

Mikhail Bakhtin and Manoel de Barros: between Chronotope and Childhood / *Mikhail Bakhtin e Manoel de Barros: entre o cronotopo e a infância*

*Paloma Dias Silveira**

*Margarete Axt***

ABSTRACT

This article addresses childhood, time and space through literature and philosophy. We begin with the assessment of Mikhail Bakhtin that leads to the formation of the concept of *chronotope*, analyzing the work of François Rabelais in the context of grotesque realism. Bakhtin constructs a philosophical perspective of open and collective time-space, freedom, and creation. In turn, the literature of Manoel de Barros embodies a chronotope, cementing a view of the world and men in contrast with meanings and values. This brings us to the understanding that Barros's poems portray a particular aesthetics similar to that assessed by Bakhtin. Barros's aesthetics is governed by a time-space relationship that associates childhood with creation, the time-space of uselessness and contemplation, the lowering of the gaze, rebirth and the creation of proximities between heterogeneous elements.

KEYWORDS: Aesthetics; Chronotope; Childhood

RESUMO

Neste artigo aproximamos a infância, o espaço e o tempo através da literatura e da filosofia. Partimos da leitura que Bakhtin faz das obras de François Rabelais, no contexto do realismo grotesco, e do conceito de cronotopo aí formulado. Bakhtin constrói uma perspectiva filosófica de espaço-tempo aberto e coletivo, de liberdade e criação. A literatura de Manoel de Barros, por sua vez, materializa um cronotopo, afirmando uma visão de mundo e de homem no embate entre sentidos e valores. Chegamos ao entendimento de que os poemas de Barros possuem uma estética particular que se aproxima daquela analisada por Bakhtin. É regida por uma relação espaço-temporal que trabalha com a infância associada à criação, envolvendo o espaço-tempo do inútil e da contemplação, o rebaixamento do olhar, o renascimento e a produção de vizinhanças entre elementos heterogêneos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Estética; Cronotopo; Infância*

* Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; paloma.dias@gmail.com

** Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; maaxt@ufrgs.br

Encounters between philosophy and literature are replete with men and their complexities. For enthusiasts, it is difficult to engage with literature that is not philosophical to some extent, or with philosophy that is not slightly literary. In the mind of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and theorist, literature is estheticized life that gives form to concepts and values through the dialogism of words, voices, and meanings. In the literature of Manoel de Barros, a Brazilian poet, philosophy is the thinking that drives life and causes it to break free from common sense, increasing the power of creative imagination.

One could say that childhood is a major theme in Barros's poetry; however, this would be reductionist, since in this case it is far more than that. It even becomes its material and method. Barros approaches his childhood memories in terms of what it still is and continues to be. It is the childhood that he writes about and which is inscribed and enunciates itself. In his book *Memórias inventadas: a infância* (Invented Memoirs: Childhood, 2010), Barros discusses childhood, space, and time. Like the poet, we refer to childhood as opposed to children, because childhood is something that surpasses children. If children are defined by their chronological age and the passage of time, childhood is defined by its poetry and limitless creative capacity.

This article highlights the conceptual relationship between childhood, space, and time. To that end, Bakhtin provides a reflection on space and time through the concept of *chronotope*, which is echoed in Barros's literature. The same echoes ensure that we hear philosophy in literature and literature in philosophy. Our goal is to share these echoes with readers and attempt to make them audible and visible. We begin with *Ver* (Watching) a poetic prose by Manoel de Barros, published in "Memórias inventadas: a infância."

1 The Bakhtinian Chronotope

Watching

Every afternoon during school vacation, I watched the slug in the yard. The same slug. Every afternoon I watched the same slug crawl out of its shell, in the garden, and climb onto the stone. It seemed addicted to it. The slug remained stuck to the stone, happily naked. Does it possess the stone? Or is it possessed? I was perverted before the spectacle. What if I were a voyeur in the garden, without binoculars? Perhaps. But I never lied to my parents about enjoying watching the slug surrender to the stone. (I might be using the verb surrender incorrectly, instead of climbing. Perhaps. But, in the end, isn't it the same thing?) I never

hid my erotic delirium. I never concealed from my parents that supreme desire to watch. It seemed there was a voracious exchange between the slug and the stone. In fact, I admit, at the time I adored all crawling creatures that rubbed their bellies across the ground. Lizards were far above slugs in this point. These little creatures were the ones that lived happily on the ground that fascinated me. There was no more edifying spectacle for me than belonging to the ground. For me these small beings had the privilege of hearing the sources of the Earth (BARROS, 2010, p.29).¹

