

The Limits of Proofreading Literary Texts Based on the Concepts of Authorship and Style in Bakhtin / *Os limites para a revisão do texto literário a partir dos conceitos de autoria e estilo de Bakhtin*

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ABSTRACT

Although the relationship between writers and proofreaders is traditionally tense, proofreading literary texts especially is no longer limited to regulatory aspects, such as spelling or typing correction. It expands to the observation of aspects, such as verisimilitude and narrative concatenation, which go beyond textual issues. Such tasks, however, can increase the tension between the writer and the proofreader as they bring authorship and style into play, which can be noticed in works, such as *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*. This study deals exactly with the limits of the proofreader, seeking, in Bakhtin's Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity and The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art, the concepts of authorship and style that can contribute to the understanding of the limits of the proofreader's intervention. Such limits are set, as we will see, because the proofreader can never interfere directly in the basic sense of the world and of the "axiological value" expressed by the aesthetic object, under the risk of interfering with "style" and "authorship."

KEYWORDS: Proofreading; Review of the Literary Text; Authorship; Style

RESUMO

Embora a relação dos escritores com os revisores seja tradicionalmente tensa, a revisão textual, sobretudo no texto literário, não se limita mais a aspectos normativos, como correção ortográfica ou de digitação, ampliando-se para a observação de aspectos como verossimilhança e encadeamento narrativo. Tais atribuições, porém, podem ampliar a tensão entre escritor e revisor à medida que coloca em jogo a autoria e o estilo, como ilustrado em obras como História do cerco de Lisboa. Este estudo trata exatamente dos limites para o revisor textual, buscando nos ensaios O autor e a personagem na atividade estética e O problema do conteúdo, do material e da forma na criação literária, de Mikhail Bakhtin, os conceitos de autoria e de estilo que possam contribuir para o entendimento do limite da intervenção do revisor. Tal limite se dá, como se verá, por ele jamais poder interferir diretamente no sentido básico do mundo e do "valor axiológico" expressos pelo objeto estético, sob pena de interferir no estilo e na autoria.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Revisão textual; Revisão do texto literário; Autoria; Estilo

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Introduction

The relationship between writers and proofreaders is traditionally tense, a tension expressed in works such as *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, by José Saramago.¹ The Portuguese writer created Raimundo Silva, a proofreader who feels compelled to “betray” the author by putting a “no” before a sentence and changing the meaning of the text.

Such a function of proofreading, however, is naturally necessary and understood as fundamental not only by the editors but also by the writers themselves, responsible for a first review of their texts. Manuel Bandeira, for example, in *Itinerário de Pasárgada* [*Itinerary of Pasárgada*] even defends that revisions can give a new life to the poem:

How many times have I also seen in poets of accurate taste in the verses a defective or expressionless act of loading themselves with poetry by the incantatory effect of one or a few words, expressing, however, the same feeling or the same idea from the replaced ones. Compare, for example, the poem *Mocidade e Morte* [Youth and Death], by Castro Alves, as it appeared in *Espumas Flutuantes* [Floating Foams], with the first release in 1864, and published in São Paulo around 1868-69 under the title *O Tísico* [The Consumptive]. In the first octave there is the verse *In the bosom of the brunette there is so much blackberry!* In the final version “blackberry” was replaced by “aroma.” Naturally, the poet mused that the blackberries in the bosom of the brunette are not many, only two, and later corrected the verse “In the woman's bosom there is so much aroma.” The superiority is obvious (1986, p.41, emphasis in the original, our translation).²

Clearly, the example given by Bandeira refers to a change observed by the author himself, but is the literary text not also subject to reviews or even proposals for improvements by the other parties involved in its editing, as the proofreader? Is that not exactly one of the tasks of the proofreader, especially in increasingly leaner editing teams that often do not even have an editor or a copy editor?

¹ SARAMAGO, J. *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*. Translated by Giovanni Pontiero. London: Random House, 2011.

² Text in original: “Quantas vezes também vi, em poetas de gosto certo nas emendas, um verso defeituoso ou inexpressivo carregar-se de poesia pelo efeito encantatório de uma ou de algumas palavras, exprimindo, no entanto, o mesmo sentimento ou a mesma ideia que as substituídas. Compare-se, por exemplo, o poema *Mocidade e morte*, de Castro Alves, como apareceu em *Espumas flutuantes*, com a primeira versão de 1864, e publicada em São Paulo por volta de 1868-69 sob o título *O tísico*. Na oitava inicial havia o verso *No seio da morena há tanta amora!*. Na versão definitiva “amora” foi substituída por “aroma”. Naturalmente o poeta ponderou que as amoras do peito das morenas não são tantas, duas apenas, e mais tarde corrigiu o verso para “No seio da mulher há tanto aroma”. A superioridade é óbvia.

Admitting so, then a new and difficult discussion about the limits of the proofreading activity in the literary text begins – a text that is distinguished by the distinctive form of language organization, which has a direct impact on its own linguistic structure, the proofreader’s field of work.

