

Dialogism in Portuguese Contemporary Novel / *Dialogismo no romance português contemporâneo*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect upon the dialogic constitution of the contemporary Portuguese novel using as basis for the analysis Mikhail Bakhtin's contributions on this literary genre. Bakhtin emphasizes, in his studies, the double-voiced discourse of varied orientation, the complex interactions between/among different points of view in one utterance that could elevate the dialogism in the novel to a higher degree. The contemporary novel diversifies the forms of transmission of the discourse of the other, shuffling the characters' voices, demanding redoubled attention on the part of the reader to the construction of meaning. To exemplify this tendency, the novel *Raised from the ground* (2012), by José Saramago, an acclaimed contemporary Portuguese writer, has been used.

KEYWORDS: Dialogism; Double-voiced discourse of varied orientation; Portuguese contemporary novel; José Saramago

RESUMO

*Objetivamos, neste artigo, refletir sobre a constituição dialógica do romance contemporâneo português, retomando, para isso, as contribuições de M. Bakhtin sobre esse gênero literário. Bakhtin enfatiza, nos seus estudos, o discurso bivocal de orientação vária, as interações complexas entre diferentes pontos de vista num mesmo enunciado, que elevariam a um mais alto grau o dialogismo do romance. O romance atual diversifica as formas de transmissão do discurso de outrem, embaralhando as vozes das personagens e exigindo atenção redobrada do leitor para a instituição do sentido. Exemplificamos essa tendência por meio da análise do romance *Levantado do chão* (1980), do consagrado autor português José Saramago.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Dialogismo; Discurso bivocal de orientação vária; Romance português contemporâneo; José Saramago

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Talking is like eating cherries from a bowl, you take hold of one word and others immediately follow, or perhaps they're like ticks, which are equally hard to disentangle if they're attached one to the other, because words never come singly, even the word loneliness needs the person who's feeling lonely, which is just as well, I suppose.

José Saramago

Introduction

Our study of contemporary Portuguese novel aims to consider what Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, p.203) calls “of paramount importance for the study of the artistic discourse”. “What kind of discourse dominates during a given epoch”? What “forms exist for the refraction of discourse” and “what serves as the medium of refraction” in the contemporary novel? After reading literary works produced in Portugal since the 1950s, by authors such as Augusto Abelaira (1926-2003), José Saramago (1922-2010), Almeida Faria (1943), Lobo Antunes (1942), Lídia Jorge (1946) and valter hugo mãe (1971, name written on purpose with lower case letters by the writer himself), we find a prose deeply wrapped in multiple voices, which abolishes the clear and stable limits between the points of view and explores with intensity the internal dialogism of the words.

Characterized already in the decade of 1980s by Maria Alzira Seixo as a “composite mark of the crossing of discourses of varied provenience and different registers”¹ (1984, p.31), the current Portuguese novel presents, mainly, reports given by two or more narrators, constant and unpredictable changes of perspective, a complex mixture of diverse space-time planes, dubitative style, a text full of ambiguities and self-irony. After reading some contemporary Portuguese novels, we do propose the thesis that what predominates in this production is the discourse oriented to the discourse of the other, highly responding to the Bakhtinian concept of the novel as a “phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” (1981, p.261). To elucidate this hypothesis, we will analyze, in the discursive materiality of the novel *Raised from the ground* (first published in 1979), by José Saramago, the relations established between the word that reports and the reported word.

¹ “Marca compósita do cruzamento de discursos de diversas proveniências e de diversos registros”.

The meeting of the own word with the word of another

According to Bakhtin, essentially dialogic, the discourse in the novel

is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien valued judgements and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects yet with a third group; and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers (1981, p.276).

As Cristóvão Tezza points out, it is from the understanding of the language in the novel, “in permanent exchange with live and unfinished language of daily life, in the vein of a long process of decentralization of discourse”² (2005, p.216), that the appreciation of the novel in Bakhtin surfaces. Such valuation has contributed significantly to the importance of the novel as a genre amongst the specialists in literature in the twentieth century.

For Bakhtin, the novel maintains an effective connection with life, picturing its linguistic diversity and establishing itself as “an intentional and conscious hybrid of languages” (1981, p.366), a privileged form of representation of social heteroglossia. He points out that “the dialogized image can occur in all the poetic genres, but such an image can fully unfold, achieve full complexity and depth and at the same time artistic closure, only under the conditions present in the genre of the novel” (1981, p.278).

