i> <i>The folk culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance: the context of François Rabelais</i></p>
<p><i>CPIMR</i> (English) (Bakhtin, 1984)</p>	<p><i>Rabelais and His World</i></p>	<p><i>Rabelais e seu mundo</i></p>

Source: the author.

Albeit not being our aim to discuss details in relation to each translation process, we highlight what was stated by Souza (2002) as, on the one hand, a mere conflict of nomenclature and, on the other hand, possible contributions from a duly oriented comparative work. We verified that the Russian word “*tvortchestvo*”<sup>41</sup> can be used as “*obra* [work],” in the sense of the total production of a given author, that is, the collection of the author’s work, as well as “creation” or “process of creation,” in the sense of the product of one’s creative work. Therefore, in this research, given the implications involved in choosing either word that corresponds to “*tvortchestvo*” in the target language, we chose to preserve both meanings.

Hence, the translation for “*tvortchestvo*” in the French and Italian titles preserve those meanings, given the use of Latin words “*oeuvre*” and “*opera*,” respectively, both translated into Portuguese as “trabalho/obra.” In the title of the Brazilian edition, first published in 1987 from the French translation, the word “context” is used. The same for the Spanish edition, translated directly from the Russian and published in 1974. Our first comment highlights, in the Brazilian edition, “o contexto de François Rabelais” [“the context of François Rabelais”] in the place of “*Tvortchestvo Fransua Rable*” [“A obra/O processo de criação de François Rabelais”/ “the work/the creation of François Rabelais”].

<sup>41</sup> The translation possibilities for the word *tvortchestvo* are also implicated in the Bakhtinian text from 1929 about Dostoevsky, as we have exposed.

The first footnote in the Brazilian edition of the article “Rabelais e Gogól (Arte do discurso e cômica popular)” [Rabelais and Gogol (The art of discourse and the popular culture of laughter)] (Bakhtin, 2014) brings the translation of the title into Portuguese as *A Obra de François Rabelais e a Cultura Popular da Idade Média e da Renascença* [The Work of François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance]. In addition to using “da” [“of”] instead of “na/no” [“in”], as well as “Renascença” instead of “Renascimento,”<sup>42</sup> we observe the word “*tvortchestvo*” is translated as “obra”/ “work.” Hence, we see this version is closer to the original title.

Our second observation refers to the title of the Brazilian edition “*A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais*” [The folk culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance: the context of François Rabelais], which is divided by colon (:), thus offering a title and a subtitle. Nonetheless, as observed, the original title in Russian is not divided into those parts: *Tvortchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa*.

That separation is also noted in the use of colon (:) in the Spanish as well as in the final stop (.) in the Italian translations to replace the “*i*” [“and”] compared to the Russian original. We also note that, in Italian, “*Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa*” [in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance] corresponds to “*nella tradizione medievale e rinascimentale*” [“in the medieval and in the Renaissance traditions”], as well as “*Riso, carnevale e festa*” [“Laughter, carnival and festival”] in the place of “*narodnaia kul'tura*” [“folk culture”].

Despite the differences in the Italian translation available, we point out that the initial part of the title is retrieved as in the Russian title, precisely the fragment “*L’opera di Rabelais e la cultura Popolare*” [“The work/the process of creation of François Rabelais and the Folk culture”].

We also verify that the French title as well as the Portuguese title in “Rabelais e Gogól (Arte do discurso e cômica popular)” [Rabelais and Gogol (The art of discourse and the popular culture of laughter)] corresponds to the original in Russian:

- i. in the French edition: *L’oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*) [*O trabalho/A obra de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média durante o Renascimento*]; The work of creation

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<sup>42</sup> Renascimento, Renascença ou Renascentismo are three possible words for Renaissance in Portuguese.



- of François Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance];
- ii. in the article Rabelais e Gogól “Rabelais e Gogól (Arte do discurso e cômica popular)” [*Rabelais and Gogol (The art of discourse and the popular culture of laughter): A obra de François Rabelais e a Cultura Popular da Idade Média e da Renascença/ The work of François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance*];
  - iii. in the Russian edition: *Tvortchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa*) [*A obra/O processo de criação de François Rabelais e a cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento; The work/creation of François Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance*].