In order to attempt to propose the beginning of a reflection on the limits of proofreading the literary text, assuming, as a premise, that the linguistic revision is no longer restricted to the correction of grammatical rules, as we shall see, we sought the reading of *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* and *The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art*, which is required, as it will be shown, to the understanding of the concepts of authorship and style in Bakhtin.

1 Proofreading Beyond the Linguistic Revision

Raimundo Silva, the celebrated character of Saramago in *History of the Siege of Lisbon*,³ became a symbol of the proofreader’s betrayal when he deliberately put a “no” in the author’s text, changing the meaning of the sentence about a key episode in the history of Portugal (the help of Crusaders to the Portuguese to seize Lisbon from the Moors). With such a measure, Raimundo, in full consciousness, infringed the “ethical code, unwritten but regulating the actions of proof-readers in relation to the ideas and opinions of authors” (SARAMAGO, 2011, p.40).⁴

However, Saramago’s novel brings, perhaps more importantly than the deliberate action of the proofreader, a long and deep reflection on the place of proofreaders, who sees themselves as undervalued and distressed professionals, squeezed between the author, to whom an almost sacred respect is due, and the editor, who, all in all, is their employer. Such devaluation and distress are found throughout the novel, emerging early in the text, in a monumental dialogue between the proofreader and the author.

The dialogue, though full of ironies and silences, reveals a certain complicity between the two figures, and the author even states that proofreaders are “guardian angels”: “in you we put your trust, you, for example, remind me of my caring mother, who would comb the parting in my hair, over and over again, until it looked as if it had

³ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁴ For reference, see footnote 1.

been made with a ruler” (SARAMAGO, 2011, p.4)⁵. Further on, however, the same author uses the expression “proofreading fraternity” (SARAMAGO, 2011, p.4),⁶ and Raimundo Silva, after lamenting the hardness of the profession, refers to the anecdote of Apelles to illustrate to his customer the role of the proofreader:

Consider, sir, the daily life of the proof-readers, think of the horror of having to read once, twice, three or four or five times books that Probably would not warrant a first reading, Take note that it was not I who spoke such grave words, I am all too aware of my place in literary circles [...] If you want to know, consult the authors, provoke them with what I have half said and with what you have half said, and you will see how they respond with the famous anecdote of Apelles and the shoemaker, when the craftsman pointed out an error in the sandal worn by one of the figures and then, having verified that the artist had corrected the mistake, ventured to give his opinion about the anatomy of the knee, At that point, Apelles, enraged at his insolence, told him, Cobbler, stick to your last, a historic phrase, Nobody likes people peering over the wall of his backyard (SARAMAGO, 2011, pp.5-6).⁷

Much of the anguish that Raimundo expresses, one can affirm, is derived from the limitation that has been imposed to the proofreader’s work by the very “manuals of style”. Ildete Oliveira Pinto, in *O livro: manual de preparação e revisão* [The Book: Manual of Preparation and Editing] says that the proofreader’s task is “to discover any errors that have been made in the composition and give instructions for correction” (1993, p.126, our translation).⁸ Henry Saatkamp, in *Preparação e Revisão de originais* [Preparation and Edition of Manuscripts], states that the proofreader has an “arduous task, which requires dual attention from the professionals: to the meaning of the text and to spelling correctness” (1996, p.66, our translation).⁹ And even a recent work, such as *Livros: um guia para autores* [Books: A Guide for Authors], by Paulo Tedesco, devalues the role of the proofreader when he says that this is “a cheap alternative to having a copy editor” (2015, p89, our translation).¹⁰ According to this author, “many publishers hire language teachers and students, or already have their proofreaders, who make that *quick*

⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁷ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁸ Text in original: “descobrir quaisquer erros que tenham sido cometidos na composição e dar instruções para sua correção.”

⁹ Text in original: “tarefa árdua, que exige dos profissionais dupla atenção: para o sentido do texto e para sua correção ortográfica.”

¹⁰ Text in original: “a forma barata de se ter um copidesque.”

proofreading of the use of Portuguese, who suggest some specific changes and essential corrections to the fluency in the reading of the book” (TEDESCO, 2015 p.89, emphasis added, our translation).¹¹

Luiz Roberto Malta, in *Manual do revisor* [Proofreader’s Guide], expands the proofreader’s tasks a little, although, as we shall see in the following list, these functions remain restricted to normative, supervision-like tasks, as the loving mother of the author of the siege of Lisbon:

- Proofread the manuscripts approved for editing by publishers;
- Proofread (if they know other languages) translations, comparing them with the original books;
- Proofread the second proofs, based on the first ones and, when necessary, referring to the original (including, if necessary, the book);
- Proofread (less common, but it happens) the third proofs, based on the second ones;
- Examine (the word “proofread” would not fit well here) the blueprints (it is not very common, but if the proof-reader is an employee of a publishing house, they will eventually do this work);
- Proofread (unusual, but it happens) films that have given or will give rise to blueprints; and finally,
- Reread books which are already published, due to modifications that the author wants to make for a new edition, or when it is suspected that the published edition contains errors (MALTA, 2000, p.16, our translation).¹²

On the other hand, although Coelho Neto, in *Além da revisão: critérios para revisão textual* [Beyond Reviewing: Criteria for Proofreading], strongly recommends that proofreaders know their limits by not giving evidence, before starting a proofreading job, of being a frustrated author, changing a text indefinitely. He further exemplifies some proofreaders’ tasks that go beyond the simple spelling and syntactical correctness, stating that they must always be aware of “the ambiguity caused by using terms in sentences”

¹¹ Text in original: “muitas editoras contratam professores e acadêmicos de letras ou têm já seus revisores, que fazem aquela *rápida* revisão no uso do português, que sugerem algumas mudanças pontuais e correções essenciais para a fluência na leitura do livro.”

