

**PERI IN THE ADVENT OF THE REPUBLIC:
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POLITICAL IDEA OF NATION
BY THE ROMANTIC LITERATURE OF THE 19TH CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT: We investigated in which way art and, more specifically, literature was used in the construction of the political ideology in 19th century Brazil. We understand literature as an instrument of the process of crystallizing a national identity from the exaltation of the exotic nature and the virtues of native indians. Romantic literature is used with a clear symbolic and ideological function in the advent of republican institutions, going beyond its explicit function as leisure. Moreover, the article analyzes the part of literature in the Republic's civilizing project, of teaching the habits of the urban *bourgeoisie*. The work presents an interdisciplinary analysis between literature, art, history, law and politics, with the intention of deepening the investigation about the processes of construction of identity in the Brazilian imperial era.

KEYWORDS: national identity; indianism; symbology; republicanism; *O guarani*.

INTRODUCTION

Literary creation, as a cultural product, is marked by its historicity and can indicate, through its representations, in what ways a certain society hierarchizes its values and organizes the relationships between individuals. In this perspective, understanding this creation as a document, the image or narrative may be interpreted historically, because it is in “the material surface of the texts that the organizing and constitutive part of the social,

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political, linguistic and aesthetic codes which function in the organization of cultural practices is revealed” (Velooso; Madeira, 1999, p. 46).

According to this idea, interpreting an artistic work goes beyond the analysis of its aesthetic value and can help to identify and articulate the identity speeches that are implied in the architecture of the state. This “architecture”, and set of validating and procedural choices usually formalized in the constitutional charter, reflects an understanding of society and power very characteristic of the Brazilian idea of a republic. Although the idea of a republican state of rights such as the one forged by French liberal thinking has features which are strongly abstract, ideal and, because of that, universal, it is with the local political experiences of national states that the meaning of republic, democracy, freedom, and other values which are important to a liberal structure of the state gained its place and significance as cultural appropriation.

In this study, the goal is to show that, in the special case of the Brazilian republic, José de Alencar’s romantic literature consciously takes on a “civilizing” part, be it in teaching the habits of the urban *bourgeoisie* or in building an ideology capable of supporting the existence of a truly Brazilian nation, independent from Portugal. Unveiling how this discourse articulates itself and the purposes it aims to achieve is a way of comprehending the Brazilian legal-constitutional experience in the 19th century. Therefore, I propose an analysis interface with the goal of congregating, on one side, a certain philosophical concept of state, with liberal roots, which resonates greatly in the Brazilian legal-intellectual environment, and on the other, an anthropological analysis – using literary sources – of the appropriation and resignification of cultural symbols in the advent of the first republic.

Considering this premise, it is possible to analyze not only how the literary discourse favored the construction of the Brazilian national identity through the exaltation of exaggerated nationalism and the “indianist” movement, but also how this identity was used to forge a political unity around the republican ideology. The analysis of the book *O Guarani*, by José de Alencar, is especially suited for this purpose because of its permeability and intertextuality (the mythical figure of the noble savage

identified in Peri is “transported” to many spaces of symbolic creation, like music and visual arts, for example).

But how can an author whose life began and ended during the imperial era (1829-1877) be important for studying the republican ideology? Although the “proclamation” of the Brazilian republic happened only in 1889, it is in the period before this formal act of political transition that the manipulation and construction of a pro-republican discourse takes place, still during imperial times. The common effort for the crystallization of an identity, begun by the independence of the colony in relation to Portugal, in 1822, is “taken advantage of” by the positivists for consolidating the idea of a republic in Brazil. This political indoctrination, according to Carvalho, happens through the use of symbols: “firstly, undoubtedly, written and spoken word. They used it abundantly in books, newspapers, church publications, and public conferences” (1990). Spoken and written discourse constituted, thus, “the main weapon for convincing the medium sectors” (Carvalho, 1990, p. 139).

Therefore, I chose *O Guarani* because of its popular reach and its repercussion in varied forms of artistic representation². José de Alencar’s text, among the romantics, can be especially useful, since the author gives himself and other authors the mission of promoting the education of the people according to certain values which were important for the development of a nation. José de Alencar’s autobiographical material reveals a personal purpose which was not merely aesthetic or for leisure, with the recognition of a political function specific to his art and labor.

As to the time frame, the 19th century is a rich period for the study of the formation of identities in Europe’s former colonies. Like Veloso and Madeira wrote, “in Brazil and, to a certain extent, throughout Latin America, this is considered to be a privileged moment for the observation of

² The figure of Peri went beyond its “literary” reality, it transcended the book by Alencar and occupied the mythical image of the Brazilian savage, intrinsically good and faithful to Christian morality. References to this character may be found not only in literature, but in songs and other artistic manifestations, like the opera by Antônio Carlos Gomes, *O Guarani*, presented for the first time in Milan in 1870. Historic records point to a retelling of *O Guarani* in a comic book by Francisco Acquareone in 1938.

the intellectual field was organized” (1999, p. 62). The richness mentioned by the authors seems to be connected not only to the moment when the independent republics were established, but to the consolidation of the historic *Aufklärung* through which European philosophy is going (Gadamer, 2012, p. 244). This historic turn represents not only the birth of historiography, but the valorization of the local, the peculiar, the different.

