

The affirmation of indigenous identity in the works *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara*, by Eliane Potiguara, and *Iracema*, by José de Alencar /

A afirmação identitária nas obras 'Metade Cara, Metade Máscara', de Eliane Potiguara, e Iracema, de José de Alencar

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to raise a discussion on the indigenous identity affirmation present in *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara* (2004), by Eliane Potiguara, and *Iracema*, by José de Alencar, in order to establish a comparative dialogue between them. The novel *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara* (2004) allows us to reflect on indigenous identity, since the author brings to the plot aspects of the Potiguara peoples, such as: their traditions, experiences, cultural representations and influences of their ancestors. In *Iracema* (1865), the author points out issues of Brazilian nationality since the country's colonization. Alencar, among other nineteenth-century writers, sought to define national identity with his literary productions inspired by indigenous representation. The work tells the story of two ethnic groups: the Tabajaras and Potiguaras peoples, who come into conflict because of the relationship between the indigenous protagonist *Iracema* and the Portuguese colonizer *Martim*. The author emphasizes the characteristics of the Brazilian landscape, resembling a female character that surpasses the exotic beauty of nature. The study is supported and based on the studies of theorists such as: Zigmund Balman (2005), Eliane Potiguara (2004), Stuart Hall (2003), Homi Bhabha (2005), Daniel Munduruku (2018), Graça Graúna (2013) and Aníbal Quijano (1992, 2006), among others. As a result,

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it is possible to identify significant changes regarding the discourse of resistance through more active literary voices engaged in the process of reconstruction and identity affirmation.

KEYWORDS: Identity; Indigenous literature; Resistance; Metade Cara, Metade Máscara; Iracema.

RESUMO

O presente estudo tem por objetivo refletir sobre a afirmação identitária indígena presente nas obras *Metade Cara*, *Metade Máscara*, de Eliane Potiguara, e *Iracema*, de José de Alencar, de modo a estabelecer um diálogo comparativo entre as narrativas propostas. O romance *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara* (2004) nos possibilita realizar reflexões sobre identidade indígena, uma vez que a autora traz no enredo da obra aspectos referentes aos povos Potiguara, tais como: suas tradições, vivências, representações culturais e influências dos seus ancestrais. Em *Iracema* (1865), o autor aponta questões da nacionalidade brasileira a partir da colonização do país. Alencar, entre outros escritores do século XIX, buscava definir a identidade nacional com suas produções literárias inspiradas na representação indígena. A obra narra a história de duas etnias: os povos Tabajara e Potiguara, que entram em conflito por causa do relacionamento da protagonista indígena Iracema com o colonizador português Martim. O autor enfatiza as características da paisagem brasileira, assemelhadas à personagem feminina que supera a beleza exótica da natureza. A pesquisa está respaldada nos apontamentos de teóricos e estudiosos como: Zigmund Balman (2005), Eliane Potiguara (2004), Stuart Hall (2015), Homi Bhabha (2005), Daniel Munduruku (2018), Graça Graúna (2013) e Aníbal Quijano (1992, 2006), dentre outros. Como resultado, é possível verificar mudanças significativas no tocante ao discurso de resistência a partir de vozes literárias mais atuantes e engajadas no processo de reconstrução e afirmação identitária.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Identidade; Literatura indígena; Resistência; *Metade Cara*, *Metade Máscara*; *Iracema*.

1 Initial Considerations

Indigenous literary texts have contributed to demystifying the erasure of marginalized ethnic groups since the colonial period. Contemporary indigenous writers such as Eliane Potiguara and Daniel Munduruku have anchored their writings in the traditions and resuscitation of the culture of their people. Their narratives are also about the displacement and survival of their descendants, reflecting the resistance to the violence and exclusion that these groups experienced, as well as the disrespect towards so many other natives who lost their loved ones and their lands as a result of colonization.

Their novels focus on love, human rights, racism, migration, indigenous women, ethnicity, identity, resistance, culture, among other pertinent issues. Eliane Potiguara, for example, gives a voice to the couple Jurupiranga and Cunhantaí, separated by colonial oppression. The protagonist travels through time and records moments of conflict that the natives experienced over the restless years of colonization in Brazil, such as the destruction of their lands, forced diaspora, and other tragedies caused by the colonizers. However, the couple is moved by the feeling of hope and by

the possibility of having a reunion in a world without social injustices, where unity between peoples would become real.

The protagonist recalls the historical period in Brazil when indigenous families were the main occupants, enjoying nature and living in harmony with their fellow men. The couple's trajectory is marked by struggles, sadness, loneliness, violence and resistance.

