

Maria Aparecida Baccega: a palavra e o ato

Maria Aparecida Baccega: the word and the act

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Resumo: *Este artigo tem o propósito de apresentar aspectos da trajetória pessoal, acadêmica, profissional de Maria Aparecida Baccega. Busca-se indicar algumas linhas de força que compuseram o quadro teórico e de influências no interior do qual a docente efetivou as suas investigações e escreveu significativo número de obras. Destaca-se neste conjunto reflexivo a presença de certa tradição teórica advinda do marxismo e como ele aparece desdobrado em temas que alcançam os estudos de linguagem, a análise discursiva, os vínculos ficção-história, as incursões no terreno da comunicação, da comunicação e educação, da telenovela, do consumo. Conclui-se evidenciando o caráter inovador levado a termo pelo trabalho da professora no campo da pesquisa e do magistério.*

Palavras-chave: *Maria Aparecida Baccega; comunicação; educação; telenovela; consumo.*

Abstract: *This article aims to present aspects of the personal, academic and professional trajectory of the Maria Aparecida Baccega. It seeks to indicate some lines of strength that made up the theoretical framework and influences within which the professor carried out her investigations and wrote a significant number of works. In this reflective set, the presence of a certain theoretical tradition arising from marxism and how it appears unfolded in themes that reach language studies, discursive analysis, fiction-history links, incursions in the field of communication, communication and education stands out, soap opera and consumption. It concludes by highlighting the innovative character carried out by the professor's work in the field of research and teaching.*

Keywords: *Maria Aparecida Baccega; communication; education; soap opera; consumption.*

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*Preso à minha classe e a algumas roupas,
vou de branco pela rua cinzenta (...)*

Carlos Drummond de Andrade

Achegas

The rhetoric expansions do not shy away to certain tricks: they can hide what is not supposed to be said, reveal what is, promise the impossible and justify the lack of action. Maybe one of the first challenges of who is engaged in the word of language is, precisely, finding your place inside it and, at least, trying to understand it, adjusting the terms in which the game will be played. It is possible that this huge challenge results in the moving force of the ethical-moral, political, ideological, evaluating endeavors, to evoke some terms whose fusion tie the bonds between saying and doing. Everything points towards residing, here, the vitality from which will derive all types of moral, political, evaluating inflections that grant the bonds of word-acts. Adjusting both attributes, in the fusion sign and meaning, language and principles, implies finding during the passage the noun coherence, something that asks requirements stiff tenacity of an elevated cost. To pursue congruence does not mean, however, to dive in the territory of inflexibility and orthodoxy ignoring the difference as a starting point, contradiction between ideas in circulation and recognition of distinctive perspectives. To a certain gentleman, with which she would gladly share the celestial banquet – if she believed in such ethereal horizons – is attributed the sentence, reassuring that strength and tenderness are included in the same package. *“One has to be hard without ever losing tenderness”*.

Since I am talking about Maria Aparecida Baccega, it seemed pertinent to begin from a point which, one way or another, exercised a decisive role in her intellectual project, of a researcher and professor, in daily life, in the political engagements, in the affections: language and its arrangements; the fine tuning between verbal formulation and social insertion; the responsibility of someone that says what is said. She liked

to remind us that words are not summarized into a semantic dimension, since they carry strategies of action and forms of revealing subjects into the world. It is hard to think about that tall woman, with fair skin, blue eyes and wide gestures, a certain impatience and firm voice “as a good Italian daughter that I am”, in a scenario that is far from the challenges of language.

Political-emotional gap

I met who would be a friend for almost half a century in the tumultuous period of the 1970's. Maybe in late February, which is now a coincidence with our last encounter, also taking place in the same period, now in 2020, with her lying in a hospital bed.

Due to AI-5, the military dictatorship had grown the uprising of violence leading to the prison of thousands of Brazilian people, including Baccega's partner, José Adolfo de Granville Ponce, a journalist of publications such as *Realidade* magazine and, later, a publisher of publishing houses, such as Editora Ática, where he directed the important collection of university books *Ensaíos*. Equally incarcerated and a friend of Granville, who was weekly visited by the lady with a strong presence, filled with groceries for her husband, but always in a larger quantity to be distributed to other political prisoners, I started to connect with her. I admired the generosity and courage of Granville's wife, who would frequently help families of other prisoners with what she had of material possessions – one piece of clothing, a pair of glasses to be repaired, the indispensable medicine, a letter put in the mail – the numberless pieces of advice given, the active solidarity – especially with the ones who needed the most, the ones without relatives in São Paulo, with trouble getting some legal assistance. And even the execution of tasks with evident risk, such as establishing contact with clandestine political organizations and even sheltering people under the target of political repression. In the subtlety of some procedures, it was possible to get a glimpse of Baccega's character and personality.