¹² Text in original: “• Revisar os originais aprovados para edição pelas editoras; • Revisar (se tiver conhecimento de outros idiomas) as traduções, cotejando-as com os livros originais); • Revisar as segundas provas, tomando como base as primeiras e, quando necessário, reportando-se aos originais (inclusive, ainda se preciso, ao livro); • Revisar (menos comum, mas ocorre) terceiras provas, tendo como base as segundas; • Examinar (a palavra “revisar” não caberia bem aqui) as heliográficas (não é muito comum, mas se o revisor for funcionário de uma editora, acabará fazendo esse trabalho); • Revisar (incomum, mas acontece) filmes que deram ou darão origem a heliográficas; e, finalmente, • Reler livros já publicados, em função de modificações que o autor quer fazer para uma nova edição, ou quando se desconfia que a edição publicada contém erros.”

(2013, p.109, our translation),¹³ “the chronological order (no one leaves before entering, nobody publishes things before birth, etc.) and the number of items and sub-items” (2013, p.110, our translation),¹⁴ of the emphases, typing, marks of orality in formal texts. It is necessary to identify the “target audience of the text to admit or not colloquial terms or vulgar expressions” (2013, p.112, our translation),¹⁵ repetitions and twitches.

This conception that the proofreader should not be limited to normative aspects has grown in recent years, perhaps on the one hand due to the strengthening of sociolinguistic views on what is correct or not in textual expression, and on the other hand, the constant improvement of the software programs that offer automatic proofreading. The fact is that not only broader tasks are assigned to the proofreader in the textual context, but also one begins to work with the idea of proofreading beyond the linguistic revision:

Upon receiving a text to assess, proofreading professionals, in a first reading, may have their attention drawn to more superficial aspects of the text, such as spelling or grammatical problems (agreement, regency, use of pronouns, among others), but it is necessary to remember that, if the tasks of proofreading were in a specific order, the last step would be to verify these aspects. Before verifying them, the reviewer needs to cling to two fundamental aspects of a text: its genre and its textuality. These are the aspects that will ensure the readability and overall adequacy of the text. Moreover, to evaluate these aspects, usually more than one text reading should be done; thus, proofreaders will have a better understanding of the text with which they are dealing (COELHO; ANTUNES, 2010, p.207, our translation).¹⁶

Considering this view, when proofreading literary texts, for example, aspects such as verisimilitude and narrative concatenation, which go beyond the basic textual issues, can and must be observed by the proofreader. The proofreader is thus seen as a privileged,

¹³ Text in original: “à ambiguidade promovida pela colocação dos termos na oração.”

¹⁴ Text in original: “a ordens cronológicas (ninguém sai antes de entrar, ninguém publica coisas antes de nascer, etc) e numeração de itens e subitens.”

¹⁵ Text in original: “público-alvo do texto para admitir ou não termos da linguagem coloquial ou expressões chulas.”

¹⁶ Text in original: “Ao receber um texto para avaliar, o profissional da revisão, em uma primeira leitura, pode ter sua atenção despertada para aspectos mais superficiais do texto, tais como problemas ortográficos ou gramaticais (concordância, regência, uso de pronomes, entre outros), mas é necessário lembrar que, se se fossem ordenar as tarefas de uma revisão textual, a última etapa seria a verificação desses aspectos. Antes de verificá-los, o revisor precisa ater-se a dois aspectos fundamentais de um texto: seu gênero e sua textualidade. São esses aspectos que irão garantir a legibilidade e adequação globais do texto. Além do mais, para se avaliar tais aspectos, geralmente mais de uma leitura do texto deve ser feita, assim o revisor passará a ter um conhecimento mais aprofundado do texto com o qual lida.”

attentive and skilled reader, who is able to contribute to the text both in the linguistic and in the structural dimension. Perpetua (2008) even compares the proofreader with a translator, since the proofreader casts a new vision on the text, a new look that will give rise to another text.

It is necessary, however, that the limits of such interventions be also sought. As much as proofreaders need not to be restricted to checking writing flaws, it is necessary to think about the extent their interventions can go without interfering in the author's voice, especially the author of literary texts, which are greatly marked by style: "by modifying the texts from their points of view, which are not exactly the same as the authors', the reviewers operate on what we call the appropriation of the text" (PERPÉTUA, 2008, p85, our translation).¹⁷ At this point, we turn to the Bakhtinian concepts of authorship and style to offer a brief discussion on the limits of proofreading literary texts.