Similarly, José de Alencar's *Iracema* (1865) narrates an inconceivable love between an indigenous priestess and a European man. The protagonist, Iracema, represents the Tabajara people and their traditions and, when she falls in love with Martim, the Portuguese ally of the Potiguara, she provokes a conflict between the communities. Iracema is described by the author as "the virgin with the lips of honey¹", because her beauty was undeniable and her purity could not be subverted, since the girl kept the secret of Tupã. It was she who held the power to multiply the descendants of the natives with the sacred drink of Tupã.

Therefore, the legend of Ceará, starring the Tabajara warrior, highlights the origin of Brazil in the colonial context, in which the tropical environment had not yet been touched by foreigners. The legend takes place in Ceará lands and considers the places inhabited by the native peoples. Alencar still uses authentic vocabulary from the natives' daily life and alludes to the culture they maintained to ensure that ancestral knowledge and values are passed to the future generations.

In fact, the authors of that generation saw their homeland as a favorable environment for the consolidation of nationalist ideals. The project of erecting the native as a lyrical character is out of step with the reality of the original citizens and causes resistance from these subjects, who start to narrate their versions assuming the role of protagonists of their own stories.

Literary manifestations of indigenous authorship break with the secular silencing of marginalized peoples and enable a polyphony of voices for excluded people. In this research, we established a comparison between the two works mentioned in order to identify points in which they intersect or diverge on the theme of identity.

2 The question of identity in late modernity: perceptions and criticism

¹ A virgem de lábios de mel

As with post-colonial theories, the reflexive notion about the concept of identity in post-modernity is outlined from an interdisciplinary standpoint, since, being an epistemological discourse, it cannot be thought of in isolation. Thus, in the context of cultural studies, or the theme of identity, in particular, authors such as Stuart Hall (2003), Zygmunt Bauman (2005), Homi Bhabha (2005), and Aníbal Quijano (1992, 2006), among others, emerge as essential figures.

The construction and/or reconstruction of identity, from the perspective of cultural studies, takes place through dialogues about issues that have arisen from pre-established historical situations, thus aiming at the retheorization of hegemonic knowledge and diversification of concepts around the notion of identity in the postmodern period.

The issue of identity has been extensively discussed in academia. This is because of the constant transformations of identities driven by the symbolic system that surrounds us, as pointed out by Kathryn Woodward (2000), who considers that identity formation takes place at the local and personal levels. Global changes in the economy, for example, transformations in production and consumption patterns and the shift of investment from manufacturing industries to the service sector, have a local impact. From this perspective, many authors have discussed the existence of an identity crisis, as a result of the constant transformations our identity undergoes. This certainly contributes to current and relevant discourse on identity.

Following this same reflection, in his study *Colonialidad Y Modernidad/Racionalidad* (1992), Aníbal Quijano presents discussions that take into account the individual and individualistic character of the subject and the half-truths that may arise from pre-established paradigms. For him, all half-truths falsify the problem by denying intersubjectivity and social totality as places of production of all knowledge. The idea of identity as an isolated object is not compatible with the knowledge generated from current scientific research, and there is not much room for an idea of identity, of ontologically irreducible originality, outside a field of relationships.

When discussing this issue, Stuart Hall (2002), in regards to identity in post-modernity, affirms that the so-called identity crisis is seen as part of a broader process of change, which is displacing the central structures and processes of modern societies and shaking the frames of reference that gave individuals a stable anchorage in the world. Hall also clarifies that the different changes that are transforming modern society are further fragmenting the cultural landscapes of class, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender and race, which in the past, at the end of the 20th century, allowed us to solidly conceptualize ourselves as social subjects. Hall (2015) also adds that

our personal identities are being modified as a result of these transformations, raising uncertainties regarding our self-perceptions.

The theorist also discusses, in the book *Cultural Identity in Post-modernity (2001)*, the idea that we have contradictory identities within us, dragging us in different directions at the same time. The author deconstructs the fully unified, secure, complete and coherent version of identity, which is only an illusory thought, as we are confronted daily by a bewildering multiplicity of identities that influence our choices, actions and way of being, even though it may be temporary.

To understand how modern identity has become fragmented, that is, decentralized or displaced, we examine the three conceptualizations of identity and the character, or the nature, of its change throughout late modernity formulated by Stuart Hall (2015). The first definition stems from the Enlightenment-era idea of the subject, which was centered on the issue of the subject's essence and which was based on the perception of the individual endowed with the capacity for reason and conscience, the inner self remaining intact throughout the person's existence. In this way, through the immutable essence of the human being, the person's identity was maintained regardless of outside influence.

