

**Verbal Style as the Dialogic and Pluridiscursive Place of Social Relations: A Dialogic Status for Linguistic Analysis / *O estilo verbal como o lugar dialógico e pluridiscursivo das relações sociais: um estatuto dialógico para a análise linguística***

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**ABSTRACT**

In the present study, we advocate a dialogic status to the activity of linguistic analysis in the reading of texts. The short story *The Hidden Cause*, by Brazilian writer Machado de Assis, is taken as our *corpus*, as literature aesthetically consists of a tensioned representation of the linguistic phenomena analyzed herein. The current analysis acknowledges verbal style as the dialogic and pluridiscursive place of social relations in which the lexical and syntactic choices made by the author are oriented towards semantic and object-related connections of cognitive and ethical nature, thus revealing shared social axiologies that support what constitutes text/discourse. The discussion is based on studies carried out by the Bakhtin Circle and on research studies further developed under the same scope. Results reveal the presence of stylistically-compositionally discursive movements that indicate the interaction established among author-creator, interlocutor and theme, which we present herein as dialogic/valuational and whose description requires an axiological interpretation of form as well as a stylistic-grammatical interpretation of language functioning. Hence is the dialogic status of the linguistic analysis carried out.

**KEYWORDS:** Linguistic Analysis; Style; Axiologies

**RESUMO**

*Neste trabalho, defendemos um estatuto dialógico à atividade de análise linguística na leitura de textos. O conto A causa secreta, de Machado de Assis, é tomado como corpus, por a literatura constituir, esteticamente, uma representação tensionada dos fenômenos de linguagem analisados. A análise compreende o estilo verbal como o lugar dialógico e pluridiscursivo das relações sociais, cujas escolhas vocabulares e sintáticas da autoria estão orientadas às ligações objetais e semânticas de caráter cognitivo e ético, refletindo o compartilhamento de axiologias sociais sustentadoras da constituição textual/discursiva. A discussão se respalda nos trabalhos do Círculo de Bakhtin e nas pesquisas decorrentes. Os resultados demonstram a presença de movimentos discursivizados estilístico-composicionalmente, demarcadores da interação autor-criador, interlocutor e tema, os quais apresentamos como dialógicos/valorativos e cuja descrição exige uma interpretação axiológica da forma e estilístico-gramatical do funcionamento linguístico. Daí advém o estatuto dialógico da análise linguística empreendida.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Análise linguística; Estilo; Axiologias

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## Introductory Remarks

Concerns regarding the object of grammar teaching (FRANCHI, 1987; NEVES, 2002) or linguistic analysis (LA) as a grammar teaching perspective (GERALDI, 1984) (PERFEITO, 2007), (MENDONÇA, 2006), (REINALDO E BEZERRA, 2013) have been present in Brazilian Applied Linguistics for over 30 years, aiming to oppose the lack of productivity in traditional language teaching. Thus, LA has been heterogeneously advocated as a pedagogical tool used to ponder on language in use, whether in connection with practices of reading, writing or speaking, with enunciative and/or discursive approaches, as recommended by the documents guiding language teaching in Brazil, from which discussions highlighting the importance of LA as a necessary praxis in initial and continued teacher education arise.

In the latest scenario, most discussions taking LA as object have been associated with different perspectives on the work with text/discourse genres, fully or partially within the scope of Bakhtin's theory. Normative or descriptive concepts of grammar teaching are refuted, as they lead to an isolated analysis of the meaning of words and grammatical structures, rather than their contextual meaning (sense), which can only be achieved from actual utterances which, in turn, are substantiated in the form of concrete utterances, on the basis of their finished whole. Despite significant advancements, the understanding of social axiologies (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b),<sup>2</sup> as that which provides support to what constitutes text/discourse, and which have been ultimately reflected and refracted in the verbal style of a given genre, the place encompassing broad aspects of dialogism, has yet to be clarified.

We understand that this is an important issue leading to the understanding of the object discussed herein. For this reason, we aim to demonstrate how the pluridiscursive style adopted by the author-creator (BAKHTIN, 1981a;<sup>3</sup> 1990b;<sup>4</sup> FARACO, 2007) can be interpreted on the basis of its linguistic materialization, which reveals the

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<sup>2</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art: Concerning Sociological Poetics. Transl. I. R. Titunik. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Freudianism: a Marxist Critique*. New York: Academic Press, 1976b. pp.93-116.

<sup>3</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981a, pp.269-422.

<sup>4</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Author and Hero in the Aesthetic Activity. In BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov; supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1990b, pp.4-256.

extralinguistic dimension of language (BAKHTIN, 2010).<sup>5</sup> The interpretation of this broad interactional phenomenon requires a dialogic status for the linguistic analysis conducted in the present study, thus demanding stylistic-grammatical interpretation of language functioning, which is seen as necessary, as suggested by Bakhtin (1986a;<sup>6</sup> 2004).<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, this text follows a theoretical and analytical path with a view to understanding the verbal style of the genre as a place of valuational conclusions enclosing different levels of dialogism. A theoretical narrowing is proposed in order to provide support to the discussion, beginning with the understanding of the ideological content present in the verbal material/word, which functions as a bridge to man's inner and outer dialogue and as a result of social relationships (BAKHTIN, 1981a;<sup>8</sup> VOLOŠINOV, 1973d).<sup>9</sup> Finally, we analyze how the verbal style of the utterance is composed, materialized by valuations of compositional and architectural forms, as the place in which social relations are established (BAKHTIN, 1990a),<sup>10</sup> as it reflects the axiologies shared in the author-creator-interlocutor-theme interaction (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b),<sup>11</sup> inherent to the broad, immediate sociohistorical situation of interaction (VOLOŠINOV, 1976a).<sup>12</sup>

The *corpus* used for analysis is the short story *The Hidden Cause*,<sup>13</sup> written by the Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. The text was chosen with the aim of clarifying the interpretation of the author's lexical and syntactic choices, as oriented by object-related and semantic connections of a cognitive nature – technique, form, world

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<sup>5</sup> BAKHTIN, M.M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 11.ed. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. [1929-1963].

