

**Analysis of the Short Story “The Lady with the Dog”. Parallels in the Author-Character Relations in Mikhail Bakhtin and Anton Chekhov / *Análise do conto “A dama do cachorrinho”. Paralelos entre as relações autor-personagem em Mikhail Bakhtin e Antón Tchêkhov***

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ABSTRACT

Bakhtin's early works point to the origins of his theory. The novelty of this article consists in presenting Bakhtin's early works, more precisely the essay “The Author and the Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” written in the 1920s, and comparing it with Chekhov's views on the Author-Character-Reader relationship since we consider Chekhov a writer and a theorist of verbal creation, which we will evidence with excerpts from his letters. The article presents an analysis of Anton Chekhov's short story “The Lady with the Dog,” and the thesis that Chekhov had, right from the title, about the intention of relating his story to Alexandre Dumas' novel *The Lady of the Camellias*.

KEYWORDS: Chekhov; Bakhtin; Bakhtinian theory; Author-Character relations; Chekhov's narrative style

RESUMO

*Os primeiros trabalhos de Bakhtin apontam as origens de sua teoria. O ineditismo deste artigo, então, consiste em comparar os trabalhos iniciais de Bakhtin, mais precisamente o ensaio “O autor e a personagem na atividade estética”, escrito nos anos 1920, com as visões de Tchêkhov sobre a relação autor – personagem – leitor. Isso porque consideramos Tchêkhov não apenas escritor, mas também teórico da criação verbal, o que mostraremos com trechos das suas cartas. Assim, o artigo apresenta uma análise do conto “A dama do cachorrinho”, de Anton Tchêkhov, e a tese de que Tchêkhov teve, já a partir do título, a intenção de relacionar o seu conto com o romance A dama das camélias, de Alexandre Dumas Filho.*

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tchêkhov; Bakhtin; Teoria bakhtiniana; Relações Autor-Personagem; Narração tchekhoviana*

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## Introduction

This article is the result of the joint work of two Russian researchers at the University of São Paulo. An analysis of the short story “The Lady with the Dog,”<sup>1</sup> by Anton Chekhov, was carried out on the basis of Bakhtinian theory, well developed and influential in Brazil. There are many Brazilian scholars of Chekhov’s work, including Boris Schnaiderman, Arlete Cavaliere, Bruno B. Gomide and Elena Vássina. As Bruno Gomide (2018) writes his Presentation section of Rodrigo Alves do Nascimento’s *Tchékhov e os palcos brasileiros [Chekhov and Brazilian Stages]* (2018), Chekhov’s reception in Brazil is different from Dostoevsky’s and Tolstoy’s; after “a complex series of redefinitions of the ways in which the Russian text was perceived” for a “more productive dialogue to be established with Brazilian publishers, critics, stages and writers” (Nascimento, 2018, pp.XIII-XV).<sup>2</sup> Thus, this article aims to contribute to the development of this dialogue. We emphasize that most research on Chekhov in Brazil has as its object his dramaturgy (such as, for example, the studies by Arlete Cavaliere and Elena Vássina and *As três irmãs, de Tchekhov, por Stanislávski [Chekhov’s Three Sisters by Stanislavsky]* by Tieza Tissi, to name a few); there are still few writings on his prose, which is one of the focuses of our research. In this article, Anton Chekhov presents himself not only as a writer, but also as a theorist of verbal creation, which is demonstrated with extracts from his letters.

There is a proximity between Bakhtin’s early work and Chekhov’s ideas on the relationship between author, character and reader in the essay *Author and the Hero in the Aesthetic Activity*,<sup>3</sup> written in the 1920s. Without any pretension to analyse Bakhtin’s theory in its entirety—which may be the subject of a future article—we justify the choice of this essay by the fact that it was published at approximately the same period as Chekhov’s story, and it is the first exposition of Bakhtin’s theory on Author-Character-

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<sup>1</sup> CHEKHOV, A. P. *The Lady With The Dog*. In: *Short novels and stories*. Translated by Ivy Litvinov. Progress Publishers, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Our translation. In Portuguese: “uma série complexa de redefinições dos modos como o texto russo era percebido” para que um “diálogo mais produtivo fosse estabelecido com as editoras, os críticos, os palcos e os escritores brasileiros.”

<sup>3</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (ca. 1920-1923). In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

Reader relations. *Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity*<sup>4</sup> is considered one of Bakhtin's first philosophical treatises, which he wrote not for the general public but for himself, and already then, he discusses issues and concepts that he would develop in his theory. After the publication in Russia of Bakhtin's complete works with commentaries by V. Mákhlin, S. Botcharóv, L. Gogotichvíli and others (2003c), a special interest in his early works was observed among scholars. Let us cite the master's thesis of Irina Archínova, defended under the guidance of the eminent professor Piótr Bukhárkin, a great expert on Russian culture, from St Petersburg State University in 2016, which explains this trend: "These texts, according to the unanimous opinion of experts, contain in condensed form practically all the main ideas developed by Bakhtin throughout his long scientific life" (Archínova, 2016, p.5).<sup>5</sup>

Among the rare works that articulate Bakhtin's theory with the analysis of Chekhov's work is the book *Problémy kommunikatsii u Tchekhova* [The Problem of Communication in Chekhov], 2005, by A. D. Stiepánov, in which Chekhov's works are analysed in the light of Bakhtin's theory of discourse genres. We aim to add to his approach to Chekhov the idea that he was not only a creator but also a theorist of verbal aesthetic creation. The proximity between the views of Chekhov and Bakhtin on the Author-Character-Reader relationship makes it possible to apply Bakhtin's ideas to Chekhov's works.

Although Mikhail Bakhtin has deeply studied several Russian authors, such as Dostoevsky, Gogol and Pushkin, he only quotes works by Anton Chekhov. At the same time, Bakhtin mentions him in *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*,<sup>6</sup> and makes references to him in some of his drafts, in 'Tolstoy as dramatist' and in his notes supporting his lectures. But he never delved into Chekhov's texts, which is surprising, firstly, because of the relevance of this writer's texts and dramas for the development of Russian literature in the twentieth century and, secondly, because of the affinity between their ideas on verbal creation. Bakhtin, although a profound connoisseur of classical

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<sup>4</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>5</sup> Our translation. In Russian: "Éti tiéksty, po iedinodúchnomu mniéniiu spietsialístov, v sguschiónoi fórmie sodiérzhat praktícheski vsié osnovny'ie idiéi, razvivávchiiesia Bakhtiny'm na protiazhiénii iegó dólgoi náučnoi zhízni."

<sup>6</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*. In: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp.84-258.

Russian literature, was probably unaware of Chekhov's ideas on Author-Character relations, but with time it appeared clearly that they had similar views on the subject, as we shall show below.

In twentieth-century Russian society, there were major changes in approaches to Chekhov's work, which partly coincided with changes in Bakhtin's views. Although he began the 20th century with popularity, Chekhov soon came up against great resistance among writers and thinkers of the same period in Russia, who considered him a superficial and ephemeral writer rather than a profound author of great and influential ideas. This view was typical during the period called the Silver Age: roughly from the 1890s until the Russian Revolution in 1917, plus a few years after the Revolution in the early 1920s.