In the second notion of identity, Hall (2015) introduces us to the sociological subject. According to the theorist's view, this subject still has an inner core, but this is built upon and modified when he makes contact with the outside world. In other words, we can say that identity is constituted from the interaction of the self with society. According to this view, we internalize cultural values and symbols, which become part of us and contribute to our position in the social environment. This conceptualization reorients and recenters the subject within the cultural system.

The last conceptualization brings into play the postmodern subject, seen as someone who does not have a fixed, permanent or essential identity whatsoever. For Hall (2015), this third definition of identity occupies a "mobile celebration", that is, it is constantly molded and modified by social relationships and the ways in which we are questioned or represented in a system of meaning. This latest transformation leads us to the understanding that the categorization of identity (ethnic, religious, cultural or gender) is something that is increasingly unattainable.

Additionally, within this view of the constant evolutionary process of identities, we have the contributions of Zygmunt Bauman (2005) who, in accordance with Hall's thinking, states that identities do not have the "solidity of a rock", as they are transformed over time. According to Bauman, identities transit in the midst of the "transport revolution" that causes people to come in

contact with new ways of being. The identities constantly circulate as new practices are created and/or made available, and they subsequently become mixed.

However, the other aspect of the identity question is related to the character of its change in late modernity. This nomenclature is used by Hall (2015) to refer to the process of globalization caused by changes and impacts on the subject's cultural identity. In particular, late modernity has a definite character. As Marx (1973) points out, modernity is the permanent revolutionizing of production, the uninterrupted shaking of all social conditions, eternal uncertainty and movement. All fixed and frozen relationships, with their retinue of ancient representations and conceptions, are dissolved, all newly formed relationships age before they can ossify. Everything that is solid melts into air.

According to Marx (1973), modern societies are, therefore, by definition, societies of continuous and rapid change. This aspect distinguishes traditional societies from modern societies. We take up, then, the studies of Zygmunt Bauman (2005) to engage with this thought. From Bauman's perspective, this view of modernity is justified because the world we live in is divided into increasingly uncoordinated fragments and our individualities are disaggregated into various with fragile connections.

Contributing to this discussion, political theorist and philosopher Ernest Laclau (1990) points out that late modern societies are characterized by differences, and they arise because of different divisions and antagonisms of the "position of the subject". Laclau (1990) also rectifies that societies totally disintegrate due to changing identity circumstances and different elements of identity being jointly articulated. Therefore, he stresses that the structure of identity is in constant evolution.

In this sense, indigenous literature presents itself as a way of reaffirming their social position already marked by history. In the following section, we will discuss the current configuration of indigenous literary productions, highlighting, above all, the active role of Eliane Potiguara as an important critic, activist, and writer.

3 The reaffirmation of ethnic identity: a resistance movement

When considering indigenous literature in Brazil, the name of the writer Eliane Lima dos Santos (Eliane Potiguara) stands out, recognized as one of the main precursors of contemporary

female indigenous literature in the country. The author is a descendant of the Potiguara peoples and possesses a dual identity due to her being born in the Brazilian metropolis, Rio de Janeiro. She is an activist of indigenous causes and participated in the drafting of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 (MUNDURUKU, 2012).

Eliane was the creator of Grumin, which is a communication network in defense and support of indigenous women who experience cultural discrimination or physical violence, in addition to being an open digital space for various discussions on indigenous issues. The author also wrote a literacy booklet, called Akajutibiró, to support the literacy of indigenous children and adults, with the aim not only of teaching literacy, but also of preserving and raising awareness of indigenous values and traditions. She has participated at numerous international conferences to emphasize the unity of nations and the rights of indigenous peoples that, from her perspective, have always been violated.

In recent years, Indigenous writers, through their literary productions, have become agents of their own stories, and ceased to be mere spectators of social criticism. Literature produced by indigenous women, according to Graça Graúna (2013), is a form of resistance and reaffirmation of their identities, being a channel to voice complaints about the gaps left in history as it was overwritten by the colonizers.

Through literature, indigenous intellectuals can rewrite their autoethnographies, which for a long time have been erased and annulled, and thus claim the guarantee and maintenance of the rights granted to natives. In addition to this potentiality of voices breaking a secular silencing, indigenous narratives open new horizons to reposition the autochthonous subject subjugated and hyphenated by the oppressors.

The work under analysis, *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara [Half Face, Half Mask]* (2004), brings together different textual genres. The author, Eliane Potiguara, reveals the varied themes contained in the novel in the form of poems, short stories, chronicles, autobiographical accounts, storytelling, articles and poetic prose. Literary critics have noted that the book produced by the indigenous writer is considered unclassifiable and has contributed to the important visibility of the cultural phenomenon of the recent insertion of indigenous literature into the Brazilian publishing market (OLIVIERI - GODET, 2017).