On the first item of this work, we analyze how art contributed to the formation of a symbolic system of communication, favoring its use by political actors when constructing an identity through the manipulation of the social imaginary. We observed the context in which the creation of the Brazilian state as an independent state happened, noting the need of an idea of Brazil that encouraged individuals to respect its institutions. On the second item, we establish how literature may serve as an instrument for understanding the structure of society in a certain space and time, beyond aesthetic criticism. Literary discourse, in addition to its multiple functions, is seen as a modality of historic discourse that helps to understand certain social ordinance models. Lastly, we close with the analysis of the book *O Guarani*, by José de Alencar, an emblematic narrative from the indianist movement in Brazil.

The dialogue between Law and Literature is a rich hermeneutic resource, especially concerning the understanding of the constitutional and political dynamics. Beyond its instrumental function in the ordinance of power, the constitution assumes the cultural part of favoring national unity around common values, contributing for the crystallization of symbols which were also constructed by the arts. The constitutional charter integrates, according to Nolte e Schilling-Vacaflor (2012), a unique set of culture, power and politics.

Understanding the meaning attributed to the constitution, the dynamics of implementation and effectiveness as well as the role of the powers constituted in the perpetuation of a sense of Brazil is favored by an interdisciplinary analysis that changes the focus from strictly legal documents: literature is seen, thus, as a rich source of discourses for the historical interpretation of the advent of the republic in Brazil. There is,

thus, a split between fiction and reality in the political culture study, specifically regarding the identity and significance of values. The artistic and legal-political discourses do not take up, as it were, distinct social spaces, but are part of a constitutive symbolic complex of culture itself, if it is understood to be global, integrative and comprehensive, indispensable for the consolidation of certain architecture of operating power.

The analysis is based on the methodological conjecture that, on the way to the construction of an ideology, the boundaries between the many fields of knowledge and culture (law, visual arts, theater, music, politics, etc.) appear to be diffuse, even if they are all heading towards the forging of a sense of Brazil. This intention is explicit in Alencar's work. This article, using a methodological interface between law and literature, seeks to demonstrate the function of the many narrative elements articulated in the literary discourse of the author for the consolidation of an original "brazilian-ness" that could affirm itself in the new republic.

ART AS A SYMBOLIC SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS ARTICULATION WITH POLITICS

In 19th century Brazil, right after the independence from Portugal and during the articulation towards the republic, with the threat of territorial disintegration and facing the need of creating a stronger national state, the construction of a nationalist feeling capable of mobilizing and uniting was indispensable. A seductive and convincing identity that could favor the sense of belonging of the individuals in relation to the nation was need for guaranteeing the permanence of the institutions.

19th century in Brazil was marked by cultural heterogeneity, intensified by territorial expansion. Thus, "the Brazil of the middle of the 19th century was not only constituted by many Brazils, regionally diverse: there were also many and diverse Brazils as to the time or era lived by different groups among the Brazilian population" (Freyre, 2008, p. 61). This diversity of practices and means of acting socially highlighted the need to create a body of representations capable of mobilizing individuals around a common political ideal. According to Veloso and Madeira, the idea of Brazil "was built and disseminated mainly by Literature and History, discourses

which possess local and metropolitan values seen as universal” (1999, p. 62). The Brazilian identity was artificially created through discourses whose social and natural functions support symbolic crystallization: the enchantment, the emotional appeal and the proximity with day-to-day life make the arguments brought through art be more palatable and accessible than the discourses built in formal spaces.

The transference of the Portuguese court to the colony, in 1808, followed by the Independence in 1822, represents the creation of a new dynamics for social life in Brazil, with the appearance of new cultural strategies that take on the goal of *civilizing* the local society. Thus, the “political transformation of the status of a country” demands “the creation of forms of political-institutional organization and reordering” (Velooso and Madeira, 1999, p. 63) that will influence not only the structure of the state, but, above all, the articulation of new spaces of social relationships, through which it becomes possible to use art in a civilizing process.

The process of building an identity, recognized in its intention and political function, is composed primarily by local artistic manifestations (even if they are greatly influenced by the foreign look), from the articulation of the representation of the nation in music, literature and visual arts, with which a certain coherence in what it means to be Brazilian is reached. Say the interpreters:

Literature is, in this moment, the “expression of the national states” par excellence, so committed it was with the project of building a nationality. That is why literature, always eager to take on causes and ideals, has a militant and documental character (Velooso; Madeira, 1999, p. 71).