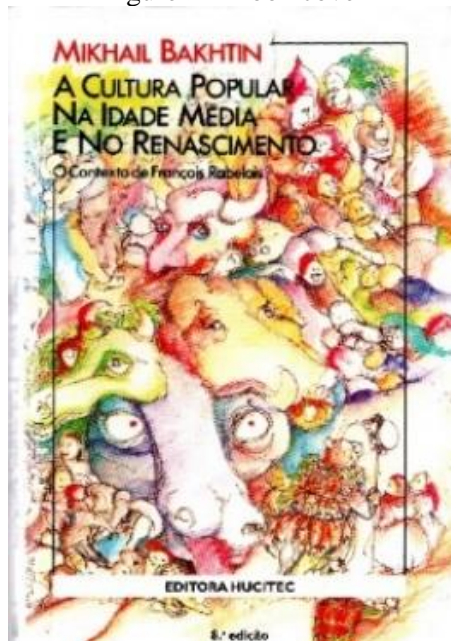
Even though the Brazilian Portuguese translation relied on the French edition as the source-text, the correspondence to that text is not preserved in the Brazilian title. In the Russian original, unlike the Brazilian translation, the designation of the author “*Fransua Rable*” [François Rabelais] comes before “*narodnaia kul'tura Srednevekov'ia i Renessansa*” [the Folk Culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance]. This could suggest that, in the Brazilian title, like in the Spanish one, the dividing punctuation combined to the sequence in which the parts are presented denote that “*o contexto de François Rabelais*” [the Context of François Rabelais] is subordinated to the original title. Such hierarchization suggests the context of the French writer as a type of delimitation on the study of “the Folk Culture in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.”

What we interpret as “noise” between the original and the Brazilian translation is present in the cover of the 8<sup>th</sup> Brazilian edition of “*A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais*” [Rabelais and His World] – which we use as the basis for this article. The cover is credited to Luiz Días in the dust jacket.

As seen in Figure 2, “A CULTURA POPULAR NA IDADE MÉDIA E NO RENASCIMENTO” [THE POPULAR CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND IN THE RENAISSANCE] is the main title displayed in small capitals. The typographic emphasis and the size of the first part in relation to “O Contexto de François Rabelais” [The context of

François Rabelais] – right underneath, in smaller cases and just the first letter capitalized  
– preserve a certain order that hints at a hierarchy.

Figure 2 – Book cover



Source: Bakhtin (2013) [Brazilian edition]

It is possible to see that, despite the absence of a colon to separate the parts, which is common in book covers, the hierarchy between the segments is preserved. Ratifying the aspect observed in the Brazilian edition, we also note that, the subtitle for the Brazilian translation, that is, “O Contexto de François Rabelais” [The Context of François Rabelais] is suppressed in the spine. It only says “A CULTURA POPULAR NA IDADE MÉDIA E NO RENASCIMENTO” [THE FOLK CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND IN THE RENAISSANCE].

Figure 3- Spine

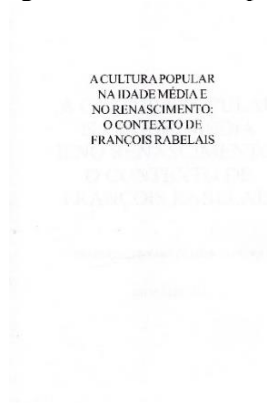


Source: Bakhtin (2013)

Despite the absence of colon between the parts of the title in the cover, it is possible to claim that in the Brazilian edition “o contexto de François Rabelais” [the context of François Rabelais] is taken as a secondary title – which is confirmed by the suppression on the spine. The weight of “*A cultura popular na Idade Média e no*

*Renascimento*” [The folk culture in the Middle Ages and in Renaissance], despite “o contexto de François Rabelais” [the context of François Rabelais] is reaffirmed by the colon in the false title page, which contains only the title of the book. The title page, however, displays the author’s name, the title of the book and information on the translation, edition and publisher; in addition to the data in the catalog sheet.