2 Authorship and Style in Bakhtin

The potential resources of literary texts are very wide and varied. So much so that, if one sought to establish rules, discuss the limits and possibilities of intervention by the proofreader of this type of text, one would certainly incur in improprieties, since what applies to one case does not necessarily apply to another. Therefore, the search for theoretical principles appears as the safest way to achieve the objectives of the work. The Russian theorist proved to be very suitable for these purposes, given the attention he dispenses to the processing of materials and concrete elements of language even when he reaches high levels of abstraction.

Bakhtin (1990)¹⁸ studies the literary text and its limits, limits that are built through the relation with the other verbal productions, as well as the aesthetics of the arts in general. To address these formulations for the study of the proofreading of the literary text, the concepts of *content*, *material* and *form*, as well as other concepts, which relate

¹⁷ Text in original: "modificando os textos a partir de seus pontos de vista, que não são propriamente os mesmos das autoras, os revisores operam o que chamamos de uma apropriação do texto."

¹⁸ BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art. In: *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.257-326.

to these and clarify them, as *aesthetic object*, *compositional form* and *architectonic form* will be analyzed.

2.1 Content, Material and Form

The content is an “indispensable moment or constituent [...] in the aesthetic object” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.266).¹⁹ Among the elements that constitute the work of art, the primary relation of the artist is with the content. Only later, and considering that first relation, is “the artist’s relationship to words as words” established, “a secondary, derivative moment, which depends on his primary relationship to context, i.e., the immediate givenness of a lived life and the world of that life (the cognitive, ethical tension of that life” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.195).²⁰ This pre-existing reality in the condition of the artistic content is not presented to the author in a completely chaotic way; it is previously reworked. It has nothing to do with a “random and unordered matter that is completely indifferent to value. [...] No reality *in itself*, no *neutral* reality, can be placed in opposition to art: by the very fact that we speak of it and oppose it to something, we determine it and evaluate it in some way” (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.274; 275-276, emphasis in the original).²¹

Unlike the other phenomena of culture, as science, which seeks to build a reality that is “pure, [...] where only the unity of truth is sovereign” and ethics, which seeks to establish “*the relation of the ought to reality*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.277; 278, emphasis in the original),²² art embodies this reality, even if filtered by the author, without denying its existence prior to the work. In the words of Bakhtin:

The basic feature of the aesthetic that sharply distinguishes it from cognition and performed action is its receptive, positively accepting character, which enters into the work (or, to be exact, into the aesthetic object) and there becomes an indispensable constitutive moment. In this sense, we can say that in actuality life is found not only outside art but in it, within it, in all the fullness of its value –bearing weightiness – social, political, cognitive, and so on. Art is rich – it is not arid, not

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁰ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. In: *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

²¹ For reference, see footnote 18.

²² For reference, see footnote 18.

specialized. The artist is a specialist only as a master-craftsman, that is, only in relation to the given material (1990, p.278).²³

The Russian theorist thus conceptualizes “aesthetic object” precisely as the “content of the aesthetic activity (contemplation) directed toward a work” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.267).²⁴ The aesthetic object is different from the “external work itself, which admits of other approaches, and among these, first of all the primary cognitive approach, i.e., sensory perception ordered by *concepts*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.267, emphasis in the original),²⁵ that is, something whose content is not dependent on the pre-existing reality, but is apprehended only by knowledge. The content of the aesthetic object is then defined as

The reality of cognition and ethical action that enters (as an al-ready identified and evaluated reality) into the aesthetic object and is subjected there to concrete, intuitive unification, individuation, concretization, isolation, and consummation, i.e., to a process of comprehensive artistic forming by means of a particular material (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.281, emphasis in the original).²⁶

Having established the concept of the content of the work of art, it is precisely the meaning of the material, referred above, for the aesthetic object of poetry²⁷ that Bakhtin seeks to understand in order to continue his studies on literary creation. Directly, the author defines that for the proper understanding of this problem for the proposed purpose, “this question does not concern at all the linguistic peculiarities of poetic language (as some are inclined to reinterpret this problem), but concerns the significance of the language of linguistics in its entirety as material for poetry, and this problem is purely aesthetic in character”. This is because “the extra-aesthetic nature of the material (in

²³ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁶ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁷ In *The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art* in the section that deals with the material, Bakhtin refers to poetry with more emphasis, saying it is the poetry (in relation to the verbal artistic creations in general) that interests him the most in addressing this concept. This is possibly due to the fact that, as he says, “*poetry utilizes the language of linguistics technically in an altogether special way: poetry needs language in its entirety, in all its facets and all its constituents-poetry does not remain indifferent to any nuance of the word studied by linguistics*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.294, emphasis added). There is no reason, as per what has been studied so far, to assume any radical difference between the treatment that the concept of material receives the study of poetry and for what it receives the treatment of other verbal artistic creations, it can be understood, indeed, that poetry potentiates the use of the material. Therefore, in this study, these differences will not be addressed.

distinction to content) does not enter into the aesthetic object” (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.294-295).²⁸

