

ENGENDERING NATIONALITY

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Although it is now commonplace to ascertain how the figure of woman has been transferred to those perceived as alien, much still remains to be done in terms of theorizing the ideological operations through which such a process of signification is effected and how literature participates in it.

One of these several things that remain to be done is, exactly, by means of the theoretical ascertainment of some ideological operations showing how such a process of signification is effected in a nineteenth century postcolonial literature like the Brazilian one.

First of all, we might agree with the Brazilian critic Antonio Candido when he affirms, in his classic and fundamental work *Formação da literatura brasileira* (*The Formation of Brazilian literature*) that at the end of the Brazilian colonial period the Arcadian movement was singularly important because it established once and for all the hegemony of the Western literature patterns in Brazil. In order to understand what exactly he means, we must consider that until the last quarter of the XVIII century, the Portuguese tropical colony was a mix not only in terms of language (several African and native languages prevailing against the colonist's language) but also in terms of a kind of "multiculturalism". Not only in spite of but also in a certain way exactly for being under slaver situation, the African and the native behaviour patterns and religious beliefs influenced and even attracted very much the colonists, like a kind of Other's fascination that must repress in the name of the success of the colonization. It was only because the Portuguese Prime Minister Marquis of Pombal forbade the teaching of all languages except Portuguese in the colonial territory that this one became hegemonical. In consequence, what could be until the moment considered as differences coexisting in a social and cultural rank became clearly and forever inequalities.

At the moment of becoming independent from Portugal, the new nation's hegemonic purpose wasn't to rupture its Western identity or even to abolish the inequalities between Western and non Western cultures established during the colonial period, but only to become itself one of these Western nations. That is the reason why the process of building a national literature in Brazil consisted on processing the annihilation of the so considered annoying differences between the hegemonic cultural traits and the others in a literary Romantic background combining the idealization of the Other (by which he becomes almost identic to the white people in terms of values and cultural paradigmes) with the erasement of the traits of his ethnic identity both in relation to individuals and human groups.

This process could be really understood as a fuse whose the wanted (but not completely obtained) effect would be the cultural and inner metamorphosis of Afro-Brazilian and native people into Western and white one, except for the white skin and the corresponding racial feature, of course. . .

Engendering sameness: a comparative approach

As only a part of a larger inquiry in progress in which I focus on the historical and gendered emergence of national literatures in some peripheral and belated modernized South-American and European countries in the eighteenth century, this paper also studies the relationship between belated modernization and emergence of an autonomous national identity, basing the inquiry on the role of the gender relations and the representations of women in different types of societies.

By examining the function of this realm in the construction of the state/nation as the hegemonical mode of sociopolitical organization in modernity, I try to demonstrate how the invention of national culture as a mirror of a new nation is related to its literary canon formation and how representations of women and ethnic minorities play a decisive role in this hierarchical social construction named state/nation. In other words, I wish to show how literary narratives not only promote ideological consensus but also create collective identities.

My approach to these questions is greatly indebted to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*; Gregory Jusdanis' *Belated Modernity and aesthetic culture. Inventing national literature*; Peter Uwe Hohendahl's *Building a national literature. The case of Germany. 1830-1870*; Sérgio Luiz Prado Bellei's *Nationality and literature. The ways of Otherness*, Doris Sommer's *Foundational fictions. The National romances of Latin America*, Sneja Gunew's "Denaturalizing cultural nationalisms" and H. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*.

Sneja Gunew, for instance, states that "like other parts of the so-called New World, white Australia has always been riddled with anxious cultural debates concerning its national identity. Since white settlement initially took the form of penal colonies, it was difficult from the outset to sustain the myth (as in America) of new Eden." ¹Both prison and paradise, in the beginning of its own colonial period, Brazil even now has its imagined national identity characterized simultaneously by the fact of being an exotic very beautiful country and a place of refuge not only for immigrants escaping into a dream world but also for foreign criminals running away from homeland in order to escape punishment. As R. Faoro points up, on the colonial empire's point of view, the geographical distance between Portugal and its colonies, and, above all, the colonial dependence, make them the ideal site for prisons. ²

During the period of Brazilian colonization, both criminals and poor were, for different reasons of course, undesirable in Europe. The banishment imposed on the criminals couldn't be also applied to the crowds of country-men wishing to get rich as quickly as possible. However, the

idea of an Eldorado on the Tropics could be very appealing to these crowds not to stay at home...

Either Eden and prison, the tropical colony remained almost always a site of excluded people from the Metropolitan Portugal similarly to the 'second-hand Europeans' as they are called in an anonymous English professor's poem "Australia" ("And her five cities, like five teeming sores,/each drains her; a vaste parasite robber-state/Where second-hand Europeans pullulate/Timidly on the edge of alien shores. ") quoted by S. Gunew , and to "a woman beyond her change of life" also mentioned in the same poem ("They call her a young country, but they lie: / She is the last of lands, the emptiest/A woman beyond her change of life, a breast/ Still tender but within the womb is dry. ").

