

Figures of the Resurrection in *O Pai da Menina Morta* [The Dead Girl's Father], by Tiago Ferro / *Figurações da ressurreição em O pai da menina morta, de Tiago Ferro*

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a reading of the novel *O pai da menina morta* [Dead Girl's Father], by Tiago Ferro, linked to the theme of Christian resurrection materialized in the Gospel according to John. The biblical episodes about the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus Christ are placed in dialogue with the narrative of the Brazilian author, as well as the symbolisms regarding the pelican and the celebration of Christian Easter, figures belonging to the structure of the work under examination. The analyses put in discussion promote the understanding that Tiago Ferro, when indicating the religious discourse, refracts it to the constitution of his narrative voice, relocating it to the secular, profane level, typical of the human condition. The theoretical foundation working as a support for the reading of this work stands out in the contributions of the Circle of Mikhail Bakhtin, Frederico Lourenço, Northrop Frye, among others.

KEYWORDS: Tiago Ferro; *O pai da menina morta*; Bible and Literature; Comparative Literature

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe uma leitura do romance O pai da menina morta, de Tiago Ferro, vinculada à temática da ressurreição cristã materializada no Evangelho segundo João. Os episódios bíblicos acerca da ressurreição de Lázaro e de Jesus Cristo são postos em diálogo com a narrativa do autor brasileiro, bem como os símbolos dessa temática condizentes ao pelicano e à própria celebração da Páscoa cristã, figuras pertencentes à ossatura da obra em exame. As análises postas em discussão promovem o entendimento de que Tiago Ferro, ao indicar o discurso religioso, refrata-o à constituição de sua voz narrativa, realocando-o ao nível secular, profano, próprio da condição humana. A fundamentação teórica que sustenta a leitura deste trabalho destaca-se nas contribuições de Mikhail Bakhtin e seu Círculo, de Frederico Lourenço, de Northrop Frye, dentre outros.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tiago Ferro; O pai da menina morta; Bíblia e Literatura; Literatura Comparada

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[mydaughter.com]
I DON'T WANT TO DIE
4/2011 - I don't want to die.
After we die, can we come back?

Silence.
*Tiago Ferro*¹

[list]
On what I won't be able to do in this book:
Bring My Daughter back to life.
*Tiago Ferro*²

Introduction

In the classic work *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, Northrop Frye, from the angle of Literary Criticism, outlines the cultural relevance of the Bible throughout the centuries, highlighting the authority that the text, from a sacred perspective, has exercised and continues to exercise in the West. Beyond this sacred enlightenment, the critic presents interpretative statements about the biblical text in the rational, discursive and literary sphere, which is the focus of his study. According to the author, every narrative scheme known in Western literature and art is nothing more than a variation on biblical plots, since “the Bible is clearly a major element in our own imaginative tradition, whatever we may think we believe about it” (Frye, 1982, p. 18).³

The statement formulated by Frye dialogues with and recovers the postulates of Eric Auerbach, according to whom “neither the art of Cervantes and the Spanish theatre, nor that of Shakespeare, to mention the best-known examples alone, could have been imagined without [... the] realistic conception of the tragic man, which is of Christian origin” (Auerbach, 2015, p. 96).

¹ In Portuguese: [minhafilha.doc] / NÃO QUERO MORRER / 4/2011 – Eu não quero morrer. / Depois que a gente morre, pode voltar? //Silêncio/. *O Pai da Menina Morta*, 2018, p. 23

² In Portuguese: [lista] / Do que não vai dar para fazer neste livro: / Trazer a Minha Filha de volta à vida. Tiago Ferro, *O pai da menina morta*, 2018, p. 35.

³ FRYE, Northrop. *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature*. Cambridge: Academic Press, 1982.

Grounded in this dialogical perspective, “the organizing center of any utterance” (Vološinov, 1973, p. 93),⁴ the analysis regarding the novel *O Pai da Menina Morta* [Dead Girl’s Father], by Tiago Ferro, the *corpus* of this article, will shed light on the text by the first-time and award-winning Brazilian author as a variation on the topic of the biblical resurrection, a recurring image in the New Testament of the Christian Bible which, in turn, by contaminating the fiction writer’s discourse makes it double-voiced, if Mikhail Bakhtin’s interpretations are taken into account. For the language scholar, “someone else’s words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 195).⁵

Ferro’s figures and/or allusions to the sacred text, both from the Old and New Testaments, far from being affiliated with religious discourse, refract it in their fictional composition, since “the author to make use of someone else’s discourse in the direction of its own particular aspirations” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.193); in other words, the novelist, in appropriating the scriptures or sacred themes, uses them in a way that reverses their meaning or denies their institutionalized configuration.

Although the novel *O Pai da Menina Morta* is “related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication”⁶ (Bakhtin, 1987, p. 91)⁷ to the biblical text, the composition of this contemporary production must be considered first and foremost as a “response” to religious postulates. This response, by basing itself on sacred texts and implying that they are well-known, rejects them as an expression worthy of credibility. In other words, the narrative voice uses double-voicedness and empties the mystical aspect of the sacred, relocating it to the literary text. The following sentence, which desecrates the most emblematic Christian ritual, the Eucharist, exemplifies this premise: “Communion is but a cookie” (Ferro, 2018, p. 23).⁸

⁴ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Seminar Press, 1973.

⁵ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

⁶ “Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word “response” here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account.”

⁷ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

⁸ In Portuguese: “A hóstia é um biscoito.”

