

# A meticulous sensible curriculum

## 1 Identification

Ercília MACEDO-ECKEL (Ercília Macedo de Moraes Eckel) is the daughter of Virgílio Cordeiro de Moraes and Avelina Macedo de Moraes. She was born in Palmeiras de Goiás – GO, on February 20, 1937, but she rather thinks that she came from Cidade de Goiás and neighboring areas, where she lived during her childhood and adolescent years.

She married twice; the first time, to Aparício Dias de Araújo, when she was 22 years old, and the second time, to Horst Eckel, from Germany, when she was 56. The first marriage was celebrated in Goiás, the city. The second, in Goiânia.



## 2 Contact information

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## 3 Schooling

Ms. Macedo learned to read when she 5 years old and living in a farm. She used a black and white primer and evangelical magazines for children for that. She learned to sound the letters just like the people from Bahia do it (**fê, guê, ji, lê, mê, nê, rê, dolevê-w**), in her home, approximately 12 km from the German Settlement, known as Uvá, nowadays, and 45 km from Cidade de Goiás (which is equivalent to, give or take, 7.5 leagues or 180 furlongs, from the old State capital). Soon (1943/44?) she was introduced to the life of David Livingstone, a peregrine in Africa (the author of the book was completely irrelevant to her at the time). The purpose was to help her “to become civilized”, so to speak, and improve her reading skills. The book contained the tales of religious adventures and mostly, the discoveries made in distant lands by this Scottish Congregationalist pioneer medical protestant missionary – the first European to make a transcontinental journey across Africa. It was a hardback book with a red cover which lived on the terrace table, along with the Bible and a sewing kit: “Read right here where the *black* natives removed the heart of this man of God to bury it in the village, as a souvenir. And they removed the internal organs, washed, salted and dried his body, which was then taken by ship to the United Kingdom. Read it out loud, I want to hear it. Read it as if you were talking to me, not as a tedious litany. Mind the punctuation!” This all took place under the rigorous care of her maternal grandmother, Domethildes de Matos Macedo (1886-1981), from the state of Bahia who professor Alexandrina Passos (BA)

believes is a descendant of Gregório de Matos, a baroque poet. But there is no proof of that relationship.

When she turned 7, Ercília left the Buriti Isolado farm and came to Goiás, with her grandparents. Night was falling and in the distance, from her vantage point on top her horse, the little girl thought that the street lamps were fallen stars, scattered on the ground. Such a strong image was never forgotten. The city still kept the smell of a capital city and light was provided by generators. The girl was immediately enrolled in a public school: Grupo Escolar Manuel Caiado. After completing this stage of her education she entered a private preparatory course for admission into secondary school, given by the teacher Colombina Caiado de Castro. At the end of Middle School she was chosen as the class valedictorian and then went on to high school (called “científico”, in Portuguese) in the old lyceum in Goiás, which she attended up to her 3<sup>rd</sup> year, when was transferred to Anápolis, and was enrolled in a boarding school.

And, at a time in which family girls would leave home only after they married, Ercília Macedo moved to Goiânia by herself. She sat the Entrance Examinations for admission to the Catholic Faculty of Goiás, founded in the 50s, which is currently, the Pontifical Catholic University of Goiás, and started the school's undergraduate program in AngloGerman Letters in 1958. She then moved into the “Pensionato das Freiras”, a boarding house run by nuns, across the street from the Santa Helena Hospital. However Ms. Macedo dropped out of school when she married her first husband, and was only able to complete her university education later, in Anápolis, in 1966.

Going back to her childhood years, however, that little girl who had just begun her adventure in the world of letters-reading, and counting concrete objects and animals in the field - as long as the numbers were small - was introduced to the complexity of Arabic numerals, cardinal and ordinal numbers; the multiplication table, sung, and in random order, the six to the nine times tables. Terrifying! She showed that she could use the seven Roman numerals, by writing a sequence from I (1) to M (1,000), with the corresponding Arabic numerals, in a homework assignment. She also learned about prime numbers, decimal notation and its application in the four operations, with the decimal period placed correctly. The greatest common divisor and the smallest common multiple, fractions... Linear measurements, including weight or mass, capacity and volume, for solids and liquids. And still more numbers: units, tens, hundreds, thousands, million... octillion, nonillion, decillion (1 followed by 60 zeros). All of that was learned by that girl, from 8 to 10 years of age. But her teachers were her second parents. They deserved silence, obedience and respect. Only after she became an adult she started to understand these numbers, as they applied to practical life. It was during the mandate of President Sarney. And, now, as she sees the display of the Brazilian debt clock.

