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Mikhail Bakhtin

Teoria do romance II
As formas do tempo
e do cronotopo

Tradução, posfácio e notas
Paulo Bezerra

Organização da edição russa
Serguei Botcharov e Vadim Kójinov

editora 34

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The release of *Teoria do romance II: As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Theory of the Novel II: The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*] continues the ongoing publication of Mikhail Bakhtin's *Theory of the novel* (*Teória romana*) (1895-1975). In Brazil, the collection of essays translated by Paulo Bezerra and published by Editora 34 has been divided into three tomes.¹ The first, entitled *Teoria do romance I: A estilística* [*Theory of the Novel I: Stylistics*], inaugurates the series of publications and has been available to the reader since 2015.²

The second volume, as the subtitle indicates, is intended to introduce and develop the concept of the literary *chronotope*, understood as real space-time assimilated by literature throughout history. In the author's words, "a literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope" (p.243).³ ⁴ The text, which is dedicated to the genre of the European novel, is still fundamental as a basis for Bakhtin's thesis on the works of François Rabelais, as the philosopher himself proclaims at the end of the eighth chapter (p.224) and in footnote 16 (p.238).⁵

The essay was originally written between 1937 and 1939 in Savelovo during the Stalinist purges that drove Bakhtin into exile. In 1973, two years before his death and already in Moscow, Bakhtin devoted himself to the revision of the manuscript. Part of this effort resulted in the addition of Chapter 10, entitled *Observações finais* [Concluding Remarks] – a fact pointed by the *Nota à edição brasileira* [Note to the Brazilian edition] which opens the book, and later highlighted again by footnote 19 (p.258),⁶ which refers to the title of the chapter in question. Although a fragment of the text dealing with time and space in the novel became public in the then Soviet Union in 1974 appearing in the third issue of the periodical *Questions of literature* (*Voprosy literatury*), the first publication of the full text occurred only a few months after the author's death in 1975, when it was published by *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, along with Bakhtin's other essays on the *Theory of the Novel*.

¹ This is due to a decision based on editorial and translation issues, and consented by Sergei Botcharov (1929), living heir to Bakhtin's estate.

² For further information on the first volume, see the review by Adriana Pucci Penteadó de Faria e Silva (2015).

³ BAKHTIN, M. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. In: _____. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.84-258.

⁴ For reference, see footnote 3.

⁵ For reference, see footnote 3.

⁶ For reference, see footnote 3

The 1975 version is already known to the Brazilian reader through the direct translation from Russian into Portuguese by Aurora Fornoni Bernardini and four other translators, published by Unesp/Hucitec under the title *Questões de literatura e de estética: a teoria do romance* [*Questions of Literature and Aesthetics: Theory of the Novel*] (*Voprosy literaturny i estetichy*) in 1988. The time that has passed and the acknowledged importance given to the text in Brazil since this first valuable translation together justify a review focused on the comparison of the two available Portuguese versions of the work, – understood by us as events – and, more specifically, on the contributions made by the new translation.

Thus, although both versions are translated directly from the Russian, the translation carried out by Paulo Bezerra is based on the critical edition published in Russia in 2012 by the publisher Iazyki Slaviánskikh Kultúry. The full text, which incorporates corrections made by Bakhtin in his manuscripts and typewritten copies, is part of the set of *Collected Works* organized by Botcharov and Vadim Kójinov (1930-2001) in seven tomes, the first of which was published in 1997.

Among the novelties provided by the most recent translation, we highlight the addition of Folhas esparsas para *As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Scattered Pages for The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*], a set of annotations found in the author's archive addressing ideas developed in the tenth chapter of the book, hitherto unpublished in Portuguese. This is precious material, in which we can observe facets of Bakhtin's reflective and creative process as he revised the text thirty years after he wrote its first draft.