The Portuguese writer Leonel Cosme classifies Eliane's novel as an impactful and disturbing reading, for evoking multiple sensory effects and intensifying the semantic weight of its contents on the reader. About his impressions, one quotation stands out to critics:

I have to start by saying that my memory does not register, after the impossible resignation of the greatest black Angolan poet, Agostinho Neto, another book as disturbing as *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara*, by the Brazilian Indigenous writer and poet Eliane Potiguara, whose presentation I attended in Porto – Portugal, on November 13, 2010². (COSME, 2015, p. 73).

As we can see, the author compares Eliane Potiguara's poetic language with African works, and deduces that her writing is characterized by the recovery of ancestral awareness and the affirmation of identities. He reiterates that the poetic composition of the work is a result of the author's perception and subjectivity. According to Cosme, she is “a messenger, perhaps misinterpreted in the depths of the Brazilian jungles” (COSME, 2015, p.73). The critic interprets the narrative as disturbing to the senses.

The novel narrates the poetic saga of the central characters Cunhataí and Jurupiranga. The protagonists are separated by the process of territorial disputes and represent the various Brazilian indigenous families, displaced from their lands as a result of violence and invasions of their spaces. At the beginning of the story, during the separation, Cunhataí takes a trip back in mythical time and walks through several places as they were during the colonization period of Brazil. She then witnesses stories of pain, suffering, loneliness, conflicts, migrations, fears, struggles and losses. With this trip back in time, the indigenous heroine vents her feelings of dissatisfaction and sadness at the destruction of her family. Thus, she narrates the journey in search of her lost love and the challenges faced:

Cunhataí vislumbra o novo, apesar de sua angústia, e quer saber onde está seu amor, desaparecido por ação do colonizador.
Cunhataí sai pelas matas, pelos céus, pelos rochedos,
pelas montanhas pelos rios e pelos lagos buscando suas raízes
fragmentadas e fragilizadas pelo colonizador de todos os tempos. Viaja pelo espaço e vai percebendo, como em um filme, as histórias de outras mulheres, de outros guerreiros, de crianças e velhos e de velhas ou viúvos (as). Ela vai

² Tenho que começar por dizer que minha memória não registra, depois da renúncia impossível, do maior poeta negro angolano, Agostinho Neto, outro livro tão perturbador como é *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara*, da escritora e poeta índia brasileira Eliane Potiguara, a cuja apresentação assisti na cidade do Porto – Portugal, a 13 de novembro de 2010. (COSME, 2015, p. 73).

testemunhando a destruição das terras, a poluição dos rios, o saque das riquezas minerais.

[Cunhataí glimpses the new, despite his anguish, and wants to know where his love is, disappeared by the colonizer's actions.

Cunhataí goes out through the woods, through the skies, over the rocks, through the mountains by the rivers and by the lakes looking for its roots fragmented and weakened by the colonizer of all time. She travels through space and starts realizing, as in a movie, the stories of other women, other warriors, children and old people and old women or widowers. She witnesses the destruction of lands, the pollution of rivers, the plunder of mineral wealth (our translation)]. (POTIGUARA, 2004, p.76).

The female lyrical speaker uncovers the history of diasporas caused by the deterritorialization of native peoples and the serious consequences of this process. According to Daniel Munduruku (2010), these compulsory displacements have interfered with the identity constitution of the indigenous subject, and have distanced natives from their traditions, weakened their spirituality, and undermined their subjectivity of belonging.

In the light of Homi Bhabha (2005), we understand that these cultural mismatches generate hybrid societies and that colonized subjects find themselves in a sort of *between-place* that is occupied yet not clearly demarcated. In this borderline existence, identities become unstable and more complex, going beyond socio-historical dimensions to take refuge in difference or in the groups to which they belong. In this way, the novel registers the discomfort generated by the phenomenon of involuntary decentering of the indigenous identity and the conflict of rescuing the essence and dignity of this identity in the current social environment. The following excerpt, taken from the poem “Pankararu”, explains the questioning, anguish and lack of belonging of the lyrical self, as a paternal voice cries:

[...] Sabe, meus filhos...
Nós somos marginais das famílias
Somos marginais das cidades
Marginais das palhoças...
E da história?
Não somos daqui
Nem de acolá...
Estamos sempre ENTRE
Entre este ou aquele
Entre isto ou aquilo!
Até onde aguentaremos meus filhos? [...]
[...] [You know, my children...
We are outcasts of the families
We are marginalized from the cities

Marginalized from the huts...
And from history?
We are not from here
Not even from there...
We are always BETWEEN
Between this or that
Between this or that!
How far can we endure this, my children? (Our translation)]
(POTIGUARA, 2004, p.60).