The ferule that came with the Jesuits to punish the members of the indigenous population refractory to acculturation was handed over to slave owners and made its way into Brazilian schools. However, when Ercília started elementary school (1944), this punishment was not being used any more in Cidade de Goiás. The use of this instrument of punishment may still have been used in remote rural schools.

Up to the first half of the 40s, elementary education comprised 3 years of schooling. In 1946, elementary education was expanded to four years. But it seems to me that beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, students were required to use a vertical penmanship notebook Nos. 1, 2, 3... to copy words and phrases, so that children could practice using pencil to produce

legible, clean handwritten examples, as well as acquire the discipline necessary for good penmanship. After practicing with pencil, the students were given dip pens and blotting paper to blot excess ink. The inkwell could never be tilted and the students could never use their uniforms to wipe the nibs clean. That practice would result in a telling off back home. During the 1950s, Ercília Macedo got a black, gold-plated Parker 51 fountain pen, engraved with her name. This gift was equivalent to a smartphone or a state-of-the-art tablet to a modern day girl. The intense use of this pen, and later, of plastic ball-point pens, which she has been using since the 1960s, caused a callus to develop in the distal phalanx, the nail phalanx, in the internal aspect of ring finger in her right hand, which she still has to this day. And, I believe, it will remain there forever.

But before that, during the 40s, when she would come back from elementary school with her classmates, she had a simple habit: she would buy molasses candy with old silver or nickel and bronze-aluminum réis (Brazilian real), still accepted. The coins sported the effigies of Carlos Gomes, Oswaldo Cruz and others. President Getúlio Vargas introduced a new currency, the cruzeiro. And when she saw a brand-new coin with the effigy of Marechal Dutra, that girl looked at the coin several times, very carefully. With this new currency, the cruzeiro, the concept of cents was introduced to Brazil.

The textbooks used in secondary school were an Italian soap opera episode in themselves. It is not clear whether there were difficulties related to printing them, transportation problems or any other reason which caused the students to have to go through a veritable obstacle course to acquire them. The fact is that the students had to make do with 2<sup>nd</sup>-, 3<sup>rd</sup>- or 4<sup>th</sup>-hand books. As long as they had been well-kept and were clean. Students were *not* given books by the government. And different authors and printing houses were not adopted every year. And photocopied makeshift books, or handouts, also called apostilles in Portuguese, only existed in another sense: as an annotation in a diploma or official title; comments and recommendations on the margins of a text of the Scriptures. Decades later, and facing considerable resistance, these handouts replaced textbooks, most notably in college preparatory courses. Many educators argued that these compilations limited the acquisition of knowledge and that ready-made formulas, chewed to palatable bits, restricted the students' ability to think.

The school called *Lyceu de Goyaz*, which brings to the mind of students of that time pleasant memories was/is located at Rua Dr. Corumbá; it was founded in 1846 and is one of the oldest public secondary school in Brazil, second only to Colégio Pedro II, in Rio de Janeiro (1837/1838). In 1937, as the seat of the State government changed cities, the school was transferred to Goiânia. But a *second unit* remained in the same address for decades and the old school is open to students to this day. The building is still there, defying time.

In this lyceum, or secondary school, where students attend 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year (which correspondos to 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> year of elementary education), in addition to arithmetic and fractions, square root, equations, Cartesian coordinates... little Ercília also discovered Latin, and got lost within the tangled web of declensions; she learned the fables written by Phaedrus, Ovid's four ages, Cicero's letters and his oration (known as the Catilinarian Orations) against Catiline... The original texts, written in inverse order, were placed in direct order and translated by the teacher, usually a former seminarian or former priest. And there were the French classes, the English classes (she did not learn anything) and Portuguese classes, based on Camões writings. Logical analysis, nowadays called syntactical analysis or parsing, was taught with the help of

“As armas e os *barões* assinalados (up to) Sem  
à dita de Aquiles ter *inveja*.”

Lectures on World History were based on Joaquim Silva's view, the author of the textbook adopted by the school. And they coincided with what Ercília had heard from the Bible, as she was growing up – the history of the ancient eastern world, the classic civilization of Greece, Macedonia and Rome. But, when she studied the geological eras and the major periods in the geologic history of the Earth, in Moisés Gicovate's World Geography book... she noticed an evident contradiction with Moses' Pentateuch, right in the first chapter of Genesis, whose basic narrative expresses how God creates man, the heavens and Earth and everything that exists on Earth, “and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made”.