Figure 4 – False title page



Source: Bakhtin (2013).

Figure 5 – Title page



Source: Bakhtin (2013).

Figure 6 – Catalog sheet

B142c  
 Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovitch, 1895-1975  
 A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais / Mikhail Bakhtin ; tradução de Yara Frateschi Vieira – São Paulo : Hucitec, 2013 (Linguagem e Cultura, 12)  
 ISBN 978-85-271-0019-9  
 1. Cultura – História – Século 16. Rabelais, François, 1494-1553 – Crítica interpretação. 3. Sátira – História e crítica. I. Título. II. Série.  
 87-1786 CDD 847.3  
 809.7  
 909.5  
 Índices para catálogo sistemático  
 1. Cultura : Século 16 : História 909.5  
 2. Sátira e humor : História e crítica 809.7  
 3. Sátira e humor : Século 16 : História 847.3  
 4. Século 16 : Cultura : História 909.5  
 5. Século 16 : Sátira e humor : Literatura francesa 847.3

Source: Bakhtin (2013).

Therefore, we note the importance given to Rabelais’ name in the original Russian text compared to the title of the Brazilian edition. The difference lies not only in the fragmentation of title and subtitle, but, mostly, in the inversion of the Russian title. In the original, the name of the author studied by Bakhtin is in the beginning of the title and the nucleus of the synthetical structure.

We also observe the reference to “Rabelais” in every translation in our comparison, even those with significant changes to the title, like the English edition, – translated from the Russian in 1968 as the first translation of the book and the first translation of Bakhtin into English: *Rabelais and his world*.<sup>43</sup> Despite the concision, the English version preserves Rabelais’ name from the original.

The “noise” or “detail,” as we show later on, seems to be very important since it resumes the title of Bakhtin’s doctoral dissertation, *Rable v istorii realizma* [*Rabelais in the history of realism*]. Regarding the dissertation title, Pan’kov (1999, p.23) cites the accusatory opinion manifested by Piksánov in the dissertation defense in 1946: “this is a

<sup>43</sup> In the Prologue to the translation, Holquist (Bakhtin, 1984, p.xxi) states: “*Rabelais and His World* (or, as it is called in Russian, *François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*),” suppressing *tvortchestvo*, but preserving the rest of the title as the original.

wholly misleading title. With the same degree of exaggeration as you have indulged in your choice of title, I will allow myself to propose to you an alternative: Rabelais Pushed Back into the Middle Ages and Antiquity. That is how your dissertation should be titled.” In contrast, Pan’kov also mentions Finkel’shtein’s perspective (Pan’kov, 1999, p.27), by counterposing Piksarov’s provocation: “On the contrary, yours is a Rabelais who is moving forward.”

### 3 Folk, Festive and Grotesque Forms in *Rabelais and His World*

It is revealing that, in addition to the controversial issue of how Bakhtin approaches Rabelais’ work in relation to the past or the future (or both), the reference to the title is expressed by such opposed points of views from members of the Academic Council and the audience in the defense. Also valuable for the proper rearticulation of the issue is Bakhtin’s letter to Soloviev and Leibovich, dated from 05 July 1962, when the author-researcher already introduces the change in titles. Here we present a free translation that preserves the controversy of work/creation:

#### Chart 18

I send you the manuscript of my book *The work/creation of Rabelais and the folk culture in the Middle Ages and in Renaissance* (I changed the original title). This book was finished in 1940 and expanded in 1948, [...].  
My book, finished two decades ago, needs, of course, a certain upgrading and some additions. Furthermore, you’ll have to comment on the translation of all texts in a foreign language, make some explanations, at times, make the presentation lighter, use the new translation by H. M. Lyubimov, etc. But the essence of the book will remain unchanged.

Source: Bakhtin (2010e, p.637).<sup>44</sup>

We observe that the title is the same of the one published in Russian in 1965, except for the absence of “François,” since the letter only mentions “Rabelais” in the title.

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<sup>44</sup> In the Russian original: “Высылаю Вам рукопись моей книги «Творчество Рабле и проблема народной культуры средневековья и Ренессанса» (я изменил первоначальное заглавие). Книга эта закончена в 1940 г. и дополнена в 1948 г., [...].