The material composes the aesthetic object but is not the object; it is not to be taken for the object: “The author-artist’s creative consciousness is never *coincident* with language consciousness: language consciousness is no more than a constituent, a material that is totally governed by the purely artistic task” (BAKHTIN, 2010a, p.179, emphasis in italics in the original).²⁹ That is the reason why “to compose a semantic dictionary according to subjects not yet mean at all that we have come into the presence of creative art” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.194).³⁰ What matters in the treatment of the use of the word as material in literary creation is that “all the verbal interconnections and inter-relations of a linguistic and compositional order are transformed into extraverbal architectonic events”³¹ (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.297).³² That is, the work with the word interests from the aesthetic point of view in that it transcends its own verbal nature, not directly toward the outside world, but toward the aesthetic object itself, the possible world of the aesthetically prepared material.

The linguistic form remains outside the aesthetic object, unlike its “axiological significance,” which actually penetrates it: “The significance of material in artistic creation is defined: while it does not enter into the aesthetic object in its material, extra-aesthetic determinateness, it is indispensable for the construction of the aesthetic object as a technical element” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.302).³³

Indissolubly linked to the content and to the material of the work of art is the form:

Form cannot be understood independently of content, but neither can it be independent of the nature of the material used and the devices determined by the latter. Form is conditioned by the given content, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the particular nature of the material and the methods of working that material. A purely material artistic task would constitute a technical experiment. An artistic device cannot be solely a device of working the verbal material (words as a linguistic datum); it must be first and foremost a device of working a particular

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 18.

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 20.

³⁰ For reference, see footnote 18.

³¹ Following in the text, note the difference between the compositional and architectural forms to Bakhtin.

³² For reference, see footnote 18.

³³ For reference, see footnote 18.

content, except that it must do so by means of a particular material (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.192).³⁴

For Bakhtin “artistic form is the form of content, but a form which is realized entirely in the material – is attached to the material.” That is why its study can be undertaken in two directions, “from within the pure aesthetic object, as architectonic form, axiologically directed toward content” or “from within the compositional material whole of the work-this is the study of the technique of form” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.303).³⁵ The form takes place entirely in the material, but maintains an axiological relation to the content; it is always the form of that content. This is achieved by the “primary function of the form,” the “isolation,” something similar to the “unfamiliarity” conceptualized by the Russian formalists. The author draws attention to the fact that it is not the material that is isolated/estranged, but the form, the word “by way of destroying its habitual place in a semantic series” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.307).³⁶ The form still constitutes the unit of the artistic object in encompassing the “content from the outside.” This unit is created “by the feeling of valuational activity” (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.311; 312).³⁷

The inseparability between content and form is so strong that the author states that content is a “moment of form” and then explains that “the form relativizes content completely; this is the sense of the assertion which makes content a moment of form” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.283).³⁸ Further on, he adds: “the aesthetic object is not a thing, since its form.” This happens in such a way that it is necessary to “understand the form as the form of content, and the content as the content of form, to understand the distinctiveness of law and their interrelationship” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.317).³⁹

The way these interrelations are established also deserve Bakhtin’s special attention. He distinguishes the compositional form from the architectonic form. The latter corresponds to the “*aesthetic object in its purely artistic distinctiveness*” and the first as “completely apart from the aesthetic object” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.267, emphasis added).⁴⁰ Unlike compositional forms, architectonic forms “*enter into the aesthetic*

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 20.

³⁵ For reference, see footnote 18.

³⁶ For reference, see footnote 18.

³⁷ For reference, see footnote 18.

³⁸ For reference, see footnote 18.

³⁹ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁴⁰ For reference, see footnote 18.

object” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.270, emphasis added).⁴¹ There is a hierarchy in the relations between one and the other, “that the architectonics of the artistic world determines the composition of a work (the order, the disposition, the concatenation, and the consummation of verbal masses), and not vice versa” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.197).⁴² The compositional analysis is technical, not artistic, since the understanding of the architectonic form requires aesthetic perception.

The compositional forms, organizing the material, have a teleological, implemental character, a "restless" character, as it were, and they are subject to a purely technical evaluation: to what extent have they adequately fulfilled their architectonic task? The architectonic form determines the choice of the compositional form. Thus, the form of tragedy (a form of the event, and to some extent that of a person-the tragic character) selects the appropriate compositional form - the dramatic form (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.270).⁴³

2.2 Authorship and Style

The understanding of the previous concepts is fundamental to the comprehension of authorship and style in Bakhtin. For him, the artistic creation corresponds to a form of organization of the fictional world in which the author participates from outside. This is because the artistic event depends on the existence of the relationship between the “I” and the “other,” because only then is it possible to make “*any actual valuation*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.174, emphasis in the original).⁴⁴ The horizon of the author cannot shut itself completely and keep this relation: “My own axiological relationship to myself is completely unproductive aesthetically: for myself, I am aesthetically unreal. I can be only the bearer of the task of artistic forming and consummating, not its object - not the hero” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.188).⁴⁵ The aesthetic creation makes it clear to see in the man and his world “that which he himself is in principle incapable of seeing in himself, and do so while remaining in oneself and living one's own life in earnest; one must be able to approach him not from the standpoint of a lived life, but from a different standpoint -

⁴¹ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁴² For reference, see footnote 20.