So, that little girl started to *suffer* by reflecting, day and night on everything that exists in the world, until she backed right into her contradictory conclusion: What if the absolute Nothing existed, before what exists today, what would(n't) it be? And God, where would He be? What would(n't) He be? The absence of all things? There wouldn't be time, space, light, color and form. Would it be eternity? But the heaven and hell described have time, space, light or fire, color, form and even voices...

What if that high school student shared her anguish with someone? It would be heretical. Blasphemous. No question about that. She only calmed down and stopped suffering, when the respected Dr. João Perilo, a physician and die hard atheist became her Science teacher on her 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school. She had the impression that the bedside book, the *Bible*, in this teacher's home was *On the Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin.

On data about Ercília Macedo another piece of information should be remembered:

The school inspector for the lyceum had the habit of showing up in the classroom, unannounced. All the female students would stand up as soon as he arrived. I said *all the female students* because the school segregated girls from boys: boys attended classes in the morning and girls, in the afternoon. This school authority was never seen, however during night school, when classes were co-ed. So, inspector (whose name I now remember) Agenor Alves de Castro would check the back of the gray roll call book for the subject being taught and would choose, randomly, both the subject matter and a student. The student so chosen would then have to answer questions put to her by the teacher. If the answer was not to his satisfaction, he could call on one or two additional girls. And the student was awarded a grade which would be added to other test grades and be used to calculate the monthly grade for that course. The class was under the impression that the teachers were also evaluated on the questions put to the students and by the quality of the knowledge that was demonstrated by the student.

Speaking of inspectors, one evening this student was doing her school homework, when her grandfather came into the room followed by Anísio Teixeira. How they met in Vila

Boa, or how they knew each other is not known. The girl soon noticed that the visitor was fascinated by Education, by the questions and comments made. This appearance was like a physician's visit, as he didn't even take a seat. But he staid long enough to warrant the girl's grandmother, who was on the back of the house, to be called to meet the visitor. On the way out, the three of them started to talk about Caetité, Macaúbas and about how proud they were of being from Bahia. Only ten or twelve years later, Ercília found out he was a champion of public education.

At that time, “comic books”, “fotonovela”, were dangerous words and expressions, and were considered almost pornographic, among the parents with school-age children, in Cidade de Goiás. Especially in evangelical homes. Girls collecting sexy Elvis Presley photos, after 1954? Not on your life! What did happen, then? Magazines, such as *Grande Hotel*, *Capricho*, among other black and white mags which carried pictures girls would *drool over*, were hidden in and under mattresses and in unimaginable places in the houses. Ercília Macedo was good at this. Publications such as *Jornal das moças* (RJ), *A cigarra* (SP) and *O cruzeiro* (RJ) were tolerated, after homework was finished. The curious thing is that these readings (including the ones which were prohibited), contributed to the academic performance of the subject of this biography. Let's be clear about this: she was retained in her 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of high school, a fact which was a source of sorrow for the girl and humiliation for the grandparents. I pity that young girl, and at the same time, miss that period immensely.

Advancing in time and to complete the details on Ercília Macedo's schooling, it must be said that in 1978 and 1979, she took four semesters of classes on Visual Arts at [UFG](#), but did not complete the next four semesters. Towards the end of 1980 and the beginning of the 90s, she used some credits from her Master's Degree Program, started in 1976, whose dissertation had already expired, and was finally able to complete the program for a degree in Letters and Literature.

#### **4 Jobs and cultural activities**

She worked as a registrar (diploma registration for teacher preparatory school) in the Department of Education of the State of Goiás. She had the opportunity to work with Drs. José Feliciano, Rocha Lima, José Sizenando Jayme and Antônio Nery da Silva, the latter, when he was still an undergraduate student. The subject of this biography abandoned this job when she married for the first time, in November of 1959. Later, in October of 1963, separated and with two children, she moved to Anápolis and started to teach Portuguese Language at Colégio (Evangélico) Couto Magalhães, where she had already been enrolled as a boarding student, with moderate success (3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school). From an early age (11/12 years), in Cidade de Goiás, Ercília Macedo already showed a talent for teaching. As the eldest sister, she would gather her younger siblings and other children from Rua Travessa (or Marquês Tocantins) where she lived in house No. 5, to teach “classes”. She would fashion notebooks, report cards and roll call books from paper used for wrapping bread. The pages were sewn together in her maternal grandmother's portable sewing machine.

