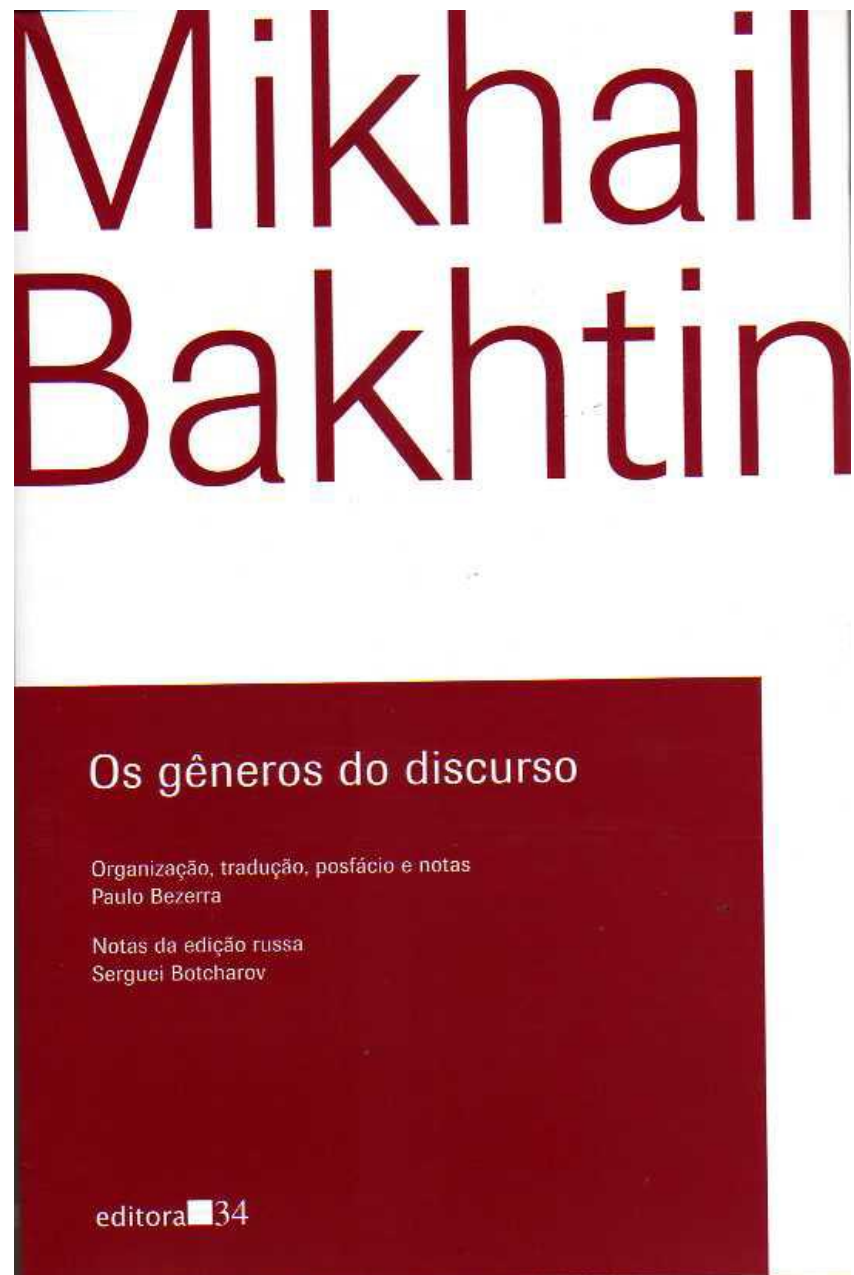


BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Os gêneros do discurso* [Speech Genres]. Paulo Bezerra (Organização, Tradução, Posfácio e Notas); Notas da edição russa: Serguei Botcharov. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016. 164p.

*Beth Brait**



* Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo – PUC/SP, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; CNPq-PQ n°. [303643/2014-5](https://doi.org/10.1590/2176-457329562); bbrait@uol.com.br

Why do particular texts, literary or otherwise, fare better translations than others in the same target language, without the order of appearance disqualifying the earlier version? And if the translation is done by the same translator, what justifies the (re)translation? Clearly, there are multiple answers that necessarily depend on how the passage of a text from one language to another is conceived. If, for example, we perceive translation as a distinct relationship, established between a text of departure and a context of arrival, which implies ways of reading/re-reading a work and its author, it will be possible to consider not only the idiosyncrasies of the careful translator who circles over the same text more than once, and who, with his/her magnifying glass, pursues the stylistic-meanings of the dialogue established between the two languages, between two productive consciences and in a state of tension, but also, the possibility of recognizing particularities of space-time in which the translation and the (re)translations occur. The new context of reception, simultaneously, involves a space-time tradition of studies regarding the author/work/translation, and the possibility of granting a unique status to the new work of the translator, to the original text, and to the (re)translation that is distinct from earlier versions.

