

## **Pandemic, Ethics and Discourses / *Pandemia, ética e discursos***

We live in a moment of mourning, an invisible mourning, in a society that does not allow itself to talk about death, or about illness, or even about aging. It is necessary for us to take an injection of perplexity, so that we do not naturalize the daily *coups* that Brazilian democracy is suffering.<sup>1</sup>

*Lilia Schwarcz*

In the given once-occurrent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurrent time and once-occurrent space of once-occurrent Being. And it is around this once-occurrent point that all once-occurrent Being is arranged in a once-occurrent and never-repeatable manner. That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else. The uniqueness or singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellingly obligatory. This fact of *my non-alibi in Being*, which underlies the concrete and once-occurrent ought of the answerably performed act, is not something I come to know of and to cognize but is something I acknowledge and affirm in a unique or once-occurrent manner.<sup>2</sup>

*Mikhail Bakhtin*

Pandemic time. Still. When we proposed this issue, in mid-June 2020, we could not predict that in the moment of publishing it, that is, in late 2021, we would still be living it. It has been a long and difficult period. It has also been a moment in which, more than ever, our ethical positionings towards others and society matter. And such positionings are expressed in the discourses that constitute us, constitute the other and the world, bringing about values that identify us.

Our choices reveal our ability to empathize with each other in every moment of our existence. Our unique and unrepeatable existence does not allow us an alibi in life, in knowledge or in art: we are ethically responsible as regards our responses to the other and to reality. Therefore, in this pandemic moment, it is necessary not only to “think right,”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Portuguese: “Vivemos um momento de luto, um luto invisível, numa sociedade que não se permite falar da morte, nem falar da doença, sequer falar do envelhecimento. É preciso que a gente dê uma injeção de perplexidade, então é necessário que não naturalizemos os golpes cotidianos que a democracia brasileira vai levando.”

<sup>2</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translation & notes by Vadim Liapunov. Edited by Vadim Liapunov & Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press Slavic Series no. 10, 1999 [1926], p.10.

<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese: “pensar certo.”

remembering the centenary of Paulo Freire's birth (1997, p.31), but also to position ourselves in the right direction, believing in the possibilities of changes particularly in Brazil today, in which the health crisis goes hand in hand with other crises; crisis in politics, education and the environment, to say the least.

It is a moment of pain and mourning, the figures (sick people, deaths...) to which the articles allude are all out of date, unfortunately. At the moment of writing this Editorial, Brazil already counts almost six hundred thousand deaths. Therefore, there is an ever-growing necessity of reflection and debate over and with the documents, sources, figures, and data. They urge to be acknowledged and thoroughly understood. It is necessary that our large area of Letters, Linguistics and Arts be socially effective not only on denouncing and pinpointing the false narratives that flood our social networks, but also on seeking to understand reality in a responsible manner always "hoping" as advised Paulo Freire, though difficult as it might seem.

Living the worries and anguishes in the face of this political reality is perhaps our most challenging burden in such times. On publishing seven articles and a review, this issue presents us with the academy's only mode of resistance: we keep resisting! We keep on reflecting upon this (hard) reality, producing texts that point out the ways we understand it, the paths we take, the new possibilities we envisage, the values we fight for, seeking to assume the concrete duty expected from each one of us. This issue represents a commitment to the Bakhtinian ethics, something that each one of us *recognizes and affirms in a singular and unique way*.

In honor of the Russian philosopher, the title of our journal evokes Mikhail Bakhtin and the Circle in which he participated in the former Soviet Union. The works those scholars left to us as legacy speak of their thoughts and shared ideas, although the *definite* publication of their *Collected Works* in Russia only started in 2009. As Grillo (2009) reminds us,

The reception of the works of Bakhtin and the Circle has gone through a tortuous history both in Russia and abroad. Disputed authorship, incomplete texts, reprints, lack of knowledge of most of their writings, lack of translations, force the researcher to move on an unstable terrain and deal with the provisional nature of the available works.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: "A recepção da obra de Bakhtin e seu Círculo tem conhecido uma história sinuosa tanto na Rússia quanto fora dela. Autoria disputada, textos incompletos, reedições, desconhecimento de boa

We must add to this the (little) knowledge about the details regarding the scholars' private lives, the more restricted context in which the members of the Circle lived, the reception they had in their own country. However, aspects that can shed new light on their intellectual careers do not cease to appear; and they help us understand both the broader and more restricted contexts in which they wrote with possible implications to the reception and the reading of their works. This is one of the reasons why the review, we are publishing in this issue, is so important. It refers to the book "Publications with dedicatory inscriptions in the collection "The personal library of M.M. Bakhtin" of the National Library of the Republic of Mordovia named after A.S. Pushkin: catalog / comp. by N.N. Zemkova; ed. O.A. Paltina. Saransk, 2018. 264 p." The review was produced by Svetlana Dubrovskaja and Oleg Osovski, both from Mordovian State Pedagogical University –MSPU/ Faculty of Philology, Department of Linguistics and Translation, Saransk, Russia, where Bakhtin taught from 1930 to 1969 (as per BRAIT; CAMPOS, 2009, pp.23-24). The inscriptions in books and periodicals given to Mikhail Bakhtin as gifts and found in his personal library shed light both to moments of his biography and to the reception of his work, revealing the construction of his recognition and reputation as a respected scientist and innovator in Soviet academia, even before the publication of the second edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [1963] and the publication of *Rabelais and his World* [1965].