In the novel, “each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.293). Thus,

authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters, are merely those fundamental compositional units with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel. Each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized) (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.263).

² “em permanente troca com a linguagem viva e inacabada da vida cotidiana, no veio de um prolongado processo de descentralização da palavra”.

To approach dialogism in the novel, Bakhtin reminds us that “of all words uttered in everyday life, no less than half belong to someone else” and the procedures of transmission of the words of the others may comprise from “direct verbatim quotation” to the “deliberately parodic distortion”, the “slander” (1981, p.339). It is easy to perceive, however, that Bakhtin gives little attention to the direct transmission of the words of the other, giving importance instead to the double-voiced discourse, the “complex interactions” among different voices and intentions. When Bakhtin presents the categories of prose discourses, he notes: “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” (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.185).

Regarding the evolution of the European novel, Bakhtin recognizes two stylistic lines. In the First Stylistic Line, there predominates one language and one style, and the “heteroglossia remains *outside* the novel, although it does nevertheless have its effect on the novel as a dialogizing background in which the language and world of the novel is polemically and forensically implicated”. In the Second Line, to which belongs the greatest representatives of the novel as a genre, heteroglossia *into* a novel’s composition” is incorporated (1981, p.375). Even recognizing the heteroglot nature of the First Stylistic Line, Bakhtin takes little time to explain it, maybe, as he points out, because it is a hard task to recover “the background of heteroglot words and meanings” (p.374) in a monologic and uniform structure. His main task is to show the tension of voices and styles introduced in the novel.

When analyzing the transmission and framing of the word of the other, Bakhtin gives priorities to the literary double-voiced representation, in other words, the hybrid processes when “two potential utterances are fused, two responses are, as it were, harnessed in a potential dialogue” (1981, p.361). The author defines processes as the stylization, the parody, the skaz, the polemics, the replica, in which the dialogic relations, in a more or less explicit way, *evidence themselves* in the texture of the novel’s discourse.

Fiorin (2005), trying to approximate the Bakhtinian theory to the heterogeneity principle of the analysis of the discourse of French lineage, more specifically the contributions of Authier-Revuz (1990), tells us that “the heterogeneity may be

constituent or shown. The first does not show itself in the tissue of the discourse; the second is the inscription of the other in the discursive chain, altering its apparent unity”³ (*apud* FIORIN, 2005, p.220). Heterogeneity may be shown and marked, when circumscribed, by linguistic marks, (as quotation marks, dashes, direct speech, indirect speech) and shown and not-marked, when the other is inscribed in the discourse, but his presence is not explicitly marked (as an example, indirect free discourse, simulation) (FIORIN, 2005, p.220).

To Fiorin, Bakhtin addressed preferably the analysis of the discourses in which the dialogic relations are shown in the utterance (shown heterogeneity) (FIORIN, 2005, p.220). We could say that the Russian author dedicated his studies even more to the “shown and unmarked heterogeneity”, the one that would be, according to Authier-Revuz, half way to constituent and marked heterogeneity.

In fact, most of the studies of the author are centered on the analysis of the “phenomenon of the internal dialogicity of the word”⁴, in the sense of an internal dialogue within the same enunciation, qualitatively different from the conventional dramatic dialogue (PONZIO, 2010, p.12-13). In Charles Dickens’ novel, for example, we know that shown heterogeneity is predominant. It is recurring in it the literal and explicit transmission of the characters’ voices. But it is to the non-explicit marked heterogeneity that Bakhtin dedicates his attention when analyzing *Little Dorrit*. He considers important to demonstrate the parodic interposition of the voices, the “typical double-accented, double-styled, hybrid construction” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.304). It is important to elucidate them, as the dialogue that occurs in the hybrid utterances only may be plentifully fulfilled in the reader’s mind, a reader who is therefore called to participate in the interaction established in the novel. Namely, hybrid forms demand from the reader to position himself “halfway”, to deduce, in the voices non-explicitly marked, the constituent heterogeneity of the language that may project them in the developed dialogue. As a consequence, the dramatic potential of the discourse in the novel is enhanced, qualifying the tension of points of view.

As Bakhtin himself allows us to understand from his reading of the modern novel, the Second Stylistic Line becomes predominant and the dialogism is more

³ “A heterogeneidade pode ser constitutiva ou mostrada. A primeira é aquela que não se mostra no fio do discurso; a segunda é a inscrição do outro na cadeia discursiva, alterando sua aparente unicidade”.