Barros's work is marked by a peculiarity in terms of time and space elements. The yard, mentioned in the very first line, is the great stage of the child's life, where childhood experiences the intensities of time and its duration, where life unfolds itself intensely in encounters with the small crawling creatures that inhabit it – intensities that populate the imagination and, for that very reason, become more important. In the intensity of these encounters, the little creatures crawling across the floor are at the highest level in nature. And the garden, a sort of stage or square in which childhood's important beings meet, seems to insinuate itself through Barros's words as an axiological value, giving rise to ideas, meanings and values that, if irrelevant in the "real world," allow the visualization of new horizons, world views, and possibilities of life.

Ver is a text from Barros's work in which the full and intensive time of affections and perceptions spatializes into a yard and a slug, the latter extending out and opening itself incompletely and sensually to the world of the stone. The same happens to space, which is temporalized, intensifying itself when the slug becomes a stone (or the stone becomes a slug) as an event in the imaginative duration of a childhood.

For us, these movements in Barros's poetry are a particular *chronotope* that recalls Bakhtin's concept of chronotope involving the time-space relationships in literature, especially those present in the Rabelaisian world that intersects with the axes of the body.

¹ Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "Ver. Nas férias toda tarde eu via a lesma no quintal. Era a mesma lesma. Eu via toda tarde a mesma lesma se desprepar de sua concha, no quintal, e subir na pedra. E ela me parecia viciada. A lesma ficava pregada na pedra, nua de gosto. Ela possuía a pedra? Ou seria possuída? Eu era pervertido naquele espetáculo. E se eu fosse um voyeur no quintal, sem binóculos? Podia ser. Mas eu nunca neguei para os meus pais que eu gostava de ver a lesma se entregar à pedra. (Pode ser que eu esteja empregando erradamente o verbo entregar, em vez de subir. Pode ser. Mas ao fim não dará na mesma?) Nunca escondi aquele meu delírio erótico. Nunca escondi de meus pais aquele gosto supremo de ver. Dava a impressão que havia uma troca voraz entre a lesma e a pedra. Confesso, aliás, que eu gostava muito, a esse tempo, de todos os seres que andavam a esfregar as barrigas no chão. Lagartixas fossem muito principais do que as lesmas nesse ponto. Eram esses pequenos seres que viviam ao gosto do chão que me davam fascínio. Eu não via nenhum espetáculo mais edificante do que pertencer do chão. Para mim esses pequenos seres tinham o privilégio de ouvir as fontes da Terra".

The concept of chronotope is addressed extensively in *Rabelais and His World* (1984a),² in which Bakhtin analyzes the influence of popular comic culture in the five books that make up *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1534), by the French author François Rabelais. Along these same lines, in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (1981), Bakhtin presents chronotope as a category of esthetic analysis. The chronotope of a text is inseparable from the concept of men and the world that it records. According to Bakhtin (1981, p.84),³

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.

It is through this concept that Bakhtin describes *time*. According to Amorim (2006, p.102), “On reading the basic text describing the chronotopes concept, we see that it is in fact an inversion of exotopy. Here, time is the privileged element.”⁴ Until then space had predominated Bakhtin’s aesthetic design (reflected primarily in the concept of *exotopy* in *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*),⁵ formulated in 1920 by a young Bakhtin. On the other hand, based on his study of François Rabelais’s work begun in the following decade, time is prioritized, the Rabelaisian time of radical changes and inverted meanings.

² BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984a.

³ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. In: HOLQUIST, Michael (Ed.). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp.84-258.

⁴Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: “[...] quando lemos o texto básico do conceito de cronotopos, descobrimos que há na verdade uma inversão com relação ao conceito de exotopia. Aqui, o elemento privilegiado é o tempo”.

⁵ Essay published in the collection entitled *Art and Answerability* (BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*. In: HOLQUIST, Michael; LIAPUNOV, Vadim (Ed.). *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translation and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.4-256). In this essay Bakhtin questions the relationship between the author and the character. The author is considered the holder of the vision that encompasses all the characters and their respective horizons. While the characters have only their horizon before them, the author holds a vision that encompasses the character’s entire environment. The author occupies the position of an *I* creator that sees the *other*, the character, from a privileged vantage point because he possesses a *surplus of vision*. The author occupies a position that Bakhtin refers to as *exotopic*, based on spatial relationships with the character. Based on this outlook, he discusses the author’s individual creative capacity, which consists of creating a finished aesthetics of the character and his world.