With this understanding, this study recovers biblical images in the bones of Tiago Ferro's narrative, in particular the evangelical figure of Lazarus, a character embodied in the Gospel of John, who, upon reviving four days after his death, through the intervention of Jesus Christ, marks himself out as the antitype of the Messiah himself: both figures, in a canonical context, rise from death to life. On the other hand, in a secular, profane context, i.e. in the novel *O Pai da Menina Morta*, a product of social interaction, the theme of resurrection, whether explicitly alluded to in the figure of Lazarus, or symbolically referenced, as will be exemplified below, responds oppositely to the biblical narrative: death takes place in the novel, the proscenium of the narrative.

The Father of the Dead Girl or the Author of These Fragments

Tiago Ferro was born in São Paulo in 1976. *O Pai da Menina Morta* is his first novel, which awarded him the *Prêmio São Paulo de Literatura* [São Paulo Literature Award] in 2018 in the category of first-time author and the *Prêmio Jabuti* [Jabuti Award] for best novel in 2019.

The story that emerges in the pages of the book, pointing to a personal issue, disassociated, according to the author, from the postulates of autofiction - "Am I the Dead Girl's Father? Who is speaking here, anyway? Who am I?" (Ferro, 2018, p. 157)^{9 10} -, has its literary inception in the mourning that the fiction writer has experienced concerning the death of his daughter: an eight-year-old girl who was victimized in 2016 by myocarditis, a type of inflammation in the myocardium (the muscular part of the heart), which can cause cardiac arrest.

If, on the one hand, by talking about aspects of his personal projection into the lines of the narrative, the author disregards the restraints that the postulate autofiction presents:

⁹ In Portuguese: "Eu sou o Pai da Menina Morta? Quem fala aqui afinal? Quem é Eu?."

¹⁰ The author's questioning of the reality of his empirical experience with the artistic, literary representation he produces in *O Pai da Menina Morta* is curious. However, the writer's surname, metaphorically recorded, is indicated in the continuity of the referenced excerpt: "Am I the Father of the Dead Girl? Who is speaking here, anyway? Who am I? The body torn apart by the twisted *iron* of what was once a car" (from the original in Portuguese: "Eu sou O Pai da Menina Morta? Quem fala aqui afinal? Quem é Eu? O corpo dilacerado pelo *ferro* retorcido do que um dia foi um automóvel." Emphasis added. Ferro, 2018, p. 157).

When the label of autofiction is attached to a work, a reading emerges that inevitably collates fiction and reality, life and work, etc. And for me, art is form. But the market needs novelties and ways to feed the advertising machine. Another way would be to accept the concept and just say that my book doesn't respond to the two basic pillars of autofiction: a narrator with the same name as the author printed on the cover and a first-person narrative (Ferro *apud* Prelorentzou, 2020).¹¹

On the other hand, Ferro, in the same interview he gave to the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* [The State of São Paulo], reports that: "(...) being the author of *O Pai da Menina Morta* pulls the rug out from under the identity of "the dead girl's father," at least sometimes. In any case, it's a story that I continue to live every day. And I'll live it to the end" (Ferro *apud* Prelorentzou, 2020).¹² The author's real voice, as an interviewee for the São Paulo newspaper, dialogues with his own narrative. That is: "I will never again be able to leave this scene"¹³ (Ferro, 2018, p. 159).¹⁴

This "scene" represents the way through which the construction of *O Pai da Menina Morta* is made effective. A book whose plot is associated either with the recording of a film - "there is a lot of apprehension on set right now" (Ferro, 2018, p. 68), or with the representation of the writing of the book as a theatrical performance - "your daughter is the one who died. You're just staging her death in aesthetic form" (2018, p. 129), "I don't know what the play is about (...) making a spectacle out of pain (...) one must play the Father, right?" (2018, pp. 161-162); or a circus performance - "Seventh Day Mass (...) Respectable public! (...) a bearded woman and a priest with brown shoes" (2018, p. 82).¹⁵ Elements that distort the author's empirical reality and disguise it, erasing it through the artistic layers referenced.

¹¹ In Portuguese: "Quando o rótulo da autoficção é colado a uma obra, surge uma leitura que inevitavelmente coteja ficção e realidade, vida e obra etc. E para mim arte é forma. Mas o mercado precisa de novidades e meios de alimentar a máquina da publicidade. Outro caminho seria aceitar o conceito e apenas dizer que meu livro não responde a dois pilares básicos da autoficção: narrador com o mesmo nome do autor estampado na capa e narrativa em primeira pessoa."

¹² In Portuguese: "[...] ser o autor de *O pai da menina morta* puxa o tapete, de vez em quando pelo menos, da identidade "o pai da menina morta." Seja como for, é uma história que eu sigo vivendo todos os dias. E viverei até o fim."

¹³ In Portuguese: "Eu nunca mais vou conseguir sair dessa cena."

¹⁴ Participating in a conference promoted by the Postgraduate Program in Letters at Mackenzie Presbyterian University in 2020, Tiago Ferro reaffirms that his book does not fall within the scope of autofiction. According to the author, the book does not meet two of the genre's primary criteria: "first-person narrative and a character identified with the author's name" (from the original in Portuguese: "*Narrativa na primeira pessoa e personagem identificado com o nome do autor.*" Ferro, 2020.)

¹⁵ In Portuguese: "Há muita apreensão no set de filmagem agora," "Quem morreu foi sua filha. Você está apenas encenando a sua morte na forma estética," "não sei do que trata a peça (...) fazer da dor um espetáculo (...) é preciso encenar o Pai, correto?," "Missa de Sétimo Dia (...) Respeitável público (...) mulher barbada e padre com sapatos marrons."