⁴ “fenômeno da dialogicidade interna à palavra”.

commonly used in the discourse of the modern European novel, related to historical conditions that allowed us to understand and clarify its linguistic diversity (1981, p.415). An important researcher of the contemporary novel, Linda Hutcheon (1988, 2000) emphasizes its profound dialogism, based mainly on the heterogeneity of forms and parodic revision of traditional discourses. The novel demonstrates, according to her, a theoretical consciousness of History as a discursive creation, which implies in questioning the bases of our western ways of thinking (positivism, empiricism, rationalism, etc.) and in recognizing the relativity, the provisionality and the contingency of truths traditionally sustained. To obtain that, such a prose uses, in a concentrated way, some formal marks as the inclusion of different genres, the radical transgression of borders and frontiers irreconcilable at first, the investment in the subversive potential of irony, parody and humor, the use of a variable perspective that blurs space-time planes, the radical rupture with the realist narrative logic. All these factors contribute to emphasize the hybrid, plural and contradictory nature of the existential, historic and social reality.

Voices raised from the ground

After studying the Portuguese novel of the last decades, we perceive how it explores a discourse “entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents” that interlace and intertwine in complex interactions (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.86), and demands an active answer on the part of the reader, which may refute or reinforce the orientation of meaning. Its predominant heterogeneity links and dissolves the voice of the other in the voice of the self, making it difficult to untie the knots of these tangles. The discursive formatation itself, many times without dashes and quotation marks, suggests an intricate composition of voices, which is hard to disentangle. The following passage, from the novel *Os cus de Judas* (English translation: *The land at the end of the world*), by Lobo Antunes, offers a sample of what we could deem as one of the distinctive marks of the novel in the last decades:

I am tired of this shit for God's sake give me a disease, Desert cried the papers of the MLA [Angola's Liberation Movement], Desert Desert Desert Desert DESERT, the broadcaster at Zâmbia's radio asked Portuguese Soldier why do you fight against your brothers but it was against ourselves that we fought, against ourselves our rifles pointed, I love to show you my entire body and I had already forgotten your body of open legs in the bedroom in the attic where I lived for a month, I forgot the smell the taste the elasticity of your skin...⁵ (ANTUNES, 2003, p.101-102)

In this fragment, from a long paragraph that goes through eight pages configured this way, the changes in the voices become subtle and sometimes almost imperceptible; the order and hierarchy between them are not imperative anymore, as if the narrator's thinking flow had burst continuously, without longer pauses and definitive demarcations, amalgamating discursive appeals of different natures. The result is a tense interpolation of voices and ideologies, which suggests the psychological torment of the Portuguese soldier fighting in Angola. In order to make sense what is potentially in dialogue, the reader may put himself amongst the various voices, to hear each one in its space-time context, to understand each intonation and to feel each intention, actively participating in the proposed dramatic game.

José Saramago is one of the authors in Portuguese literature that consecrated this entangled format of the voices, also using, in large measure, resources like carnivalization and parody. These resources suit Saramago to better unveil the discursive formations that orient the process of construction of Portuguese national identity and, at the same time, to incite the critique, the polemic and the revolt in face of hegemonic discourses imposed violently and authoritharily, responsible for the silencing of minority voices and ideologies.

José Saramago says he has found his style in the process of elaboration of *Raised from the ground*: "I think I found myself in a certain moment of my life and probably it was in *Raised from the ground*, which is a book written that way only

⁵ "Estou farto desta merda pelo amor de Deus arranje-me uma doença qualquer, Deserta gritavam os papeis do MPLA [Movimento pela Libertação de Angola], Deserta Deserta Deserta Deserta Deserta DESERTA, a locutora da rádio da Zâmbia perguntava Soldado português porque lutas contra os teus irmãos mas era contra nós próprios que lutávamos, contra nós que as nossas espingardas se apontavam, I love to show you my entire body e eu já me tinha de novo esquecido do teu corpo de coxas afastadas no quarto do sótão onde durante um mês vivi, esquecido do cheiro do sabor da elasticidade suave da tua pele..."

because I had been at Alentejo and there I listened to people that told me stories”⁶ (REIS, 1998, p.42). The novel deals with the social fights of rural workers from the region of Alentejo in Portugal, in search of useful work and possession of the land. The story covers seventy-five years until some days after April 25, 1974, date of the revolution that ended Salazar’s dictatorship. More specifically, the novel highlights the popular voices – raised from the ground – that defied the dictatorial regime and the powers that represented it, such as the National Guard, the Church and landowners, workers who were fighting for their rights, making demands such as the reduction of working hours to eight hours daily. The protagonists of this revolt are the Mau-Tempo family, representative of all these workers, Portuguese or not – that fought, in the course of history, for their rights defying the landowners’ powers, landowners who can be considered as a sign in the novel, a sign that stands for the oppressive power of capital over the socially excluded.