From this perspective, the speaker's perception of his own subjugated identity implies the deconstruction and fragmentation of identity caused by excluding social practices. Perceived social differences play a part in the identity construction process and can promote acceptance or rejection of the (pre) judged individual. However, the exclusion and erasure of the subjectivities of the oppressed trigger reactions of resistance. In this sense, indigenous literature has declared a form of struggle and combat against social impositions, as suggested by the poetic writing of Eliane Potiguara, whose work is permeated with denunciations, non-conformism and claims for human rights.

To explore the nature of resistance narratives, we turn to the theoretical contributions of Alfredo Bosi (2002). According to the author, the resistance narrative is an internal movement that reveals the knots that bind the subject to the historical and existential context, thus opening a possibility for the individual to observe himself from a wider perspective and recognize the ties that bind him to the institutions' systems. Resistant writing rescues, in addition to complaints that may have been voiced, what was silenced by fear or anguish; this resonates in a narrative or dramatic dialogue as formerly trapped voices emerge through the text and break free. For Bosi, it is not the values themselves that differentiate a resistant narrator and an activist with similar ideologies, but the way in which these values are put into practice.

In the same line of thought as Bosi, Quijano (1992) believes that the discourse of resistance should not start from the idea of a subject as an isolated individual, but should take into account the social structures that have contributed to the silencing of the individual. The liberation process must take place as a result of the social and cultural struggles that take place in the present as a result of those that took place in the past. To Quijano,

Todo discurso, o toda reflexión, individual, remite a una estructura de intersubjetividad. Esta constituida en ella y ante ella. El conocimiento, en esta perspectiva, es una relación intersubjetiva a propósito de algo, no una relación entre una subjetividad

aislada, constituida en sí y ante sí, y ese algo [All individual discourse, or all reflection, refers to a structure of intersubjectivity. It is constituted in her and before her. Knowledge, in this perspective, is an intersubjective relationship about something, not a relationship between an isolated subjectivity, constituted in itself and before itself, and that something (our translation)] (QUIJANO, 1992, p.15)

It is in this sense that the writer Eliane Potiguara rescues the tradition of her people through her poetic storytelling, the valorization of her ancestors, and the recognition of the displaced and erased indigenous identities, as well as She also aims at the transformation of an exclusionary system full of stigmas, so that the indigenous, as well as other marginalized people such as women, blacks, homosexuals and others are no longer oppressed. The author weaves in a thread of hope by reversing the picture of indigenous history painted by the colonizers. Her struggle takes place collectively with her ancestors, peoples of different ethnicities and other people who identify with indigenous causes.

4 The convergent aspects in *Iracema* (1865) and *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara [Half Face, Half Mask]* (2018)

With the intention of idealizing a national hero, some authors stood out in prose and poetry by producing literary works with indigenous characters that became enshrined in Brazilian literature, as can be seen in the novel *Iracema* (1865). José de Alencar's story is an allegory of the colonization process in Brazil. The central character, Iracema, is endowed with nationalist and patriotic ideals. The protagonist is a symbol of the harmony of virgin nature, an allusion to Brazilian lands before being explored by the colonizers.

In *Iracema*, the author recounts the emergence of a nation, represented by the female character of the Tabajara ethnic group by the same name, accentuating the group's culture and indigenous traditions. The narrative presents a loving relationship between a native and a European, which is why there were great conflicts and rivalries between two indigenous communities in the book.

The work begins with the appearance of Martim, a Portuguese colonizer, in indigenous lands, when he gets separated from the Potiguara peoples who are his allies. Iracema finds him in the middle of the forest, which today is part of the state of Ceará, and shoots the warrior to protect herself. Realizing that the foreigner did not react to the attack, the virgin understands that she

injured an innocent person, so she takes the white man to her hut to recover. The guest starts to live with the original Tabajara peoples, causing the birth of an unlikely love between the two. During the narrative, the author describes some indigenous cultural traditions of the Tabajaras and the rupture of their values represented by the figure of Iracema.

In the description of the sacred rites, the central character, Iracema, demonstrates the religious beliefs of her people. This is because she had the task of guarding the mystery of the dream through the preparation of the magic liqueur, a hallucinogenic drink that provided the indigenous people the possibility to fulfill their deepest aspirations during their sleep.

The following quotation shows the importance of protecting Iracema's religious role as the shaman's daughter: "*Estrangeiro, Iracema não pode ser tua serva. É ela quem guarda o segredo da jurema. Sua mão fabrica para o pajé a bebida de Tupã* [*Foreigner, Iracema cannot be your servant. It is she who keeps jurema's secret. Her hand makes Tupã's drink for the shaman (our translation)*]" (ALENCAR, 1865, p.22). As a special figure representing a cultural tradition of the Tabajaras, Iracema was prohibited from engaging with any man, otherwise she would suffer God's punishment for disobedience, and that punishment would be death.