The civilizing intent that characterized Alecar’s worry was composed not only of a nationalist ideology, but also of the creation of models of behavior that served families in an urban environment facing the development of cities. In a dynamic that related the construction of a nation and the teaching of habits, we have a set of books and writers whose analysis may help to understand how this discourse – the artistic discourse – was articulated to serve this national project.

José de Alencar (1829-1877) may be very useful to illustrate this dynamic: author of several books, the writer from Ceará concerned himself with the diffusion, through literature, of the different regional realities that represented Brazil, without failing to promote the teaching of the habits of urban families. His incursion was not restricted to indianist literature, with *O Guarani* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865); he also wrote regionalist narratives, such as *O gaúcho* (1870) and *O sertanejo* (1875); and urban ones, such as *Senhora* (1875) and *Lucíola* (1862). Most of his texts were published as *feuilletons*, destined to a predominantly feminine audience³.

The author makes the moralizing function of his literature explicit through the comedy *O demônio familiar*, staged for the first time on November 5, 1857, at the *Teatro Ginásio Dramático*, in Rio de Janeiro. The plot revolves around Pedro, a domestic slave who wishes to marry his masters to rich partners so he could be a coachman. In the text *A comédia brasileira* (“The Brazilian comedy”), the author clarifies his objective when writing that play:

The public, listening in good humor, says I achieved my first goal to make people laugh; the men who are more Stern in terms of morality cannot find there one single word, or sentence, that can make a fifteen-year-old girl blush. (Alencar, 2003, p. 29)

In this process, we notice that literature on the stage uses simplicity to educate the public on the intended values, highlighting the importance of family, work, marriage etc. According to Faria (2003), “realistic comedy will be a photograph of bourgeois society, but always an improved photograph at the end.” Thus, we have that:

With this type of play-writing, the writer valued his work and put his art to the service of the country, seeking to touch the citizen with the ethical values of the bourgeois that should guide their existence if they wanted to be part of a modern society. (Faria, 2003, p. 9)

³ Freyre emphasizes the habit of “the girls who spent the days leisurely talking, sometimes on the Windows; or reading the most recent stories by Macedo or Alencar” (2008, p. 82).

Candido says art may have a communicative – and, consequently, argumentative – function for the construction of a symbolic system through which the dialogue finds its place more easily because of the expressive strength of the artistic discourse. According to the critic, literature “requires a certain communion of expressive means (words, images) and mobilizes deep affinities that unite men from a place and time so as to reach *communication*” (Candido, 2010b, p. 147).

Through literary messages – associated to musical representations, monuments, paintings – they tried to build, in the social imaginary, an idea of Brazil associated to a certain model of behavior. This happened through a process of “redefinition of a collective identity.” Carvalho states:

The social imaginary is built and expressed through ideologies and utopias, undoubtedly, but also – and this is what interests me – by symbols, allegories, rituals and myths. Symbols and myths may, because of their diffuse characteristic, through a less coded reading, become powerful elements for projecting interests, aspirations and collective fears. As they succeed in reaching the imaginary, they may also shape world views and conducts (2009,p.10).

Literature would act, thus, as a mechanism of *crystallization* of an ideology (Velooso; Madeira, 1999), favoring the diffusion of a symbology created to forge a Brazil. For reaching this end, we have the artist that “resorts to the common arsenal of civilization” (Candido, 2010c, p. 32), identifying images, themes and elements that may favor the communicative process.

The direct association between art and politics in 19th century Brazil is capable of explaining the strength institutions has in the civilizing process. The development of arts, therefore, goes through the state, which is interested in shaping an idea of Brazil and of national homogeneity.

This is, rigorously, a movement for the construction of the history of a young nation, a history that still needed to be written. Brazil is seen as a promising nation whose importance the historian must emphasize in his accounts, like von Martius points out in his paradigmatic text where there is a self-reflective posture about the part of the historian:

Lastly, I must make an observation about the position of the Brazilian historian to his country. History is a master not only of the future, but also of the present. It can spread very patriotic feelings and thoughts among contemporary citizens. A historic work about Brazil must, in my opinion, have the tendency to awaken and rekindle, in its Brazilian readers, a love for their country, courage, constancy, industry, fidelity, prudence, in one word, all civic duties (Martius, 1956, p. 456).

In this passage, originally published in 1845, we see how Science – and, similarly, art – was put to the service of a civilizing ideal from the development of certain feelings (of belonging, love to the country etc.) in Brazilian people. The indianist movement, in this sense, when resorting to natural Brazil, to the context of colonization of the territory, acts through the manipulation of memory (Le Goff, 1996), using symbols which were already known and associating them to others, new ones, plastically recreating the meaning of the symbolic arsenal and, consequently, the notion of Brazilian-ness of the 19th century.