The following passage gives us a first notion how the story is told and how characters’ voices are used (identified between brackets):

And so no one else dares say a word and *they* arrive in Monte Lavre in silence, go up the ramp to the guards’ post [voice and perspective of the narrator], because all of *them* had been arrested by then, all twenty-two of them, so someone had obviously betrayed *us*. *They put them* [*us* in the original: voice and perspective of the workers] in an enclosure in the yard at the back, piled in, with nowhere to sit but the ground, although what does that matter, *they’re* [perspective of the guards over the prisoners] use to it, *weeds can survive the hardest of frosts*, [popular saying] they have skin as thick as donkey hide, which is just as well, because that way *they* get fewer infections, if it was us, frail city dwellers, we wouldn’t stand a chance (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 16, our emphasis).

The discourse of the narrator sometimes is contaminated by the voice and perspective of the group of rural workers, caught by the Guard, and sometimes by police authorities’ perspective. His position is that of a person who listens to the voices that cross the discursive universe of Portuguese society, whose conflicts will lead to a slow transformation of both mentality and reality of Portuguese society. Or, in Bakhtin’s words, regarding Saramago, “the world is full of the words of the other, and

⁶ “Eu acho que me encontrei num certo momento da vida e provavelmente encontrei-me n’O *Levantado do chão*, que é um livro que foi escrito daquela maneira pelo facto de eu ter estado no Alentejo e de ter ouvido contar histórias”.

he guides himself through them having a sensible ear to perceive its specific particularities”⁷ (2010, p.231). Within this discourse frame, punctuation signals as the period and question mark are erased, and it is the reader’s task to perceive the displacement of intonation and the discontinuity of voices. Saramago himself explains how this way to narrate the story was arrived at when he was working on *Raised from the ground*:

I had this story to tell, the story of these people, three generations of a family of peasants from Alentejo, with their shortcomings: hunger, unemployment, latifundium, politics, the church, everything. But I felt something was missing, it was missing the way to tell this... So, what happened? Around pages 24, 25, I was doing well but I didn’t like it. And, without perceiving it, without even trying to think about it, I started to write the way all of my readers know I do today, without punctuation. Without this paraphernalia, all the signs we keep on using... So, I think this happened because without noticing it, it was as if in the moment of writing, I suddenly was in their place, but now narrating to them what they had told me before. I was giving them back by the same process, by *orality*, what I had received from them before⁸ (COSTA, 1998, p.22-23, our emphasis).

According to Saramago, the position of his narrator is that who puts himself in the place of the other, of somebody who admits that most of the words that tell the stories come from the other. As he shares the responsibility of the narrative, he seems to attest he could not tell the story alone, in his own words, a story built by so many and heterogenic voices. This is different from the traditional scenic way to present the discourse of the character, in which he usually keeps himself isolated like the direct discourse of only one voice, hierarchically subjugated to the omnipotent discourse of the narrator. It is also different from the indirect traditional way to narrate, in which the narrator tells, in his own terms, what the characters do or say. As we can observe in the

⁷ “o mundo está repleto das palavras do outro, ele se orienta entre elas e tem um ouvido sensível para lhes perceber as particularidades específicas”.