Still in Anápolis, a city which Ercília Macedo owed a great deal to, she participated in the first Examination Board for the recently founded School of Law (FADA), in 1968. The

admission examination included an oral test, after the students had sat a written test on Portuguese Language and Brazilian Literature. She also taught at Colégio Estadual José Ludovico de Almeida, in college preparatory courses and at the “Bernardo Sayão” School of Philosophy, after she completed her undergraduate program in the same school. That year (1966), she wrote her senior paper *Um contista goiano*, on the short stories written by [Bernardo Élis](#). This study was published by the State Department of Culture of the State of Goiás, in 1968. Her taste for literature became more manifest. And, having bought, years before, *A poesia em Goiás* (1964), a study and anthology, by [Gilberto Mendonça Teles](#), she thought about doing something similar, albeit more modest, for the prose produced in the State: short narratives, short stories, novels. So, the starting point was the appendix of the aforementioned work, the end of the year “literary inventory” written by [Miguel Jorge](#) and published in the culture section of [O popular](#). She added to her work the answers to questionnaires sent to several writers as well as her observations from a careful reading of the “more recent” (up to 1974) prose. In view of this wealth of material, Ercília Macedo was able to type more than 200 pages in legal size paper. She left the originals at the State Department of Culture to be published, but did not keep a copy for herself. The work was misplaced or lost, along with the four years it took her to prepare it. (Unfortunately, she deserved it, after such oversight.) However many part of the study were published in *O popular*, [Correio brasileiro](#) (story on Ursulino Leão), in *Folha de Goyaz*, *Cinco de Março* (currently called [Diário da manhã](#)). The title of the work was supposed to be “A prosa em Goiás”.

Ms. Macedo moved back to Goiânia in the beginning of 1973, since she had been admitted to the [Catholic University of Goiás](#), currently known as PUC. She was there for four years, until she began her Master's Program in Brazilian Literature at the UFG (1976), whose dissertation was not completed and expired. Still in the 70s, she participated in spoken poetry festivals at Praça do Cruzeiro (Setor Sul) and in poems posters exhibits ([Teatro Goiânia](#)) – These events were organized by Miguel Jorge, a writer and art critic of nationwide fame. At that time previous censure of text was in force and sometimes even “during” the presentations or art shows, but she never had any problems during her presentations.

Family problems follow her since... always. At the end of 1981, and in the beginning of the following year, Ercília read a work by Nancy Mayer which had as second title: “Recomeçando a vida depois dos 40”. Editora Record. A very important reflection for someone going through a midlife crisis and in need of changes, in need of challenges to face. This book impacted her deeply.

So, in April of 1982, she applied for a leave of absence from the State and established residency in [Curitiba](#), when she was 45 years old. In that city, she taught Portuguese in public schools (according to Brazilian contract laws, at the end of the mandate of Ney Braga and the beginning of Hosken de Novais’ mandate) and Scientific Methodology / Research Techniques, at the School of Social and Human Sciences, also called [Faculdade Espírita](#). Three or four years later, she returned to Goiânia, to teach Portuguese Language, Brazilian Literature or Creative Writing, courses which she was licensed to teach. And that was what she did until she retired. Before retiring, however, she used some of the credits from the previous master degree program of studies and completed the degree requirements, with an oral defense of her dissertation in 1994, at UFG.

## 5 Academic titles

- University degree: Modern Letters (December 2, 1966) [Bernardo Sayão](#) Anápolis – GO.
- Specialization: Authorized by the Ministry of Education and Culture to teach Methodology of Intellectual Work, attended the course on Methodology of Higher Studies, [UFG](#), completed on April 23, 1975.
- Master's degree: Letters and Linguistics – Brazilian Literature (November 28, 1994), [UFG](#).

## 6 Published work

### 6.1 Individual work

- [Um contista goiano](#). Anápolis: Couto Magalhães, 1968 – a pioneering study on the short stories by Bernardo Élis, up to Veranico de janeiro (1966). Available on the Internet, pdf.
- [Maíra - reescrita e dessacralização do mito](#): o ritual parodístico do sacrifício indígena pela catequese. Goiânia: Kelps, 2000 – essay on the pornomythical novel Maíra, by Darcy Ribeiro, anthropologist. Available on the Internet, pdf.
- [Quarta dimensão](#): o tempo da palavra e outros tempos. Goiânia: Kelps, 2005 – poems. Available on the Internet, pdf.