Over time, we grew closer and as we talked, we identified common interests, that went beyond politics, and found the terrains of literature, language, the challenges of education, the crooked path of a country that seemed destined to live a long winter of obscurantism, regression, intolerance, traces of which we still haven't distanced ourselves and are always ready to emerge with the natural brutality of their actions.

The daughter of an Italian immigrant of the working class of Ribeirão Preto, prepared for marriage, raising children, domestic work, brought since the beginning the element of insurgency, the skeptical look for the ordinary ritual of submission and settling to the values of the provincial patriarchal society. As we used to joke about, everything went wrong, or, in popular tradition, no one has gone along with the Russians. And the mayhem went on, she got in the Communist Party, had her first marriage dissolved, a small son to raise, study and hard work to survive, world to be conquered: the ordinary provincial square had become small and her bachelor's in law didn't have enough strength to hold the assertive lady in an office dedicated to calm down the afflicted souls of litigators in search of settlement with the penal, labor, civil, family code and other tasks concerning legal activities. Moving to São Paulo, more than a mere transportation of household chachkis implied the accomplishment of a life's project in pursue of a bigger freedom of action and personal procedures, new work experiences and intellectual challenges, such as the unconcluded master's program in San Francisco, the new graduation in Languages at University of São Paulo and then the long, successful and known university career.

Since we ceased our conversations, we saw each other again years later, around 1974. The meeting place was a party that tried to gather strength and funds for the fight for democracy, at that moment being taken back and extended until the campaign for direct elections, in 1984, and the end of dictatorship with the editing of the Constitutional Letter of 1988 – called civic constitution by Ulysses Guimarães, and

now violated and target to every candidate to Simão Bacamarte² of the 21st century, with their aberrant orders of military intervention and the end of the Supreme Court, the National Congress, reason, science, art, public education of quality, in summary, of everything that suggests intelligence and civility. I imagine what would be my friend's reactions if she was alive and with full health.

Our encounter happened amidst the sounds of joy and air of surprise: I hear a loud scream followed by a radiant smile and the tall woman coming towards me with a proud cigarro de palha³. It was fumo de corda, something unthinkable nowadays, especially for the urban middle class youth, unless they would consider some variation of weed - something our friend would never get a hit.

During our friendship, we strengthen our bond that spread out to numberless professional endeavors that converged to a period of almost 20 years in which we were together as professors at the School of Communications and Arts at University of São Paulo. After her retirement and beginning a new work phase at Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Baccega helped organize the first moments of the Graduate Course in Communication and Consumption Practices, in which she was assistant coordinator between 2003 and 2007. Despite the different places of work, we continued in an intimate intellectual collaboration and emotional convivence until her death. I had other opportunities to talk about aspects of Baccega's life, in articles and expositions, as it is already possible to read works of authors that systematized her biography. All of this material can be found in database. However, I will stick to points over which I did not cover in previous initiatives and maybe collaborate to a wider understanding of the political, intellectual, professional itinerary of our companion.

First, however, I believe we can make an addendum, highlighted to regret practices that do not strengthen university life and exemplify the

2 Lead character from Machado de Assis' *The Alienist*, a story that talks about fear, conspiracy and revolutionary attempts.

3 Artisanal cigarette

existence of individual costs when we seek to accomplish the cited link between saying and doing.

The restless intellectual, marked by so many initiatives, had known setbacks and obstacles – as it usually happens with people that do not accept things according to the order they are imposed, neither think to firm pacts around personal projects surrendered to the solitude of their own interests, or even admit prevaricate about ethical procedures. On one hand, the strong positions seasoned in the heat of many dimensions of political fight and from which our professor have never shied away. On another hand, the tensions of power, in which the specific case of the university arena include not only symbolic dispute, but also physical spaces, positions and hierarchic places. Here, our professor knew oppositions more or less explicit that charged a high price: a dismissal of a private institution due to the defense of non-negotiable principles; discontinuity, in a public institution, of a journey that, despite being entirely successful in the intellectual terrain, in research, in production, in the professional involvement, it didn't get where it could. In a career that has as last level the position of full professor, Maria Aparecida Baccega retired from the School of Communications and Arts, in 2003, in the penultimate degree, as Associate Professor. The reasons, certainly, never were about the so-called meritocracy.