⁸ “Eu tinha uma história para contar, a história dessa gente, de três gerações de uma família de camponeses do Alentejo, com tudo: fome, o desemprego, o latifúndio, a política, a igreja, tudo. Mas me faltava alguma coisa, me faltava como contar isso... Então, o que aconteceu? Na altura da página 24, 25, estava indo bem e por isso eu não estava gostando. E sem perceber, sem parar para pensar, comecei a escrever como todos os meus leitores hoje sabem que eu escrevo, sem pontuação. Sem nenhuma, sem essa parafernália de todos os sinais, de todos os sinais que vamos pondo aí... Então, eu acho que isso aconteceu porque, sem que eu percebesse, é como se, na hora de escrever, eu subitamente me encontrasse no lugar deles, só que agora narrando a eles o que eles me haviam narrado. Eu estava devolvendo pelo mesmo processo, pela *oralidade*, o que, pela oralidade, eu havia recebido deles.”

following passage, the discourse of the character does not sound as a direct discourse of one single voice; at the same time, the discourse of the narrator does not sound as a monologic one, keeping away from that indivisible tonality that dominates all the voices introduced in the novel:

The days of acceptance and resignation are coming to an end. A voice is travelling the roads of the latifundium, it goes into towns and villages, it talks on the hillsides and in cork plantations, a voice that consists of two essential words and many others that serve to explain those two words, eight hours, this may not appear to mean very much, but if *we say* eight hours of work, then the meaning becomes clearer, there might be those who protest at this scandalous idea, what is it these *workers* want, if *they* sleep eight hours and work other eight, what will *they* do with the remaining eight hours, it's an invitation to idleness, they clearly don't want to work, these are modern ideas, it's all the fault of the war, customs have changed out of all recognition, first *they* stole India from *us*, now they want to take Africa away (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 30, our emphasis).

The narrator's utterance intercrosses the voices of the rural workers - "but if *we say* eight hours of work, then the meaning becomes clearer", and the landowners' judgement on their behavior - "what is it these workers want, if they sleep eight hours and work other eight, what will *they* do with the remaining eight hours, it's an invitation to idleness...". The narrator, however, does not simply juxtapose in his utterance voices socially determined, but also gives a new semantic orientation to the landowners' appreciation regarding the rights of the working class. The snobbish and arrogant tone that characterizes the appreciation is stressed in the framing the narrator gives it allowing the reader to perceive the narrator's discordance and hostility when faced with such preposterous judgement.

Effectively, the role of the narrator does not reduce itself to listening and reproducing the voices of this extensive (and tense) discursive web. Surreptitiously, appealing to the connivance of the reader, he assumes the function of ironizing the hegemonic voices, giving the other's statement a new stress or meaning.

The nation summons its sons, can you hear the voice of the nation calling [...] Your name is António Mau-Tempo, and ever since you came into this world, I have been waiting for you, my son, for I am, you see, a devoted mother, and you must forgive me if, during all these years, I haven't paid you much attention, but there are so many of you,

and I can't possibly keep my eye on everyone, I've been preparing my officers who will be in charge of you, one can't live without officers, how else would you learn to march, one two left right, right turn, halt [...] and yet they tell me you can't read, I'm astonished, didn't I set up primary schools in all the strategic places, not secondary schools, of course, because you wouldn't need them for the kind of life you lead, and yet you come and tell me that you can't read or write or do arithmetic, well, you're putting me to a lot of trouble, António Mau-Tempo, you're going to have to learn while you're in the army (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 19).

In this passage, the narrator simulates the characteristic speech of the authoritarian Portuguese nation, travesty with ironic colors the expected discourse of a "mother-country" interested in the improvement of life conditions and in the guarantees of the rights of its citizens; at the same time and in opposition, there is a discourse that reveals itself as repressive and demagogic. This latent mocking censorship is a significant part of the Saramaguian novels and it is responsible for questioning the social and historic dominant discourses in Portuguese political society, discourses that for a long period were the pillars of its cultural politics and the guiding principles of its conduct. In the following passage, the derisive narrative of a Salazar's speech unlegitimizes the serious intention of the authorized discourse, in a movement of destabilization, subversion and rupture of the official discourse.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's funny, so in the bullring in Evora, I'm a gentleman, am I, I don't remember being a gentleman anywhere else, not even by my own choice, what's the saying, Viva Portugal, I can't hear him, we are gathered here today, united by the same patriotic ideal, in order to tell our government that we are pledged to continue the great Lusitanian adventure and we promise to follow in the footsteps of those ancestors who gave the world whole new worlds and spread both faith and empire, and when the trumpet sounds, we will come together, as one man, around Salazar, the genius who has dedicated his life, here there are shouts of salazar, salazar, salazar [...] ha, ha, ha, Where do I go to take a piss, Requinta, that's just a joke, no one here would t say such a thing at a moment of such gravity, when the nation, which never has to take a piss, is being evoked by that well-dressed gentleman on the platform (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 11).