Amorim (2006, p.105) states that the concept of exotopy “addresses the issue of individual creation,” whereas the concept of chronotope “addresses the production of history. It designates a collective place, a type of time-space matrix where several stories are told or written.”⁶ These concepts are related and complement each other although the former is permeated by the element of individual creation and the latter by issues of the collective subject, a collective that “[...] refers to the idea of a classless society where everyone shares the work and, as a result, shares time” (AMORIM, 2006, p.103).⁷ Based on this Bakhtinian perspective, we assess time through François Rabelais’s analysis of grotesque realism, when Bakhtin formulated the chronotope concept. Next, we map some of the ways this analysis intersects with the chronotope found in Manoel de Barros’s work.

Bakhtin studies the popular culture of the transition period between the Middle Ages and Renaissance, attempting to understand Rabelais’s literary work by identifying the values and world views at play.

While Rabelais’s critics considered his work “of bad taste,” given its obscene language and imagery, among other aspects, Bakhtin’s profound and innovative aesthetic design revealed its greatness to the world. Rabelais experienced the transition between the historic periods in terms of living in a society undergoing significant change. He had the sensitivity to capture these transitions and transform them into meaningful literary images and metaphors about man and his existence. It is in this context that Rabelaisian realism emerges, along with the characters Gargantua and Pantagruel, two giants who are father and son and were incorporated into a grotesque environment, living a particular reality that is linked to the body and language and replete with eccentricities.

In the Bakhtinian aesthetic, words are very important as the material of literary creation, but are secondary in aesthetic analysis since the meanings and values at play in the word are the priority. These meanings and values are undoubtedly constructed through the craftsmanship of words, giving rise to an *architectonic*, as referred to by Bakhtin in *Art and Answerability* (1990),⁸ in which he discusses the problem of material, content and

⁶Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: “trata da questão da criação individual”. Já o conceito de cronotopo “trata de uma produção da história. Designa um lugar coletivo, espécie de matriz espaço-temporal de onde várias histórias se contam ou se escrevem”.

⁷Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: “remete aqui à ideia de uma sociedade sem classes em que todos compartilham do trabalho e, por conseguinte, compartilham do tempo”.

⁸ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art. In: HOLQUIST, Michael; LIAPUNOV, Vadim (Ed.). *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin.

form in literary artistic creation. Only the compositional form of technical aesthetic analysis within the formal aspect of words is perceived in linguistic material, while the architectural form of esthetic analysis, which involves a relationship with the meanings and values at play in the literary text, is perceived in dialogue with the compositional form, providing a view of the uniqueness of the book, the plot, its characters, and their relationship with the world.

When we talk about *value*, we are referring to the axiological position that expresses a way of observing and considering the world, an idea, and consciousness. For Bakhtin (1990, p.195),⁹

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.

Based on this understanding of aesthetics and style, Bakhtin's position is that the crude language used by Rabelais in his work is the writer's way of expressing the meanings and values at play in his literature, combined with a view of man and the world that is permeated by the historic and cultural context.

Popular comic culture in the 15th and 16th centuries in Europe was opposed to serious religious thought and manifested itself in the form of ceremonies, performances, verbal comedic work, and different forms of crude vocabulary. Popular carnival celebrations in public squares were the primary means of manifesting popular culture and became a kind of second life for the population over certain time periods. They provided a different view of the world occurring at the same time as the real version, but symbolically destroying dogmatism and authoritarianism.

The carnivalesque view of the world that Bakhtin revives in Rabelais's work clashes with the monologic principle of manifesting a single voice or a single world view. This is because carnival was a dialogic celebration that gave rise to multiple voices,

Translation by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.257-325.

⁹ See footnote 5.

temporarily abolishing dogmatism and diluting hierarchies, establishing new forms of human relationships.

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed (BAKHTIN, 1984a, p.10).¹⁰

During carnival celebrations, representing the opposite of an official life, a freer and more familiar form of contact was created between people, without the barriers that normally separated people, such as those of class. Dialogue was open to everyone and occurred in the form of a particular carnivalesque language, found in Rabelais's work. Carnavalesque language was free from norms and labels, subverting them and using expressions prohibited by the official culture.