There is also another means of dialogue that Tiago Ferro's text establishes with regard to the mourning that his narrator shows: the signposting in the novel of other parents who have lost their children, such as Lygia Fagundes Telles, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Gilberto Gil, Eric Clapton, John Travolta, among others.

The problematic definition of what is real or fictional has led the field of literary studies to catalogues or to apriorisms, in an attempt to define autofiction as belonging above all to the author's *real experience*, or to aspects of that experience that gain a voice in the textual fabric. The death of Tiago Ferro's daughter is well known, and the author is not exempt from alluding to it; however, seeing the empirical reality of the transposition of the real into the fictional field, as Antonio Candido explained, is a difficult task, doomed to the abyss:

In fact, we all know that literature, as a phenomenon of civilization, depends on the interweaving of various social factors in order to be constituted and characterized. But determining whether these factors directly interfere with the essential characteristics of a given work is an abyss that is not always easily crossed.¹⁶

Within this framework, according to Bakhtinian guidelines, the author, when constructing his fictional work, "participates from the outside," that is, "my own axiological relationship to myself is completely unproductive aesthetically: for myself, I am aesthetically unreal. I can be only the bearer of the task of artistic forming and consummating, not its object – not the hero" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 188).¹⁷ In this article, Tiago Ferro's novel is understood as an aesthetic production and product in which the values of the empirical world, experienced by him, are not fictionally transfigured/transported, but re-adapted to a sphere that is different from the real, re-presented and legitimized by the narrative field:

The aesthetic act gives birth to being on a new axiological plane of the world: a new human being is born and a new axiological context – a new plane of thinking about the human world.

¹⁶ CANDIDO, Antonio. *On Literature and Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

¹⁷ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In HOLQUIST, Michael. LIAPUNOV, Vadim. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

The author must be situated on the boundary of the world he is bringing into being as the active creator of this world, for his intrusion into that world destroys its aesthetic stability (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 191).¹⁸

The aesthetic object is a creation that includes its creator within itself. The creator finds himself in it and feels intensely his own creative activity in it. Or put it differently: it is a creation as it looks from the eyes of the creator himself, who freely and lovingly created it” (true, this is not a creation from nothing, for it presupposes the reality of cognition and action which it only transfigures and shapes) (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 317).¹⁹

Considering fictional production, aesthetic art, the novel itself, as a transfigured recreation/representation of reality, Bakhtin’s concepts lead us to reflect on an additional organization: the author’s axiological position. The main point of interest in this article is the consideration that the transposition of Tiago Ferro’s biographical themes - the death of his daughter and the mourning he experiences - into his fictional function explicitly dialogues with intricate biblical figurations, particularly in the canonical Gospel of John, i.e. the figurations of the topic of resurrection. If, in a sacred context, the characters Lazarus and Jesus Christ rise from death to life, metaphorically, in Tiago Ferro’s novel, the life of the dead girl reappears, transfigured into fiction.

Figures of the Resurrection

One key to understanding the pain of mourning that the narrative voice exposes is based on the direct/explicit dialogue that the author establishes with the biblical character Lazarus. Belonging to Christianity, Lazarus – whose own name means the one whom God helps - gains narrative projection in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Of the four canonical Gospels that portray the life and ministry of Jesus Christ - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - only the last one sheds light on the episode of Lazarus’ resurrection, through the vocal action of Jesus Christ, that is, “a supreme miracle” (Lourenço, 2017, p. 374),²⁰ to use the expression coined by Frederico Lourenço.

As this event, the resurrection of Lazarus, is exclusive to the book of John and does not appear in the synoptic Gospels (a designation given to the Gospels of Matthew,

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 16.

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 16.

²⁰ In Portuguese: “um milagre supremo.”

Mark and Luke, as they include a significant number of stories in common, with the same sequence and sometimes using the same word constructions), some experts refute or think that the narrative recorded in John 11 is inconsistent.

The books that make up the Christian biblical canon are texts considered by religion to have been inspired by God and/or the Holy Spirit; however, there are excerpts of texts that have not been considered canonical due to the interpretation that they do not have divine inspiration; these narratives are called apocryphal or pseudo canonical books. It is also pointed out that:

There is a body of writings, apart from the Apocrypha and dating mostly from the last century or so before Christ, which are called Pseudepigrapha, meaning “false writings” because some of them, such as the Book of Enoch, are ascribed to venerated figures who assuredly did not write them. Most of the generally accepted data of Biblical scholarship are connected with demonstrating that many if not most books of the Bible are pseudepigrapha in the same sense (Frye, 1982, p. 202).²¹

The biblical narrative embodied in John 11, canonical and economical in its description, is configured with the following topics: the brothers Lazarus, Martha and Mary are friends of Jesus; as Lazarus was ill, his sisters sent for Christ in the hope that he would intervene to help them; Jesus, in turn, set off towards the village of Bethany, where his friends live, after two days of receiving the call; the delay, “a deliberate tardiness” (Lourenço, 2017, p. 373),²² establishes the death of Lazarus in the narrative, since, when Jesus arrived, his friend’s death was on its fourth day and, consequently, the decomposition of his body could already be sensed: “Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.” (John 11:39).²³

Considering that Christ’s delay in going to Bethany was justified by the purpose of the resurrection, so that people would see and believe that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God (John 11:42), the consequence of this “astonishing and inconceivable” event is marked: Christ, in resurrecting his friend, condemns himself to death at the same time;

²¹ For reference, see footnote 3.

²² In Portuguese: “um atraso propositado.”