<sup>6</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTIN, M. M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986a, pp.60-102.

<sup>7</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Dialogic Origin and Dialogic Pedagogy of Grammar: Stylistic in teaching russian language in secondary school. Translated by Lydia Razran Stone. In: *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, vol. 42, n° 6, November-December 2004, pp.12-49.

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>9</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Verbal Interaction. VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Transl. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, trans. Studies in Language Series. New York: Seminar Press, 1973d. pp.83-98.

<sup>10</sup> BAKHTIN, M.M. The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art. In: BAKHTIN, M.M. *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990a, pp.257-325.

<sup>11</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>12</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. The Content of Consciousness as Ideology. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Freudianism: a Marxist Critique*. Transl. I. R. Titunik. New York: Academic Press, 1976a. pp.85-92.

<sup>13</sup> ASSIS, J. M. M. *The Hidden Cause*. In: *A Chapter of Hats and Other Stories*. Translated by John Gledson. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009.

knowledge – as well as of an ethical nature – the peculiar axiological position taken by the author-creator while addressing a given theme before his interlocutor (BAKHTIN, 1990a;<sup>14</sup> 1986a),<sup>15</sup> settled upon the values of the major social dialogue that determines the aesthetics of creation, the aesthetic finishing and the peculiar tone of the new utterance, embedded in the chain of discourse. Thus, the descriptive procedures are carried out on the basis of a stylistic-grammatical interpretation of the living functioning of language based on categories that originate from Bakhtin's theory and the Brazilian Grammatical Nomenclature (known as NGB), which we believe will enable us to reflect upon teaching and learning situations.

The rationale behind the choice for a *corpus* of a literary nature is that it consists of a tensioned and representative sample of analysis that is applicable to texts and genres from other fields. Therefore, we understand the text – our object of analysis – on the basis of its material status, which makes reference to materialization via discursive genre, a place where discourse is mobilized in a specific enunciation project, as advocated by Bakhtin (1986a)<sup>16</sup> and elucidated by Sobral (2009).

The present study also dares to be considered as an interface to a theoretical-analytical dialogue that shall be productive to the interests not only of scholars of Literature, but also of those devoted to Applied Linguistics, since the association between linguistic analysis and literary texts has been little explored, hollow and tense. Coherently, research undertaken in the field of Literary Studies has struggled to ensure that methods, theory application and information on the works do not replace reading in teaching and learning contexts (TODOROV, 2007; COSSON, 2007). It is noteworthy that using a literary text as a pretext for decontextualized grammatical analysis (PAULINO, 2010) is a major issue against which there has been consensual battle.

Hence, the present study aims at turning its attention to the literary text as a complete, finished expression of social interaction established among the author-creator, the interlocutor and the theme. By doing so, it demonstrates the existence of certain dialogic/valuational moves, which are discursive markers of such an interaction, based on a linguistic analysis of a dialogic nature, which converges to the whole of the aesthetic finishing of the utterance.

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<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>15</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>16</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

## 1 Dialogism: Language, Enunciation and Utterance

Bakhtin's dialogism can be understood as a complex set of interrelated concepts that attribute the center stage of social relations to verbal interaction. The Bakhtin Circle defines text/discourse as a place of intersubjectivity and as a multifaceted object to which attention must be given by means of understanding extralinguistic and linguistic aspects (BAKHTIN, 1986b;<sup>17</sup> 2010).<sup>18</sup> Most dialogic relations are of an external nature, but at the same time they cannot be dissociated from language – a concrete integral phenomenon, since it is in and through language that such relations become manifest and are materialized (BRAIT, 2006). Hence, Bakhtin proposes a translinguistics, which incorporates the extralinguistic dimension of language into the linguistic dimension, thereby including the notion of ideological sign, the extraverbal and verbal aspects of enunciation, as well as the internal and external aspects of the utterance oriented towards reality.

The understanding of language as an integral phenomenon is reached on the basis of the concept of ideological sign because “Everything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside of itself” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973a, p.9, emphasis on the original)<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the sign is understood as a category intrinsically associated with ideology.

In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973c),<sup>20</sup> Vološinov focuses on two specific conflicts in order to advocate the ideological nature of the sign. The first objects to Idealism and a psychological view of culture, both of which place ideology as a fact of consciousness, outside the sign. The second conflict comes in opposition to the objective, abstract and instrumental means by which Saussurean Linguistics conceives the concept of sign, which, in a way, ultimately sustains assumptions that interpret the sign as technical means of achieving the inner effect, i.e., comprehension.

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<sup>17</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. First Edition. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986b, pp.103-131.

<sup>18</sup> For reference, see footnote 5.

<sup>19</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. The study of Ideologies and Philosophy of Language. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Transl. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, trans. Studies in Language Series. New York: Seminar Press, 1973a. pp.9-16.

<sup>20</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Two Trends of Thought in Philosophy. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Transl. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, trans. Studies in Language Series. New York: Seminar Press, 1973c. pp.45-64.