In this way through the newly published work, which has been revised and extended with a tenth chapter and the ideas outlined in the ten sheets of drafts, it seems possible to think, for instance, about issues involving movements and trajectories of and in Bakhtinian thought. We find small clues as to how the author reflects about his early writings, traceable in the text prepared for publication, and which emerge from the notes in excerpts such as this, in which Bakhtin states that his work deals with “the chronotope of the universe represented in the novel, of the events represented,” but that “there is still

the chronotope representing the author [...], and the chronotope of the *listener* or *reader*, the chronotopes of the events of representation and hearing-reading” (p.238).⁷

There is also the following passage: “It is necessary to distinguish the architectonic time (the chronotope) and the compositional time of narration or representation” (p.241),⁸ which prompts questions about this discussion in the context of the whole Bakhtinian oeuvre. The relation between the notion of *architectonic*, as conceived by young Bakhtin, and the idea of the *chronotope* is picked back up again by Paulo Bezerra in the book’s afterword. In the researcher’s words, “this is where the old architectonic gives way to this category as an amalgam of ‘space-time’” (p.253).⁹

Regarding the Contents, we highlight the removal of the text in parentheses, namely (Ensaio de poética histórica) [(Essays of Historical Poetics)] (BAKTIN, 2002), after the title *Formas de Tempo e de Cronotopo no Romance* [*Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*] – *As formas do tempo e do cronotopo no romance* [*The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*] in the latest version. In Bakhtin’s introductory text, however, “poética histórica” [historical poetics] is present in the subheadings of both versions. The difference here lies in the use of the plural in the earlier edition, Ensaio de poética histórica [Essays of Historical Poetics] (BAKTIN, 2002, p.211), in comparison to the use of the singular, Um ensaio de poética histórica [An Essay of Historical Poetics] (p.11), in the most recent version. In any case, this removal in the Contents does not seem to diminish the importance of Bakhtin’s historical poetics to the translator, who discusses this topic in A poética histórica [The Historical Poetics] (p.261), part of his afterword.

As for differences between the titles of the chapters, in the title of Chapter 6, where it once read ‘trapaceiro’ [cheater], it now reads ‘pícaro’ [rogue], a change which is maintained throughout the text. The title of Chapter 7 also differs, shifting from O cronotopo de Rabelais [Rabelais’s Chronotope] to O cronotopo rabelaisiano [The Rabelaisian Chronotope]; ‘de Rabelais’ [Rabelais’s] is also replaced by ‘rabelaisiano’

⁷ Text in Portuguese: “do cronotopo do universo representado no romance, dos acontecimentos representados”, mas que “ainda há o cronotopo representador do autor [...], e o cronotopo do *ouvinte* ou *leitor*, os cronotopos dos acontecimentos da representação e da audição-leitura.”

⁸ Text in Portuguese: “É necessário distinguir o tempo arquitetônico (o cronotopo) e o tempo composicional da narração ou da representação.”

⁹ Text in Portuguese: “é aí que a antiga arquitetônica dá lugar a essa categoria como um amalgama de ‘espaço-tempo’.”

[Rabelaisian] in the title of Chapter 8. In the text, we can also note the stabilization of some terms that, more than mere words, operate as key concepts in Bakhtin's thought. This is the case of the replacement of 'autor em pessoa' [author in person] [p.276 – in the previous version (BAKTIN, 2002)] by 'autor pessoa' [author-person] (p.111 – in the most recent translation).

In terms of footnotes, the previous translation has 88 - between author's, translator's and editor's notes and other unspecified footnotes. For an example of the latter, see the credits to the first footnote in both translations [p.211 – in the previous version (BAKTIN, 2002, p.11 – in the most recent edition), both referring to a lecture given by Alexei Ukhtomsky on the *chronotope* in biology and on issues of aesthetics. In the earlier version, there is no indication regarding the author of the note as there is, for example, in footnote 61 of the same edition (BAKTIN, 2002, p.316). In the new translation, it is now possible to identify the footnote as a note from the author, which is complemented by an enlightening translator's note about the speaker. At the same time, the option to unify the numbering of footnotes throughout the volume, where it was previously divided chapters, makes it easier to read and, if necessary, come back to them. Thus, although the main text of this translation presents fewer footnotes, it is worth highlighting the improved organization of all 75 of them.

Besides the first note already mentioned (shared between author and translator), there are fourteen other notes from the author and sixty notes from the translator. The translator's footnotes go beyond explanations about the use of one word or another, or about the translation used as a source, offering excellent insights that contextualize and bring further detail to various aspects of the work.

The attention to detail demonstrated by the translator, who is evidently knowledgeable about Bakhtinian theory, far from leading to mere precious indulgences, aims to ensure that the translated text is suited to the dialogical perspective. In this sense, an important gain in the new translation concerns the passages from other authors cited by Bakhtin over the course of the book, especially those who compose his analysis.¹⁰ For starters, the text makes occasional adaptations to the Portuguese translations of the works

¹⁰ It is worth pointing out that this preference for using direct translations from the original language into Portuguese for passages cited by Bakhtin extends beyond the works being analysed, as can be seen with the lines from Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, which are taken from a direct translation of the German into Portuguese.

it consults – this is the case, for example, in footnote 33 (p.125) which refers to *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais, as well as in footnote 13 (p.56), referring to Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*. In the note referring to Apuleius, the translator explains that such modifications are intended to accommodate the analysis proposed by Bakhtin, fitting and adapting the quoted text to the purposes of the Russian author, thereby avoiding deviation from the meaning he originally intended.