For Bakhtin (1984a, p.16),¹¹ "It is characteristic for the familiar speech of the marketplace to use abusive language, insulting words or expressions, some of them quite lengthy and complex." This language was accompanied by happy, carnivalesque laughter. At the same time as they made fun of the Church, religious services, and the authorities, using grotesque vocabulary, everyone laughed, renewed themselves, overcoming their fear and inequalities, albeit temporarily.

During carnival, laughter belonged to everyone; it was universal and collective. Laughter was also ambivalent in that it was both degrading and renewing. It was degrading because it debased anything dogmatic, such as the Church or the State. According to Bakhtin (1984a, p.21),¹² degradation "here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better." The Church was laughed at and the clergy was parodied with the intent of its degradation and its improved rebirth in another life, the second life of the carnival goers.

¹⁰ See footnote 2.

¹¹ See footnote 2.

¹² See footnote 2.

The scenes of bodily and material life such as drinking, eating, copulating or giving birth (terms used in Rabelais's work) gain new meaning and imagery in literature, recalling the principles of overabundance and fertility. These are components of the aesthetics of Rabelaisian grotesque realism impregnated by the carnival environment. The body gains renewed meaning, becoming incomplete, open, and interacting with the world. Eating and drinking are important acts in the body's reality, "the body transgresses here its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense" (BAKHTIN, 1984a, p.281).¹³ Below are sections which were taken from Bakhtin's analysis of Gargantua and Pantagruel, in which form appears as the body and the author addresses the acts of eating and drinking:

This grotesque use of the fantastic to describe the human body and all its processes is well illustrated in the portrayal of Pantagruel's illness, whose cure involves lowering into his stomach workers with spades, peasants with pick-shovels and seven men with baskets to clean the filth out of his stomach (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.173).¹⁴

An intersection of the body series with the series of eating-drinking and with the defecation series occurs in the episode with the six pilgrims. Gargantua swallows six pilgrims with his salad and washes them down with a healthy gulp of white wine. At first the pilgrims hide behind the teeth, and then they are all but carried away into the abyss of Gargantua's stomach. With the help of their staffs they manage to hang on to the surface of the teeth. At this point they accidentally touch a sore tooth, and Gargantua spews them out of his mouth. And while the pilgrims are making their escape Gargantua begins to urinate; his urine cuts across the road, and they are forced to make their way across this great current of urine (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.188).¹⁵

Rabelais's images, analyzed by Bakhtin, place the body, drinking, eating, birth, and excrements side by side, constructing series of meaning. As Bakhtin observes (1981, p.177), "Rabelais is not afraid of a logic along the lines of 'the melon is in the garden, but my uncle is in Kiev.'" ¹⁶ He creates eccentric scenes that bring together what is traditionally separated, producing unexpected matrices between elements related to birth, death, eating, drinking, laughing, crying, scatological acts, and sex. He often brings death and laughter together, creating the meaning of death as rebirth into a new world.

¹³ See footnote 2.

¹⁴ See footnote 3.

¹⁵ See footnote 3.

¹⁶ See footnote 3.

For Bakhtin (1981),¹⁷ the approximation of heterogeneous elements into new matrices, together with the selection and extraction of components from their original context to be combined into new ones, is an important and complex esthetic operator through which the author produces novelty and creates a way of seeing and a discourse that encompasses the craftsmanship of style.

This compositional structure that combines heterogeneous elements is a characteristic of Rabelais's work and produces bold combinations that debase and degrade to give birth to the new. Incompleteness and the mutating body are characteristics of these grotesque images, linked to excess, exaggeration, everything that passes through the body and escapes it, and all the excrescences that prolong it and unite it with other bodies. The term grotesque, according to Discini (2006, p.58), "came to express the transmutation of certain forms into others in the eternal incompleteness of inexistence."¹⁸

In Rabelais' work, the body is always a collective body, essentially linked to others. Whereas in his previous work from the 1920s, reflection on space predominated, and Bakhtin focused on the individual body with no well-defined boundaries, on encountering Rabelais' work, Bakhtin analyzes the body as collective and open.

These two notions introduce us, in a bodily sense, both to time and its duration, and to an architectonic of the Being-as-event, which makes the *I/Other* relationship inseparable in the course of the event-ness of Being: These positions, which reflect openness and collectivity, seem to recall a worldview already put forward in the author's first (known) work *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993),¹⁹ written in about 1919.