It is in this vein that *Mikhail Bakhtin: os gêneros do discurso* [*Mikhail Bakhtin: speech genres*] should be understood, made available to readers in 2016, represents advances and new meanings in Bakhtinian studies in Brazil. The critic, essayist, professor and researcher, Paulo Bezerra – recognized for his important literary translations and for being one of the scholars responsible for the existence of Mikhail Bakhtin in Portuguese – revives two texts he has already translated directly from the Russian. These texts were previously published in 2003 in the collection *Estética da criação verbal* [Aesthetics of Verbal Creation], titled: “Speech Genres,” and “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experience in Philosophical Analysis.” The latter was renamed, “O texto na linguística, na filologia e em outras ciências humanas: um experimento de análise filosófica” [The Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experience in Philosophical Analysis], as well as two previously unpublished works – Diálogo I. A questão do discurso dialógico and Diálogo II (Dialogue I. the question of the dialogical discourse, and Dialogue II). These were originally published in Russia in 1997.

Undoubtedly, this translational event – joining significantly modified versions of the two texts that, together with others by the Russian thinker, are central to the understanding of concepts, such as *speech genres, utterance, text, communicative chain, communicative discourse chain, cultural communication fields* – will excite scholars for at least two reasons. For the *aesthetic* of Paulo Bezerra’s translations, which are renowned products of scientific-academic rigor, for the ethical character of the research, always attentive to his state-of-the-art translations, and current scholarship on the writings of the author of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetic*, notably in Russia, where he seeks out and confirms sources. And for the presentation of two new writers, who focus on dialogue, another essential richness of Bakhtinian theoretical-philosophical reflections, as Bezerra affirms, “even as preparatory texts for *Speech Genres*, they discuss similar questions not addressed in this work, and bring sketches of theory projects that the master intended to develop, revealing his persistent preoccupation with developing and deepening his theory of discourse, widening its reach to various fields of the humanities” (p.151).¹

Therefore, the gesture implicates (re)translation, with the addition of unpublished translations, as a return of the translator-researcher to the Russian sources, in this case, *Estética da criação verbal* [The Aesthetics of Verbal Creation] (Moscow, Iskustvo, 1979, organization and notes by Serguei Botcharov) and the tome of *The Collected Works of M.M. Bakhtin*, (Moscow, 1997, organized by Botcharov and Liudmila Gogotichvíli). The immediate consequence, highly positive for Brazilian readers and Bakhtinian scholarship in general, is an editorial decision that rethinks the nature of the texts in *Estética da criação verbal* [The Aesthetics of Verbal Creation] – published posthumously in Russia.

This anthology, extremely well known in Brazil, was first translated from the French by Maria Ermantina Galvão G. Pereira in 1992, but has had, since 2003, a version translated directly from the Russian by Paulo Bezerra. It comprises the texts “*Speech Genres*,” “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experience in Philosophical Analysis” as well as other various works

¹ Text in Portuguese: “mesmo sendo textos preparatórios de ‘Os gêneros do discurso’, discutem questões congêneres não contempladas nessa obra e trazem rascunhos de projetos teóricos que o mestre pretendia desenvolver, revelando sua permanente preocupação com o aprofundamento e uma maior abrangência de sua teoria do discurso em vários campos das humanidades.”

produced at different times by Mikhail Bakhtin. As Paulo Bezerra affirms, “it is not a book that is thematically organized; there are three books in one, each one different with regard to the objects of analysis and reflection, along with two texts about Dostoyevsky and another four on different themes in the humanities” (p.151).² In other words, it is a collection that could actually be dismantled, using a criteria of relatedness and coherence among the works, and thus providing the contemporary reader with a panorama that clarifies how some constructs of Bakhtinian thought appeared, being worked and reworked, demonstrating their role, function and participation in building the architectonic that directs and protects the collection of this intense thought on language.

And it is exactly this perspective that, considering the possibility of coherent groupings of the comprised in *Estética da criação verbal* [Aesthetics of Verbal Creation], presents *Speech Genres* as the first four volumes previewed. In this sense, the reader asks: “What is the thematic coherence that accounts for, in this first volume, of the two works known added to the two unpublished?”

Scholars concerned with some of the main threads of Bakhtinian thought have sought to establish, among other things, the relationship that exists between the concepts of utterance (at times *concrete utterance*, even *enunciation* in some translations), *text*, *discourse*, *speech genres*, *discursive communication chain*, *fields or spheres of cultural communication*, without a doubt pillars of construction of Bakhtinian reflection, focused on the language in the arts and humanities and, especially, the way these elements constitute units and links to the understanding of the dynamic process of human communication and discursive chains.

This search necessarily brings these two works –“*Speech Genres*” (1952-53) and “Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experience in Philosophical Analysis” (1959-61) – produced by Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1950s and early 1960s, closer in very pertinent ways. In them, the concepts mentioned are presented, thematized, discussed and included in the construction of a dialogic perspective and approach of the language, as well as interlinked in an interdependence that evokes other writings by Bakhtin, as in the case of “Discourse in the Novel”

² Text in Portuguese: “não é um livro tematicamente uniforme; são três livros em um, todos diferentes entre si pelos objetos de análise e reflexão, além de dois textos sobre Dostoiévski e outros quatro sobre diferentes temas de ciências humanas.”