As regards the analysis of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, those who have read *Questões de literatura e de estética: a teoria do romance* [*Questions of Literature and Aesthetics: Theory of the Novel*] should note that in *Teoria do romance II: As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Theory of the Novel II: The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*], the excerpts from the work of Rabelais are no longer in French, but in Portuguese, which makes the text more accessible to the Brazilian public, especially to those who do not speak French. Moreover, the differences in relation to citations open a door for dialogue between the passages cited, which is to say, between those preserved in the original and those collected by Paulo Bezerra in the version translated directly from French into Portuguese.¹¹

In the preface of the revised Brazilian edition of *Problemas da Poética de Dostoiévski* [*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*], another important work by Bakhtin also translated by Paulo Bezerra, the translator discusses the implications for the understanding of Bakhtin's thought stemming from Dostoevsky's excerpts taken from indirect Russian translations. Indeed, these indirect translations have given rise to misunderstandings and inaccuracies, a fact which justifies the need to replace them at the time of revision. Paulo Bezerra also states in this same preface that direct translation allows us “to recreate the spirit of the work in the closest possible language to the original,” while at the same time providing “a much broader and deeper understanding of the peculiarities of Bakhtinian theory” (BEZERRA, 2010, p.VI)¹². Thus, the rigorous work undertaken by the translator guarantees the reader a better understanding of

¹¹ Differences between the cited passages which are not related to the language in which they are written can also be considered. For example, in contrast to the version coordinated by Aurora Fornoni Bernardini, Paulo Bezerra's translation includes a passage which expands the citation about the beating given by the monk Jean (*frei Jean* in the previous version).

¹² Text in Portuguese: “recriar o espírito da obra na linguagem mais próxima possível do original”, ao mesmo tempo que possibilita “uma compreensão muitíssimo mais ampla e profunda das peculiaridades da teoria bakhtiniana.”

Bakhtinian theory with his version of *Teoria do romance II: As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Theory of the Novel II: The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*].

At the end of the volume, a valuable afterword entitled *Uma teoria antropológica da literatura* [An Anthropological Theory of Literature] has also been added, offering the reader 15 pages in which Paulo Bezerra provides a framework for the preceding text. In and of itself, the title of the afterword instigates the reader to think about the text he has just read (or intends to read, in cases where the reader flips through the pages of the volume before plunging into the text).

Bezerra, in his discussion, reminds us of Einstein and Kant's influences on the concept of the Bakhtinian *chronotope*, but also gives due credit to the Russian biologist Alexei Ukhtomsky – the speaker mentioned by Bakhtin himself in his first footnote (p.11)¹³ – through the approximation of the notion of the chronotope to questions of aesthetics. In the first part entitled *A construção de um conceito* [The Construction of a Concept], the translator provides us with the translated quote from a transcribed passage from the biologist's lecture and points out the differences between the thoughts developed by Bakhtin and Ukhtomsky.

In this first section, Paulo Bezerra also contextualizes the idea of the *chronotope* within the whole of the Bakhtinian oeuvre, both before and after those reflections which led to the construction of the concept, such as the relation between the notions of the *chronotope* and *architectonic*, while the second part of the afterword, *Lapidando o conceito: Observações finais* [Polishing the Concept: Concluding Remarks], discusses the tenth chapter of the work. In the aforementioned third part of this postface, *A poética histórica* [The Historical Poetics], the author deals with the changes of time in a certain space, picking up on another valuable notion for Bakhtin – that of *great time* – through which we can reflect on “the evolution, the changes and alternations of the different chronotopes in the light of the new historical and cultural realities that alternate in the different literary plots” (p.262),¹⁴ without such passages being reduced to a question of mere sequentiality, linearity or progressivism.

The fourth and last section, entitled *O cronotopo além da literatura* [The Chronotope beyond Literature], emphasizes the different areas that today mobilize the

¹³ Bakhtin (1981, p.84). For reference, see footnote 3.