Comparing *Iracema* to *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara*, it is possible to identify some convergent features. To highlight these similarities, the following table juxtaposes two excerpts that narrate the participation in a sacred ritual that involves the ingestion of a magical drink that provides hallucinogenic effects.

Metade Cara, Metade Máscara

"Assim como a experiência que tive quando me transportei ao sagrado ao tomar a bebida mágica em um ritual espiritual entre os xamãs Yanomami, no qual só pude ver gente muito velha, com as peles bem enrugadas, eram mulheres e homens indígenas.[As well as the experience I had when I transported myself to the sacred when drinking the magic drink in a spiritual ritual among Yanomami shamans, in which I could only see very old people, with well wrinkled skins, they were indigenous men and women (our translation)] (POTIGUARA, 2004, p. 121).

X

Iracema

- Bebe! Martim sentiu passar nos olhos o sono da morte, porém, logo a luz inundou-lhe os olhos d' alma; a força exuberou seu coração. Reviveu os dias passados melhor do que os tinha vivido; fruiu a realidade de suas mais belas esperanças. [Take it! Martim felt the sleep of death passing in his eyes, however, light soon flooded his soul's eyes; the strength exuded his heart. He relived the days gone better than he had lived before; he enjoyed the reality of his most beautiful hopes (our translation)] (ALENCAR, 1865, p.27).

In the excerpts above, we can see the strong mark of the indigenous traditions emphasized by the two authors, although they wrote the works in different periods and in distant contexts. We observe in the two fragments descriptions of sacred rites performed by two indigenous ethnic groups, which imply the maintenance of the original peoples' culture as a way to rescue their histories and preserve their values. Thus, we can understand the importance of these traditional elements in the words of indigenous writer Daniel Munduruku:

A cultura e os conhecimentos tradicionais indígenas são fundamentais para a identidade brasileira. Os cantos, os ritos de passagem, o jeito tradicional de transmissão de conhecimento, devem ser mantidos nas comunidades e, ao mesmo tempo, precisam ser valorizados nas escolas convencionais. A sociedade brasileira não é apenas uma sociedade ocidental, ela é o resultado do acúmulo de diversos povos, conhecimentos e tradições [Indigenous traditional culture and knowledge are fundamental to Brazilian identity. The songs, the rites of passage, the traditional way of transmitting knowledge must be kept in the communities and, at the same time, they must be valued in conventional schools. Brazilian society is not just a Western society, it is the result of the accumulation of different peoples, knowledge and traditions (our translation)] (MUNDURUKU, 2018, p, 94).

In concordance with Munduruku, we can affirm that the cultural traditions of native peoples reinvigorate their identity and spirituality, which are based on ancestral knowledge and must be transmitted to future generations in order to ensure the reproduction of values. From this perspective, culture is configured as a multiplicity of individual perceptions and experiences, with fundamental importance placed on the maintenance of the country's cultural plurality.

According to Stuart Hall (2003), the culture of the people, even those without power, is inserted into several social spheres through a mutual exchange with the broader society, linking to society through countless practices and cultural traditions. In this way, culture can be considered a constantly changing domain.

Continuing with the discussion of the works under analysis, *Iracema* (1865), as part of the Indianist phase of Brazilian Romanticism, incorporates the characteristics of this movement, such as the contemplation of nature, the idealization of the national hero, patriotism, and the exaltation of the sacred woman.

José de Alencar does this by presenting a protagonist with unsurpassed beauty to represent the purity of the national territory before the explorations of foreigners. The author

compares the image of the central character with the elements of tropical nature, as described below: “Iracema, a virgem dos lábios de mel, mais rápida que a ema selvagem, o favo da jati não era doce como seu sorriso, a morena virgem corria a sertão e as matas do Ipu [Iracema, the virgin with honey lips, faster than the wild rhea, the jati comb was not as sweet as her smile, the virgin brunette ran through the sertão and the forests of the Ipu (our translation)]” (ALENCAR, 1865, p.18).

Upon comparison with the characterization of Potiguara’s female protagonist, Cunhataí, we see the close similarity since she is also described using the symbols of regional fauna and flora: “Cunhataí tem os olhos de águia, Cunhataí tem a memória dos elefantes. Cunhataí tem as pernas de um alce, veloz como as éguas [Cunhataí has the eyes of an eagle, Cunhataí has the memory of elephants. Cunhataí has the legs of a moose, swift as mares (our translation)]” (POTIGUARA, 2004, p.76). It is clear that the authors use literary characteristics of the Indianist trend, relying on the expressiveness of the exotic beauty of the natives and on the evidence found in natural wealth, thus justifying the use of devices that compare their characters with environmental beings.