The seven articles that deal specifically with this period of the pandemic seek to see it from different perspectives, using very specific objects. The first one, "Poetry and the Popularization of Science About and Under Quarantine - The Brazilian Academy of *Cordel* Literature Poetic Quarantine," analyzes poems from *Cordel* Literature produced in a campaign by the Brazilian Academy of *Cordel* Literature. Poetry is the chosen way to talk about the pandemic, allowing us to approach other and varied ways of understanding the quarantine we face. Under the theoretical-methodological lenses of Patrick Charaudeau's semiolinguistics, Kim Silva Ramos (Fiocruz, RJ) and Maria Conceição de Almeida Barbosa-Lima (UERJ; Fiocruz, RJ) show us how *cordel* verses reflect and refract the subjective experiences of *cordelistas* [authors of the works of *Cordel*] in relation to scientific themes and popular representations of science.

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parte de seus escritos, ausência de traduções obrigam o pesquisador a se mover em um terreno instável e a lidar com o caráter provisório dos trabalhos disponíveis."

The following article, “Intergenerational Responsibility and The Covid-19 Pandemic,” signed by Marcus Vinicius Borges Oliveira (Instituto de Ciências da Saúde, UFBA, Salvador) and Larissa Picinato Mazuchelli (UEMS/MS, Departamento de Letras, Campo Grande), proposes reflections upon the treatment given to one of the most vulnerable groups to covid-19 – the elderly, through the analysis of interviews published in the media. Bakhtin's philosophical reflections on the responsible act, the concepts of architectonics and excess of seeing, as well as the understanding of otherness as constitutive of subjectivity, allow the authors to address the importance of the encounter of generations in decision-making in facing the pandemic.

In the opposite age group, we have the reflections found in the article “Narratives of an Early Years Teacher: A Search for Childhoods’ Responses in Pandemic Times,” by Vanessa França Simas and Guilherme do Val Toledo Prado (both from FE, UNICAMP). The authors analyze, compare, and propose reflections based on face-to-face work prior to the pandemic in relation to remote work in pandemic period, when the interrelationship between babies and teachers starts being mediated by families, leading the teacher to reorganize her work in a Bakhtinian way in relation to the responses of the others.

The next article “A Work Shift That Broke my Heart:” The Nursing Work from the Dialogical and Ergological Perspective in Times of COVID-19,” analyzes the account of an ICU nurse, on Facebook, and speaks very closely to our emotions. Márcia Cristina Neves Voges (PUC-RS, Letras, Porto Alegre, RS), using concepts taken from both Ergology and Bakhtinian theory, highlights the subjective axiological positions shared by the nurse in her report, as well as the existing tensions in dealing with the complexity of death in the daily lives of health professionals.

The aspects of our polarized national politics stand out in the article “#StayAtHome:” Active Responsiveness in Institutional Political Propaganda in View of the Covid-19 Pandemic.” Paula Tatiana Silva-Antunes, Gabriela Maria de Oliveira-Codinhoto and Aline Suelen Santos, all from Universidade Federal do Acre - UFAC, Centro de Educação, Letras e Artes, Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil, use postulates from the Bakhtin Circle together with aspects of the Discursive-Functional Grammar to analyze the propaganda from the Government of the State of São Paulo that responds to the Federal Government's campaign, both dealing with pandemic, which constitute the basis of public policies to guide the population's attitudes in the pandemic scenario.

In Russia, as throughout the world, the transition from face-to-face to remote learning has also taken place during the pandemic period. Three researchers from the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation - Moscow, Russia, Irina Klimova, Nina Kozlovitseva, and Natalia Tolstova, sign the text “Distant culture in foreign language learning: how to avoid social distancing?” Questioning the social distancing between teacher and students, the article presents possible ways to counterbalance the problem of non-face-to-face teaching and learning in foreign language context.

Last but not least, we close the issue with an eminently theoretical article, produced by the French linguist Dominique Maingueneau (Sorbonne Université, Faculté des Lettres, Paris). In the text “Discourse Analysis Faced with the Coronavirus Crisis: a Few Thoughts,” starting from the observation that discourse studies are a field of research inscribed in history, and that its researchers must be aware of the changes in the world, Maingueneau raises some notions to deal with this pandemic moment analytically. He shows some possibilities for analysis and also how the utterances are intended to be therapeutic to respond to the health crisis. At the end, it raises some questions specific to the moment:

it is not only the lives of people that are at stake but also fundamental values, as the debates that have emerged show: should the economy be preferred to health? Can the dying be deprived of the presence of their families? Is it democratic to monitor the entire population? Can religious cults be banned? etc.

The present moment has also shown us how discourses reveal the vulnerabilities, inequalities and weaknesses of social, ethnic and gender minorities... Who are the most affected by covid-19? Who are those who cannot practice social distancing? Who are the ones most affected by fake news? Pandemic reflections...; or they gain new contours in the pandemic...

As readers can see, this is an issue of profound reflections, both from a theoretical point of view and in terms of the different discourses analyzed and the different institutions and authors that it brings together: ten Brazilian researchers from seven different universities (UFACRE, FIOCRUZ, UERJ, UNICAMP, PUCRS, UFBA, UEMS) and five foreign researchers from three universities (Sorbonne Paris, Financial University

under the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Mordovian State Pedagogical University, Saransk). We invite everyone – readers, authors and collaborators – to include the reflections brought about here in their research. Once again, they give the *Bakhtiniana* journal the opportunity to actively participate in the Brazilian and international academic lives. The submissions of articles, as well as their rigorous selection carried out by competent and collaborative reviewers of the Editorial Board and *ad hoc*, allowed us to get this result: *Bakhtiniana* remains firm in the commitment to always create dialogic possibilities of research linked to language studies. In this regard, we thank, once again, the invaluable and constant support, assistance, and recognition of PUC-SP, through the Research Incentive Plan (PIPEq)/Publication of Periodicals (PubPer-PUCSP) – 2021, Request 18.937.

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