For Vološinov (1973a),<sup>21</sup> the sign is ideological and, for this reason, it refers to something outside of itself, but which is also imbued with the content of individual consciousness.

Signs emerge, after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness and another. And the individual consciousness itself is full of signs. And the individual consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction (VOLOŠINOV, 1973a, p.11).<sup>22</sup>

In this sense, ideology is not inside one's consciousness, or outside of it, as a ready package, coming from the world of nature, as highlighted by Miotello (2008). Therefore, it can neither be analyzed as subjective-individual, nor as an idea one appropriates in an objective manner, since the ideological sign both reflects and refracts the ever-changing reality in every ideological field, which can distort, enhance or grasp this reality from a specific point of view – the speaker's.

Thus, the word is an ideological sign par excellence because its flexibility allows the speaker to internalize it and (re)assess it idiosyncratically in the utterance itself, considering the task of granting exhaustibility to a theme while addressing the other/interlocutors with whom relations of alterity are maintained. For this reason, “the role of signs in human thought and the role of utterance in language, each of these topics is then linked to the way in which we report in our speech the speech of others” (CLARK; HOLQUIST, 1984, p.212),<sup>23</sup> thus outlining the imminent social nature of utterances.

According to the Bakhtin Circle, as highlighted by Brait and Pistori (2012, p.387),<sup>24</sup> the “social evolution of the sign is subject to methodological requirements that are fundamental to the science of ideologies.” Vološinov (1973a)<sup>25</sup> advocates that one cannot dissociate ideology from the material reality of the sign nor dissociate the sign from the concrete forms of social communication. Similarly, he recommends that

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<sup>21</sup> For reference, see footnote 20.

<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 19.

<sup>23</sup> CLARK, E. & HOLQUIST, M. *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*. In: *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp.212-237.

<sup>24</sup> Original text: “evolução social do signo está submetida a exigências metodológicas fundamentais para a ciência das ideologias.”

<sup>25</sup> For reference, see footnote 20.

“Communication and the forms of communication may not be divorced from the material basis” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973a, p.21, emphasis in original).<sup>26</sup>

When explaining how ideology functions according to Bakhtinian thought, Miotello (2008) offers a glimpse into the fact that (re)assessing the sign does not dismiss everyday life which is organized in upper strata (the most immediate social organization of that thought) – infrastructure – and can be felt in formalized and stabilized ideologies – superstructure. This is a continuous process in the chain of verbal communication, as “The word has the capacity to register all the transitory, delicate, momentary phases of social change” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973b, p.19)<sup>27</sup>.

For the Bakhtin Circle, therefore, all aspects said to be of a linguistic nature can only be observed in the interim of the verbal interaction phenomenon, given as dialogic and socio-historically constitutive of the subject, language and interaction itself (BRAIT, 2006). This process does not happen out of concrete utterances, achievable by means of typical forms of utterances – genres – and which are linguistically materialized, as proposed by the sociological method for the study of language advocated by Vološinov (1973d).<sup>28</sup> Based on this method, it can be inferred that broad and immediate sociohistorical context of interaction is fundamental to the interpretation of the text/utterance because: a) social axiologies provide meaning to language; b) genres are semioticized objects in the process of verbal interaction, and their relative stability and social functioning are shared by the subjects involved in interaction; and finally, c) words are “always already there, [...] like ‘never ever before,’ because [...] those words must be spoken in contexts that are utterly unique and novel to the speaker” (CLARK; HOLQUIST 1984, p.217),<sup>29</sup> thus gaining their own intonation and value.

Each typical form of utterance that serves to speech is socially valued by the field of human activity from which it emerges and by its own historicity; however, from the point of view of its eventivity, the choice for a typical form of utterance represents

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<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 20.

<sup>27</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Concerning the Relation of the Basis and Superstructures. In: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Transl. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik, trans. Studies in Language Series. New York: Seminar Press, 1973b. pp.17-24.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 9.

<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 23.

an axiological position taken by a speaker (BAKHTIN, 1990a)<sup>30</sup> in response to preceding utterances (BAKHTIN, 1986a).<sup>31</sup>

Objectively, genres are palpable on the basis of their thematic content, their linguistic style and compositional construction, all of which are internal elements of genre construction, indissolubly constituent of its finished whole, as highlighted by Bakhtin (1986a).<sup>32</sup> These elements also have external orientation in the reality regarding the utterance itself (BAKHTIN, 1990a).<sup>33</sup> Thus, dialogic relations, especially the extralinguistic ones, are forces refractive of ideological content, as they materialize the word and the whole utterance, allowing them to reflect towards the particular purpose of their use and their production, the social valuations that are likely to be shared among interlocutors, so that discourse is established among them (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b).<sup>34</sup> The aforementioned was analyzed in the present study, using the short story *The Hidden Cause*, by the Brazilian writer Machado de Assis, as our *corpus*.

Thus, the extra-artistic social environment never affects art from the outside, but “finds direct, intrinsic response within it” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.96),<sup>35</sup> reflecting and refracting itself in the author-creator’s pluridiscourse and finding corresponding ideological support in the extraverbal context, value judgment and intonation, all of which are axiological elements grounded in the context of life and triggered in and for enunciation in the act of interaction. This valuational tripod is markedly interconnected to the extent that it is an integral part of the multifaceted discourse.