Книга моя, выполненная около двух десятилетий тому назад, нуждается, конечно, в известном обновлении и в дополнениях. Кроме того, придется дать в примечаниях перевод всех иноязычных текстов, внести некоторые пояснения, местами улегчить изложение, использовать новый перевод Н. М. Любимова и т. п. Но сущность книги останется неизменной.”

We resume Chart 17 and the comparison between the titles from the original, translations and correlated enunciations. By placing the author's name on a secondary plane, the Brazilian and Spanish translations seem to oppose what Bakhtin (2013, p.50; our highlights)<sup>45</sup> stated at the end of the introduction: “the immediate object of our study is not the culture of folk humor but *the work of Rabelais*.” Hence, Rabelais' relevance seems to lean toward a title rather than a subtitle.

A similar claim is made by Souza (2002, p.35) in a footnote: “In reality, the original title is more adequate for Bakhtin's theoretical purposes [...], since it is based on that work (this concrete utterance) that Bakhtin studies the transition from folk culture between these two periods.”<sup>46</sup>

Reaffirming what we have thus far called “noise,” we return to the Russian author's statements during his doctoral defense, the immediate context of which, as we mentioned, was surrounded by controversies. At the time, Bakhtin introduced the notion of *hero*, distinguished from the notion of *object*, explaining that, at first, Rabelais, albeit an *object*, was not a “hero” himself. In his words:

#### Chart 19

I decided to make [Rabelais] the particular object of my research, but nevertheless he did not become my hero. For me he was just the clearest and most intelligible articulator of this world. Thus the hero of my monograph is not Rabelais, but this popular, festive-grotesque forms, the traditions revealed, illuminated for us in the work of Rabelais.

Source: Pan'kov (1998, p.15).

We recall, despite a possible controversy, that, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin (2010a) presents, as author-researcher, the double-voiced discourse as *object* and *hero* of his research. Therefore, the hero, for Bakhtin, is the *object* – not the *corpus*.

We can understand the consequences of that title-subtitle organization, somewhat hierarchical, through the claims of Gurevich (1990, p.12) resumed by Pan'kov (1998), for whom the analysis of Rabelaisian texts “leads Bakhtin to the conclusion that these novels manifested and brought to the surface an antagonism between the two cultures of

<sup>45</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.58.

<sup>46</sup> In the original: “Na realidade o título original é mais adequado aos propósitos teóricos bakhtinianos [...], pois é em torno da obra (desse enunciado concreto) que Bakhtin estuda a transição da cultura popular entre essas duas épocas.”

the Middle Ages – the ecclesiastical, scholarly, official culture on the one hand, and the popular, carnivalesque culture of laughter on the other.”

Here, we mention Bakhtin’s concluding remarks during the presentation of his doctoral dissertation, as registered and highlighted once again by Pan’kov:

Chart 20

In his concluding remarks Bakhtin said: ‘I did not approach the topic with a ready-made conception, I was searching and I continue to search.
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Source: Pan’kov (1998, p.14).

For our point of view, this is a fundamental statement to understand how Bakhtin approaches and relates to the issue, in principle, from a dialogic perspective, being the relationship between author-researcher and *corpus* and *object* that sheds light on the possibilities. Such possibilities are not given beforehand, neither are *corpus* and *object*, as we seek to demonstrate.

Therefore, according to Pan’kov (1998), the issue is more complex. This author claims that “The work was based, of course, on an inductive scheme,” however, “it was not the study of Rabelais that pushed Bakhtin towards his discovery of the antagonism between the two cultures of the Middle Ages, it was the discovery of the two cultures of the Middle Ages (above all its popular culture) that prompted Bakhtin to study Rabelais” (Pan’kov, 1998, pp.14-15).

Our aim is not to discuss which is the most appropriate title, but to point out indicatives of a tension that rises between *corpus* and *object*. What appears to be “noise” in the Brazilian translation, compared to the Russian original, is actually an issue that involves the boundaries between what features as *corpus* and features as *object* in Bakhtin’s research on, or rather, from Rabelais’ work. That “noise” seems to reveal more about the research process and the importance of the relationship with the *object* than about Bakhtin’s *object* exclusively.