To the pronouncement of an authority of the Salazarist government, the narrator interpolates mocking expressions ("that's funny, so in the bullring in Evora, I'm a gentleman"; "that's just a joke, no one here would there say such a thing at a moment of

such gravity, when the nation, which never has to take a piss, is being evoked by that well-dressed gentleman on the platform”). The plaza of Evora with its solemn rally is compared to a bulls’ plaza, being transformed into a carnivalesque public arena where the serious intention of high reasoning (“Ladies and gentlemen...”) is mixed with the physiological needs of the corporal (“Where do I go to take a piss, Requinta”), in which the seriousness of power is corrupted by Alentejan’s ironic expression. The novel parodies here the typical ufanist way the Portuguese nation identifies itself with, still attached to the epic ideals of the past (signalized in Camões very-well known words : “they extended the faith and the empire”⁹), deconstructed by the irreverent tone and carnivalesque context.

As the few cited fragments allow us to perceive, the Saramaguian novel probes and deconstructs the ideals that sustained the Salazarist power. Concomitant with the narrator identifying the character, Father Agamedes, the colonialist ideology of the Portuguese empire is shown as corrupted, through this character’s words:

Santa Maria walking on the waters like her divine son, and now there’s news from Africa as well, about the blacks, Well, I always said we were too lenient with them, I said as much, but no one would believe me, you have to live there to know how to deal with them, they don’t like work, you see, they’re shirkers, they’ll always go to the bad, and now you see the result, we treated them too kindly, as if they were Christians, but all is not lost, we won’t lose Africa if we send in the army [...] The imperial dream soon faded, best to run away from the mess we made, the Black man is now a Portuguese citizen, long live the black man who comes bearing no weapon, but keep your eye on him nonetheless, and down with the other sort, and one day, if we happen to wake up in a good mood, we’ll declare that these overseas provinces, our former colonies, are now independent states, well, what’s in a name (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 29).

The humanist and expected Christian feelings – so many times a justification for the civilizatory Portuguese mission in Africa – crumble in a violent and discriminating discourse by Father Agamedes, which expresses the current judgements of that age, as the notion that the “black” was “lazy¹⁰”, and other typical expressions of Salazarist

⁹ “dilataram a fé e o império”.

¹⁰ In the document *Da governação de Angola* [About the governation of Angola], the Ultramarine Minister Armindo Monteiro says “the Portuguese should teach the black people to work, giving them the means and forcing them to do it. Laziness is not a right of the indigenus”. Translated from the

propaganda which tried to silence the colonialist repression and sustain the idea of indivisibility and integrity of the national territory (with the slogan “the black is a Portuguese citizen” and the title of “ultramarine provinces”¹¹ given to African colonies). This kind of valuation was used by the Portuguese government to reiterate the thesis that the Lusitanian nation used to practice a different system of colonization when compared to other European countries, coexisting harmonically with differences and miscegenating easily. The discourse of the narrator does not reproduce the words of the priest in their integrity and authenticity, but transfigures them instead, pointing out head and tails, so to speak, of Father Agamedes’s discourse, unmasking his vision of the world.

This unsacred tone reaches various hegemonic discourses allied with the Salazarist government and responsible for its upholding. The following passage mocks the connivance of Portuguese law agents when confronting political crimes, like torture.

Speak up, Dr Romano, doctor of medicine, you who have sworn the Hippocratic oath with its various modern revisions to form and sense, speak up, Dr Romano, here beneath the bright sun, is it really true that this man hanged himself. The doctor raises his right hand, looks at us with candid, innocent eyes, he’s a much respected man in the town, a regular churchgoer and punctilious in carrying out his social duties, and having shown us what a pure soul he is, he says, If someone has a wire wound twice around his own neck, with the other end tied to a nail above his head, and if the wire is pulled taut enough even by only the partial weight of the body, then there is no doubt that, technically speaking, the man has hanged himself, and having said this, he lowered his hand and went about his business, Not so fast, Dr Romano, doctor of medicine, it’s not time for supper yet, if you still have any appetite after what you’ve just seen, I envy you your strong stomach, tell me, didn’t you see the man’s body, didn’t you see the

Portuguese: “português devia ensinar o negro a trabalhar, dando-lhe os meios e obrigando-a a tanto. A preguiça não entra nos direitos dos indígenas” (Lisboa, 1931 apud ROSAS, 1995, p.4).