The extraverbal context can be understood in light of something that resembles a contract among interlocutors, which requires three factors: 1) shared ideational spatial range of perception involving “the ideological knowledge of the speakers about the conduct they should have in that particular space” (MENEGASSI; CAVALCANTI, 2013, p.436);<sup>36</sup> 2) knowledge and shared understanding of the situation; and 3) shared evaluation of the situation (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b ).<sup>37</sup> Therefore, “*the situation enters*

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<sup>30</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>36</sup> Original text: “o conhecimento ideológico dos falantes sobre as condutas que devem ter nesse espaço determinado.”

<sup>37</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.



into the utterance as an essential constitutive part of the structure of its import” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.100, emphasis in original).<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, the utterance always is comprised of a portion that is perceived or fulfilled in words and another portion that is assumed. “*The ‘assumed’ may be that of the family, clan, nation, class and may encompass days or years or whole epochs*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.101, emphasis in original).<sup>39</sup> Therefore, we can claim that history and the most immediate context of production of any utterance, as well as its author-creator and its interlocutors/listeners, are inscribed therein in a concrete way, with the same social values being assumed by the subjects involved in interaction. This allows the social and ideological value of each word as well as the entire syntactic-semantic systematic organization of object-related expressions to be understood (BAKHTIN, 1990a)<sup>40</sup>. All of them are materialized by the typical form of the utterance.

The analysis of *The Hidden Cause* precisely highlights how the lexical and syntactical choices made by Machado reflect the social valuations of the broadest, most immediate sociohistorical context of production of the short story. Moreover, it points out how the cognitive and ethical work of the author is accomplished from the very moment he holds an axiological position by choosing this typical form of utterance to address the themes of sadism and human cruelty before interlocutors, constituted as scrutinizers of this human experience of evil and timeless nature, which makes it possible to analyze the work from the valuational standpoint of the present time.

In the case of literary discourse, the valuational aspects are more vehement, since that which concerns the extraverbal context is not present. Therefore, the allusion made to the extraverbal context is best marked in verbal materialization, thus causing this discourse to become a pragmatic-referential inventory to which a timeless, yet historically representative status is propelled. This phenomenon occurs because the range of the social valuations addressed is generally wider. It allows the utterance to “act only if sustained by constant and stable life factors and in substantive and fundamental social assessments” (MENEGASSI; CAVALCANTI, 2013, pp.436-437),<sup>41</sup> capable of constituting interlocutors who are both determined and undetermined in time.

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<sup>38</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>40</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>41</sup> Original text: “agir apenas se sustentado em fatores constantes e estáveis da vida e em avaliações sociais substantivas e fundamentais.”

In prose, the extraverbal context is alluded to in the representation of each scene, each space, each act performed by the characters. Social value judgement and intuition inseparably concatenate as the truth of life and the work because social value judgement compresses social assessments and “[...] organizes the very form of an utterance and its intonation, [...] it determines *the very selection of the verbal material and the form of the verbal whole*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, pp.101-102, emphasis in original),<sup>42</sup> finding its most refined expression in the intention that is shared, which echoes towards the understanding of the theme. This, in turn, establishes the close bond between verbal discourse and the extraverbal context. The word and the utterance are bridges between interlocutors (VOLOŠINOV, 1973d;<sup>43</sup> BAKHTIN, 1986a),<sup>44</sup> while “*listener and hero are constant participants in the creative event*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.107, emphasis in original),<sup>45</sup> which involves all three elements.

Therefore, the extraverbal context, value judgment and intonation are dialogically noticeable in the verbal style of the utterance, and it is possible to observe a tripod of intertwined relationships: a) the very form, the structure, is valuational in itself because it allows materialization; b) the author’s style within the generic style to address something; c) a theme socially capable of provoking assessments shared by the interlocutors, and which has been exhausted in a peculiar manner in the utterance. “And this basic requirement of *stylistic suitability has in view the evaluative-hierarchical suitability of form and content: they must be equally adequate for one another*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.109, emphasis in original).<sup>46</sup> Thus, all lexical and syntactic connections become compositional and also realize form in the artistic object, since they have been permeated by the unity of feeling of a connecting activity, “which is directed toward the unity [...] of object-related and meaning related-connections of a cognitive or ethical character, that is, by the unity of the feeling of tensions and form-giving encompassing from outside of cognitive-ethical content” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.313).<sup>47</sup>

As a result, the author, the theme and the readers/listeners, essential entities that constitute the work act as “living forces that determine form and style” (VOLOŠINOV,

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<sup>42</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 9.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>45</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>46</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>47</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

1976b, p.109).<sup>48</sup> For this reason, only in the finished whole of the utterance, in an analysis that argues in favor of an interpretation of form as partial means towards the interpretation of the pluridiscursive style, is it possible to unveil such interconnection from a linguistic analysis of a dialogic nature.

### **3 Social Valuations in the Finished Whole of The Hidden Cause**

#### **3.1 Contextualization for the Understanding of the Theme**

The plot of the short story *The Hidden Cause* depicts the lives of three main characters: Fortunato, a rich capitalist with high social status and prestige; his wife, Maria Luísa, described as gentle and submissive; and Garcia, a recently graduated doctor, a former acquaintance of Fortunato's. All of them take part in the plot in which their personal relationships are strained by the specific characteristics of social and affective relationships that connect them in the urban Brazilian context of the late 19th century. Noteworthy, this is achieved in an approach that refers back to literary Realism whose focus is on the psychological analysis of characters.