If, like Pan’kov (1998) suggests, Bakhtin is led to study Rabelais, that does not happen at random. That is stated in the following fragment:

It is only where our relationship to an object ceases to be founded on a necessary principle (becomes a matter of whim, as it were), where, in other words, we depart from our principled relationship to things and to

the world – only then are we confronted by the determinateness of an object as something foreign and independent. The object’s determinateness begins to disintegrate for us and we ourselves fall under the domination of the contingent, with the result that we lose ourselves and we lose the stable determinateness of the world as well (Bakhtin, 2011, p.4).<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, although the *object* speaks and it is necessary to hear it in a relationship of authentic dialogicity and alterity, this does not mean that the relationship between author-researcher and his *object* fails to respect certain parameters. At this point, we resort to the reflection in Amorim (2004). According to the author, unlike the daily context that privileges the interaction between author and addressee, doing research is centered on the relationship between author-researchers and their *object*, the addressee, thus, being a third party. Hence, the addressee performs much more the role of an observer of that author-*object* relationship. In addition, Bakhtin highlights the unpredictable character of the answers that we usually find through research, arguing that such unpredictability does not mean that methods are dispensable or that mere chance prevails.

Claiming the text as primary data of Humanities, Bakhtin (2016b, p.71; highlights from the Brazilian edition)<sup>48</sup> calls it “the *unmediated reality* (reality of thought and experience), the only one from which these disciplines and this thought can emerge. Where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either.” For this reason, we understand the *corpus* as a text that serves as a starting point for the investigation, but does not overlap with the *object*. The definition of research *object* depends on the relationship between the author and that starting point. It is the alterity with the *corpus* that provides the elements to define the research *object* – and vice-versa, since this is not a linear way of proceeding. In this regard, we can hear Voloshinov (2017, p.143)<sup>49</sup> stating that “When beginning an investigation, one needs to construct methodological guidelines, not definitions. It is essential above all to get the feel of the actual subject matter-the object under investigation; it is essential to separate it from the reality surrounding it and to make a preliminary delimitation of it.”

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<sup>47</sup> For references, see footnote 28, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist Austin, Texas University Press, 1986, p.103. [A.N.: for the purposes of this article, we decided to add the highlights present in the Brazilian edition to the English citation.].

<sup>49</sup> VOLOSHINOV, V. N. *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejaka and I.R. Titunik, New York, Semina Press, 1973, p.45.

We disagree with Bernardi (2012, p.76) on the understanding of Rabelais' work as the *object* of Bakhtin's study. What Bernardi defines as object, in our understanding, is actually *corpus*. Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*, focuses on the books the French writer published during the Renaissance and, in these writings (albeit not limited to them), seeks questions and answers for what he conceives as his research problems. Despite the indefinite presentation of that *object*, it is not possible to confuse *object* and *corpus* (or vice-versa).

In other words, although *corpus* and *object* are presented amalgamated *a priori*, the relationship between researcher and *corpus* gradually defines the *object*. Furthermore, according to Voloshinov (2017, p.136),<sup>50</sup> in a footnote to *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* about the notion of total impression, taken from other authors - "Total impression means the still undifferentiated impression of the totality of an object-the aroma of its totality, as it were, which precedes and underlies knowing the object distinctly." Therefore, it seems possible to claim that, at first, the author-researcher has an idea of what his *object* could be and how that *object* can lead him to hypothesize, but it is the relationship with the *object* through the *corpus* that determines and stabilizes the respective boundaries.

It is noteworthy that the traces shown here can also be verified throughout the text, that is, placed in a dialogic relationship, defining tensions that provide us with possible paths toward the method proposed by Bakhtin in his writings, especially regarding his *object*.

We present some examples from different chapters to illustrate our point. In the presentation of the problem, still in the introduction, the author-researcher questions:

Chart 21

What are the peculiar traits of the comic rituals and spectacles of the Middle Ages?
--

Source: Bakhtin (2013, p.5).<sup>51</sup>

In the second chapter, named "The language of the Marketplace in Rabelais," the author-researcher also asks:

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<sup>50</sup> For references, see footnote 49, p.38.