¹¹ The constitutional revision of 1951, “answering to decolonization pressures that post-war was provoking will end formally with the ‘empire’ and the ‘colonies’ in favour of the ‘ultramarine’ and the ‘ultramarine provinces’, revogating the Constitutional Act of 1930 [...] In reality, nothing fundamental changes in the ‘ultramarine’ in terms of what was the ideologic legitimation of the ‘Empire’, as the political solution and administrative and assimilative integration that at that time was being reinforced as a colonial strategy of the regime, reaffirms the ideological, mythical and organic traces of the ‘Portuguese whole’”. Translated from the Portuguese: “respondendo às pressões descolonizadoras que o pós-guerra despertava, acabará formalmente com o ‘império’ e ‘as colônias’ em favor do ‘ultramar’ e das ‘províncias ultramarinas’, revogando o Acto Colonial de 1930 [...] Na realidade, não só nada de fundamental se altera no ‘ultramar’ em termos do que era legitimação ideológica do ‘Império’, como a solução política e administrativamente integracionista e assimiladora que então se reforça como estratégia colonial do regime, reafirma os traços ideológicos, míticos e orgânicos do ‘todo português’” (ROSAS, 1995, p.30).

welts, the bruises, the battered genitals, the blood, No, I didn't, they told me the prisoner had hanged himself and he had, there was nothing else to see, You're a liar, Dr Romano, medical practitioner, how and why and when did you acquire the ugly habit of lying, No, I'm not a liar, it's just that I can't tell the truth, Why, Because I'm afraid, Go in peace, Dr Pilate (SARAMAGO, 2012, chapter 17).

The derision of the narrator affects the solemn discourse and the serious attitude of the authority, undermining the legitimacy of its image and allowing us to perceive other aspects of facts and intentions. Intensely ferine, the criticism does not impose itself in a direct mode, but from a stance of utilization and, at the same time, ironic detraction of the various social voices involved – the technical discourse of the specialist, the solemn discourse of the law agent, the flattering voice of the people, the indulgent discourse of the Church – which, each in its own way, contributed to the constitution of a false version of history. Thus, with the participation of the reader – actor and interpreter of this tense dramatization – voices and social positions are raised promoting constant strife and unmasking the multiple ideological aspects involved in the construction of the historical event.

Conclusion

“The forms of reception and transmission of the word of the other and, therefore, the functioning of the syntax of the enunciation are easily evidenced by the literary word, given its specific disposition to the listening to and exposition of the word of the other”¹² (PONZIO, 2010, p.32). Analyzing the modern novel, we perceive syntax complications in the enunciation that ask for careful reading on the part of language researchers.

This has become evident in the novels of that group of authors we have studied more carefully (and this may be applied to other contemporary authors as well): that there is a reduction of the linear style of transmission of the word of the other, as it used to happen in traditional scenic expositions. The present tendencies point out that the context of the utterance tries to undo the compact and closed structure of the word of the

¹² “As formas da recepção e da transmissão da palavra outra e, portanto, o funcionamento da sintaxe da enunciação, são mais evidenciados pela palavra literária, dada a sua disposição específica para a escuta e a exposição da palavra outra”.

other, decomposing and erasing its limits. As we have observed in the analysis of *Raised from the ground*, it happens specially by means of the non-systematic introduction of a character's direct discourse in the narrator's discourse; the attenuation of the frontiers among the direct, indirect and free indirect discourses, and making use of dynamic and unpredictable relations amongst them; the detraction of meaning of the other's word through irony and parody. The result is an intense revitalization of the discourse of the other.

Naturally, these characteristics of the enunciation in the novel are related to the general context of crisis in contemporary dominating ideologies, with the tendency to delegitimize imposed truths and overturn traditionally accepted truths, based on race, ethnicity, class, and genre. Specifically in Portugal, such a crisis was established after the period of *Revolução dos cravos*, when literature assumed the role of rethinking the country's identity. In order to attain this, the first step was to integrate in the novel dimensions that could emphasize specific textual aspects of the official historical discourse, contaminating the past by the critical present thus revealing its contradictory and incomplete nature. Therefore, one can conclude that highlighting the tension of voices in a single utterance and the relativization of the word of the other expresses contemporary literary criticism, a task we aimed to attain when analyzing the contemporary Portuguese novel.

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Received March 04, 2013

Accepted June 13, 2013