(initiated in 1929 and concluded between 1934 and 1936, published for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1972).

The ongoing effort to more fully understand the meaning of these fundamental constructs, from a dialogic perspective of language, be they *speech genres*, *utterance*, or *text*, is facilitated by the organization of this first volume, dismantling *Estética da criação verbal* [The Aesthetic of Verbal Creation], precisely in the way discourse, genre and utterance are articulated in relation to text and vice-versa.

In “Speech genres,” we find an instance of the Bakhtinian concept of language that systematizes the importance of the notion of genre, through the understanding of language in movement, full of life and mobility, exposed in the *say-what-you-will* of the buzz of life and culture, of life *in* culture, be it artistic or scientific, of the utterance as a dialogical unit of tension between self/other, between at least two consciousness, between identities/otherness, between language/unit, preserved at great cost by centripetal forces, and the language/plurality, multifaceted, fully manifested by the provocative centrifugal forces of heteroglossia. And it is precisely because of this duality – unity/uniqueness – that important discussions are found in “Discourse Genres,” which concern the realities represented by the sentence/phrase, while the unit/model of the set of possibilities of a system and *utterance*, oral or written, proffers a concrete and unique form by members of different spheres of human activity.

While the theme of *speech genres* accompanies the Russian thinker throughout his entire life, this presence, alive in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and in “Discourse in the Novel,” for example, the concept of text as an ideological semiotic unit is reiterated as well, throughout the breadth of his work, and receiving special focus in “Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experience in Philosophical Analysis.” In it he writes, “behind each text is a system of language... Concomitantly, however, each text (as utterance) is something individual, unique and singular, and in this resides all of its meaning... This second element (pole) is inherent to the text itself, but is only revealed in a situation and chain of the texts (in the discursive communication of the given field)” (p.74-75).³

³ Text in Portuguese: “[...] por trás de cada texto está o sistema da linguagem. [...]. Concomitantemente, porém, cada texto (como enunciado) é algo individual, único e singular, e nisso reside todo o seu sentido [...]. Esse segundo elemento (polo) é inerente ao próprio texto, mas só se revela numa situação e na cadeia dos textos (na comunicação discursiva de dado campo).”

The highlighted excerpt indicates two implied dimensions, observed in “*Speech Genres*, which are evoked as a condition of the existence of a text: the materiality of the sign or *semiotic dimension*, that constitutes it and makes it a participant of a system; the *singularity* that is conferred on it from its effective and active participation in the chain of the discursive communication of life in society. This constitutive combination of given elements (system) and elements created (language in use) makes it possible to recognize a text as pertaining to a system (linguistic, pictorial, musical, etc.), and, at the same time, as a carrier of values, positions that guarantee the production of meanings, always in confrontation with other positions and values present in society, and in a culture. According to Bakhtin, “Where there is no text, there is no object of research and thought” (p. 71).⁴

The two unpublished texts have their own unique piquancy. The title evokes one of the key ingredients of Bakhtinian theory – dialogue – conceived as constitutive of human language, and not just as a structure of conversation. Dialogue I (1950) and Dialogue II (1952), published in 1997 in volume 5 of the *Collected Works of Bakhtin* (Russkie Slovari Editor), certainly surprises, as Bezerra affirms:

At first glance, they are sketches of what would come to be the final text of “Discourse Genres”, however, an attentive reading shows that Bakhtin goes beyond the book projected... In the entire bakhtinian concept, human language is seen through the dialogical prism, but in these “dialogues”, a dialogic nature was attributed to the language itself, which, in my view, is a novelty in the linguistic theory of Bakhtin (p.111).⁵

To this coherent collection, Paulo Bezerra even adds an afterword, which is actually a substantial essay of nearly twenty pages, suggestively entitled, “At the threshold of various sciences.” In it he characterizes the coherence of the quartet, as a theoretical composition, linked by one of the thematic units of Bakhtinian thought itself, relating it to other works by the author, discussing the importance of this grouping, and furthering, at this moment in Bakhtinian studies, the understanding of complex

⁴ Text in Portuguese: “Onde não há texto não há objeto de pesquisa e pensamento.”

⁵ Text in Portuguese: “À primeira vista são rascunhos do que viria a ser o texto final de “Os gêneros do discurso”, porém, uma leitura atenta mostra que Bakhtin vai além do livro projetado. [...] Em toda a concepção bakhtiniana a linguagem humana é vista sob um prisma dialógico, mas nesses “diálogos” atribui-se à própria língua uma natureza dialógica, o que, a meu ver, é uma novidade na teoria linguística de Bakhtin.”

intricacies of Speech Genres — a work that is not always regarded in its actual specificities, or in consonance with other works by Mikhail Bakhtin. And in this way the (re)translation is justified, achieving its form and place in Brazilian culture.

Translated by Jennifer Sarah Cooper – jennifersarahj@gmail.com

Received September 20, 2016

Accepted April 07, 2017