Bakhtin grew up and graduated precisely at that time, in which he even met Valery Briusov and Vyacheslav Ivanov and attended the philosophical-literary meetings of Andrey Bely and Dmitry Merezhkovski / Zinaida Hippius, that were the hub of cultural life in St. Petersburg. Such encounters formed the views on verbal creation and literature in general at the time. Bakhtin himself, in the well-known interview with Duvakin (1973),<sup>7</sup> declared that his literary interests were not limited to the classics and that there was a passion on his part for modern poetry, in particular for Vyacheslav Ivanov, his favourite poet. We have a confirmation of his interests in the essay "Peculiaridades formais da poesia de Viatcheslav Ivánov in Estética da Criação Verbal" ["Formal Peculiarities of Vyacheslav Ivanov's poetry"] in *The Aesthetics of Verbal Creation* (2003c). The personal knowledge of Vyacheslav Ivanov and other poets inscribes Bakhtin's way of thinking in a particular cultural context of the time.

The older Bakhtin deepens his perception of Chekhov by dealing with a misguided production by the MAT (Moscow Art Theatre) in the 1910s. In the aforementioned interview, Bakhtin (March 1, 1973) states that between the years 1915 and 1917, Chekhov was "misunderstood"; that after the consecration, he was misinterpreted and "lost his roots"; and, finally, that this "consecration killed him." For the theorist, it was not acceptable to 'create a weepy melodrama' of *The Cherry Orchard*, initially proposed by

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<sup>7</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Interview Two, March 1, 1973. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Duvakin Interviews, 1973*. Edited by Slav N Gratchev and Margarita Marinova. Ithaca, NY: Bucknell University Press, 2021. pp.49-93. <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781684480944-006>

Chekhov as a farcical comedy (pp.49-93).<sup>8</sup> During the period when Bakhtin's ideas were being formed, the reception of Chekhov was varied and inconsistent, ranging from hatred to canonisation. The theorist disagreed with both extremes, as evidenced by his interview with Duvakin.

In this article, we will focus on the relations between author, character and reader in Bakhtin's and Chekhov's perspectives. Considering the Brazilian tradition, the comparison will allow us to point out that, for both, the importance of the reader in verbal creation is close to that of the author/creator and the character. Since, in Bakhtin's early works, the aesthetics of verbal creation turns to general philosophical aesthetics, we will deal with the notion of 'exotopy' (or 'extra-location') in relation to the 'compenetration' and 'conclusion' of narrative. Later, we will approximate this theoretical framework to objectivity in Chekhovian narrative and see that, both in Bakhtin's early works and in Chekhov, aesthetic objectivity and 'artistic interest' are fundamental in verbal creation.

To finalise our theoretical framework, we will deal with symbols and chance details, two salient points in Chekhov's works, under the Bakhtinian notion of exotopy, which expresses the idea of 'compenetration' and 'completion' for Bakhtin and is equivalent, for Chekhov, to the objectivity of the narrative. After this exposition, we will carry out an analysis of the tale "The Lady with the Dog"<sup>9</sup> and we will highlight the Author-Character relations according to the results of our theoretical proposal. On the basis of these relations, the symbols and fortuitous details and the combination of these with the title, we will make a new proposition about the said tale: he maintains an intertextual echo with Alexandre Dumas fils's novel *The Lady of the Camellias*.<sup>10</sup>

## **1 Author-Character in Aesthetic Activity for Mikhail Bakhtin and Anton Chekhov**

A reference on the issue of the formation of Author-Character-Reader relations in Brazil is Beth Brait's book *A personagem [The Character]* (1985/2019). There she deals with the "artistic-literary game"<sup>11</sup> that intertwines creator, creature and all those who

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<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>9</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>10</sup> DUMAS fils, A. *The Lady of the Camellias*. Translated by L. Schillinger. Penguin Classics, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Our translation. In Portuguese: "jogo artístico-literário."

“engage with them, experiencing them, loving them, hating them”<sup>12</sup> or “trying to understand them.” (Brait, 2017, p.9)<sup>13</sup> In this process of creativity, we are all clearly involved, from readers to scholars, and this involvement reflects the Bakhtinian view of the subject:

What we actually experience are not particular feelings of the hero (nor do such particular feelings really exist), but, rather, the whole of the hero’s soul or inner life. That is, our *horizons* coincide, and this is the reason why we perform inwardly, along with the hero, all of his actions as necessary constituents of his, the hero’s, life — the life we are co-experiencing (Bakhtin, 1990, p.79).<sup>14</sup>

Already at the beginning of the discussion, the proximity between Bakhtin’s and Chekhov’s views is remarkable; the latter states, in a letter to Suvórin:<sup>15</sup> “When I write I reckon entirely upon the reader to add for himself the subjective elements that are lacking in the story ...” (Chekhov to A. Suvórin, 1 April, 1890).<sup>16</sup> For the writer, the reader’s complicity is important: the reader, by entering the game, interprets it in his own way, based on his own experience and his own personality. Because of these positions, the tales of the late period of Chekhov’s work (such as “The Lady With The Dog,” 1899) seem to us the most appropriate to be considered in the light of Bakhtin’s Author-Character-Reader theory.

Mikhail Bakhtin, throughout his life, devoted several works to the question of the Author-Character-Reader relations. Among the most significant, we can cite *The Author and the Character in Aesthetic activity*, written in the 1920s, but published in Russian only in 1979, in the collection *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation* (which arrived in Brazil in 1992, translated from French; and directly from Russian, only in 2003); *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (in Russia, the 1st edition was published in 1929 and the 2nd edition in 1963; in Brazil, the 2nd edition was published in 1981 and the 1st edition is in process

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<sup>12</sup> Our translation. In Portuguese: “se envolvem com eles, vivenciando-os, amando-os, odiando-os.”

<sup>13</sup> Our translation. In Portuguese: “tentando entendê-los.”

<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>15</sup> Alexéy Suvórin - Russian journalist, editor, writer, theatre critic and playwright. Editor of the newspaper *New Times (Nóvoie vriémia)*, with which Chekhov collaborated.

<sup>16</sup> CHEKHOV, A. *Letters of Anton Chekhov to His Family and Friends*. With Biographical Sketch, Translated by Constance Garnett, 2004. Gutenberg EBook: [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6408/6408-h/6408-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0070](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6408/6408-h/6408-h.htm#link2H_4_0070).

of publication); *Discourse in the Novel* (written in the 1930s but published in Russia only in 1975, in the collection *Issues of Literature and Aesthetics: the Theory of the Novel*; in Brazil, it was published in 1988). In these works, as Brait (2017) mentions, Bakhtin does not classify the characters, but delves into issues of literary prose, such as ethics and aesthetics, dialogism, polyphony and Author-Character-Reader relationship. It thus inaugurates the discussion of how an author-creator “gives voice to his creatures, going in search of a poetics of prose” (Brait, 2017, p.58).<sup>17</sup> In this article, we will specifically address *The Author and the Character in Aesthetic activity*, from the 1920s, as it is chronologically closer to Chekhov’s time. This work, in our view, reflects the origins of Bakhtinian theory and cannot be ignored in studies on the subject; a more thorough analysis of Bakhtin’s legacy in totality, in relation to Chekhov, would warrant future articles. Note that we are not talking about direct borrowing between the two views (positions), but about the influence of the period in which Bakhtin’s views were formed.

That work, unfortunately, is not fully preserved in Bakhtin’s archive, and only part of the first chapter exists. However, the preserved parts give a holistic and complete picture of this great work by Bakhtin, who began it in the mid-1920s but did not complete it. It is assumed that the text was worked out during the author’s years in Vitebsk (1920-1924), when he devoted himself to the aesthetics of verbal creation. The content of this work is closely related to two other works of the 1920s: the article *The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art* (1924) and the book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Work* (1929).<sup>18</sup> The fundamental thesis of Bakhtin’s 1924 article and these early works is the need for the aesthetics of verbal creation to be based on a general philosophical aesthetics (see: Bakhtin, 2002).