### 6.2 Anthologies

- Revista Educação hoje. São Paulo: Brasiliense, No. 3, May/June, 1969.
- Colheita (collection of poems), org. [Gabriel Nascente](#), Goiânia: Unigraf, 1979.
- Coletânea of poesias. Org. [Casa do Poeta do Paraná](#), Curitiba: Linarth, 1983.
- Quarta noite da poesia paranaense: a poesia sobe ao palco. Curitiba: Beija Flor, [Teatro Guaíra](#), September 15, 1983. Directed by Lilian Fleury.
- Revista da UBE/GO. Goiânia: Kelps, selected issues.
- Year book and Literary Journal published by Academia Feminina de Letras e Artes de Goiás. Every issue, since the Academy was founded in 1969.
- Coletânea de escritores brasileiros contemporâneos em prosa e verso, de Adrião Neto, Teresina – PI: Edição Geração 70, 1999, among other issues.
- Academia Feminina de Letras e Artes de Goiás. Antologia 2012: Vozes atuais da AFLAG. Goiânia: PUC/GO – Kelps, 2012, p.21.b
- Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Goiás: Goiânia 80 anos de poesia. Org. Ubirajara Galli & Elizabeth Caldeira Brito. Goiânia: Kelps, 2013, p. 45.

## 7 Citations in dictionaries

- Dicionário enciclopédico de Goiás, by Ciro Lisita Júnior. Goiânia: Universidade Católica de Goiás, 1984.
- Enciclopédia de literatura brasileira, by [Afrânio Coutinho](#). Rio de Janeiro: Oficina Literária, 1990 and 2001, 2. ed.
- Ensaístas brasileiras, by [Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda](#) and Lúcia Nascimento Araújo. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1993.
- Dicionário de escritores de Goiás, de Mário Ribeiro Martins. Rio de Janeiro Master, 1966.

- Dicionário biobibliográfico de escritores brasileiros contemporâneos, de [Adrião Neto](#), Teresina – PI: Edição Geração 70, 1998 and 1999
- Dicionário de mulheres, de Hilda Agnes Hübner Flores, Porto Alegre: Nova Dimensão, 1999; 2nd edition 2011.
- Dicionário do escritor goiano, by José Mendonça Teles, Goiânia: Kelps. Several editions.
- Also cited at [Wikipedia](#), The Free Encyclopedia.

## 8 Membership

- Patron and occupant of Chair No. 10 of the [Academia Feminina de Letras e Artes de Goiás](#) (1969), Goiânia. <http://www.aflag.org.br> / aflag1969@gmail.com
- Member of the [União Brasileira de Escritores \(UBE/GO\)](#). //www.ubebr.com.br / ubegoias@gmail.com
- Corresponding Member of the [Academia Petropolitana de Letras](#), Chair No. 76, Petrópolis – RJ. //academiapetropolis.html //www.apcl.com.br//www.clerioborges.com.br

When living in Curitiba, Ms. Macedo Eckel was a member of the Casa do Poeta do Paraná.

## 9 Current projects

- [Os portais da viagem](#) – texts reflecting different genres and styles, to be published in hard copy the near future. (The version available on the Internet has not been revised and is not current.)
- [Estudos](#), a reinterpretation of research and seminars presented as part of the author's Master's Degree Program at the Federal University of Goiás and at AFLAG, to be published in hard copy (Part of this work is available on the Internet, not revised).
- **Redação passo a passo até à Universidade**, content to be updated [if life allows for it] with the help of files from 31 years of experience in this area, from elementary education to preparatory courses to the university.

## 10 Interviews (additional information)

**Diniz**, Pedro Augusto. Documentary maker and a professor at the State University of Goiás, UEG. [Interview](#) with Ercília Macedo-Eckel, Goiânia, Nov. 2009.

**Lourenço**, Edival & **Naves**, Doracino. Rememóris Series: “Marieta Teles Machado”. By Ercília Macedo-Eckel. [Programa raízes/net - Cultural journalism](#). Fonte TV, Goiânia, July 15, 2012.

Ercília Macedo-Eckel  
Goiânia, December 12, 2012.

Translated by Denise Lopes Rodrigues, LUMEN Tradutores & Intérpretes