Productive restlessness

*Chega mais perto e contempla as palavras.
Cada uma
tem mil faces secretas sob a face neutra
e te pergunta, sem interesse pela resposta,
pobre ou terrível, que lhe deres:
Trouxeste a chave?*

Carlos Drummond de Andrade

Considering the plural character of researches and works written by Maria Aparecida Baccega, it is necessary to appeal to the spirit of synthesis,

necessarily weak and a little bit unsatisfactory, even because there are editorial limits to this article. Thus, having established the isotopic limits, it is possible to find links that, according to my understanding, give coherence to the intellectual project sought by her throughout her academic journey. And what is found in it is the theoretical-practical movement dialectically guided (according to the Marxist perspective) to the examination of bibliographic sources, thematic concerns and forms of approaching them, only clarifies the general assertive. And it randomly escapes the fact that the term praxis (and terms derived from it) gain permanent connotation in discourses created by our professor. It is a form through which the debate involving subjects in analysis (derived from research, metacriticism, from different ponderations) follow a certain script to which converge the historic scenario, social-economic factors, ideologies, culture and the desire of promoting some sort of intervention – or destination – of what is going through the reflective filter. Which is also can be considered a strategy of activism and combat in the intellectual field, in the field of concepts and ideas. It is a way of marking one's position, clarifying the place through which the world is seen and thought of. It is important to point out that I use the noun activism in a very precise direction, not being necessarily related to political parties, revealing the focus of vision, the commitments comprised, the interests at stake, the eventual paths to be taken.

I believe it is risky to withdraw the research and academic production of Baccaga in this circumstances, locking purposes and fragilizing involvements. Let us clarify that even because she would certainly like that. Here, we do not speak about political engagements with organized political groups, which she had until a certain point of the 1980's, but rather a dialectic inflection, as we already referred to contemplate in their epistemic core the idea of praxis. Let us say that the organic experience, as her bond with PCB (the Brazilian Communist Party) and indirectly with ALN (National Liberty Alliance), gained a residue to be kept in an almost emotional key. What we highlight, therefore, in expressions such as dialectic methodology, praxis activation, activist understanding,

relates to an attitude facing the intellectual field understood as scientific determination, integrity in research, accumulation of competences, strategy of clarification qualified in things of the world and vector of a possible social transformation. Neither theory or metacriticism as autonomous occurrences belonging to their own spheres with low or no connection with the “world of life”, nor voluntary or populist association with investigative procedures or immediatism located in the fights of circumstance. If we could speak of an existence of a method to guarantee internal recurrence to the works taken to term by our professor, we would say that it is put in the general lines drafted above.

The consequences of such methods find themes and forms that circulate, especially, in four big axis interconnected: language/discursive analysis; history and (tele)fiction; communication and education; consumption. Following this script – something found through the titles of research, books, articles, lectures, courses given, registered in her Lattes resumé – we will find in the cited lines of strength the majority of her production.

In works such as *Estudos de comunicação e análise do discurso: teoria e prática*; *Comunicação e Linguagem: discursos e ciência*; *Lenguaje verbal y médios de comunicación*; ou mesmo *Palavra e discursos: história e literatura*, what we see is the language call to action to guide and reflect the different consequences. The special place filled by the universe of words illuminates the other three axis of the sequence above. And even working in a closer manner with iconic signs (the televisional images) the supporting base did not leave the ground that shelters the word. Such understanding was derived from convictions and influences coming from, at least, two sources. Adam Schaff and Mikhail Bakhtin – if there was enough space to do so, there would be necessary to open a parenthesis to clarify how both characters are used, crossed and related to other sources of equal or close theoretical lineage; the subject will be briefly resumed below, however, their implications could be talked about in another moment.

In a similar way, it is possible to recognize the place where interdisciplinarity will fill in Baccega's thought. In the first and third books above, the verbal discursive material is put in dialogue with communicational studies; in the second one, the same bonds will turn to scientific discourse; in the last, it is about the literary variable in which is examined through the novel *Mayombe*, written by the Angolan writer Pepetela (Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos) and geared towards narrating the fights of Angolan guerilla against Portuguese colonialist military. Such subject was used with the taste of the professor for associating the theme of national liberation the circuits word-history-fiction.