One of the main aspects of character creation, according to this early work of Bakhtin, is the idea of extra-location or exotopy. The first stage of aesthetic activity would be ‘compenetration’: “I must empathize or project myself into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as *he* sees this world; I must put myself in his place...”; this is followed by the stage we may call ‘separation’: “(...) after returning to my own place (...)”; and, finally, the ‘conclusion’ follows: “(...) to ‘fill in’ his horizon

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<sup>17</sup> Our translation. In Portuguese: “dá voz às suas criaturas, indo em busca de uma poética da prosa.”

<sup>18</sup> Translated into Portuguese by Sheila Vieira de Camargo Grillo and Ekaterina Vólkova Américo, to be released in 2022.

through that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my seeing...” (p.25).<sup>19</sup> We consider that, for Bakhtin, the moments of ‘compenetration’ and ‘conclusion’ do not succeed each other chronologically and that the distinction between them is only semantic; still, both are closely connected, and this connection forms an aesthetic event: in a verbal work, each word has a double function and orientation: it both directs the ‘compenetration’ and concludes it, although one moment may prevail over the other (p.23).<sup>20</sup> We notice a similar effect in the works of Chekhov, in which the world portrayed by the author passes entirely through the prism of the character’s perception. Only what the character feels, sees and knows is portrayed. The artistic microcosm of such a story becomes the world perceived by the characters. This capacity of Chekhov’s narrative “to transform itself into a character” has already been noticed by contemporary scholars of his work (p.48).<sup>21</sup>

In the same work, *The Author and the Character in Aesthetic Activity*, Bakhtin (2003a) defines Author and Character: the Author is the bearer of the ‘intently active’ unity of the character and the completed work/text, which is ‘transgredient’ to every particular element of it. The Author not only “sees and knows everything seen and known by each hero individually and by all the heroes collectively, (...) moreover he sees and knows something that is in principle inaccessible to them” (p.12).<sup>22</sup> Bakhtin calls this ‘excess of the author’s seeing’. The consciousness of the Character and the vital (cognitive-ethical) interest in the Character event is “encompassed by the author’s artistic interestedness in the hero and his life. In this sense, aesthetic objectivity aims in a direction different from that of cognitive and ethical objectivity (...); the center of value for aesthetic objectivity is the whole of the hero and of the event of his lived life” (p.13).<sup>23</sup> About the Author’s *artistic interestedness*, linked to *aesthetic objectivity*, Chekhov writes in his letters with irritation, in everyday language, when arguing with the editor Suvórin (letter of 17/10/1889):

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<sup>19</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>20</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>21</sup> CHUDAKOV, A. P. *Chekhov’s Poetics*. Translated by E. J. Cruise and D. Dragt. Ardis, 1983.

<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.



If they serve you coffee, don't confuse it with beer... Do you place so much value on opinions of any kind, that you see only in them the centre of gravity, and not in the manner of expressing them, nor in their origin etc.?

(...) For me, as an author, these opinions, by their essence, are of no value. The issue is not in their essence, which varies and is not new. The point is the nature of these opinions, their submission to external influences, etc. It is necessary to examine them as things, as symptoms, in a totally objective way, abstaining from agreeing with them or disputing about them.<sup>24</sup>

In the passage presented, Chekhov indicates the insignificance of the characters' *opinions* in the texts and raises the importance of the *manner of expressing* these opinions (aesthetic objectivity), dealing with the question of the objectivity of the narrative, which he considers an essential point. Let us briefly look at the author's path from subjective narrative to objective narration. Chekhov's narrative style is considered a special phenomenon of late 19th and early 20th century Russian art. According to Chudakov (1971),<sup>25</sup> Chekhov's works can be divided into 3 stages. The first (writings from approximately 1881 to 1887), called subjective narrative, shows an active author: judgements come directly from him, a characteristic that was typical of literature of the period before Chekhov. This narrative is full of the author's emotions and assessments, and in no passage of the work does Chekhov omit his own judgements (e.g., the short stories *Dáchnitza* [*Summer resident*], *V vagóne* [*In the cart*]). Gradually, the narrator's point of view begins to no longer coincide with that of the author. This disjunction culminates in a second stage (writings from approximately 1888 to 1894), in which Chekhov begins to create a new way of narrating: judgements and emotions emanating from the characters themselves appear; the author's voice disappears from the text and the narration is from the point of view of the character. At this stage, indirect speech predominates in Chekhov's verbal creation. Already in the third stage (approximately 1895 through 1904), the character begins to displace the narrator from his position: the

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<sup>24</sup> Our translation. In Russian: "Esli vam podaiut kofe, to ne staraites iskat v nem piva (...) Neuzheli vy tak tsenite voobshe kakie by to ni bylo mnenia, chto tolko v nih vidite center tiazhesti, a ne v manere vyskazy vania ih, ne v ih proishozhdenii i protchem? Dlia menia, kak avtora, vse eti mnenia po svoei sushnosti ne imeiut nikakoi tseny. Delo ne v sushnosti ih; ona peremenchiva i ne nova. Vsia sut v prirode etih mnenii, v i zavisimosti ot vneshnih vliianii i prochee. Ih nado rassmatrivat kak veshi, kak simptomu, sovershenno obiektivno, ne staraia ni soglashatsia s nimi, ni osparivat ih."

<sup>25</sup> For reference, see footnote 21.

form becomes more complex, the voices of the characters and the author sometimes sound and intertwine, sometimes separate.

Although the styles of narrative structure of Chekhov's early and late period works is remarkably complex, there are no sharp boundaries between them; a smooth transition occurs. Since the mid-1880s, Chekhov had been developing and refining his artistic approach, so that by the end of the 1890s he had consolidated a definitive and innovative system, with a complex interaction between author and character. This interaction is constructed by composition, style, forms of speech (e.g. indirect speech) and diversity of viewpoints. The voices of narrator and character are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to distinguish between them, which makes identifying the author's vision especially difficult for both readers and researchers of Chekhov's work.

## 2 Symbolism and Fortuitous Details in Chekhov

Before starting the analysis of the short story, we will briefly touch upon the characteristics of Chekhov's symbolism and the role of fortuitous details, which reflect his conception of Author-Character-Reader relations. Andrey Bely writes for the first time about the symbol in the writer's works, in the article *Chekhov* (1907). According to Bely, along with the continuation of the realist tradition, Chekhov "threw the dynamite of true symbolism." (Chekhov: pro et contra, p.831).<sup>26</sup> For example, character-specific items (such as memories, nature, etc.) become symbols for the author: the colour grey denotes boredom and tedium. The symbol connects with the inner world of the character and therefore reflects the character's state, and the objective world surrounding the character pervades his own consciousness.

In addition to symbolism, we want to highlight in Chekhov also the fortuitous details. In the traditional literary system, a detail is an element of characterisation of the character or the atmosphere of the work. In Chekhov there are numerous details, among which we want to point out the fortuitous details, which have nothing to do with the characterisation of the character or the plot. The presence of fortuitous details in the Chekhovian text does not have a clear function, especially in those short texts so

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<sup>26</sup> Our translation. In Russian: "Zalózhzen dinamít istinnogo simvolízma."

thoroughly constructed, in which not a single word is out of place or leftover. The function of the fortuitous detail is especially controversial because, at first sight, it does not appear to be a mean of characterisation and, according to the rules of literature prior to Chekhov, it is not necessary in the text or, at least, it is optional. Several researchers give their interpretations; Chudakov (1971),<sup>27</sup> for example, believes that they confirm real-life contingencies. Something may not be important to the character, but it is important to the author. Detail, in Chekhov, can either possess direct and figurative meaning, or it can be merely a lyrical brushstroke and a vector of subtext.