<sup>51</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.7.



Chart 22

But how did the marketplace enter the sphere of his novel and how was it reflected in it?

Source: Bakhtin (2013, p.137).<sup>52</sup>

Similar to what was done for Dostoevsky, Bakhtin cites excerpts of the text under analysis.

Chart 23

How is the prologue of *Pantagruel* constructed? It begins thus:

[...]<sup>53</sup>

Here we see combined the praise of the “Chronicles of Gargantua” and of the readers who enjoy this chapbook [...] But of course these announcements have nothing in common with naive and direct practical advertisements. They are filled with popular-festive laughter.

Source: Bakhtin (2013, p.138; original highlights).<sup>54</sup>

Bakhtin associates the compliments in the excerpt to the style of jugglers, mountebanks and medicasters, defining their meaning in the context of the marketplace in the Middle Ages. This is how the author-researcher begins to associate Rabelais’ text to the Middle Ages.

In the last chapter, “Rabelais’ Images and His Time,” Bakhtin says:

Chart 24

While destroying the official conception of his time and of contemporary events, Rabelais did not seek, of course, to submit them to a scholarly analysis. He did not speak in the conceptual language but in the tongue of popular comic images

[...] Let us now look at a number of examples from Rabelais’ novel which reflect his time, from his immediate surroundings to great historical events.

Source: Bakhtin (2013, pp.386-387; original highlights).<sup>55</sup>

Subsequently, Bakhtin starts by mentioning the chapter of the hero’s birth, then the purchase of indulgences, and continues to list a series of examples and citations from Rabelais’ work, like in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, to reach the marketplace. It seems possible, then, to say that the author’s *object* is what he also calls the main *hero* in our previous citation regarding his concluding remarks in the defense of his dissertation

<sup>52</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.159.

<sup>53</sup> We suppressed part of the citation from *Pantagruel* in Bakhtin (2013) [1984].

<sup>54</sup> For references, see footnote 1, pp.159-160.

<sup>55</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.439.

(see Chart ). Therefore, we can say that folk, festive and grotesque forms are Bakhtin's research *object* which have in Rabelais' work the *corpus* of interest. Finally, let us read what Bakhtin claims to be original about Rabelais:

Chart 25

We have examined all the aspects of Rabelais' work which are essential in our mind. We have tried to show that the exceptional originality of his work was determined by the ancient folk culture of humor, powerfully reflected in Rabelaisian imagery.

Source: Bakhtin (2013, p.417).<sup>56</sup>

As we analyze concrete elements in the book about Rabelais, comparing translations for the title of the book and Bakhtin's dissertation as well as establishing possible dialogic relationships from the records of Bakhtin's defense, what we find at first to be "noise" between translations becomes an issue of boundaries between *corpus* and *object*. It seems that the author himself hesitates to name what in fact is his *object*. Therefore, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, contrary to what was claimed by Bakhtin (2013) and reinforced by Bernardi (2012), is the author-researcher *corpus*, not his *object*, which, in fact, are the folk, festive and grotesque forms.

Once more, we resume the words of Bakhtin (2016b, p.96; our highlights):<sup>57</sup>

Frequently the whole of scientific analysis amounts to a disclosure of everything that has been given, already at hand and ready-made before the work has existed (that which is found by the artist and not created by him). It is as if everything given is created anew in what is created, transformed in it. A reduction to that which was previously given and ready-made. An object is ready-made, the linguistic means for its depiction are ready-made, the artist himself is ready-made, and his world view is ready-made. And here with ready-made means, in light of a ready-made world view, the ready-made poet reflects a ready-made object. *But in fact the object is created in the process of creativity, as are the poet himself, his world view, and his means of expression.*

In the passage, what Bakhtin (2016b) proposes about the literary creation inspires our reflections regarding the scientific creation. Therefore, from a dialogic perspective, *alterity* crosses and values the investigative process, defining its practice. Hence, *corpus*

<sup>56</sup> For references, see footnote 1, p.473

<sup>57</sup> For references, see footnote 35, p.120.

and *object* assume the role of “other” with whom the author-researcher (equally constituted in and through the process) establishes a relationship.