The clarification of the project created around the aforementioned four lines of strength can be identified in other works – and here I am limiting myself, for obvious reasons, only to the books written by her individually or in collaboration with other authors. Compelled the inter-relations – term that followed her, I suppose, even when she slept – television/television and consumption follow titles such as: *Telenovela nas relações comunicação e consumo: diálogos Brasil e Portugal* (in collaboration with Márcia Tondato); *Consumindo e vivendo a vida: telenovela e consumo e seus discursos* (in collaboration with Isabel Orofino). About the field of communication and education, I will dedicate a bigger segment next, mentioning, right now, two titles: *Televisão e Escola: uma mediação possível?*; *Contar histórias, tecer culturas: as intersecções entre comunicação, educação e consumo na teleficação brasileira*.

In summary, there is an abundance of material (and here we only ventured in her articles, lectures, courses) to justify the existence of the consigned four big lines of strength feeding the legacy of Maria Aparecida Baccega, arranged under the light of two integrated vectors and to which we highlight: language and interdisciplinarity.

In the first case, in translation of the studies concerning discourse analysis (of French influence, as she would like to accentuate, in company of Pêcheux, Fuchs, Courtine, Orlandi, etc. to which was incorporated the Russian Bakhtin) – subject which she would work with persistence, in the second, as an unescapable procedure to who wants to

advance the terrain of communicational and language studies. According to her, Communication has its goals, constituting itself in a field of knowledge with method, research strategy, insertion in the social debate, pragmatic purposes, by what is structured in a field of knowledge. Within this theoretical framework, it is developed a dialogue with different areas, scientific fields, without which Communication would be left short. And she would reiterate that when bringing up Philosophy, Sociology, Language Theory, communication could not be reduced to any of them, but incorporated to them, giving solidity to their own meaning brought in the noun field. It is spread in Baccega's work this key idea that "the place of making philosophic, sociologic, linguistic theory is in their original institutions, in the School of Communication is necessary to promote intense dialogue with such areas, not to subsume oneself to them, but with the purpose of giving body to our own field, the clash with other areas should not occur in the gateway, but in the exit door. This quote is evidently an approximation.

Educational action

*Um galo sozinho não tece a manhã:
ele precisará sempre de outros galos.
De um que apanhe esse grito que ele
e o lance a outro: de um outro galo
que apanhe o grito que um galo antes
e o lance a outro; e de outros galos
que com muitos outros galos se cruzam
os fios de sol de seus gritos de galo
para que a manhã, desde uma tela tênue,
se vá tecendo, entre todos os galos.*

João Cabral de Melo Neto

The term education will be used here in a wider sense, involving not only the formal plan, but, equally, the procedures of subjects that, being in the world, decide to change it through attitudes and words whose

spreading promotes knowledge, information, analytical-critical spirit, reaching a certain number of interlocutors.

In this coverage, Maria Aparecida Baccega was a full-time educator.

I have witnessed, considering we have shared an office for many years at ECA-USP, her efforts in the sense of providing the courses she gave with propositions converging the new concepts of language studies, communication, education and culture.

Hence sociolinguistics, whose apprehension comes from the work of Marcel Cohen, Tullio De Mauro, Michael A.K. Halliday, William Labov, Robert Lado and Dino Preti – who she was an assistant at ECA until she took place in the Linguistic Communication department, which both divided until the return of the professor to his position at FFLCH-USP. Such perspective around language studies was, in the beginning of the 1980's, still new to us. Or even, the problems involved in the concept of editing texts available through media – and a sentence that was recurring: “What we read in the newspaper and watch in the television is an edited world.” Furthermore, the themes of reception and mediations, for which she sought a foundation in Raymond Williams, David Harvey, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, Jesús Martín-Barbero.

We can go on, while in a key of systematization, mentioning the effort that our professor had with the goal of enabling to her students a stronger experience in the communicational challenges, communicative-educational interfaces, culture, politics; common era in which classes directed towards, for instance, topics of semantics would come a question referring to the forms of speech of the working class or rural workers, and, with that, texts of general character including Paulo Freire, Marx, Ecléa Bosi, in an effort to show how language phenomena involve contexts, stories, age and social segments, economic status, etc. She understood that, in order to form a good professional of communication, it was essential to bring to light this complex character of language, necessarily, articulated with the world, something that did not deplete itself, therefore, in teaching techniques of production and circulation of speeches.

The spirit of innovation gained materiality in the propositions formulated to students aiming field research – an echo of sociolinguistics – about levels and variabilities of speeches used by the population and the confrontation with registers processed through media. The research, with months of preliminary work, used to make the class go to the streets, interview people not only to know their idiolects, but also to identify, in them, values and ideologies; such physical contact should represent to students more than the accomplishment of a school assignment, but allow to activate a reflection about the processes of alterity.