The fortuitous detail does not change its semantics; the object remains itself. We judge that, by repeating itself in different texts and episodes, the fortuitous detail indicates parallels between the characters (the hands in chapter 3), between scenes in the story (lorgnette, wind) and other works by this and other authors (the title of the show “Geisha,” for example), on which we will provide details later.<sup>28</sup>

### **3 Analysis of the Short Story “The Lady With the Dog,” by Anton Chekhov, from the Perspective of Author-Character Relations**

In *Author and the Character in Aesthetic Activity*,<sup>29</sup> Bakhtin (2003a) explains that a necessary condition for an aesthetic event is that there is a character and that the character exists as a *different consciousness* in relation to the omnipresent consciousness of the author. The author is beyond the scope of the content and therefore elaborates and completes the event externally in relation to the character. The author’s ideas are hidden in the depths of the text: in the style, composition, plot, chronotope, etc. In order for exotopy to be constituted, Bakhtin points out that the integration between two consciousnesses that need to be distinct is primordial: that of the author and that of the character. Chekhov basically defends the same position: “It is enough to be just a little more honest: to put oneself aside from everything, not to cram oneself into the characters of the novel, to renounce oneself if only for half an hour”<sup>30</sup> (letter to Alexander Chekhov,

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<sup>27</sup> For reference, see footnote 21.

<sup>28</sup> Fortuitous detail can also play other roles, such as contributing to the chronotope, but we do not deal with this here.

<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>30</sup> Our translation. In Russian: “Stóit byt tólko pochestnéi: vybrasyvat sebia za bort vsiudu, ne sovát sebiá v gerói svoiegó romána, otréchsia ot siebiá hot na ½ chasá.”

20 February 1883). We will show below how Bakhtin's exotopy, which goes along with Chekhov's position on Author-Character relations, is developed in this short story. To this end, we will examine the lexicon and indirect speech, the appearance of the character and the voice of the author, and the relationship between repetitions, in Chekhov, and parallels with the legend of Don Juan. All the discussion about how these elements make the finish of the Chekhovian tale will lead us, finally, to present our hypothesis about the intertextuality of "The Lady with the Dog" and *The Lady of the Camellias*.

### 3.1 Lexis and Indirect Speech

The short story was written in 1899. The action takes place in Yalta, a tourist city in southern Russia. Two tourists, Dmitri Gurov, and a young woman, Anna Sergeyevna Diederitz, who they called "the Lady with the Dog" because tourists often see her walking down the embankment with a white pomeranian on a leash, get to know each other. Gurov, far from his wife, hopes for a light and easy relationship; Anna, on the other hand, disappointed with her union with a man she doesn't love, wants to experience an adventure and feel the emotions of which she is deprived in an unbearably tedious marriage. A trivial romance is started between them, however, unexpectedly and inexplicably, it turns into a strong and deep feeling for both. The feeling changes not so much the course of their lives, but the protagonists themselves. The point of the story is not about the development of character relationships; rather, it is a reflection on the gradual development and change of feelings until their complete transformation from the starting point.

Although "The Lady with the Dog" is written from the narrator's point of view, the reader almost immediately realises that the situation, events and characters are portrayed through the perception of the character Gurov, as only what he sees, hears and thinks enters the reader's scope of awareness. The author's text rumbles imperceptibly towards the character's thoughts, which brings indirect speech so close to direct speech that they become almost undistinguishable: "he began to feel an overwhelming desire to share his memories with someone. But he could not speak of his love at home, and outside his home who was there for him to confide in? Not the tenants living in his house, and

certainly not his colleagues at the bank. And what was there to tell? Was it love that he had felt?” (p.303)<sup>31</sup>

According to Bakhtin, in order for the reader to perceive the text from the character’s point of view, various stylistic, grammatical and lexical forms must be used. Thus, from the first sentence of the story, uncertainty is mentioned, a state that is only possible for subjective consciousness. Uncertainty is constructed by the impersonal form (in Russian) of the verbs ‘to tell’ (‘were telling’, *govorili*) and ‘to refer’ (‘referred’, *nazyváli*): “people were telling one another that a newcomer had been seen on the promenade – a lady with a dog... Nobody knew who she was, and people referred to her simply as “the lady with the dog” (p.291).<sup>32</sup> The same role of uncertainty and presumption is played by some introductory words and constructions, such as ‘seemed’ (*kazálos*), ‘should be’ (*dolzno byt’*), ‘evidently’<sup>33</sup> (*otchievidno*) and ‘probably’ (*veroiátno*): “someone approached them – a watchman, probably – looked at them and went away” (p.299);<sup>34</sup> “he considered that (in Russian – *kazálos*, it seemed to him) the ample lessons he had received from bitter experience entitled him to call them whatever he liked, but without this “lower race” he could not have existed a single day” (p.292);<sup>35</sup> “she had insisted in calling him good, remarkable, high-minded. *Evidently* he had appeared to her different from his real self, in a word he had involuntarily deceived her...” (p.300);<sup>36</sup> “this must be (in Russian – was *probably*) her husband” (p.306).<sup>37</sup>

Words indicating a sudden event in relation to the character (‘suddenly’ – *vdrug*, ‘at least’ – *khotiá by*, ‘for example’ – *naprimiér*) or an emotional state (emphasis particle

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<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>33</sup> Here we find a likely translation error in Portuguese. *Otchievidno* in Russian has two meanings (Voinova, Starets, p.400): 1) adverb - “evidently,” “no doubt” and 2) introductory word - “apparently.” In this context, it would be better to use the second. The story also contains the hero’s uncertainty about what is happening and the ambiguity of the author’s assessment, emphasising the unclear transition between the points of view of both. “Obviously,” as an introductory word, together with the synonym “probably” and “apparently” and verbs with the same meaning (e.g. “it seemed”), represent the motif of uncertainty, one of the main ones in the tale. The hero’s uncertainty about what is happening, and the ambiguity of the author’s assessment reinforce that unclear transition between the points of view of one and the other. Moreover, the motif of uncertainty also correlates with the duality of Gúrov’s life, and in some fragments of the text this motif is contrasted with ‘clarity’: “everything remained clear in his memory” (CHEKHOV, 2011, p.324); “he understood sharply that there was now, for him, in the whole world, no closer person” (CHEKHOV, 2011, p.328).