Fortunato is a man with a peculiar trait: human cruelty associated with sadism – the hidden cause – the short story's theme. The man causes suffering by manipulating others unmercifully and feels delighted with pleasure to watch it. This cruelty and this sadism extend to people and animals, and psychologically torture his wife whom Garcia loves. Garcia, however, only pities his beloved's suffering while passively accepting the reality that surrounds them. He does not dare to confront Fortunato's actions. Meanwhile, Maria Luísa becomes ill, languishes in distress and dies of moral pain, while Fortunato, with pleasure, enjoys all sorts of feelings (which are pleasant to him) involving the fact.

#### **3.2 Valuations via Form**

In order to address the theme of cruelty associated with sadism axiologically, Machado chooses the typical form of the short story utterance, clearly addressed to the

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<sup>48</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

listener and “the object of utterance, the hero”<sup>49</sup> (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.107).<sup>50</sup> The architectural form and the organization of the internal structure of the compositional form function similarly.

As it is a compact of a narrative nature that purges the dialogue of all that does not converge to the drama (CORTAZAR, 2006), to the theme, the plot itself, the short story ultimately adopts a rather tensioned verbal style, allowing one to acknowledge how its compositional form dematerializes itself and goes over the boundaries of the literary work as an organized material, thus becoming “the expression of the axiologically determinate creative activity of an aesthetically active subjectum” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.304).<sup>51</sup>

In *The Hidden Cause*, form is enmeshed in style, and this relationship can be perceived through a few syntactical choices made by Machado. On the occasion of creation and narration of everyday scenes involving acts performed by the characters, the option for the non-finite reduced adverbial time clause is recurrent in several passages: “when [...] still a student, he met Fortunato” (ASSIS, 2009, p.167);<sup>52</sup> “when [on] his seat, Fortunato came in” (ASSIS, 2009, p.168);<sup>53</sup>; “[getting to] the door, he stopped short, astonished” (ASSIS, 2009, p.179).<sup>54</sup> The author could have chosen the developed form of the clauses, as it would be the case in “when he was still a student, he met Fortunato”; however, the absence of the pronoun illustrates not only the compression of style via genre, but also the author’s choice of this specific reduced form whose effect is to lead the reader to immediately recreate the extraverbal context of the scene mentally. The author’s individual style is materialized within the generic style (BAKHTIN, 1986a).<sup>55</sup> Such an effect results from this grammatical/stylistic choice. Similarly, a bilateral dialogue is established: the words chosen, the syntactic organization, organize the compositional form. There is a compositional use of syntactical connections because “[...] rhythm, attached to the material, is placed outside

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<sup>49</sup> In the work *Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art: Concerning Sociological Poetics* (1976), the hero is understood as the utterance’s theme, or the discourse object.

<sup>50</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>51</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>52</sup> TN. Some changes were made to the sentences from the ones found in John Gledson’s translation (cf. footnote 13) so that the sentences would be grammatically closer to the Portuguese text. In Gledson’s translation, the sentence is “when he was still a student, he met Fortunato.”

<sup>53</sup> In Gledson’s translation, “when he’d taken his seat, Fortunato came in.”

<sup>54</sup> In Gledson’s translation, “when he got to the door, he stopped short, astonished.”

<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

its boundaries and begins, of its own accord, to penetrate content as a creative relation to content” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.315),<sup>56</sup> transferring it to the axiological plane of aesthetic existence, inscribing the author’s direct tone onto the linguistic surface, which could be broken down by the presence of “the cold logical conjunction” (BAKHTIN, 2004, p.18)<sup>57</sup> should the clause be developed. This example illustrates how “stylistic elucidation is absolutely mandatory when going over all aspects of the syntax of the complex sentence” (BAKHTIN, 2004, p.15),<sup>58</sup> i.e., a stylistic-grammatical interpretation. The reduced form of the subordinate clause also purges the dialogue between author and reader of everything that does not lead to the hidden cause, since directly conducting the reader to the scene is essential to trigger their shared value judgement on the social behaviors arising in that particular time and space, thus allowing the reader to co-construct images about the character.

In these terms, the form of the short story begins to function as an architectural form that is “axiologically directed toward content” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.303).<sup>59</sup> The architectural form also appears to be related to the dialogic relations that the utterance establishes with other utterances, since the short story is part of a volume entitled *Várias Histórias*<sup>60</sup> [*Several Stories*], which dialogically groups other short stories written by the same author around human perversion. Thus, it makes reference to the psychological essence of literary Realism, oriented towards readers with whom Machado establishes relations of alterity.

Also, “from within the compositional and material whole of the work” (BAKHTIN, 1990a, p.303)<sup>61</sup> we observe the valuational functioning of choosing a particular internal structure of a given compositional form. In *The Hidden Cause*, Machado opts to employ *in media res*,<sup>62</sup> and this nonlinear narrative arouses curiosity about the theme among readers, while enhancing the role fulfilled by Machado’s narrator as someone who has unlimited knowledge of all facts and is solely responsible

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<sup>56</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>57</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>58</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>59</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>60</sup> The Portuguese title of the short story collection in which *The Hidden Cause* was published.

<sup>61</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>62</sup> Author’s note for this English version: Latin expression taken from “Poetic Art” by Horacio, which means “in the middle of events.” In the narrative, when applying the *in medias res*, the plot is not reported from the temporal onset of action, but from the mid-point of its development. The events omitted from the onset of action are resumed later.

for unveiling them to the reader: “As all three characters here present are now dead and buried, it’s time the story was told with no holds barred. [...] In fact, the nature of what had happened was such that to understand it we’ll have to take the story back to its beginnings” (ASSIS, 2009, p.167).