⁴³ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁴⁴ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁴⁵ For reference, see footnote 20.

from a standpoint that is active outside a lived life” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.190).⁴⁶ Thus, “all of the world's values enter into the aesthetic object, but they do so with a particular aesthetic coefficient, and the author's position as well as the artistic task he has set himself must be understood in the world in conjunction with all these values” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.190):⁴⁷

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

The author must be situated on the boundary of the world he is bringing into being as the active creator of this world, for his intrusion into that world destroys its aesthetic stability (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.191).⁴⁸

In a later work, the relationship of the author with the work is expressed directly: “The aesthetic object is a creation that includes its creator within itself” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.316).⁴⁹ In the case of the author of literary texts, “the artist fashions the world by means of words, and to this end words must be immanently surmounted as words and must become an expression of the world of others and of the author's relationship to that world” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.195).⁵⁰ It is important to recall that the relationship of the artist with the word is secondary and it precedes (in hierarchical terms) the relation with the content, with the world, so much so that the

[...] *verbal* style (the author's relationship to language and the methods of operating with language as determined by that relationship) is a reflection in the given nature of the material of the author's *artistic* style (of his relationship to a life and the world of that life, and of the method of shaping a human being and his world as determined by that relationship). Artistic style works not with words, but with constituent features of the world, with the values of the world and of life; it could be defined as the sum total of the devices for giving form to and consummating a human being and his world. And it is this style that also determines the relationship to the given material (words), whose nature we must know of course in order to be able to understand that relationship (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.195).⁵¹

⁴⁶ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁴⁷ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁴⁸ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁴⁹ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁵⁰ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁵¹ For reference, see footnote 20.

The style does not appear only in specific parts of the work, but it also relates to the wholeness of its organization, “a correct formulation of *the problem of the style* (one of the most important problems of aesthetics), is impossible without a rigorous distinction of architectonic and compositional forms” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.271, emphasis in the original).⁵² It is necessary to distinguish the artistic style in a macro-structural level (in regards to the architectonic form) from the verbal style (in regards to the compositional form). The artwork consists of technical and aesthetic traces: these are only subject to change through the authorship dimension; those are only possibly altered considering a technical comprehension of the composition of the work.

To avoid misunderstanding, we shall provide here an exact definition of technique in art: by the technical moment in art, we mean everything that is absolutely necessary for the creation of a work of art in its natural-scientific or linguistic determinateness (this includes the entire makeup of a finished work of art as a thing), but that does not enter immediately into the aesthetic object - is not a component of the artistic whole. Technical moments are factors of the artistic impression, but they are not aesthetically valid components of the content of that impression, i.e., of the aesthetic object (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.295, emphasis in the original).⁵³

The elements of the work that constitute the aesthetic object⁵⁴ necessarily include the authorship dimension, the position from which the content is expressed. This content may only be supplemented, modified, reworked by the author (from the point of view of the creation) and the reader (from the point of view of interpretation), never by the proofreader. However, in order to define which technical interventions are to be made in the literary work that they are reviewing, the proofreader must understand the immanent logic of creation (not to intervene in it, but to qualify its intervention in the technical norm). It is precisely in the world from which the artist creates that the proofreader cannot intervene directly. In other words: “[t]he fundamental problem is to determine first of all the artistic task and its actual context, i.e., that axiological world in which the artistic task is set and actualized” (BAKHTIN, 190, p.194).⁵⁵ From this instance one searches for the

⁵² For reference, see footnote 18.

⁵³ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁵⁴ One shall remember that the aesthetic object is the content of the aesthetic activity; it is the reality of the knowledge and of the aesthetic act that undergoes an individuation (BAKHTIN, 2010b, p.35).

⁵⁵ For reference, see footnote 20.

distinction between “the technical apparatus” and the “*immanent logic of creative activity*” (BAKHTIN, 190, p.194, emphasis in the original)⁵⁶ to assist in the improvement of the first without interfering neither with the authorship nor with the stylistic procedures adopted by the author, both in the dimension of the particular use one makes of the material, and in the construction of the architectonic form.

Bakhtin defines style as the “*unity of two kinds of devices: the devices of giving form to and consummating the hero and his world, and the devices determined by the former, the devices of working and adapting (immanently overcoming) the material*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.201-202).⁵⁷ The Russian theorist established conditions for the existence of the “confident unity of style”: 1st – where “a life’s cognitive-ethical tension or directedness constitutes a unity, where the task-to-be-achieved that governs its directedness is incontestable”; 2nd – “the incontestability and confidence of the position of being situated outside that life (in short, [...] a religious confidence or faith in the fact that life is not solitary [...]), in the firmness and incontestability of the place of art in the whole of culture”. He also proposes, given this perspective, three questions: “What is the relationship that obtains between style and the author as an individuality? What is the relationship of style to content, i.e., to the world of others that is being consummated? What significance does tradition have in the value-context of the author-contemplator?” These issues need to be addressed, he adds, because “the style cannot be fortuitous” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.202).⁵⁸