²³ King James Bible. Available in: <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>.

since “it is precisely this miracle (...) that gives rise to the definitive decision on the part of Jesus’ enemies to kill him”²⁴ (Lourenço, 2017, p. 372).²⁵

The recurrence of Christian iconography is constant in *O Pai da Menina Morta*. Lazarus, for example, is quoted four times in the narrative. The author’s insistence on alluding to the evangelical figure leads to reflections. When he realizes that his daughter is dead, the resurrection that characterizes the biblical figure appears in Tiago Ferro’s fiction and is mirrored in it from different and refracting angles.

The first angle, seen through the prism of a voice questioning the scriptures in contrast to the real pain of losing a child, is thus materialized in the contemporary narrative: “Why has the heart stopped? What is the cause? Was Lazarus really risen from the dead? Why did Jesus waste his time turning water into wine instead of saving a child? (Ferro, 2018, p. 56).²⁶

The excerpt above evokes two passages in which supernatural situations are materialized exclusively in the Gospel of John, legitimizing Jesus Christ’s role as the Son of God. This situation is presented in Ferro’s narrative at two different moments in the Messiah’s life: his first miracle, which took place at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, when the transformation of water into wine was consolidated (John 2); and one of his last deeds, the resurrection of Lazarus, which, as mentioned, triggered the persecution of Christ and, consequently, his crucifixion (John 11).

By resorting to biblical passages, the Brazilian author’s dialogic narrative brings them to life, but does not share the miraculous power associated with the icons of Christianity. In this framework, the reuse of sacred texts acquires a significance that goes beyond the limits of the particular existence of biblical myths, refracting and distorting them to the concreteness and to the contemporary narrative ideology. In this sense, Ferro’s fiction is an interpretative example that “(...) a sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality-it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth” (Vološinov, 1973, p. 10).²⁷

²⁴ In Portuguese: “é justamente esse milagre [...] que origina a decisão definitiva, da parte dos inimigos de Jesus, de o matarem.”

²⁵ “But some of them [the Jews] went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done” (John 11:46).

²⁶ In Portuguese: “Por que o coração parou? Qual a causa? Lázaro realmente ressuscitou? Por que Jesus perdeu tempo transformado água em vinho em vez de salvar uma criança?”

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 4: It is worth noting the distortion that José Saramago makes in the novel *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* regarding the biblical characters materialized in the book of John (11).

There are inquiries, intentionally raised, about Ferro's bookkeeping. At first, the narrator questions why his daughter's heart stopped, and then wants to know the cause of the misfortune; without pause, the two miracles performed by Christ are evoked in the narrative: religion is signaled, but disbelief overpowers it, in a question that is contrary to the Christian faith. This demeaning, triggered in the interrogatives, highlights the human, finite condition of Ferro's characters, in turn nullifying a supposed spiritual intervention in the concrete existence of the father who is forced to accept, powerless, the death of his little girl.

However, the contemporaneity that the author promotes with regard to the biblical events that are consonant with the experimentation of the narrative voice is evident. Religious time, sacred in its configuration, reaches the narrator's current action, as if Christ were not temporally distant from the contemporary narrative. The action of both narratives - religious and fictional - are interconnected, it must be emphasized, though, the refraction, consistent with the pain of mourning (and not the contract of joy associated with evangelical miracles) stands out from the character's experimentation. What is at stake in the aforementioned excerpt, and in other moments of Tiago Ferro's narrative, is the questioning of a God who is miraculous, but only in a sacred (con)text, since in the narrator's experiment, a *profane text*, his daughter dies, while Christ turns water into wine.

The profane expression mentioned above deserves clarification. For Bakhtin, the formation of modern languages, particularly French, was in conflict with impregnable, restrictive, indubitable words, in other words, with sacred, authoritarian, limited words. "(...) Sobriety, simplicity, democraticism, and individual freedom," according to the language scholar, "have arisen from the popular and *profane* genres" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 132; emphasis added), since the new languages "have been determined to a certain degree by a lengthy and complex process of expunging the *other's* sacred word" (Bakhtin, 1986,

In the Nobel Prize winner's fiction, Christ heals the character Lazarus "from suffocation," according to the transposed fragment: "What is Lazarus suffering from, Jesus asked, from suffocations, as if his heart was going to burst, then he becomes pale, pale, it seems as if he's going to die." (From the original in Portuguese: "De que sofre Lázaro, perguntou Jesus, Dumas sufocações, como se o coração se lhe fosse passar, depois torna-se pálido, pálido, parece que vai ficar-se." Saramago, 2005, p. 334); however, later on, the cure is undone and Lazarus dies. This time, in the opposite way to the sacred text, in Saramago's profane text, Jesus Christ does not resurrect his friend; on the contrary, he intercedes for his death.

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 19 (1): e61945e, Jan./March 2024

p. 132; emphasis added).²⁸ In this sense, language, the expression of thought that differentiates man from other living beings, is, in its genesis, profane.