The narrator justifies his narrative style by inviting the reader to be engaged in a dialogue about the unknown theme so that the reader becomes a scrutinizer of what unfolds in the narrative as well as of the characters’ behavior in order to allow this dialogue to come into existence. At this point, we identify the social tone of psychological discourse permeating the content of the aesthetics of Realism, in addition to all factors of form serving this social dialogue as the expression of Machado’s position reflected in style, in an approach that addresses interlocutors and the theme.

### **3.3 Towards a Linguistic Analysis of a Dialogic Nature: Extraverbal Context, Value Judgment, Intonation and Stylistic-Grammatical Choices in the Style Adopted in The Hidden Cause**

Bakhtin (1981a)<sup>63</sup> explains that “concrete socio-ideological language consciousness [...] [of the author], as it becomes creative – that is, as it becomes active as literature – discovers itself already surrounded by heteroglossia and not all a single, unitary language, inviolable and indisputable” (BAKHTIN, 1981a, p.295)<sup>64</sup> although in literature authorial individuality is more vehement (BAKHTIN, 1986a).<sup>65</sup>

Undeniably, “where there is style there is genre” (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p.66),<sup>66</sup> but as the author reads the theme, the readers and the situation, he is subject to coercion and makes linguistic choices that determine his style and his art, recreating social values in this dialogue, attaching them to the verbal material, while also leaving a mark of his own intonation in discourse (BAKHTIN, 1981a).<sup>67</sup> Thus, the style always comprises at least two people: the speaker/author and the social group to which he addresses through

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<sup>63</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>64</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>65</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>66</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>67</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

his authorized representative – the listener, who invariably takes part in the speaker/author’s inner and outer speech, as advocated by Vološinov (1976b).<sup>68</sup>

For Bakhtin (1981a;<sup>69</sup> 1990b),<sup>70</sup> as explained by Faraco (2007), the author is not seen as an individual entity, but rather as a socially built creator - hence the expression author-creator. His style is “far from being exhausted in the authenticity of an individual; it inscribes itself in language and its historically situated use” (BRAIT, 2008, p.83, our translation).<sup>71</sup>

It is noteworthy that for Bakhtin (1986a)<sup>72</sup> every single grammatical choice made by the author is an act of style. Therefore, an analysis carried out from both grammatical and stylistic points of view should be combined on the basis of the real unity of the linguistic phenomenon – the utterance, oriented towards the organic whole of this relationship. Therefore, “there is not a single grammatical study that can do without stylistic observation and excursus” (BAKHTIN, 1986a, p.66).<sup>73</sup>

Since style is unachievable without grammatical choice, the linguistic whole, the verbal style, ultimately reveals social relations, as the “living artistic perception and concrete sociological analysis reveal relations among *people*, relations merely reflected and fixed in verbal material (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b, p.109, emphasis in original).<sup>74</sup> This is the dialogic status of linguistic analysis, taken as a critical-reflective practice that is key to the understanding of text/discourse as it seeks to understand how social axiologies (extraverbal context, value judgment and intonation) are revealed in the verbal style adopted. And how does this occur in *The Hidden Cause*?

In the short story analyzed herein, the Machado builds a panoramic view from the narrator’s standpoint so as to seduce the reader and induce him to follow the author’s path towards a tensioned, detailed and gradual presentation of the theme. The author-creator invests in the creation of microscenes that take place in microspaces, scrutinizing the characters’ acts so as to let us have a glimpse of the motivations for their actions. “The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and

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<sup>68</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

<sup>69</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>70</sup> For reference, see footnote 4.

<sup>71</sup> Original text: “longe de se esgotar na autenticidade de um indivíduo, inscreve-se na língua e nos seus usos historicamente situados.”

<sup>72</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>73</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>74</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

untied. [...] It can be said without qualification that to them belong the meaning that shapes narrative” (BAKHTIN, 1981b, p.250).<sup>75</sup> This is due to the fact that the details provided on the basis of space delimited in relation to time, in a carefully established chronotopic relation, favor the constitution not only of the narrator who is precise in his own description and analysis, but also of the curious reader who is scrutinizing so as to follow the narrator’s path.

Bakhtin (1981b)<sup>76</sup> elucidated the importance of the chronotope, addressing it as a valuational category key to the interpretation of spatial and temporal relations represented in texts, since “any motif may have a special chronotope of its own” (BAKHTIN, 1981b, p.252).<sup>77</sup> By revisiting the work of this author with a view to explaining the concept, Fiorin (2006) conceptualizes the chronotope as a content filled-formal category that refers to a world view that determines man’s image in literature, as it comprises a close connection between the real world and the represented world, thus establishing interaction between them. This dialog “[...] enters the world of the author, of the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers” (BAKHTIN, 1981b, p.252)<sup>78</sup> as these worlds are also chronotopic.

Thus, in the short story analyzed in the present study, the position taken and/or the character’s actions performed in the microspace of each recreated social scene are always evinced. Therefore, the allusion made to the extraverbal context of the scene is fulfilled and the *thematic* meaning of the chronotope becomes evident (BAKHTIN, 1981b<sup>79</sup>). This is observed in the excerpt that introduces the narrative and depicts Garcia and Maria Luísa in a situation of embarrassment when facing Fortunato’s indifference: “Garcia was standing, staring at his fingernails and cracking his knuckles from time to time; Fortunato, in a rocking chair, looked at the ceiling; Maria Luisa, near the window, was finishing off some needlework. For five minutes none of them had said a thing” (ASSIS, 2009, p.167).<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981b, pp.84-258.

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

<sup>77</sup> For reference, see footnote 76.