Tihanov (2012, p.175) also refers to this tension that prioritizes the blending of the borders of the *I/Other* relationship and is emphasized in Bakhtin's work on Rabelais:

It would be fair to argue in conclusion that, while bound together by the centrality of the body as a philosophical problem, Bakhtin's significant works 'Author and Hero' and Rabelais stand for two strongly divergent positions: the earlier one searching for the limits of privacy and identity in the exchange with others; the later one cherishing the abolition of these limits, the removal of every boundary separating a human body from the other, the activation of a grotesque mode of existence that

¹⁷ See footnote 3.

¹⁸ Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "passou então a exprimir a transmutação de certas formas em outras, no eterno inacabamento da existência".

¹⁹ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

thrives on disproportion, deliberate distortion, and rejection of the sense of proportion.

2 A Chronotope in the Literature of Manoel de Barros

Based on this analysis of popular culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance as portrayed by François Rabelais, Bakhtin formulated the concept of carnivalization (BAKHTIN, 1984a;²⁰ 1984b),²¹ meaning carnival's transposition into literature by incorporating the principles of a parodic subversion of the quotidian and the texts. There is also the recognition of human incompleteness. Literature consists of contradictions between worldviews, inverting the reality structure and creating another reality with different values.

Carnival is essentially dialogic and exists as a response to the official culture, producing new forms of collective existence. During carnival, the reigning serious tone is parodied to give birth to a new, happier, and more festive meaning. It means the transformation of the serious into something comic and popular.

Carnival is a collective time-space event where people's freedom prevails; space is represented by public squares and streets, and time by the festivities. This is Rabelais' chronotope; a literary chronotope inspired by carnival as a cultural manifestation of a view of man and of the world. As stated by Amorim (2006, p.103), "the idea of time brings with it a concept of man, and as such, each new temporality corresponds to a new man."²²

In the field of literary theory and history, however, Bakhtin was often criticized regarding the basis of his carnivalization concept, including German scholars, as described by Wall (2010), who raised questions as to the historic accuracy of the medieval carnival phenomenon. Some historians criticize the marked difference between official and popular culture in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, despite the validity of this inconclusive debate, it is important to consider that the most crucial aspect of the concept

²⁰ See footnote 2.

²¹ BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984b. (Theory and History of Literature; v. 8).

²² Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "[...] a concepção de tempo traz consigo uma concepção de homem e, assim, a cada nova temporalidade, corresponde um novo homem".

of carnivalization is not official/popular polarization, but rather the mixtures, the dynamic movement that produces new meanings through language (whether oral, written, physical...), the reversal of what already exists, which is a characteristic of Rabelais's chronotope.

Revisiting the poet, armed with Bakhtinian categories, in Manoel de Barros we also find time-space tension that defines a particular chronotope. His writings carry the recurring images of gardens, dirt roads or riverbanks as spaces for children. In *Ver* (Watching), the garden is a time marker represented by a slug crawling slowly towards a stone. There is an intersection of axes pointing, on the one hand, to the time-space in which children are free to play and have time to watch the world and the delicate movement of a small being, and, on the other, the time-space of a slug crawling slowly over the ground in an intensive folding of space.

The tension occurs in the worldview emphasized by Barros, with open spaces, connected to nature, marked by the slowness of time and time for contemplation, as opposed to the closed space and rapid time of large cities, where the poet sees “nothing prettier than a bird,” as he writes in *Sobre sucatas* (About Scrap Metal):

I saw nothing in the city prettier than a bird. I saw that everything that man produced turned into scrap metal: bicycles, airplanes, automobiles. The only things that don't turn into scrap metal are birds, trees, rocks. Even spaceships turn into scrap. Now I think that a white bog heron is more beautiful than a spaceship. I apologize for committing this truth (BARROS, 2010, p.69).²³

There is an affirmation of ethical values in reference to life as a celebration, life in its dignity of being lived and its priority of being, strained against *having* as a logic of accumulation, of ownership, disposal and garbage, a logic produced in the capitalist inflection of consumption.

The poet achieves this effect through the inversion that recalls the Rabelaisian view of the world. The boy prefers to look at the ground, at the small beings, “lowering” his gaze. By lowering his gaze and connecting to earth, Barros inverts the meaning of the

²³Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: “Não vi nenhuma coisa mais bonita na cidade do que um passarinho. Vi que tudo o que o homem fabrica vira sucata: bicicleta, avião, automóvel. Só o que não vira sucata é ave, árvore, rã, pedra. Até nave espacial vira sucata. Agora eu penso uma garça branca de brejo ser mais linda que uma nave espacial. Peço desculpas por cometer esta verdade”.

importance of things, updating a carnivalesque perspective of everyday life through the eyes of the child in an attempt to renew it and open other possibilities of life.