<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>36</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>37</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

*zhe*) also indicate that the point of view portrayed is the character's subjective world, which Bakhtin calls his 'spiritual whole': "he could remember carefree, good-natured women who were exhilarated by love-making and grateful to him for the happiness he gave them, however short-lived; and there had been others – his wife among them (in Russian - 'for example' – *naprimiér*)" (p.296);<sup>38</sup> "(...) it all (in Russian – *suddenly*) came back to him: early morning on the pier, the misty mountains, the steamer from Feodosia, the kisses (p.302),<sup>39</sup> "not the tenants (emphasis particle *zhe*) living in his house, and certainly not his colleagues at the bank" (p.303).<sup>40</sup>

Indications that the environment and atmosphere are given from the character's point of view include words that convey sensations such as *thirst*, *congestion*, *smells* and emotions such as *fear* or *irritation*, and that convey a position in space and temporary events, in which the starting point is also subjective consciousness: "the fragrance and dampness of the flowers closed round him" (p.296);<sup>41</sup> "as if they were being watched from all the boxes" (p.307);<sup>42</sup> "Anna Sergeyevna had fallen silent" (p.295);<sup>43</sup> "at Oreanda they sat down on a bench not far from the church, and looked down at the sea, without talking" (p.298);<sup>44</sup> "an hour later, the faint, vague sounds of a piano reached his ears" (p.304);<sup>45</sup> "there was a tense sensation in the atmosphere" (in Russian – a feeling of fear) (p.307);<sup>46</sup> "it was a thirsty day and Gurov kept going to the outdoor café for fruit-drinks and ice to Anna Sergeyevna... The heat was overpowering" (in Russian – one was left not knowing where to put oneself) (p.295);<sup>47</sup> "Gurov listened to her, bored to death. The naive accents, the remorse, all was so unexpected, so out of place. But for the tears in her eyes, she might have been jesting or play-acting" (p.297).<sup>48</sup> Verbs in indirect speech play the same role ('he thought' – *dúmal*, 'he remembered' – *vspómnil*, 'he knew' (in Russian – he understood – *pónial*): "he knew in a flash that the whole world contained no one

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<sup>38</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>40</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>41</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>42</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>45</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>46</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>47</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>48</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

nearer or dearer to him, no one more important to his happiness” (p.306);<sup>49</sup> “as he was speaking, he kept reminding himself that he was going to a rendezvous and that not a living soul knew about it, or, probably, ever would” (p.309).<sup>50</sup>

Exclamations, questions and equivocations about some events that are in the context of the author’s narrative also emphasise the same narrative point: “what savage manners, what people! What wasted evenings, what tedious, empty days!” (p.303);<sup>51</sup> “when the Christmas holidays came, he packed his things, telling his wife he had to go to Petersburg in the interests of a certain young man, and set off for the town of S. To what end?” (p.304);<sup>52</sup> “he told himself that this had been just one more of the many adventures in his life, and that it, too, was over, leaving nothing but a memory (...)” (p.300);<sup>53</sup> “he had believed that in a month’s time Anna Sergeyevna would be nothing but a vague memory, and that hereafter, with her wistful smile, she would only occasionally appear to him in dreams, like others before her” (p.302).<sup>54</sup>

### **3.2 The Appearance of the Character and the Voice of the Author**

Bakhtin (1990, pp.27-28)<sup>55</sup> considers the character’s appearance within two worlds: of the real and the ideal or ‘world of my (active) fantasies’. The ‘self-centred’ world of my active fantasies about myself finds no expression outside, and the character cannot imagine his external image outside this fantasies world, only the images of other characters. Even the minor characters are presented with incredible clarity and thoroughness, with all their emotions. But the Character, to whom these emotions relate, is not presented. The character just ‘enters this world as its leading actor... the one who conquers all hearts, wins extraordinary glory’ etc.

This internal perspective, the personal dream world, is materialised in “The Lady with the Dog.” The inner vision is emphasised by the lack of a portrait of Gurov, as he does not need to focus attention on his own appearance (as opposed to the appearance of

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<sup>49</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

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<sup>51</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>52</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>53</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>54</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

other characters who enter his field of vision); however the character traits, attitude towards life and others are conveyed in detail. It is precisely here that the reader seems to hear two voices, simultaneously, and it is quite difficult to differentiate between them—at one point it becomes clear that the description of Gurov's appearance is in fact his own perception, positioning and desire to see himself in a certain way. On the other hand, at the same time there happens a separation between Author and Character, and a return of the Author to himself—according to Bakhtin, in the stream of consciousness of the character, there is explicit irony by the author:

He considered that the ample lessons he had received from bitter experience entitled him to call them whatever he liked, but without this “lower race” he could not have existed a single day. He was bored and ill-at-ease in the company of men, with whom he was always cold and reserved, but felt quite at home among women, and knew exactly what to say to them, and how to behave; ... There was an elusive charm in his appearance and disposition which attracted women and caught their sympathies. He knew this and was himself attracted to them by some invisible force.

Repeated and bitter experience had taught him that every fresh intimacy, while at first introducing such pleasant variety into everyday life, and offering itself as a charming, light adventure, inevitably developed, among decent people, (especially in Moscow, where they are so irresolute and slow to move) into a problem of excessive complication leading to an intolerably irksome situation. But every time he encountered an attractive woman he forgot all about this experience, the desire for life surged up in him, and everything suddenly seemed simple and amusing (p.292).<sup>56</sup>

In passages where the irony is clear, the author's narrative blends with the character's perception, and two styles of speech intertwine, which emphasises the banality of the situation and adds a comic effect:

He looked steadily at her and suddenly took her in his arms and kissed her lips, and the fragrance and dampness of the flowers closed round him, but the next moment he looked behind him in alarm – had anyone seen them? “Let's go to your room,” he murmured (pp.295-296);<sup>57</sup>

And often, when there was nobody in sight in the square or the park, he would draw her to him and kiss her passionately. The utter idleness,

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<sup>56</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>57</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.



these kisses in broad daylight, accompanied by furtive glances and the fear of discovery, the heat, the smell of the sea, and the idle, smart, well-fed people continually crossing their field of vision, seemed to have given him a new lease of life. He told Anna Sergeyevna she was beautiful and seductive, made love to her with impetuous passion, and never left her side, while she was always pensive, always trying to force from him the admission that he did not respect her, that he did not love her a bit, and considered her just an ordinary woman (pp.299-300).<sup>58</sup>

Not only can the character's voice be woven into the author's narration, but the narrator can suddenly and directly appear in the context of the character's thoughts, as if joining them: "the next minute he suddenly remembered how, after seeing Anna Sergeyevna off that evening at the station, he had told himself that all was over, and they would never meet again. And how far away the end seemed to be now!" (p.307)<sup>59</sup> The last sentence ("and how far away the end seemed to be now!") is clearly the voice of the author, who has a broad perspective on the character.

### 3.3 The Repetitions and the Legend of Don Juan

In the works of Chekhov, mirroring is recurrent: the repetition of situations, dialogue and characters occurs not only in one story or another, but pervades his entire oeuvre. This is one of the tricks that help us find the author's voice, hidden in the subtext. So a chance detail that mentions Gurov's formal education links this character to other Chekhov philologists, such as Mikhail Fedorovich (from "Dull Story") and Laevsky (from *The Duel*). They all have a definite type of personality: a tendency towards an unconscious game in which they wear the mask of another character from literature. Laevsky sees himself in the image of Pushkin's Onegin or Lermontov's Pechorin, and Mikhail Fedorovich poses as Mephistopheles. The author plays with the characters with such skill that the reader (and even the researcher) can be fooled into mistaking the mask for the character of the text in question, without noticing some details. Kubassov (1998) suggests that the initials of Mikhail Fedorovich's name and patronymic—M. F.—were not chosen at random, but point to a certain literary prototype (Mephistopheles);

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<sup>58</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>59</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

analogously, the name and surname of Dmitry Gurov — D. G., in “The Lady with the Dog,” makes an analogy with Don Juan/Don Giovanni).