¹⁴ Text in Portuguese: “a evolução, as mudanças e alternâncias dos diversos cronotopos à luz das novas realidades históricas e culturais que se alternam nos diferentes enredos literários.”

Bakhtinian concept of the *chronotope* in Russia, demonstrating the richness of the concept. In the book's flaps, Samuel Titan Junior, professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the Universidade de São Paulo – USP [University of Sao Paulo], not only provides us with a beautiful fluvial metaphor about the work, but also reiterates the idea that the reader is being presented with “an absolutely unique book, which exceeds any predefined category.”¹⁵

Besides being a translator, Paulo Bezerra is a teacher, researcher and critic. During his career he was a professor at the University of São Paulo, the State University of Rio de Janeiro and the Federal Fluminense University, the institution where he retired and where he still teaches literary theory. His extensive translation work comprises more than 40 works in different fields of the humanities, including reputable translations of titles such as *Crime e Castigo* [*Crime and Punishment*] and *Irmãos Karamázov* [*The Brothers Karamazov*], also published by Editora 34.

Among Bakhtin's works, he is responsible for to the Brazilian editions of *Problemas da Poética de Dostoiévski* [*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*] and *Teoria do romance I: a estilística* [*Theory of the Novel I: Stylistics*] mentioned above, as well as *Estética da criação verbal* [*Aesthetics of Verbal Creation*], *Os gêneros do discurso* [*The Problem of Speech Genres*] and *Notas sobre literatura, cultura e ciências humanas* [*Notes on Literature, Culture and the Humanities*]. He has also translated *O freudismo: um esboço crítico* [*Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*], published in Brazil under Bakhtin's name, but the authorship of which is attributed to Voloshinov. Thus, the reader of *Teoria do romance II: As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Theory of the Novel II: The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*] is presented with a work whose translator is not only a professor of literary theory with a thorough knowledge of Russian culture and language, but also a researcher committed to Bakhtinian theory.

Since 2013, Editora 34 – which continues to play a key role in the editorial field and has made a considerable contribution to Bakhtinian studies – has already published five other works written by the Circle, demonstrating the same rigor as with the volume in question. The translations are always up to date with the most current international discussions, making each new work a necessary reference. In addition, many authors mobilized by Bakhtin, including in their studies about the chronotope, are known or better

¹⁵ Text in Portuguese: “um livro absolutamente singular, que ultrapassa qualquer categoria predefinida.”

known to the Brazilian public thanks to the *Coleção Leste* [Eastern Collection]. From the same publisher, the collection brings together works from Russian writers such as Dostoevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Turgenev and Chekhov, directly translated into Portuguese by renowned translators like Paulo Bezerra, but also Boris Schnaiderman.

When it comes to the Circle, and especially to the volume in which Bakhtin dedicates himself to the concept of the *chronotope*, we cannot ignore all the real space-times involved in the years and places that separate the original act of writing from the different versions and publications in the former Soviet Union and, most recently, in Russia. Nor should we disregard the spatiotemporal questions raised by the two Brazilian translations, which differ in the texts they use as sources and in their translation choices, as well as in other aspects. We must therefore consider (at the very least) their different contexts of production and reception, as well as the years, kilometres, limitations, possibilities, historical processes and cultures that separate each of the different texts.

Besides all of these aspects, we must try not to lose sight of the many changes of these spaces over the course of time, as well as everything that has been discovered and produced about Bakhtin and the Circle in the last few decades – when it comes to Brazilian translations, we are talking about an interval of exactly thirty years between the version coordinated by Aurora Fornoni Bernardini and that of Paulo Bezerra. After all, as Bakhtin explains, “we are presented with a text occupying a certain specific place in space; that is, it is localized; our creation of it, our acquaintance with it occurs through time” (1981, p.252)¹⁶, because it is open, facing the outside. Therefore, “[...] this material of the work is not dead, it is speaking, signifying (it involves signs); we not only see and perceive it but in it we can always hear voices” (1981, p.252).¹⁷

In this sense, the publication of *Teoria do romance II: As formas do tempo e do cronotopo* [*Theory of the Novel II: The Forms of Time and of the Chronotope*] is undoubtedly an invaluable event in this dialogue elevated to great time. Moreover, we believe that many contributions can be made through the study of the divergences and intersections between these two versions, which, if well conducted, could dialogically enrich the field of Bakhtinian studies, especially if the relationship between the different

¹⁶ For reference, see footnote 3.

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 3.

translations available to the Brazilian public is examined as a metaphorical encounter and from different points of view.

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