The term - profane - is used in this article because of the dialogue that Tiago Ferro's novel has with earthly issues, i.e. associated with concrete and real human experiences. Emílio Pimenta's assertive contribution to the nomenclature is also considered. For the critic, unlike the sacred, the profane "is the incomplete, the imperfect, inherent to the human condition" (Pimenta, 1980, p. 135).²⁹

The consideration of the human condition evidenced in the literary text under examination takes on greater proportions as the narrative flow progresses and once again the biblical character, Lazarus, is textually referenced. In this occurrence, after taking a written test in a Hospital Institution, referred to as a hospice, the dead girl's father, in dialogue with the doctor, possibly a psychiatrist, recovers the resurrected characteristic of the biblical character in contrast to the mortality that defines man:

The stout doctor seems content with my answers. He is also understanding of the crying fit I experienced after the test. Nobody likes to look the truth in the eyes. He soothes me, saying that, at least, the Institution is giving me the option of choosing. No, not between life and death, I'm afraid. Yes, but what about Lazarus? He patiently releases a slow puff of light cigarette and explains to me that, eventually, Lazarus also died. That he was brought back to life to shoot the scene and, six months later, had a fatal stroke in a local market. An apocryphal gospel says that the family, this time around, did not go through the trouble of burying him (Ferro, 2018, p. 135).³⁰

In the excerpt above, fragmented and apparently disconnected, emphasizing the way in which the book is configured, that is, with "short and disconnected paragraphs" (Ferro, 2018, p. 117), overlapping allusions need to be considered: the two biblical

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 7: "(...) Because of its sacrosanct, impenetrable boundaries, this word is inert, and it has limited possibilities of contacts and combinations. This is the word that retards and freezes thought. The word that demands reverent repetition and not further development, corrections, and additions. (...). It was during the process of struggling with this word and expelling it (with the help of parodic antibodies) that new languages were also formed. The boundary lines of the other's word. Vestiges in the syntactical structure."

²⁹ In Portuguese: "incompleto, imperfeito, próprios da condição humana."

³⁰ In Portuguese: "O médico corpulento parece satisfeito com as minhas respostas. Ele também compreende a crise de choro que eu tive depois do teste. Ninguém gosta de ficar frente a frente com a verdade. Ele me consola falando que ao menos a Instituição está me dando a opção de escolher. Não, entre a vida e a morte não é possível. Sim, mas e Lázaro? Com muita paciência ele solta uma baforada lenta de cigarro light e me explica que um dia Lázaro também morreu. Que ele ressuscitou para a filmagem da cena e seis meses depois teve um AVC fulminante em um mercado da região. Um evangelho apócrifo conta que a família nessa segunda vez não se deu ao trabalho de sepultá-lo."

Testaments, therefore references to biblical themes and characters; the representation of Lazarus' resurrection on film, as well as the physical death of the actor who plays him; and, finally, the signaling of an apocryphal gospel (devoid of value by Christianity) in which, along with the second death of the biblical Lazarus, the character is not buried.

Unfolding the references listed above, a possible signpost to the Old Testament is the possibility of choosing “between life and death” that the God of Israel proposes to his people: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). It should be noted, however, that in Tiago Ferro's narrative, the possibility of choosing between living and dying is not signaled: the death of the eight-year-old girl takes place and this is the backdrop that sustains the novel.

In turn, the phrase spoken by the narrator, asking the doctor and referring to the Gospel of John, “but what about Lazarus?” (Ferro, 2018, p. 135), summons belief in the resurrection in an evangelical context, that is, in the astonishing miracle performed by Christ, as a possibility of reversing the mourning in life; however, at the same time as this hope is alluded to, the irony - “structuring category of text, whose form of construction denotes a point of view, an indirect argument, which relies on the recipient's perspicacity to materialize as meaning” (Brait, 2008, p. 17)³¹ - of the doctor's retort (Lazarus died, but was resurrected to shoot a scene for a film, and died again after six months) desacralizes the biblical narrative, bringing the finite, mortal human condition into Tiago Ferro's text. Finally, this focus is reiterated in the allusion to the supposed apocryphal gospel, a text “the folktale material” (Frye, 1982, p. 22),³² without the aura of divine inspiration,³² in which Lazarus, in his second death, is recorded without burial.

In the aforementioned intertextual tangle, “(...) filled with dialogic overtones” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92),³³ it is implied that the author creates an artistic expression, linking data from his biography with biblical texts, modifying them and placing them in the realm of fictionality. The symbolism of the scenes - theatrical, cinematographic, circus-like - that make up the plot of *O Pai da Menina Morta* invigorates the “actor Lazarus” as an interpreter of death and desacralizes the Gospel text, understood as fiction. Irony

³¹ In Portuguese: “categoria estruturadora de texto, cuja forma de construção denuncia um ponto de vista, uma argumentação indireta, que conta com a perspicácia do destinatário para concretizar-se como significação.”

³² For reference, see footnote 3.

³³ For reference, see footnote 7.

sediments the narrative voice, since, according to the narrator of the last chapter-fragment that makes up the novel, “all gospels are needed, even the apocryphal” (Ferro, 2018, p. 172).³⁴

In this regard, in order to create his novel, Tiago Ferro plays with the religious aspects that characterize the belief of his place of speech - the Christianity worshipped in Brazil in the 21st century - the religiosity itself, but not devoid of its real configuration, the fiction, the Bible as a textual product. An example of this relocation can be seen in the two juxtaposed excerpts:

From the adjoining room in which your daughter is being saved, a 40-year-old woman comes out. She tells you everything is going to be okay. She is praying for your daughter. You want to believe it, but a weird resignation begins to numb your senses. You thank her (Ferro, 2018, p. 55).³⁵

[dawn of Wednesday to Thursday. third-person singular. female. the praying woman. filmed by the Coen brothers. black and white]

She’s been sitting on a chair by her daughter’s bed for three days. The thirteen-year-old was diagnosed with meningitis. The mother is the Praying Woman. Non-stop. This makes her experience a kind of ecstasy. She commands Lazarus to resurrect, the leper to be healed, the bleeding woman to be dried up. She heals the lame. She performs miracles. Non-stop. Shouts in the hallway bring her back from Jerusalem. She exits the room and sees the oval-headed man in a state of desperation. She is the Praying Woman. She stares into his eyes and tells him where she came from, with her face covered in a thin layer of desert sand. Her eyes are sparkling. The man’s daughter will live. She returns to the raft next to her little girl. Her daughter won’t die. Never again. Peter will walk on water. Christians will be eaten by lions. They will be persecuted, but truth will prevail. Rome is still going to kneel before the highwaymen. The cross will become a symbol of hope, not of pain. She speaks of things she never imagined herself capable of. No one has ever spoken like her. She is the Praying Woman (2018, p. 147).³⁶

³⁴ In Portuguese: “É preciso todos os evangelhos inclusive os apócrifos.”