In the prism of comparison, both works present the indigenous woman with a relevant leadership role within their communities. This emphasis subverts patriarchal thinking. The expression of female subjectivity reveals a cosmovision connected with spiritual and natural forces. Curiously, we observe that both of the aforementioned protagonists risk the detriment of the spiritual mission entrusted to them. In *Half Face, Half Mask* (2004), the heroine has the power of healing; when she was a child, she heard the spirits of the forest and saw the deities. Cunhataí is the warrior daughter of the ancestors who was born to represent them: “Ela já era esperada, por decisão dos ancestrais, há muitos séculos. O olho direito roxo – o espiritual – foi identificado pelos líderes pitiguary. Vai ave-menina e mulher! Crie asas e enxergue, um dia seremos livres [She was already expected, by decision of the ancestors, for many centuries. The black right eye – the spiritual one – was identified by pitiguary leaders. Go bird-girl and woman! Grow wings and see, one day we will be free! (our translation)]”. (POTIGUARA, 2004, p.73). The symbology and characterization of the central character configures the author's commitment to original peoples, in particular to marginalized native women.

Similarly, *Iracema* (1865) follows a Tabajara protagonist with priestly function. The maiden was destined to maintain the mystery of the gods, and to carry on the traditions of her descendants. The author emphasizes this tradition: “Estrangeiro, Iracema não pode ser tua serva.

É ela quem guarda o segredo da jurema e o mistério do sonho. Sua mão fabrica para Pajé a bebida de Tupã [Foreigner, Iracema cannot be your servant. It is she who keeps the secret of the jurema and the mystery of the dream. Her hand makes Tupã's drink for the shaman (our translation)]" (ALENCAR, 1865, p.22). In this sense, both narratives highlight cultural traditions in which a female figure propagates ancestral knowledge.

The importance of the figure of the shaman in indigenous communities is also notable. In both narratives, his presence is essential, as we can see in the fragment: "[...] E o Pajé, que tudo escuta e vê, colhe o segredo no íntimo da Alma [And the shaman, who hears and sees everything, gathers the secret in the depths of the Soul (our translation)]." (ALENCAR, 1865, p.53). In accord with Eliane Potiguara's novel, we note the verisimilitude of the speech: "Nenhum pajé indígena faz curso para ser pajé. O pajé – "é" - e ponto final e ninguém discrimina [No indigenous shaman takes a course to be a shaman. The shaman - "is" - period and no one argues (our translation)]." (POTIGUARA, 2004, p.94). It is noteworthy, from the perspective of Eliane Potiguara (2004), that the shaman is a spiritual leader who is knowledgeable about traditional practices, customs and culture of the natives, in addition to performing healing ceremonies, predicting the future, and unraveling the enigmatic messages of the deities.

By referencing spiritual practices, the writer intends to rescue the Potiguara indigenous identity, which is based on ancestral heritage and the preservation of their roots, assured by the strongholds of knowledge of spiritual leaders and their ancestors. Ancestry in the indigenous context represents an exponent of the traditional culture of native peoples. Graça Graúna (2013) reiterates that the shamans will exercise their missions as long as there is freedom and justice, and will have recognition and respect from the indigenous people as long as there is awareness. Their experiences, knowledge, and practices lead them to a better world, based on peace and immunization against the deterioration of morality that the oppressive society provokes. The shamans shape the resistance against cultural impositions that have extended from the colonial period.

5 Counterpoints in the narratives

It is also possible to draw contrasts between José de Alencar's and Eliane Potiguara's writing. *Iracema* introduces the European man as mentor of the natives, since he has the

responsibility to civilize and dominate them. The first sign of submission by the natives to the colonizers is the adoption of foreign values and customs by the Tabajara peoples, as shown in the scene in which the "honey-lipped virgin" is prohibited from practicing conjugal acts with any man, to keep herself pure and connected with the beings of nature. As in the Christian societies of Europe, the responsibility to control her desires and watch over the traditions of the family falls upon the woman. Such expectations come from Eurocentric religious doctrines adapted to the cultural context of Brazil, as pointed out by Aníbal Quijano (2006).