This gaze lowering, which highlights small beings such as those crawling on the ground in communion with the earth, as well as the erotic imagery of the relationship between the slug and the stone, draws attention to the renewal of meanings and values. In the case of the relationship between the slug and the stone, for example, meaning is produced by the insinuation of copulation, with the sexual act functioning as an index for the value of the renewal of life (as found in Rabelais's work).

Barros remarks that it was his grandmother who taught him not to despise despicable beings, as he writes in the poem *O apanhador de desperdícios* (The Waste Catcher):

I offer more respect to those that live with their bellies on the ground, like water, stones and frogs. I understand water's accent well. I offer more respect to unimportant beings and unimportant things. I value insects more than planes. I value the speed of turtles more than that of missiles (BARROS, 2010, p.45).²⁴

Barros's time is not a time of missiles, cars, spaceships, and technologies associated with today's fast-paced social life, but the time of the slug that he observes in fascination as it surrenders to the stone, which also has its own temporality. The stone, a recurring element in Barros's work, represents nature that suffers the action of time but remains strong and resilient, never becoming a disposable object. There are two times present in the fusion of the slug and the stone, times of nature that leave their mark on space, namely that of the stone becoming the slug and the slug becoming the stone, which, in the poet's imaginative compositions, produce the time and place of the child experiencing childhood: the garden.

Like Rabelais, viewed from Bakhtin's perspective, Barros creates a worldview based on tension, prioritizing other spaces and times. One of Barros's texts that best exemplifies this chronotope is *Caso de amor* (Love Affair) (BARROS, 2010, p.57):

²⁴Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "Dou mais respeito às que vivem de barriga no chão tipo água pedra de sapo. Entendo bem o sotaque das águas. Dou respeito às coisas desimportantes e aos seres desimportantes. Prezo insetos mais que aviões. Prezo a velocidade das tartarugas mais que a dos mísseis".

A road is deserted for two reasons: through neglect or contempt. In the case of the one I walk now, it's neglect. Even the thorn trees are suffocating it from the margins. This road gets better when I travel it alone. I have walked here since I was little. And I feel it gives me meaning. I think it understands that I went to school and I am now returning to see it. It is not indifferent to my past. I even feel it recognizes me now, all these years later. I feel it gets better as I walk alone over its body. For myself, I found it very disheveled. Nowadays, horses rarely pass over its stones. And when one does, the road holds it with care. I feel still today that the road longs for people and animals. Emus would flutter above it. Groups of peccaries would cross it to see the river on the other side. I imagine the road thinks I suffer the same fate: something completely forgotten. Perhaps. Not even dogs pass by us anymore. But I teach the road how to behave in solitude. I say: let it go, let it go, my love, everything comes to an end. Let's be honest: everyone disappears, just like Carlitos slowly fades at the end of a road... Let it go, let it go, my love.²⁵

Barros declares his love for the road that took him to school. The road is filled with time, time that passes and transforms, and, as it passes, it reconfigures space, leaving its marks. The abandoned road seems to suggest something about the abandonment of life in the countryside, in small towns where people and animals live freely and walk along dirt roads. The time-space of the road, which is not indifferent to the time of a child's life, clashes with the time-space of major highways traveled by large numbers of people at high speed. Highways often remind us of fear and danger, demanding our gaze to remain permanently fixed on it to preserve life. Depending on the point of view of the beholder, the highway may not be as loving as a road that joins a young boy to his home as he walks and observe the stones, animals, and plants in contact with nature. These are different spaces, marked by different times. The poet makes his choice. He creates value in