Features of appearance, such as grey hair and black eyebrows, are complementary semiotic traits: they are found in the figure of another Mephistopheles, the monk in *The “Black Monk.”* Kubásov analyses the lexicon of the character Mikhail Fedorovich, in which some replicas that refer to the semantic field of ‘infernally’ are recurrent, such as, for example, ‘a cold from hell’<sup>60</sup> and ‘the devil take him’,<sup>61</sup> and adds that, by irony, this character addresses God more often than the others (‘Oh, my God!’, ‘God forbid’ etc.); from this, he points out Mikhail Fedorovich’s cynicism, especially when it comes to other members of the Church. In Kubassov’s opinion, this whole set creates a literary genealogy and indicates a hidden kinship with Mephistopheles. We very much agree with the researcher’s conclusions, but point out that he has missed two substantial details, which not only complement the figure of Mikhail Fedorovich, but also modify it. The first is that the character is not simply a university colleague, but a philologist, who even “comes of an ancient family of aristocrats, all more or less fortunate and gifted, all playing an important part in the history of our literature and education” (p.91).<sup>62</sup>

The parallel between *The Lady with the Dog* and the legend of Don Juan, more precisely in Pushkin’s version, was first noted by Kataev (1989). As in the case of Mikhail Fedorovich, Chekhov plays with the names Dmitry Gurov/Don Guan (from Pushkin – the name is spelt ‘Don Guan’ in Russian) and Dama (Russian version for ‘lady’) Anna/Donna Anna. There is similarity between the plots (adultery) and the main characters. As Kataev notes, the coincidence even goes as far as the fact that the two writers had fallen in love and separated from their loved ones in the year they wrote their works.

We disagree, on this point, with the respected scholar. One element is that Gurov, the ‘philologist’, shifts the emphasis from the author’s point of view to the character’s own. It is the character who realises himself as Don Juan, the conqueror and favourite of women, and who, while condescending to them, despises them. Yet the author’s details that reverberate the character’s intonations are that Gurov, a creative person, was

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<sup>60</sup> Our translation. In Russian: “ádski khólodno.”

<sup>61</sup> Our translation. In Russian: “k tchiórtu.”

<sup>62</sup> CHEKHOV, A. P. Dull Story (From an Old Man’s Note-Book). In: CHEKHOV, A. P. *Short Novels and Stories*. Translated by Ivy Litvinov. Progress Publishers, 1960.

practicing to sing in a private opera production, even though he worked modestly in a bank, and that he had married by force, and his wife was unpleasant and domineering. All this modifies Gurov's image of himself, so that the reader sees a charming but ordinary, cowardly, weak-willed and unremarkable middle-aged man.

The remaining characters—Anna and her husband, Gurov's wife, the dog and even the more episodic ones (the caretaker in Oreanda, the receptionist, the colleague, the daughter, students at the theatre)—appear in the story, in one way or another, only in Gurov's presence, when the character remembers them, sees them, hears them or speaks to them. With one exception at the end of the story, Anna does not exist on her own. Everything that characterises her—her appearance, her thoughts, actions, her speech—are presented only through Gurov, that is, the reader is given to know only what the character sees, feels and thinks of Anna. The narrator who creates the image of Gurov is himself, which confirms Bakhtin's ideas mentioned in the theoretical part.

The dog, of a well-known breed (a white pomeranian (spitz)), is mentioned three times in the text: at first, as a trademark of an unknown lady, then as a cue for recognition, and, finally, it appears glancingly in an alarming and languid episode of waiting at the grey fence, as something familiar and dear to the character who, so excited, soon catches his breath. It is easy to see that the pomeranian appears in the story only when it is in Gurov's field of vision and, more than that, when the character is interested in its presence or aware of it. Where would the Dog be when the holiday romance develops in the scenes on the pier, in the hotel, in Oreanda, at the farewell? the dog seems to disappear precisely when the Narrator-Gurov forgets about it.

For over 100 years, researchers have tried to solve the riddle of what makes the dog so important. Removing it from the text would not alter any event as such, yet Chekhov mentions it in the title, suggesting that it plays a special role in the story. We will present our own interpretation for this riddle.

The elements in which the author's point of view can undoubtedly be sought are in the title of the work, in the proportion between various independent artistic elements and in their composition in a way defined to elicit the greatest emotional and semantic impact on the reader. The way in which the literary text is constructed and organised and the interconnection between its elements, from which its unity and wholeness derive, are

designed for maximum emotional and semantic effect on the reader, in keeping with the author's idea.

The title of Chekhov's works, especially of the late period, is often symbolic and concentrates a whole point of view and ideas of the author—it is the key for unravelling the hidden meaning and subtext. Why does the title “The Lady with the Dog” focus on Anna and her white pomeranian rather than Gurov, through whom the reader receives the image of what occurs? Here is our hypothesis.

### 3.4 “The Lady with the Dog” and *The Lady of the Camellias*

In the autumn of 1893, Chekhov met Lidia Yavórskaya, a Moscow actress. For several years, they remained linked by loving and friendly relations. In the same year 1893, Yavórskaya starred on the stage of the F. Korsch theatre in the role of Marguerite Gautier in Alexandre Dumas fils's *The Lady of the Camellias*. It is known that Chekhov repeatedly attended her performances and was familiar with the plot. The similarity between the names (in Russian, *The Lady with the Camellias*) caught our attention immediately, and from that we could find many parallels between *The Lady of the Camellias* and “The Lady with the Dog,” both on the level of plot and general detail and chance details. The main theme of Dumas' novel is the unexpected, sacrificial and inexplicable love of the characters in opposition to the moral foundations of society. In *The Lady of the Camellias*, the courtesan Marguerite Gautier, when trying to explain to her beloved the full force of her love, says:

“It's true,” she resumed. “Women who depend on luck as I do have immoderate desires and inconceivable passions (...) I will tell you a silly thing; but once I had a little dog who looked at me sadly whenever I coughed; that is the only creature I ever loved. (...) And I loved you instantly as much as I loved my dog (pp.115-116).<sup>63</sup>

The dog therefore functions as a measure of love; for Marguerite, the dog is the parameter of the highest love. In Chekhov's world, on the other hand, true love is irrational, spontaneous and requires no explanation, because it is impossible and is on a

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<sup>63</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

plane independent of the human mind, in a kind of eternal nature. Gurov felt this fusion for the first time, sitting by the sea. The episode in Oreanda is the highlight of the story. From that moment on, although the characters do not yet suspect it, their superficial holiday romance suddenly and inexplicably begins to transform into a deep genuine feeling, the strength of which is such that it becomes impossible to resist it. The inability of the characters to decide their fates, which translates into a kind of irrational force, beyond human control and almost mystical—similar to a flood—is the main event of the tale. We have already mentioned the duality and objectivity of Chekhov’s symbols; in the present case, the dog is a concrete, real, white animal and, at the same time, a symbol of that sublime love and whose strength equals the inexorability of nature itself. Thus, the allusion to the novel *The Lady of the Camellias* in the title of Chekhov’s story (in Russian translation — *The Lady with the Camellias*) immediately determines its semantic content.