³⁵ In Portuguese: “Da sala vizinha onde estão salvando a sua filha sai uma mulher de quarenta anos. Ela fala para você que vai dar tudo certo. Ela está rezando pela sua filha. Você quer acreditar, mas uma estranha resignação já começa a entorpecer os seus sentidos. Você agradece.”

³⁶ In Portuguese: “[madrugada de quarta para quinta-feira. terceira pessoa do singular. feminino. a mulher que reza. filmado pelos irmãos coen. preto e branco]

Ela está há três dias sentada em uma poltrona ao lado da cama da filha. A menina de treze anos foi diagnosticada com meningite. A mãe é a Mulher Que Reza. Sem parar. Isso faz com que ela viva uma espécie de êxtase. Ela ordena que Lázaro ressuscite, que o leproso seja curado, que a mulher que sangra, logo seque. Ela cura o aleijado. Ela realiza milagres. Sem parar. Gritos no corredor a trazem de volta de Jerusalém. Ela sai do quarto e vê o homem de cabeça oval desesperado. Ela é a Mulher Que Reza. Ela olha fixamente nos olhos dele e conta de onde ela veio com o rosto coberto por uma fina camada de areia do

In the first excerpt, a woman in her forties says prayers for the daughter of the dead girl's father. They are both in the same hospital, with their respective daughters. The record of this intercession is signaled in a succinct way, closer to the real, toned down by sober words pointing to common scenes in corridors and hospital rooms: faith activated in order to promote comfort and ask for healing. However, the second fragment subverts the sobriety of the first excerpt. It metaphorizes it, fictionalizes it in intensity. In it, "the woman who is praying," filmed by American filmmakers Joel and Ethel Coen, is renamed "The Praying Woman." A name that distinguishes a female character who is exaggeratedly tied to Christianity, since, in her trance-like attachment to Christian iconography, "The Praying Woman" is displaced by miraculous events from the New Testament. It is no longer the intervention of Christ performing miracles, but passages from the Gospels mentioned by "a false prophet" who predicts the life of the dead girl: "Never believe the false worshippers of the false prophets" (Ferro, 2018, p. 139).³⁷

It should also be noted that the narrator of *O Pai da Menina Morta* uses various codenames to refer to himself as devoid of hope, since the reality of death is common to his characterization. Among the nomenclatures that indicate the character-narrator's state of mind are: "The Leper Father" (Ferro, 2018, p. 49); "Dead Father" (2018, p. 59); "Author of These Fragments" (2018, p. 117); "Father Who's Fucked" (2018, p. 123); "The Dead Girl's Father" (2018, p. 157); "Average Man Who's Fucked" (2018, p. 169).³⁸

The use of obscene words, spelled out above, used by Ferro in his novel, points to the dialogue that the fiction writer establishes with the production of George Bataille, author of *Story of the Eye* (1928): "Bataille never writes anus, he writes ass. Don't be prudish. Do not forget, you're not a novelist. You will never be Bataille. You are prudish. And you can't write more than short, disconnected paragraphs"³⁹ (Ferro, 2018, p. 117).⁴⁰

deserto. Os olhos dela são faiscantes. A filha do homem vai viver. Ela volta para a jangada ao lado da sua menina. A filha dela não vai morrer. Nunca mais. Pedro vai andar sobre as águas. Cristãos serão devorados por leões. Serão perseguidos, mas a verdade vai prevalecer. Roma ainda vai se ajoelhar diante dos homens do caminho. A cruz vai se tornar um símbolo de esperança e não mais de dor. Ela fala coisas de que nunca imaginou ser capaz. Ninguém nunca falou como ela. Ela é a Mulher Que Reza."

³⁷ In Portuguese: "Jamais acredite nos falsos adoradores dos falsos profetas."

³⁸ In Portuguese: "O Pai Leproso," "Pai Morto," "Autor Destes Fragmentos," "Pai Que Se Fodeu," "O Pai da Menina Morta," "Homem Médio Que Se Fodeu."

³⁹ In Portuguese: "Bataille nunca escreve ânus, ele escreve cu. Não seja pudico. Não se esqueça, você não é um romancista. Você nunca será o Bataille. Você é pudico. E não consegue escrever mais do que parágrafos curtos e desconexos."

⁴⁰ The reference to the French novelist is not without meaning. George Bataille's literature is known for desacralizing discourses, transgressing them in vulgar, profane language; what Tiago Ferro does in *O Pai*

Within this narrative, which is made up of “short, disconnected paragraphs,” the narrator-character names himself “The Leper Father” (Ferro, 2018, p. 49). The symbolism of leprosy, if we consider the disease in the context of the two biblical Testaments, metaphorizes the narrator’s condition: powerless and lonely in the face of the disease and, consequently, in the face of death. This is because in the sacred text, those with leprosy were forced into social exclusion, banished from family and friendly life, and therefore into bodily, physical degradation, reaching, before death, the *psyches* of the sick.