Style is necessarily related to tradition; hence, the passage of the artistic style to the verbal style is thus understood by Bakhtin, “the great style encompasses all domains of art or it does not exist at all. For it is first and foremost a style of seeing the world, and only after that-a style of working the material” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.202).⁵⁹ The author is the one who works “moment of transgression in life”, i.e., the “outside” look, which enables the construction of meaning, and this transgression “is established and organized by a tradition (outward appearance, the exterior, manners of comportment, etc.; the communal way of everyday life, etiquette, etc.)” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.204).⁶⁰ Bakhtin seeks to demonstrate this by stating that “the collapse of the tradition exposes their

⁵⁶ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁵⁷ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁵⁸ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁵⁹ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁶⁰ For reference, see footnote 20.

meaninglessness; life breaks up all forms from within” (1990, p.204).⁶¹ Therefore, to the proofreader, “the author must be understood first of all from the event of a work as a participant in that event and as an authoritative guide for the reader in that event. To understand the author in the historical world of his time, to understand his place in a social collective, his class position” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.207).⁶²

Thus, precisely due to the fact that the technical work to be done later in the work cannot change the world, the historical universe, the experiences, the author’s sense of life, this work cannot also interfere with the authorship, the way the architectonic form is organized, the artistic style, the form (to some extent) or the content of the work, the aesthetic object, in short, something very special particularly to the literary text, as discussed below.

3 The Limits of Proofreading Literary Texts

The literary text can be understood as a product of the aesthetic work, of the human desire to communicate content through verbal language formally crafted, which falls directly on its own linguistic structure, the field of work of the proofreader. Thus, it can be said that the technical work on the literary text can never interfere directly with the content of the work of art, that is, in the aesthetic object; and all the elements of the work that necessarily form such an object must be preserved. The material of the work of art, on the other hand, can be the object of technical work of the other (in this case, the proofreader), as “it is not in the world of language that the poet creates; language is something he merely uses” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.193).⁶³

In literary proofreading, the role of the professional consists in understanding the axiological and creative context not to intervene in it, but to perceive the scope of possibilities of use of the material and the organization of the architectonic form. However, it is of utmost importance for the technical work to be successful that the relation established between this material and the aesthetic object, and the “extraverbal architectonic events” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.297)⁶⁴ is understood. Clearly, not to interfere

⁶¹ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁶² For reference, see footnote 20.

⁶³ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁶⁴ For reference, see footnote 20.

with the architecture of the work, but to acquire the ability to discern the possibilities of use of the material proposed by the aesthetic object. The reading capacity of the literary text must be developed to the point of enabling the perception of what, in a certain work, belongs or not to their linguistic possibilities. This prevents one from considering a “flaw” something that relates to the linguistic resources pertinent to that creation.

Imagine, for example, if the proofreader of Saramago (now not the character of the work, but the professional who worked on his final text) decided to punctuate the dialogues of *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* the traditional way, with dashes and new paragraphs. The Portuguese author, by the way, did not even accept the spelling to be adapted to Brazilian Portuguese, making sure that, in the Brazilian edition of the work, words, such as “acto” (SARAMAGO, 1989, p.64),⁶⁵ “terramoto” (SARAMAGO, 1989, p.72),⁶⁶ or “conosco”⁶⁷ (SARAMAGO, 1989, p.84)⁶⁸ were maintained.

The tasks of the proofreader of a literary text do not include, therefore, interference in the form of the work in its whole. The form is connected on the one hand to the content, and on the other to the material. This is why the study of the form can follow two paths, as mentioned above, “from within the pure aesthetic object, as architectonic form, axiologically directed toward content” or “from within the compositional material whole of the work - this is the study of the technique of form” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.303).⁶⁹ It is only in the relationship that the form has with the material that the proofreader’s activity can develop because, for Bakhtin (1990, p.178),⁷⁰ “a purely material artistic task would constitute a technical experiment.”

Hence, compositional changes may even be suggested, provided they do not interfere with the content, the aesthetic object; this means, in Bakhtinian terms, not to interfere with the architectonic form.

Of what does the world in which we live, act, and create consist? Of matter and psyche? And of what does the work of art consist? Of words, sentences, chapters, and perhaps of pages and paper? In the artist's

⁶⁵ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁶ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁷ TN: The words “acto,” “terramoto,” and “conosco” were kept as the original text in order not to alter the intention of the author. These words, in Brazilian Portuguese, are spelled “ato,” “terremoto,” and “conosco”; and in English they are “act,” “earthquake,” and “with us,” respectively.

⁶⁸ For reference, see footnote 1.

⁶⁹ For reference, see footnote 18.

⁷⁰ For reference, see footnote 20.

axiological context of active creation, all these constituents are secondary, and by no means primary: it is not these constituents that axiologically determine the artist's creative context, but, rather, they are themselves determined by that context (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.194).⁷¹

The proofreading, therefore, can only look into the elements that are determined by the axiological context by the author's worldview, and not directly into such worldview.