Studying how nationalities had been invented one will benefit not only from a comparative approach to former Portuguese and British colonies cases like Brazil and Australia but also from a comparative study of both cases related to peripheric and belated modernized European countries like Greece. Also in this case one can state that at its inception national culture and literature must be viewed as strongly allied . Particularly interested in the formation of culture on the periphery of Europe, G. Jusdanis studies the development of Greece as a stratified, agrarian and noncapitalist society often hostile to rationalism, Enlightenment and secularism. Greece as well as postcolonial Brazil could be studied as example of purposeful modernization in societies unprepared for it. Modernity, in these cases, could be viewed as an experiment on the margins, a kind of paradoxical "än-other"modernity, consisting in a lot of internalized tensions between acceptance and resistance, center and periphery, imitation and creation, prototypes and copies, dominant and minor. But the Greek effort to attain its integration constitutes one of the earliest attempts at modernization outside Western Europe, Its orientation is due to Greek speaking Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire who had perceived that the power center was changing from the Ottoman and the Russian Empires to the expanding capitalist states of Europe. In consequence, they had built the national Greek culture as both binding agent for the state and means of instilling the new patterned order.

The project of the insertion of the story of Greece into the master narrative of the European powerful nations is a paradigmatic example of the successful intellectual task of presenting a society to the dominant cultures. Its strategies ,in spite of being based on a different ideological reasoning, could be contrasted with those developed by some Brazilian young intellectuals in Paris circa 1830. They were Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães(the first Brazilian Romantic poet and also the leader of the group), the painter Araújo Porto Alegre and Sales Torres Homem, a doctor who had also studied law in Paris. They had in common not only their youth but also and above all their interest in speaking and making conferences about Brazil in France. All of them made conferences at the French Historical Institute. However, Magalhães' text about the history of Brazilian literature was indoubtly the most important of these papers.

In 1833, in the Havre, France, Magalhães wrote a letter to his friend C. B. Monteiro and this document became the first Brazilian text in which one can clearly find not only a refusal of the Classical aesthetic but also a break with the own author's previously published poetical work. In addition, Magalhães' letter could be viewed as a kind of a Brazilian "defense and illustration" of the Romanticism and the nationalism. Three years later, the Brazilian group in Paris published "Nichteroy", the first Brazilian literary magazine. Simultaneously, Magalhães' new book *Suspiros poéticos e saudades*, the first Brazilian Romantic poetical work, appeared.

In his conference about the history of Brazilian literature, Magalhães accused the Portuguese colonization of being responsible for the old-fashioned character of the Brazilian literature, echoing the dominante feeling of Lusophobia in the early Brazilian postcolonial period. According to his thesis, Portuguese colonization, on bringing the Old Greek Muse to the American forests, brought with her all kinds of literary anacronism. He wrote: "Brazilian poetry isn't a civilized indigenous woman; it is a Greek woman in French and Portuguese style of dressing and acclimatized to Brazil; it is a virgin from the Helicon, who, going on a pilgrimage throughout the world, had spoilt her mantle made by Homer . "

Engendering the Brazilian colonial poetry as an allegoric Greek old fashioned dressed woman, Magalhães seems to criticize ,by means of this specific allegory all the eurocentric and western legacy in the Brazilian historical and cultural formation and to propose a new poetical start based only on American difference. But this isn't in fact his thesis. For the Brazilian Romantic leader his homeland is merely a child of the french Revolution and Civilization. Besides, his vision of Brazilian history is entirely dominated by the rejection of the Portuguese inheritance and its replacement by the French influence. So, his rejection of the Classical literary fundamentals couldn't be understood as a rejection of the westernization itself but only as an option in favour of a Romantic changement in the field of neo-colonialism.

According to Magalhães' thought, instead of continuing under the cultural influence of a second-class European colonialist empire, Brazilian literature and arts must put themselves under the French influence taking into consideration the benefits of this changement. Despite their seeming contrast, the Greek and the Brazilian invention of national literature present some points in common. First of all, we must mention their common management to overcome their peripheric situation in relation to the western centers of political and cultural power. While in the belated modern Greek case the myth of its continuity of the Hellenic past, conceived as the source of the western civilization was the solution, in the postcolonial Brazilian situation occurred just the opposite, that meant the refusal of the cultural Grecian legacy identified with the colonial legacy. Secondly, we must add the common project of inventing not only a national literature but also of building it as a western type of national literature.

NOTES

¹ See "Denaturalizing cultural nationalisms", in *Nation and narration*, ed. by H. Bhabha.

² See his classical book *Os Donos do Poder* (*The owners of the power*) about the formation of the Brazilian political elite.