Returning to the biblical character Lazarus, it is worth noting that “Lazarus of Bethany was also considered (...) a leper and became in some religions the patron saint of those suffering from this disease (hence the expressions [all derogatory, in Portuguese] *casa de lázaro, lazrado, lazareto, lazarento, lepra lazarena*” (*Biblical Dictionary*, 2007, p. 1146).⁴¹

In this understanding, the death of the narrator’s daughter, shown without the Christian miracle of resurrection, “Lazarus (...) died” (Ferro, 2018, p. 135), reaches the death of the Dead Girl’s Father himself, characterized by the disease that is alluded to the character Lazarus. In this vein, the daughter’s death is a metaphor for the devastation felt by the father, who, being a leper, buries himself with the girl: “The [cemetery] official says he will send a photo of the already installed plate [on My Daughter’s grave]. He never does. Luckily, rust will eat away at all of that *before I’m buried again* in street 3, block 19” (2018, p. 45. Emphasis added).⁴²

The excerpt above supports the interpretation that, with the death of his daughter, the father-narrator begins to recover in the narrative the deaths that he himself has experienced. The “Dead Father” (Ferro, 2018, p. 59), disturbed by the implacable reality of the loss of his daughter, starts to live and dream with the disturbing presence of death.

da Menina Morta, although not associated with the field of the erotic, also desacralizes discourses, and in this vein, both literatures dialogue: “The prose writer does not purge words of intentions and tones that are alien to him, he does not destroy the seeds of social heteroglossia embedded in words, he does not eliminate those language characterizations and speech mannerisms (potential narrator-personalities) glimmering behind the words and forms, each at a different distance from the ultimate semantic nucleus of his work, that is, the center of his own personal intentions.” (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 115), in: PAM, Morris (Edit.). *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Vološinov*. London: Edward Arnold, 1994.

⁴¹ There is another character named Lazarus in the New Testament. Its materiality is found exclusively in the book of Luke, in its 16th chapter: the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The narrative presents Lazarus, a beggar, having his wounds licked by dogs (Luke 16:21).

⁴² In Portuguese: “O funcionário [do cemitério] fica de mandar uma foto da placa já instalada [no túmulo da Minha Filha]. Nunca manda. Com sorte a ferrugem vai corroer tudo aquilo antes de eu ser enterrado novamente na rua 3, bloco 19.”

In the opening pages of the novel, there is a record of what can be considered a filmic representation, a scene in which, in a dream, reminiscences of the dead girl's death are evoked. In this dream, in turn, the character named by the "third-person singular. masculine" (2018, p. 11), that is, Him, within some requests made in the hospital room where his daughter, like him, is hospitalized, wishes that "someone would shut the mouths of the pelicans that are flapping around inside the room" (2018, p. 11).⁴³

It is important to clarify the symbolism that this bird - the Pelican - represents. According to *A Dictionary of Symbols* (Jean Chevalier & Alain Gheerbrant):

Pelican: The mistaken belief that the pelican fed its young with its own flesh and blood made the bird in the past a symbol of parental love. This is the reason why, in Christian iconography, it is a symbol of Christ. There is, however, a deeper reason: as a water-fowl, the pelican is a symbol of the moist humour which ancient physical science believed disappeared under the growing heat of the Sun, only to re-appear in Winter. The pelican was thus taken for an image of Christ's death and resurrection, as also that of Lazarus. Its standing as a Christ symbol was also based upon the wound in its heart from which flowed water and blood, life-giving draughts. "Dead Christian, awake!" Angelus Silesius wrote. "Behold, our Pelican waters you with his blood and the waters of his heart. If you accept them fittingly... you will at once be alive and well" (DEVA) (1994, p. 745).⁴⁴

The incursion of this animal in *O Pai da Menina Morta* points to yet another figure that symbolically dialogues with resurrection. Trapped inside the room, therefore unable to exercise the freedom of flight, the image metaphorizes the unfeasibility of death returning to life in a secular context, that is, without divine intervention, even marking, at the end of the excerpt, the death of both characters, father and daughter: "He tilts his head to the side. So does she" (Ferro, 2018, p. 11).⁴⁵ The bowing of the head, if we consider the Gospel verse that records the death of Jesus Christ - "he *bowed* his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30, emphasis added), marks death in the novel, without pointing to resurrection.

⁴³ In Portuguese: "terceira pessoa do singular. masculino [...] alguém cale a boca dos pelicanos que se batem dentro do quarto."

⁴⁴ CHEVALIER, J., & GHEERBRANT, A. (1994). *A dictionary of symbols*. (J. Buchanan-Brown, Trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd.

⁴⁵ From the original in Portuguese: "Ele tomba a cabeça para o lado. Ela também."

In this same sense, that is, by indicating the earthly, human question, Easter - in its Christian slant, that is, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ - is materialized in the novel. In *O Pai da Menina Morta*, we read the following construction:

[Wednesday]

I gamble.

[Thursday]

I lose.

[Friday]

My job.

[Saturday]

I buy Easter eggs.

[Sunday]

The beginning of the end (Ferro, 2018, p. 114).⁴⁶

The rigmarole of everyday life, even in the materiality of the Christian Holy Week, is grafted onto the reality of the Dead Father. His *via crucis*, marked by losses, reallocates the symbolism of the celebration to gambling and the taxing trade in chocolates. Beyond this aspect, the narrative does not show the possibility of a joyful cycle - the passage from one side to the other - but rather the beginning of the week pointing to the end, that is, the beginning of the end of life in its fullness.