²⁵Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "Uma estrada é deserta por dois motivos: por abandono ou por desprezo. Esta que eu ando nela agora é por abandono. Chega que os espinheiros a estão abafando pelas margens. Esta estrada melhora muito de eu ir sozinho nela. Eu ando por aqui desde pequeno. E sinto que ela bota sentido em mim. Eu acho que ela manja que eu fui para a escola e estou voltando agora para revê-la. Ela não tem indiferença pelo meu passado. Eu sinto mesmo que ela me reconhece agora, tantos anos depois. Eu sinto que ela melhora de eu ir sozinho sobre seu corpo. De minha parte eu achei ela bem acabadinha. Sobre suas pedras agora raramente um cavalo passeia. E quando vem um, ela o segura com carinho. Eu sinto mesmo hoje que a estrada é carente de pessoas e de bichos. Emas passavam sempre por ela esvoaçantes. Bando de caititus a atravessavam para ver o rio do outro lado. Eu estou imaginando que a estrada pensa que eu também sou como ela: uma coisa bem esquecida. Pode ser. Nem cachorro passa mais por nós. Mas eu ensino para ela como se deve comportar na solidão. Eu falo: deixe, deixe meu amor, tudo vai acabar. Numa boa: a gente vai desaparecendo, igual quando Carlitos vai desaparecendo no fim de uma estrada... Deixe, deixe, meu amor".

commitment to a childhood memory as a chance to recover the historicity of being interwoven in the I/Other architectonic relationship, in the processes of the Being-as-event, which studies the contingency of life in its (un)importance and (dis)continuity and tension in terms of the termination of this same life, which places everything back into perspective.

It is important to underscore that this chronotopic analysis of the esthetic is at least partially inspired in the work of Amorim (2006). The author analyzes the movies of the Iranian director Kiarostami and reveals time-space tension characterizing his work, in which the *car* features as one of the main chronotopes of the modern world, asserting a view of man. Among other elements, this view is present in the tension between the closed space represented by the car and the open space of the beautiful landscapes filmed by Kiarostami, as well as the tension between the rapid time of the car and the slow dialogue between characters in his films, which take place inside the car.

In our analysis, we noted that the chronotope constructed by the poet gives value to the *useless*: the road which is now useless and abandoned, but gives meaning to his life; the useless time of the child observing the path of the slug. The chronotope compiled by the poet gives value to uselessness as something that does not bow to the utilitarianism of life, inverting established meanings. This could be considered very similar to the chronotope that inverts hierarchies and dogmatism, which portrays a public square and its rites, festivals, vocabulary, and laughter, free from that which tries to imprison them, producing new meanings.

Barros carnivalizes the serious elements of the utilitarian view, favoring what is unimportant, but nevertheless part of our lives. In doing so (as when comparing the times of the stone, slug, and child), he favors the creation of new matrices between different times.

Manoel de Barros echoes Rabelais by becoming a poet for small things, inversions, lowering, and rebirth, as shown below:

Rabelais

At around 1532, crazy Rabelais wandered the streets of Paris.
The lunatic was heralding rusty nails.
He knew the value of the worthless.
Rabelais would even come to imagine this:
Anyone who reaches the value of the worthless is, at the very least, a
sage or a poet.

And is at least someone capable of making faded beings shine.
Or someone who can frequent the future of words.
Watching that lunatic herald rusty nails, this thinker imagined perhaps
he wanted that man to extoll the virtues of the useless.
(Rabelais had previously stated that poetry is a useless virtue.)
(BARROS, 2010, p.387).²⁶

Bakhtin, in turn, regales us with his innovative aesthetic view that reveals Rabelais as an artist who portrayed the transformation of an age, the movements of a society captured in literature, and the promotion of time-space as an image of freedom, the production of meaning and inversions. The formulation of the concept of chronotope conveys the power of literature by using spatial-temporal indices to materialize an idea of man and the world, as Manoel de Barros does.

3 Approaches to Chronotope and Childhood

The chronotope as a conceptual tool as formulated by Bakhtin is a powerful presence when analyzing Manoel de Barros's work. The poet uses the lowering of the gaze towards small and useless things that reflect the universe of children, but primarily mankind's manner of remaining as a child. In the poet's work, childhood is portrayed as a time of slow, active and creative observation, establishing a unique chronotope.

With respect to the difference between child and childhood, we refer to scholars who have studied the theme of childhood in Barros's work. Based on an analysis of the poet, Kohan (2004) refers to a notion of childhood based on a unique view of time, in line with the discussion put forward here. First, he distinguishes two childhoods that coexist without exclusion: the first is based on chronological time (*chronos*), which refers to our

²⁶Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese:

"Rabelais

Por volta de 1532 andava pelas ruas de Paris o doido de Rabelais.

O doido apregoava pregos enferrujados.

Ele sabia o valor do que não presta.

Rabelais chegaria a imaginar assim:

Quem atinge o valor do que não presta é, no mínimo, um sábio ou um poeta.

É no mínimo alguém que saiba dar cintilância aos seres apagados.