The personification of European customs also appears in Iracema's role as priestess, which is why she was prevented from falling in love: "Iracema soltou-se dos braços do mancebo, e olhou com tristeza: - Guerreiro, Iracema é filha do Pajé, e guarda o segredo da jurema. O guerreiro que possuísse a virgem de Tupã morreria [Iracema slipped out of the young man's arms, and looked at him with sadness: - Warrior, Iracema is the daughter of the shaman, and keeps jurema's secret. The warrior who possessed the virgin of Tupa would die (our translation)]". (ALENCAR, 1865, p. 30). At the end of the novel, the protagonist breaks with her tradition and abandons her roots to join her beloved, the Portuguese Martim. Thus, the heroine experiences the consequences of her disobedience, which is punishable by death and causes great conflicts between the two ethnic groups for generations.

According to Alfredo Bosi (1992), Alencar far from accurately portrayed the origins of indigenous peoples in the colonial period, and presented an idealized and romanticized image of the native to reflect nationalist ideals and the creation of a new Brazilian civilization. In the work, he attributes to the natives Jacques Rousseau's figure of the "noble savage" which describes man in an idealized state of nature, which implies that the individual was in his most natural state, devoid of the moral corruption of society.

In Eliane Potiguara's novel, however, the indigenous person is described in a realistic condition, in addition to presenting in her narrative the claiming character, in the sense of contesting the rights of original citizens, and guaranteeing their space in society. The author resorts to identity issues to rescue the valuation of marginalized ethnic groups and suffocated by the oppressive system.

Half Face, Half Mask (2004) emphasizes the value of the family, as the plot revolves around two indigenous characters who face centuries-old obstacles to meet again and live in harmony. Eliane's main inspiration for producing poetic fiction were the stories told by her

grandmother. The writer is committed to disseminating traditional knowledge to keep the memory of her ancestors alive. Thus, we selected fragments of the poem “Indigenous Identity”, written in 1975, to illustrate her struggle:

[...] E nem tampouco o compromisso que assumi
Perante os mortos
De caminhar com minha gente passo a passo
E firme, em direção ao sol.
Sou uma agulha que ferve no palheiro
Carrego o peso da família espoliada
Desacreditada, humilhada
Sem forma, sem brilho, sem fama.
Mas não sou eu só. [...]
[And neither does the commitment I assumed
before the dead
To walk with my people step by step
And steady, towards the sun.
I'm a needle that boils in a haystack
I carry the weight of the dispossessed family
discredited, humiliated
No shape, no shine, no fame.
But it's not just me (our translation)].
(POTIGUARA, 2004, p.115).

In these verses, one can see a confluence of voices that establishes a collective identity that fights for its place in history. The author emphasizes the trajectory of indigenous peoples and the daily battles they face, underscores that the conquered territory is the pillar to move the complexity of the in-between that isolates and stifles the steps of the native warriors of this nation. The stanza suggests that indigenous women and their descendants become aware of the autonomy they have to fight for their rights.

In this discussion, we turn to the contributions of Quijano (1992), who, while recognizing the relationship of direct, political, social and cultural domination of Europeans in the conquest of all continents, highlights that in its explicit political aspect, colonial rule was defeated in the vast majority of cases, with America being the first scene of this defeat. In this perspective, indigenous voices such as Potiguara's become an important tool for resistance and maintenance of the achievements achieved so far.

Final considerations

From the analysis of the works *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara* (2004), by Eliane Potiguara, and *Iracema* (1965), by José de Alencar, it was possible to identify points of convergence and divergence regarding the approach to indigenous themes in Brazilian literature. Considering the historical moments in which the works are inserted, it is essential to point out the Eurocentric trends in Alencar's work, as well as the presence of contemporary themes in Potiguara's work.

In *Metade Cara, Metade Máscara* (2004), the author reveals a multiplicity of voices that bring to light the memory and perception of the indigenous woman, who for an extended period was silenced and subjugated. Potiguara's writing enables a reconstruction of the history of her people and the reaffirmation of her ethnicity's identity, filling in possible gaps left by the Brazilian literary historiography. The poetic fiction represented by Cunhataí and Jurupiranga dates back to the compulsory diasporic process that indigenous families have faced since the colonial period, which is also a contributing factor to the fragmentations of the original subject's identity.

In the second work analyzed, *Iracema*, there is an acculturation, as the culture of the Tabajaras undergoes an erasure, when the protagonist adopts the cultural standards of the European Martim. José de Alencar considers a passive and submissive indigenous subject, who appears as inferior to the colonizer. At the end of the novel, the protagonist's image is annulled due to the tragic outcome of the narrative, characterized by the domination of foreigners over native peoples and the appropriation of national territories.

The author's main message is about the invasions of Brazilian lands and the miscegenation of ethnic groups that came to make up the structural composition of the country's culture, however, his work overlooks that this had occurred mostly violently, an aspect which is much more evident in Eliane Potiguara's narrative.

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