Finally, we consider the dialogue, in the same vein of meaning, that Tiago Ferro makes with the last verse of the Gospel according to John, in which the eyewitness to the wonders of Jesus Christ, the beloved disciple, justifies the impossibility of narrating all the deeds of the Son of God in material support: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). In Ferro’s novel, on the other hand, by recalling his daughter’s life, the father-narrator materializes the dialogue with the sacred text:

⁴⁶ From the original in Portuguese: “[quarta-feira]/ Jogo no bicho.// [quinta-feira]/ Perco.// [sexta-feira]/ O emprego.// [sábado de aleluia] / Compro ovos de Páscoa.// [domingo]/ O começo do fim.//”

[memorable]

Few memories are left from my early childhood. I remember so much about My Daughter's eight years, however, that a single narrative wouldn't be able to capture everything (Ferro, 2018, p. 44).

Final Considerations

By explicitly appropriating figures from the New Testament of the Christian Bible, Tiago Ferro, the author of the aesthetic object under analysis, establishes a double-voicedness that makes *O Pai da Menina Morta* a dialogical product in its configuration. In this sense, according to Mikhail Bakhtin's Circle, the novel is engendered in a large-scale ideological discussion, i.e., "it responds to something, *objects* to something, *affirms* something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on" (Vološinov, 1973, p. 219; emphasis added).⁴⁷

Thus, recurring in Ferro's debut narrative, the resurrection, one of the basic figures of Christianity, and considered here, is reaffirmed in the literary text, in order to reverse its mystical meaning. By alluding to it, whether in its religious projections (the revival of Lazarus and Jesus Christ), or in the symbolism linked to the pelican (a bird that represents the resurrection of both biblical characters), or even in the Easter celebration (the resurrection of Jesus Christ), what is materialized in *O Pai da Menina Morta* is a narrative structure full of dialogues with the Christian culture, but in a different vein of meaning: by making use of the supernatural discourse, the author relocates it to the level of the natural, and by profaning transcendence, the contemporary narrative bears witness to the finite, precarious, imperfect condition of man in his concrete experiments.

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⁴⁷ For reference, see footnote 4.

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Statement of Author's Contribution

We declare for all due purposes that Camila Concato and Thiago Cavalcante Jeronimo jointly developed all the stages of the article “Figures of the resurrection in The Father of the Dead Girl” – from the initial process of written until the moment of its effective publication. In this sense, together, the authors developed and assume: 1. Conception and interpretative analysis; 2. Writing of the article and relevant critical review of the intellectual content; 3. Final approval of the version to be published. 4. Responsibility for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of any part of the work.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [*Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies*] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

The text “Figures of the Resurrection in *O Pai da Menina Morta*, by Tiago Ferro” proposes a reading of the aforementioned critically acclaimed and award-winning novel. Unlike other published texts that analyze the same work, this essay initially sets itself apart from the others by choosing Frye’s statement when he says that “every narrative scheme known in Western literature and art is nothing more than a variation on biblical plots,” followed by clarifications: to investigate Ferro’s text as the bearer of a variation on the topic of the biblical resurrection, a recurring image in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Therefore, given these intertextual and interdiscursive preconditions, its aim is to analyze this relationship, indicating how it occurs in the work and the probable meanings produced in the variation of the topic pointed out. From a formal point of view, we highlight the quality of the writing, its correctness, the very appropriate use of language, organization, argumentative orientation and mastery of article/essay production. The presentation of the text shows elaboration, clear ideas, information and discussions that are pertinent and relevant to the proposed reading, in well-articulated parts, in keeping with the genre. From a theoretical-methodological point of view, one suspects that his objectives could have been based on other theories of language/discourse or limited to literary theory and comparative literature. But the author “relies” on the dialogic perspective, on double-voicedness, in which the fictional discourse reverses the meaning and denies the religious discourse. There are no explicit references to polemical dialogism, although figures and allusions appropriate other voices and discourses with the clear intention of subverting and desacralizing them. The “dialogical perspective” comprises “the theoretical foundation that underpins the reading,” limited to the presentation of direct quotations taken from *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, Art and Answerability* and *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, works attributed to Bakhtin, plus *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (Vološinov)*, sometimes followed by simple commentary. That is why we did not find any contributions to dialogic

theory/analysis or even any reference to the importance of dialogism for literary criticism. On the other hand, there are no inadequacies or theoretical misunderstandings, which leads us to believe that the author is a capable connoisseur of the writings of Bakhtin and his Circle, whose interest is only to indicate the dialogical principle that underlies the reading, revealed in the dialogical relationships, in the syntax of appropriation and in the probable meanings produced by allusions and new figurations in the novel analyzed. For this “dialogical perspective,” concepts and categories such as verbal interaction, double-voicedness, responsiveness, authorship, excess of seeing, refraction, enunciation, profanity, irony are summoned and defined, with the aim of clarifying or endorsing the interpretative process, considerations relating to the dialogicity between texts/discourses. The purpose of the quoting discourse is to question the scriptures, to suspect the resurrection, to vivify these same scriptures with its own accent, to ironize religious discourse. A discourse produced by the pain of loss. Finally, it is a proposal that presents a privileged understanding of double-voicedness, religious discourse, sacred scriptures and the novel, which deduces, in this interrelationship between texts/discourses, that the novel proposes to transform the sacred text into fictionality, with earthly and profane images. And in this sense, the text fulfils its role. More important than signaling the relative productivity of the theoretical foundation, the essay has the merit of well-crafted writing, well-posed questions, answers that contribute to knowledge of the literature, the author, the work and the themes presented. These qualities suggest that the article should be published. ACCEPTED

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Review II

The text is well written, with clear, objective and pleasant language. The topic is treated scientifically: it meets the requirements of Methodology, logical argumentation and other parameters of Hermeneutics, as well as demonstrating successful research on the subject. ACCEPTED

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