Ou alguém que possa frequentar o futuro das palavras.

Vendo aquele maluco de rua a apregoar pregos enferrujados o nosso pensador imaginou que talvez quisesse aquele homem anunciar as virtudes do inútil.

(Rabelais já havia afirmado antesmente que poesia é uma virtude do inútil.)"

biography as a phase of life, and the second, on intense time (*aión*), which reflects creative potential and novelty, regardless of chronological age.

Chronological childhood is understood as one of the first instances followed by the stages of human development (baby, child). This childhood is recognized by chronology and considered a developmental phase in all its forms (biological, psychological, cognitive, and social). The second conception of childhood inhabits a different temporality. This childhood is not necessarily related to babies or children; it emerges as potential in human beings regardless of adulthood or old age. The dichotomies of childhood/adulthood or childhood/old age are not in play. In this perspective, childhood is an event, intensity, creation.

Leal (2004) complements this brief overview with an assessment that the concept of childhood has been linked to shortage, absence, and incompleteness. The absence may be of responsibilities, autonomy or knowledge, as well as lack of insight or malice, in terms of a romanticized childhood involving ingenuity, beauty, kindness, and purity.

A common element in analyses of Barros's work is that of childhood as creative potential and a time of creation, that is, the childhood that inhabits the second temporality discussed by Kahn, which deviates from the childhood/adulthood dichotomy. The tension present in Barros's work does not appear to occur between the adult and the child, as if adulthood striped us of what is most crucial in life and we must therefore either remain a child or return nostalgically to the past to recover something essential that was lost there. Similarly, Barros's childhood deviates from an idealized perspective according to the principle of ingenuity and purity. An example is the malice apparent in several passages, such as the *voyeurism* of the boy observing the slug surrendering to the stone.

The tensions we seek to identify in this article are especially related to time-space: rapid time versus slow time, open spaces versus closed spaces... There is also a set of tensions pertaining to language that has not been developed here, but involves the deconstruction of fixed meanings to enable the creation of senses, straining the meaning/sense relationship.

As aforementioned, the adulthood/child binary does not seem relevant in this field of tensions. The image of the adult appears several times in the poet's work associated with the same principles that qualify the image of the child, such as the grandmother that teaches the boy to value unimportant things, or even Rabelais, who values the useless.

As observed by Pagni (2004, p.44), in an analysis of the poet's work:

by forging a philosophy of observing, it [philosophy] focuses on that which is outside the established order and, based on this, becomes familiar with the established order through playing. Playing is also a form of graciously learning lessons, including excluded aspects, particularly the political lesson of defending minorities as well as many others that appear in his poems.²⁷

These lessons, which could be linked solely to childhood, in fact seem to surpass it and extend to the childhood of the human being and its creative capacity, which involves: the space-time of the useless and contemplation (active); the lowering of the gaze to focus on small and unimportant things; rebirth as an index for the value of life; and the production of matrices between heterogeneous elements (comparing the times of the slug, stone. and child).

Final Comments

The path we have taken here was supported by the Bakhtinian analysis of the chronotope, marked by carnivalization in literature and a philosophical perspective of time and space, which become open and collective and are experienced in inversions, generating the new in a series of transformations.

The literature of Manoel Barros addresses this intensive length of time and gives it materiality, as did Rabelais, putting forward a view of the world and of man in the clash between meanings and values. We reached the conclusion that Barros's aesthetics is very similar to that analyzed by Bakhtin in the universe of Rabelaisian work. Barros's aesthetic is governed by a time-space relationship that associates childhood with a time of creation.

In this article, chronotope proved to be a powerful concept in terms of illustrating the opposing tensions used by Manoel Barros. Rather than demonstrating Bakhtinian theory through Barros's poetry, our intention was to produce a dialogic encounter between Barros's literature and Bakhtinian aesthetic reflection. This approach allowed us

²⁷Excerpt translated from the original in Portuguese: "[...] ao forjar uma filosofia do olhar, ela [a filosofia] mira para aquele que estaria fora da ordem instaurada e a partir disso conhece a desordem instaurada pelo brincar, com o qual também se aprende graciosamente lições, inclusive sobre os excluídos. Particularmente, uma lição política de defesa das minorias, entre outras tantas que aparecem em seus poemas".

to show how the scale of the chronotope in poetry, as used by Barros, established a philosophical perspective of childhood that occurs in the processes of the Being-as-event and its duration, welcoming life as a celebration.

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