In both works, the themes have something in common (love, sin, society, higher meaning), as do the images: for example, in ‘birds in cages’, the scene of the action is the theatre. Some fragments parallel:

<i>The Lady of the Camellias</i>	“The Lady with the Dog”
And at Mme Barjon, her florist, she had been given the nickname ‘the lady of the camellias’, and the name had stuck (p.10). <sup>64</sup>	She was always alone, wearing the same toque, and the pomeranian always trotted at her side. Nobody knew who she was, and people referred to her simply as “the lady with the dog” (p.291). <sup>65</sup>
As I arrived at the door of the apartment that you know, my heart beat so furiously that all thought escaped me. Some piano chords met our ears (p.57). <sup>66</sup>	Gurov strolled over to Staro-Goncharnaya Street and discovered the house... an hour later, the faint, vague sounds of a piano reached his ears.... Gurov tried to call to it (the dog), but his heart beat violently, and in his agitation he could not remember its name (pp.304-305). <sup>67</sup>
The countryside has always been associated with love, and rightly so: Nothing is a better frame for the woman one loves than a blue sky and the scents, flowers, breezes, and shining solitude of the fields or the woods (...) I had beside me a young, beautiful woman whom I loved, by whom I was loved, and who was named Marguerite (p.125). <sup>68</sup>	Side by side with a young woman, who looked so exquisite in the early light, soothed and enchanted by the sight of all this magical beauty — sea, mountains, clouds and the vast expanse of the sky — Gurov told himself that, when you came to think of it, everything in the world is beautiful really, everything but our own thoughts and actions, when

<sup>64</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>65</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>66</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>67</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>68</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

	we lose sight of the higher aims of life, and of our dignity as human beings (p.299). <sup>69</sup>
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Source: The authors.

The toponymy is also similar: in both works, along with the named real cities (Paris, Toulon, Bougival in *The Lady of the Camellias*; and Yalta, Moscow, St Petersburg in “The Lady with the Dog”), there is also an unnamed city—S. (in Dumas’s novel, the father arrives from S.; in Chekhov’s short story, Gurov goes to S. to see Anna). In both cases, the city S. becomes fateful for the characters. In “The Lady with the Dog,” with an obvious reference to Dumas’s novel, the intensity of romanticism is reduced in the Chekhovian manner—there are no victims, no deaths or dug graves; the love story is mundane, quiet and secret. And while Marguerite Gautier is a bright brunette and looks stunningly beautiful in white, red or black clothes, attracting attention in every way, Anna Sergeevna is a modest blonde in a toque and grey dress, i.e. emphatically ordinary. Yet some details (chance details) unite the two, like the flowers and binoculars, unchanged in the hands of the courtesan Marguerite, echo the flowers and binoculars in Ana Sergeevna’s hands on the quay, before her evening fall at the hotel. Although superfluous to the story, the title of the play—*Geisha* (association with Marguerite being a courtesan).

In “The Lady with the Dog,” two oppressive forces are clearly felt and create an insoluble conflict for the characters: on the one hand, society; on the other, love. The word with which the story begins—‘people were telling one another’ (*in Russian — they said, govorili*, p.291)<sup>70</sup>—is reinforced by the impersonal form of the verb (in Russian), which occurs again later in the text: ‘it was said’ (*govorili*, p.291); ‘he had been talked into marrying’ (in Russian — they had married him, *jenili*, p.291);<sup>71</sup> ‘who had been caught and put into separate cages.’ (*poimáli i zastávili jit’ v otdiélnykh kliétkakh*, p.311)<sup>72</sup> The representation of *socium* in the tale is impersonal, devoid of individuality. The faceless crowd is described by the author in two scenes: on the quay and in the theatre, where no faces are seen, only clothes (largely military uniforms and insignia). In

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<sup>69</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>70</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>71</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>72</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

chapter 3, the contrast between society and the main characters is underlined by a chance detail: the position of the hands. As regards the plot and the characterisation of any element of the text (characters, situations, relationships etc.), the fact that, in the governor's residence, from behind the curtain one can see only the hands and not the head and the fact that the knight on the inkstand has one arm raised and the head has been torn off are of no importance. Yet the similarity between the chance details found in Chekhov's tale brings them together in one group: the world set against the main characters. In the objects and characters that personify 'society', it is as if the hands are separate from the body and exist on their own. For example: "holding his hat in his raised hand raising an arm holding a hat" (p.304);<sup>73</sup> "this might fall into the hands of her husband" (p.304);<sup>74</sup> "in the first row of the stalls the local dandies stood waiting for the curtain to go up, their hands clasped behind them" (p.305);<sup>75</sup> "so that only his hands were visible" (p.305).<sup>76</sup> Anna and Gurov's hands are clasped, joined, close to each other: "squeezing her fan and lorgnette in one hand" (p.306);<sup>77</sup> "began kissing her face, her lips, her hands" (p.307);<sup>78</sup> "she pressed his hand" (p.308).<sup>79</sup>

With the exception of the main characters, all the others are nameless. Gurov's wife and Anna's husband, in the text, are referred to only as 'husband' and 'wife'. Gurov cannot remember the dog's name, and the main characters' names sound distorted in the mouths of other characters: the woman mistakenly calls 'Dmitry' 'Dimítri', as does the doorman, who mispronounces the surname Diederitz - Dríderitz. Both characters are representatives of the society around them, although they are the only ones with identification, full names and biography; moreover, before he knows Anna's name, Gurov dreams, in the author's words, of "an affair with a woman whose very name he did not know" (p.293).<sup>80</sup>

Publicly, Gurov's life remains the same; a new life is just added to that public life. The new life is the one the character perceives as real, secret, parallel and defined as

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<sup>73</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>74</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>75</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>76</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>77</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>78</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>79</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>80</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

‘grain and husk’. The word ‘mystery’ is the main motif of the whole text and has a double meaning: both ‘deception’ and ‘mystery’, properly, in the positive sense of something fascinating and beautiful. This concept is so important to Chekhov that the author draws the reader’s attention to the repetition of the word ‘secret’ (in Russian — *táina, táiny*) five times in the same paragraph at the beginning of the 4th chapter. Unfortunately, the Portuguese translator opted for synonyms — ‘segredo’ (secret), ‘ocultas’ (hidden), ‘mistério’ (mystery) (p.331), and the effect of repetition was weakened.

The repetition of the same situations, vocabulary, motifs and symbols form the structure of the text. However one notices that they are repeated in a slightly different way, as a reflection of the changes that occur with the characters. For example, in both the pier and theatre episodes, Gurov and Anna are surrounded by an elegant crowd of ladies and uniformed gentlemen. At the pier, Anna loses her binoculars; at the theatre, she tightens them. On the quay, “the dust rose in clouds out of doors (by the wind)” (p.295);<sup>81</sup> in the theatre, there was “a sharp draught.” (p.307)<sup>82</sup> At the pier, “suddenly (he) took her in his arms and kissed her lips... but the next moment he looked behind him in alarm – had anyone seen them?” (p.296);<sup>83</sup> in the theatre, Gurov “didn’t care, and, drawing Anna Sergeyevna towards him, began kissing her face, her lips, her hands” (p.307).<sup>84</sup>

Another situation is repeated in the hotel: Anna cries twice. In the first case, she scolds herself for the ‘sin’ she had committed, fearing that Gurov would cease to respect her; in the second case, she weeps in silence, because of the hopelessness of the situation. Gurov’s attitude towards tears is also different: incomprehension and irritation in the first case and deep compassion in the second. At the hotel in Yalta, Anna says: “May God forgive me!” (p.297);<sup>85</sup> in Moscow: “they forgave one another all that they were ashamed of in the past, in their present, and felt that this love of theirs had changed them both” (p.311).<sup>86</sup> In Yalta, Gurov, irritated, eats a watermelon; in the hotel in Moscow, he drinks tea, while Anna calms down. The most important thing is that what they mean to each

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<sup>81</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>82</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>83</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>84</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>85</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>86</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.



other is changing. At the hotel in Yalta, they are only lovers; in Moscow, on the other hand, he and Anna Sergejevna “loved one another as people who are very close and intimate, as husband and wife, as dear friends love one another” (p.311).<sup>87</sup>

### 3.5 Symbolism of Colours and Objects and Lexical Oppositions

One of the ways in which subtext is constructed is in the vocabulary which, persistently repeated, draws the reader’s attention to motifs or symbols. Sometimes these lexical units form pairs of similar or opposite meanings, such as ‘the secret’ (*táina*); the Russian *skúka*, translated as the synonyms ‘boredom’ or ‘dullness’ and, in the same semantic field, ‘greyness’ (*siérost’*), ‘stiffness’ (*dukhotá*); the opposites ‘experience’ (*ópyt*) and ‘inexperience’, ‘angularity’ (*nieópytnost’*); ‘purity’ (*tchistotá*) and ‘impurity’ (*nietchistotá*) or ‘depravity’, in the sense of ‘sin’).