Aware of that relationship, Magalhães (2010, p.264), also from a dialogic perspective, proposes the metaphor of a “conversation” for the relationship established with his research *object*, which he distinguishes from his *corpus*. The metaphor displays the dialogism as a principle of this investigative practice that is also present in the *object*. According to Brait and Magalhães (2014, p.14), “for the research subject, the subjective condition inherent to what the researcher builds as object imposes upon the work with language the challenge of not only speaking about this object, but, especially, dialoguing with it.”<sup>58</sup> Hence, “the dialogue appears both as a way of language work and as a point of view that proposes and object of investigation.” (Brait; Magalhães, 2014, p.13)<sup>59</sup> Magalhães (2010, p.266)<sup>60</sup> reinforces that claim in the final lines of his dissertation, in which he emphasizes “the discursive force of the object” which “could not be predetermined in the investigation.”

According to that conception, both *object* and *corpus* cease to be a thing and become subjects: “A thing, as long as it remains a thing, can affect only other things; in order to affect a personality it must reveal its *semantic potential*, become a word, that is, assimilate to a potential verbal-semantic context.” (Bakhtin, 2017, p.71; original highlights).<sup>61</sup> This is how, in a genuine relationship of alterity that crosses and determines the research from a dialogic perspective, the most fundamental meanings for the interest of the investigated are revealed.

## Conclusion

Contrary to the observed in occasional definitions of *object* in Bakhtin’s works and even in Bakhtin’s own statements, what the author’s writings about Dostoevsky and

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<sup>58</sup> In the original: “para o sujeito da pesquisa, a condição subjetiva inerente ao que ele, o pesquisador, constrói como objeto impõe ao trabalho com a linguagem o desafio não apenas de falar desse objeto, mas principalmente dialogar com ele.”

<sup>59</sup> In the original: “o diálogo figura tanto como modo de funcionamento da linguagem quanto como ponto de vista que instaura um objeto de estudo.”

<sup>60</sup> In the original: “a força discursiva do objeto”; “não poderia estar predeterminada na investigação.”

<sup>61</sup> For references, see footnote 35, p.164.

Rabelais show us is that, despite the unclear definition of the author-researcher's *object* in each of his investigations, *corpus* and *object* cannot be confused with one another.

Our analysis reveals that, in his investigative process, Bakhtin approximates and establishes a relationship with texts as *corpus* not as *objects*. It is from the relationship with the *corpus* that the author-researcher builds the *object* of his investigation in a genuinely dialogic approach from the start. Therefore, we understand *corpus* as texts that act serve as starting points for investigations, however *corpus* and *object* do not overlap. We conclude, from a dialogic perspective, that the *object* cannot be established beforehand and that *alterity* with the *corpus* provides the elements that define what is, indeed, the research *object*.

Notwithstanding, the *corpus* is not given either. Determining the *corpus* is, in itself, an interpretative task. The research *corpus* before established as such, is a concrete utterance that belongs to the uninterrupted chain of communication. It is us, author-researchers and our specific purposes, who approach, collect and frame the utterances, dislocating to shape them as *corpus* of analysis. This movement builds another chain. Despite not discussing Bakhtin's process of constitution of a *corpus* in detail, we highlight that his own *corpus* was not given. This process, then, is far from a causal relationship between *corpus* and *object*, marked by many mechanical stages.

Therefore, although *corpus* and *object* are *a priori* amalgamated, it is essential that author-researchers establish a relationship with their *corpus* so it can gradually be defined against the research *object*. We also highlight that, this way of proceeding is not mechanical, unidirectional or linear, the author-researcher many turns between *corpus* and *object* delineate the boundaries and the paths between them. We hope that the reflection proposed here about Bakhtin as author-researcher and his research *objects* also reflect our field of work, our investigative practices given our research *objects*.

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Translated by Larissa de Pinho Cavalcanti – [laracvanti@gmail.com](mailto:laracvanti@gmail.com);  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3087-1881>

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