<sup>78</sup> For reference, see footnote 76.

<sup>79</sup> For reference, see footnote 76.

<sup>80</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.



In the aforementioned excerpt, the Machado's stylistic/grammatical choices aid the creation of precise images and provide them with movement and value. There is a perfectly finished simulation of reality, which allows the social value judgment shared by both author and reader as regards social conduct to flourish, especially that of psychological motivation and which the characters present in that particular chronotope. "[L]ooked at the ceiling," for example, may imply indifference; "cracking his knuckles" or remaining silent may represent embarrassment. Therefore, we observe how the organization of the characters' psychological processes in the plot relates to the experience of space-time unity. In *The Hidden Cause*, adverbials of manner and place (standing [on foot], in a rocking chair, near the window) stand out in the creation of the chronotopic effects addressing the reader and the theme. Those adverbials are inserted between the subjects of the action (Garcia, Fortunato and Maria Luísa, respectively) and the verbal forms in the past continuous,<sup>81</sup> which signal that their actions happened sometime in the past and extended across a complete period of time, emphasizing that the activity was happening during the specified period (was staring, [was] cracking his knuckles, was finishing off).

Machado interlinks a scene as a response to another, creating a valuational game which at times highlights the characters' feeling of embarrassment (Garcia and Maria Luísa's) towards Fortunato, and at other times highlights Fortunato's daily actions, thus manifesting his cruelty. As a result, the scenes interweave to address the theme, allowing us to watch several chronotopes combining with one another, coexisting, interweaving, finding themselves in more complex interrelations, as suggested by Bakhtin (1981b).<sup>82</sup> This game gradually invites the reader to notice that there is something strange regarding the personality of the man that causes feelings of embarrassment and pain at the same time. The analysis of the following excerpt depicts Fortunato in one of those actions: "He walked slowly, head bent, stopping at times to thwack some sleeping dog with his cane; the dog would yelp, and he would go on his way" (ASSIS, 2009, p.168).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> TN. The verbal form used in Portuguese is the "*pretérito imperfeito*." One function of this verbal form is to mentally take us to sometime in the past and describe what was present at that time, that is, to describe something which began before a particular time in the past and is still in progress at that point.

<sup>82</sup> For reference, see footnote 76.

<sup>83</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

The creation of this detailed microscene provides us with hints of Fortunato's cruelty. Once again, the effect of movement is achieved as a result of interlinking stylistic-grammatical choices, which refers back to the act of observation, absolutely necessary for the reader to unravel the hidden cause. We observe that the adverb of manner (slowly) allows the narrator to describe Fortunato's manner of walking down the street; the verbal forms are used to confer movement on the character (walked, stopping). The last adverbial clause is used to explain the reason for eventual stops (to thwack some sleeping dog with his cane); and the restrictive adjective clause is used to specify what type of dog the character hit (some sleeping dog).<sup>84</sup> The character's cruelty and cowardly behavior are highlighted; as a result, the extraverbal context is established here and now, inviting the reader to make social value judgments about each act performed by the character.

The author sparsely delegates to the narrator the role of offering numerous explanations so as to give a wealth of details and anticipate to the reader that he has unlimited knowledge. The recurring valuational syntactic tool used is the non-defining clause which always addresses the curious reader and the mysterious theme to be revealed: "and about a private hospital, something we'll explain later" (ASSIS, 2009, p.167)<sup>85</sup>. Thus, the plot evolves in such a way as to present Fortunato, armed with resources deriving from his capitalist social status, investing in setting up a sanatorium. He not only needs Garcia, the doctor, to run the business, but also needs to come up with means to objectively enjoy the pain felt by other people. Similarly, at home, in his personal laboratory, he dissects animals and carries out other experiments in the name of physiology and anatomy. His cruel behavior tortures his wife.

The character's manipulative powers extend to Garcia and Maria Luísa, who are indirectly tortured, but their shared interests (financial and emotional) and the social conventions maintain the bond between the couple and Garcia who restricts himself to watch Maria Luísa's loneliness, dissatisfaction, and suffering. The social values held by the bourgeois world at the time when the narrative was written are made explicit.

The narrator exposes the husband's pleasure when he experiences his sick wife's agony, up to the moment of her death.

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<sup>84</sup> TN. In Portuguese, Machado used a restrictive adjective clause "some dog *that was sleeping*."

<sup>85</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

[H]e fixed his *cold, dull* eyes on the *slow, painful* decomposition of life, drank in the beautiful creature's afflictions one by one. She was *thin, transparent, devoured* by fever and *riddled* with death itself. His *exacerbated* egotism, *hungry* for sensations, did not make him hang on *every* minute of her agony, nor did he pay for this with a *single* tear, *public* or *private* (ASSIS, 2009, p.178, our emphasis).<sup>86</sup>

The characters, their psychological and physical conditions, as well as their own feelings, are qualified by the insistent use of adjectives. The verbal form “drank in” followed by the adverbial of manner “one by one” and the direct object “the beautiful creature’s afflictions” lead to a clash between pleasure and domination of the manipulator and the helpless and inert state of the manipulated. The superlative “aspérrimo” [most harsh]<sup>87</sup> and the non-defining non-finite clause “hungry for sensations” attribute a sense of valuation to the excerpt in addition to the author’s intonation that is refracted in the narrator’s voice (BAKHTIN, 1981a)<sup>88</sup> by means of analyzing the character's selfishness, which is qualified through the aforementioned characteristic. Again, the adverbial “a single” helps to reveal the skeptic and indifferent manner with which Fortunato acted. All of the aforementioned choices, associated with the use of commas that separate densely meaningful content, reveal value judgment, gradually triggered by the character’s meticulous behavior, in addition to the valuational refined intonation used to describe the manner with which he performs his actions. Intonation will arise as the valuational position taken by the author (VOLOŠINOV, 1976b),<sup>89</sup> especially when setting scenes that anchor the reader to the context of life so he/she can follow the narration of the psychological aspects that conduct the character’s behavior. This is also revealed by the excerpt representing the climax that unveils Fortunato’s cruelty:

He saw Fortunato sitting at the table, in the middle of the study, on which he had placed a saucer filled with alcohol. The burning liquid flickered. Between his thumb and index finger he held a piece of string, tied round the mouse’s tail. In his right hand he held a pair of

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<sup>86</sup> For reference, see footnote 13. Original text: “Não a deixou mais; fitou o olho baço e frio naquela decomposição lenta e dolorosa, bebeu uma a uma as aflições da bela criatura, agora magra e transparente, devorada de febre e minada de morte. Egoísmo aspérrimo, faminto de sensações, não lhe perdoou um só minuto de agonia, nem lho pagou uma só lágrima, pública ou íntima.”

<sup>87</sup> TN. “Aspérrimo,” which is in the superlative form in Portuguese, was translated as *exacerbated* by John Gledson.

<sup>88</sup> For reference, see footnote 3.

<sup>89</sup> For reference, see footnote 2.

scissors. At the moment Garcia came in, Fortunato cut one of the mouse's legs off; then he lowered the poor beast into the flame, quickly, so as not to kill it, and started to do the same with the third leg; he'd already cut one off (ASSIS, 2009, p.176).<sup>90</sup>

Intonation, based on the value judgement that had been triggered, evinces the sadistic behavior of the character, as a result of thoroughly recreating the extraverbal context of the scene. The adverbial "at the table" indicate the exact position of the character in space; the defining clause "in the middle of the study" locates the table. The finite clause "[t]he burning liquid flickered" followed by a full stop allows the dry cadence intonation to be shared with the reader, making reference to the character's unmerciful behavior when he snips off the rat's legs successively and subsequently lowers the rat into the flame. At this point, we also see intonation arise in association with the ideological content of the word "quickly," oriented towards the theme and the interlocutor. "Quickly," between commas, describes the carefully planned action of lowering the animal into the flame. Even the position in which Fortunato got his fingers as he holds the piece of string to which the animal was tied converges to make it clear to the reader that there is pleasure in torture. The value judgment triggered by the description of each gesture reveals that Fortunato is meticulous and indifferent in his actions. He does not want the animal to die quickly, but rather to suffer before it dies. His cruelty arises from that.

Subsequently, the narrator describes Garcia's state of horror as he witnesses the scene in which cruelty is confirmed: "Fortunato cut it *very slowly*" (ASSIS, 2009, p.176, our emphasis).<sup>91</sup> The use of the adverbial phrase "very slowly" renders, once again, value judgment and intonation at the same time, which Sobral (2009) describes as evaluative intonation, since both concepts are triggered by the same expression.

The same event occurs when the narrator describes Fortunato's pleasure in seeing his now dead wife while Garcia cries over her body: "where he had stopped, quietly savoured this explosion of moral pain, which lasted a long, long, deliciously long time" (ASSIS, 2009, p.179).<sup>92</sup> The evaluative intonation that can be attributed to such an event starts with the verbal predicate "quietly savoured," completed by the object "explosion," which semantically is in contrast with the character's state. The

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<sup>90</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>91</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>92</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

complement (noun phrase) “of moral pain” specifies the explosion and the non-defining clause “which lasted a long [...] time” provides additional information about it. In addition to that, the focus is now on the duration of the feeling experienced by the character (long). Accordingly, the adverbial “long, long,” followed by the adverb of manner “deliciously long,” evince Fortunato’s pleasure and once again renders evaluative intonation, which must follow the duration of the event.

The sight sense is repeatedly taken up throughout the entire short story by means of different verb forms, namely: “examine,” “gaze,” “observe,” “unravel,” “spy,” “watch over,” “look,” “stare,” “watch,” among others. Their ideological value reveals the feelings and emotions of characters, refers to the sense of observation necessary to the reader and serves the exhaustibility of the theme, conforming with the nature of the psychological analysis of characters, which is typical of Realism.

### **Final Considerations**

The present study evinces the productivity of an analysis anchored in the understanding of the utterance’s finished whole. By interpreting the cognitive and ethical work of the author-creator we are able to establish a relationship between social and individual aspects, particularly regarding the dimensions of linguistic and extralinguistic functioning of language, based on the broad and immediate sociohistorical situation of interaction of utterance production.

The aspects relative to form are taken as axiologically connected to the choices made by the author-creator so as to fulfill his discursive will before his interlocutors. On the basis of that, we illustrate the indissoluble interweaving established among form, verbal material, and content.

The description of the dialogic/valuational functioning of the stylistic/grammatical choices materialized in verbal style allows us to understand the functioning of social axiologies (extraverbal context, value judgment and intonation) reflected in the verbal material while uninterruptedly projecting the refraction of new valuational processes. Thus, a dialogic status for linguistic analysis, focusing on the verbal style of the utterance as pluridiscursive and representative of social relations, is established.

This perspective allows us to suggest the possibility of addressing the linguistic aspects of a text on the basis of this linguistic analysis of dialogic status, in which the author's lexical and syntactic choices are interpreted in a stylistic-grammatical manner.

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