Much of the above appears already in the first chapter of the short story which, moreover, already displays a spatio-temporal category, composed of specific temporal events (week, second month), and a topographical category, composed of the four cities named and later present in the text, namely Yalta, Moscow, St Petersburg and the city S. The presence of both categories allows us to talk about the formation of a chronotope. In the first chapter all the main characters are already present: Gurov, Anna, the Dog, the husband, the wife and even the children. The symbolic colours *white*, *dark* and *grey* appear, a monochrome that will be observed throughout the story, with the exception of the description of the colours of the sea in the first chapter: “the water was a warm, tender purple, the moonlight lay on its surface in a golden strip” (p.294).<sup>88</sup> Another relevant colour is red: “sending a man in a red cap” (p.308),<sup>89</sup> who is the shining beacon that connects the characters, in the last chapter. Those are the only colourful elements in the story.

All these symbols, to some degree, are stable in Chekhov’s artistic system, but sometimes they can unexpectedly change their meaning, according to the author’s intention. The colour grey and ‘boredom’, for example, are a symbolic reflection of

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<sup>87</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>88</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>89</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

hopelessness, lack of spirituality and harmony in human existence. In “The Lady with the Dog,” hopelessness is symbolically set up by dust and the grey cloth, blanket and wall, which make Gurov feel an unbearable melancholy. Yet the meaning of grey changes when it is about Anna: her eyes are grey but beautiful, and her grey dress is Gurov’s favourite.

‘Secret’, in Chekhov’s world, is tightly associated with the love.<sup>90</sup> Already in the first chapter, the term ‘secret’ and its adverb are repeated twice: “he secretly considered her shallow” (p.292);<sup>91</sup> “with a secret aim she could not fail to divine” (p.294).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Anna’s very appearance as a stranger in a toque, is mysterious. Another mysterious detail appears in the second chapter: “and there was something mysterious and beautiful even in this” (p.299).<sup>93</sup> The translator chooses a synonym for ‘secret’ – ‘mystery’. Besides secrecy, another motif in the second chapter is religious, also expressed lexically: ‘I beg’, ‘sin/salvation’, ‘God/devil’,<sup>94</sup> ‘sinner’, ‘church’.

Although the text emphasises the fact that Gurov and Anna are still living the same ‘life without wings’, lying and cheating, in the last chapter (4), we can see that the author’s attitude towards the character is changing, and the author’s own point of view becomes more complex. The author’s narrative strengthens, the irony disappears; sympathy and regret emerge. The inability of the characters to find a way out of the love conflict, within the confines of the narrative, harks back to the inability of the three sisters to go to Moscow, as if nothing depended on them. Chapter 4 semantically echoes the beginning of the second: “the heat was overpowering” (in Russian – one was left not knowing where to put oneself) (p.295).<sup>95</sup> The characters become equal; not only Gurov, but also Anna acts as an independent character, given directly by the author, and for the first time her indirect speech appears: “she wept from emotion, from her bitter consciousness of the sadness of their life; they could only see one another in secret, hiding from people, as if they were thieves. Was not their life a broken one?” (p.310).<sup>96</sup> With the last few sentences,

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90 Alyokhin (1898) in the story “About Love,” says: “so far, only one incontestable truth has been uttered about love: ‘This is a great mystery.’” Translated by Constance Garnett. Available at: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/About\\_Love](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/About_Love). Accessed 26 June 2022.

<sup>91</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>92</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>93</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>94</sup> Our translation. In Russian: “*nietchisty*.”

<sup>95</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>96</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

the author seems to join the characters and their voices merge. And, if in the third chapter we find the word “end,” which would still be far away (“and how far away the end seemed to be now!”, p.307),<sup>97</sup> the last word of the tale is ‘beginning’ (*natchináietsa*): “the most complicated part was only just beginning” (p.311).<sup>98</sup>

When translating, it is very important to preserve the verbatim repetition, as it is one of the main elements of the author’s subtext. The themes, motifs, symbols, the chronotope and the rhythm of the story “The Lady with the Dog” are intrinsically linked to the theme of the narrative; they are rich in interesting material but still unexplored. Within the scope of this paper, we had the opportunity only to outline the main theses and present them as starting points for future research.

## **Final Remarks**

The depth of understanding of Chekhov in Brazil, outside the field of drama, has not yet been sufficiently explored; with this article we intend to contribute to the dialogue between Brazilian and Russian readers and the author’s world. The novelty of the research is to show the proximity between the views of Mikhail Bakhtin at the beginning of his activities as an essayist, and Anton Chekhov as a theorist of verbal creation (by analysing his letters), applying this theory to the corpora. We thus open a debate on the possibility of comparing Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas on Author-Character-Reader relations with Chekhovian views on the subject. Such ideas, as we have seen, can be illustrated by the writer’s narrative, and the combination may prove interesting for future studies.

The absence of analyses of Chekhov in Bakhtin’s works stems, in our opinion, from the pejorative image that persecuted Chekhov in the Silver Age. However, in the course of his life, Bakhtin changed his mind about Chekhov, so that today we can showcase the closeness between the two in terms of Author-Character relations and the ending of the narrative.

For both Chekhov and Bakhtin in the early phase of his essay-writing activity, all of us—readers and scholars—are involved in the process of verbal creation, along with

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<sup>97</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

<sup>98</sup> For reference, see footnote 1.

the Author/Narrator and the Character. The world portrayed by an Author passes entirely through the prism of the character's perception, which is termed by Bakhtin as 'author's surplus of vision': when the consciousness and vital (cognitive-ethical) interest in the character's event is embraced by the author's artistic interest. The dominance of aesthetics in verbal creation is emphasised by both Bakhtin and Chekhov: in the Bakhtinian view, in the same way as in the principles of Chekhov's narrative, the objective world surrounding the character pervades his self-consciousness.

In the analysis of the short story "The Lady with the Dog," we apply and attest to the functioning of Bakhtin's initial ideas in Chekhov's narrative. Although the story has been told by the Narrator, almost immediately we realise that the situation, events and characters are portrayed through the prism of the Character's perception: only what the Character sees, hears and thinks enters the reader's field of perception/consciousness. Uncertainty appears, which is only possible for the subjective consciousness of the character, and is expressed by the impersonal form of verbs, words and introductory constructions: words that convey sensations, the fatality of a fact, an emotional state, the position in space and temporary events, the verbs in indirect speech, exclamations, questions and misunderstandings about some events. The inner vision is emphasised by the lack of a portrait of Gurov, as opposed to the appearance of other characters who enter his field of vision. We demonstrated the parallel between the legend of Don Juan and presented our own version of the origin of the title of the story analysed here: the intertextuality between "The Lady with the Dog," by Anton Chekhov, and *The Lady of the Camellias*, by Alexandre Dumas fils.

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We confirm that the article was written by us in equal parts, including:

1. Conception and design or analysis and interpretation of data;
2. Article writing or relevant critical review of intellectual content;
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