In graduate studies, Baccega dedicated herself to one of the many faces of the academic activity, referring to the research of emerging topics, such as telenovelas, still at the time, considered smaller products managed by the alienating machinery of the cultural industry. An interview given by her became popular in 1996 to the yellow pages of *Veja* magazine in which she defended that the teleficcional genre was studied in the university, since it was a vehicle for ideologies, behaviors, aesthetics, fashion, political manifestation, etc. And she said a sentence filled with controversy when she considered telenovela “the big Brazilian cultural product”. The affirmative, now consolidated, got, at the time, criticism from different fields, to which she knew to patiently – what did not really correspond to her personality – shun and take life forward, becoming one of the first coordinators of the Telenovela Research Center at CCA/ECA/USP.

In the chapter of being bold, the professor, researcher and manager fused herself to create, in 1994, with other colleagues of the Department of Communication and Arts, at ECA/USP, the publication *Comunicação & Educação*. It is needless to say that the project was a success, whose products, after 26 years, keep getting flourished in the inheritance of one of the most important publications in circulation in Brazil, recognized internationally for the theme it comprises. In good time and even as recognition of the work performed in the axis of inter-relations communication/education/consumption, the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing/SP, where she worked as a professor in the graduate

program since 2003, in partnership with the Palavra Aberta Institute, created the professorship Maria Aparecida Baccega.

It's necessary to say, last but not least, that this path of full-time educator that had over 50 years of work, starting as a literacy teacher working in rural schools at Ribeirão Preto, going through programs of late literacy, such as the traditional Santa Inês, the direction and coordination of SESI schools, until she established herself in university. Throughout her story, she had lived in Ribeirão Preto, where she was born, Brasília, Osasco, São Paulo. She helped disseminate the Paulo Freire method, the studies of Darcy Ribeiro, just to name the first paradigmatic names in Brazilian education. And in the company of those two masters, along with the forged convictions in the political fight for a fairer, more solidary society, she bravely defended universal public education of quality.

It is understandable that she had become a respected professor, with recognition of students and colleagues involved in the communication/educational issues.

Final considerations

Having with her an extensive journey of work, research, and fights in common, of eventual disagreements, I observed, overall, the presence of an admirable political-academic itinerary, a huge capability of donation to the common good, the generous way of welcome humble people, the coherence in her principles and the total inability of wearing a mask as a form of social relationship. Maria Aparecida Baccega, just like all of us, presents her weaknesses, limits and difficulties, but from that we can distance the illusory idea, so strong nowadays, according to which someone can live as an island.

To close this text, the feeling is that the character was not captured in all its complexity, either because of the lack of ability of her friend, or due to existing editorial limits. Furthermore, how can we restrict in just a few pages – without being encomiastic or laudatory, adjectives that I would not dare to be, nor she would accept that – so many years of work, friendship, confidences and common struggles. It just occurred me to

leave with the poem written by an anonymous author (but attributed to the Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti), which she would read out loud if she were here, to say something about the tragic historic corner we are going through, in a country especially surrounded by the old air of regression, authoritarianism and resentment.

*No te rinda
 No te rindas, aún estás a tiempo
 De alcanzar y comenzar de nuevo,
 Aceptar tus sombras,
 Enterrar tus miedos,
 Liberar el lastre,
 Retomar el vuelo.
 No te rindas que la vida es eso,
 Continuar el viaje,
 Perseguir tus sueños,
 Destabar el tiempo,
 Correr los escombros,
 Y destapar el cielo.
 No te rindas, por favor no cedas,
 Aunque el frío queme,
 Aunque el miedo muerda,
 Aunque el sol se esconda,
 Y se calle el viento,
 Aún hay fuego en tu alma
 Aún hay vida en tus sueños.
 Porque la vida es tuya y tuyo también el deseo
 Porque lo has querido y porque te quiero
 Porque existe el vino y el amor, es cierto.
 Porque no hay heridas que no cure el tiempo.
 Abrir las puertas,
 Quitar los cerrojos,
 Abandonar las murallas que te protegieron,
 Vivir la vida y aceptar el reto,
 Recuperar la risa,
 Ensayar un canto,
 Bajar la guardia y extender las manos
 Desplegar las alas*

*E intentar de nuevo,
 Celebrar la vida y retomar los cielos.
 No te rindas, por favor no cedas,
 Aunque el frío queme,
 Aunque el miedo muerda,
 Aunque el sol se ponga y se calle el viento,
 Aún hay fuego en tu alma,
 Aún hay vida en tus sueños
 Porque cada día es un comienzo nuevo,
 Porque esta es la hora y el mejor momento.
 Porque no estás solo, porque yo te quiero.*

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