A more concrete example to try to clarify the Bakhtinian propositions is given by Umberto Eco. The Italian author works the notion of "cosmological fact," which would correspond to "building a world" that is necessary for those who want to "tell." The construction of fiction requires, therefore, the creation of this cosmological fact. See the example given by Eco:

To tell you must first of all construct a world, furnished as much as possible down to the slightest detail. Build up a river, two banks, and on the left bank one places a fisherman, and this fisherman has an aggressive nature and a not so clear criminal record, done: you can start writing, translating into words what will undoubtedly happen. What does a fisherman do? He fishes (hence a more or less inevitable sequence of gestures). And then what happens? Either there are fish that bite the bait or not. If there is, the fisherman gets them and go home, happily. End of story. If there are no fish, as he is wrathful, he may be angry, he may break the fishing rod. This is not much, but it is a sketch. But there is an Indian proverb that says "sit by the river and wait, the corpse of your enemy will soon pass". And if, carried by the stream, there was a corpse - since this possibility is implicit in the intertextual area of the river? One cannot forget that my fisherman has a dirty criminal record. Will he want to risk getting himself in trouble? What will he do? Will he run away, pretending not to see the corpse? Will he feel vulnerable, because after all is the corpse of the man who he hated? Wrathful as he is, will he fly into a rage because he was not able to wreak personally his longed-for vengeance? As you see, as soon as one's invented world is furnished with not too many things one already has the beginning of a story. There is also have the beginning of a style, too, because a fisherman who is fishing would establish a slow, fluvial pace, cadenced by his wait, which should have been patient, but also according to the jolts of his impatient anger. The problem is to build the world, the words will come almost alone (1984, pp.23-24).⁷²

⁷¹ For reference, see footnote 20.

⁷² ECO, Umberto. *Postscript to the Name of the Rose*. Translated by William Weaver, Itrans. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984.

Note the relationship between the cosmological fact that was raised and the pace of the narrative. As it is shaped, in this case, by the content, the narrative pace is part of the artistic style and cannot be changed by the technical work of the critical reader. They should be limited, in such a case, to an assessment; if necessary, changes that contribute to the expressivity of this relation could be suggested. It seems possible to relate the cosmological fact of Umberto Eco to the architectonic form of Bakhtin. Both would be a form of sedimentation of the product of experiment (or of a content, to use Bakhtin's terms). This sedimentation takes shape through the work and the organization made by language. It is in this way of organizing the expression of the cosmological fact that the proofreader can interfere, and not in the experience mobilized by the author, which is his/her own worldview.

Conclusions

The work of the proofreader is, as represented so well by Raimundo Silva, a work in which one has to deal with difficulties of different natures. On the one hand, the expectation of the author and of the editor, and on the other hand, the limitations imposed by them, which oblige the proofreader to "cling to his last." Today, however, it is known that the "last" is more complex than what one apparently thinks, demanding a linguistic understanding beyond the textual one from the proofreader, because the treatment of any kind of language requires the mobilization of the genres in question, the specific type of language, the resources available for this particular type of language, its relation with other languages. The situation is even more peculiar if the language in question is the verbal one, since one uses it all the time. When the verbal language receives an artistic treatment, one more (great) element of complexity comes into play in this wholeness.

In literature, the perception that one is facing a peculiar way of organizing language is sharper than in other arts, which use other materials, such as sculpture or painting, for example. This is because we are exposed to the use of verbal language (talking or listening, writing or reading) all the time. The differences between the everyday use of language and its use in artistic creations are thus perceived. For Bakhtin, this shows that the impossibility of merging form and content in the vocal art is clearer. In other arts, they seem to blend more; form and content constitute an indivisible

wholeness (BAKHTIN, 1990, pp.316-317).⁷³ When looking, for example, at a plaster sculpture in the shape of a human body, we cannot easily imagine the plaster separated from the sculpture. On the other hand, in a poem that uses, in order to maintain the line of reasoning, the words *human body*, one can easily think of other contexts in which these words or other ones from the language can be used, since we do this every day and without the aid of instruments (except, of course, one who has any special needs).

All of this requires from those working with the literary text to understand, beyond the grammatical and technical elements per se, theoretical formulations that are able to propose the aesthetic understanding of this type of text. In this work, after some initial considerations on proofreading in general and on the expansion of the proofreader's work, we sought to demonstrate that Bakhtin's formulations about the literary text are highly productive in this regard. By discussing the concepts of aesthetic object, compositional form, architectonic form, content, material and form, we sought to define what the scope of the activities of the literary proofreader is, having, as reference, the concepts (also according to Bakhtin) of authorship and artistic style, understood as items that cannot suffer technical interference.

The proofreader of the literary text is responsible for acquiring the ability to understand and grasp the functioning of this wholeness (and its relation to the artistic tradition with which the work in question dialogues) and to discern how they interact with the elements with which they can, indeed, interfere: the material, the verbal style and the compositional form, because within each literary text there are limits, set by the text itself, to the exploitation of its potentialities.

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⁷³ For reference, see footnote 18.

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