Resorting to memory is a special characteristic of the indianist movement – perceived very strongly in *O Guarani* – since the teaching of habits assumed by romantic literature had the representation of a typically Brazilian environment as a background. Memory, thus, “is an essential element of what we may call identity, either individual or collective, and the search for it is one of the fundamental activities of today’s individuals and societies, in fever and in anguish” (Le Goff, 1996, p. 476). In *O Guarani*, we observe the construction of a narrative that intentionally seeks to contribute to the formation of an affective history, resorting to symbolic elements from the memory of an early Brazil – a savage Brazil, indigenous, controlled and guided by the Portuguese father, represented by the character called Dom Antônio de Mariz.

The narrative developed in *O Guarani* is especially rich in elements that may contribute for the understanding of the Brazilian society of the 19th century, considering the relationship established between politics and art. Literature appears, then, as a way of retelling the official story,

enriching it with symbols, narratives and ideas that end up composing the collective memory regarding a representation of Brazil.

**A SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD FOR LITERARY ANALYSES:
THE PART OF THE AUTHOR IN THE PROCESS
OF AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

Using literature as an instrument for historic analysis demands special care regarding the method of work since, beyond the psychological guidelines traditionally associated to the critics, it is necessary to identify the sociological and anthropological guidelines (Candido, 2010c, p. 27) that condition the elaboration of the documents: the author does not only “tell a story”, he builds an artistic discourse determined by social, economic, political and cultural elements in the text, intentionally or not. In the specific case of this study, we aimed to identify the effects a certain discourse, promoted by literature, had (or intended to have) on the organization of the society and the habits of 19th century Brazil.

Considering the sociological guidelines highlighted by Candido, it is possible to identify two movements of the relationship between art and society, which constitute diverse fields of analysis: the influence of the environment on art and also the influence of art on the environment. This is because, in the words of Candido, "art is social in both directions: depends on the actions of the environment and produces in individuals a practical effect by modifying their behavior and world view, or strengthening a sense of social values" (Candido, 2010c, p. 30).

These movements, though coexisting, revealing a dialectical interaction in artistic creation, can be separated for the purpose of studying, in order to highlight their characteristics and functioning. For, according to Candido:

A critic that wants to be whole will no longer be unilaterally sociological, psychological or linguistic, to freely use the elements capable of conducting a coherent interpretation. But nothing prevents each critical to highlight the element of their choice, as long as they use it as a component of the structure of the work (2010c, p. 17).

Specifically in *O Guarani*, we noted that the theme chosen by the author, constitutive of the work's structure, is especially significant with regard to the discourse about the creation of the Brazilian identity in the 19th century, since, as emphasized by Veloso and Madeira, "The literary and scientific discourses then were responsible for creating the nativist ideology that unfolded into narratives and images of tropical nature and of indians" (1999, p. 62). For the authors, this idea of Brazil as a big, wild territory with exuberant and rich nature was highlighted in the imaginary by the production of the artistic and scientific missions, which affected not only the foreign view of Brazil, but also the view Brazilian artists had of their country (Veloso; Madeira, 1999, p. 65).

At this point, it is interesting to highlight the contradictions of the civilizing project, in that, while it sought a set of typical Brazilian representations, built by Brazilian artists, authors, sculptors and painters, it still used the productions from Europe as aesthetic parameters. Leyla Perrone-Moysés emphasizes the cultural relations dynamic between Brazil and France. This interests us because Alencar was inspired, obviously, by the great French novelists - as follows:

What I want to show is that the history of cultural relations between Brazil and France is less peaceful than it is generally said, and that even in the most idyllic moments, there were tensions and disagreements. Every moment of strong French influence was also a moment of refusal of that influence, by the Brazilian intellectuals. [...] The specific moments of rejection have been often linked to the search for a national identity and the assumption of a wider project, a pan-Americanism or Latin Americanist project (2007, p. 51).

In Alencar's literature it is possible to identify an intentional motivation to transform, the author puts himself in the role of educator, of a remapper of habits and traditions from the perspective of the urban, bourgeois, educated family. Faria, specifically dealing Alencar as a playwright, points out that, through the literary creation, "the writer valued his office and put his art to the country's service, seeking to sensitize citizens to the aesthetic values of the bourgeoisie that should govern their existence." (2003, p. 9).

This intentionality can be understood by the author's social status and by considering the close relationship between artistic creation and institution in the Brazilian social organization of the 19th century. Alencar acts as writer, lawyer, journalist and politician, and one can say that in his work as a writer, public man and artist found a common purpose which he himself clarifies: "To give encourage my country's literature" (Alencar, 2003, p. 27), contributing to the evolution of society, civilizing it. Such purpose of social commitment anticipates what Candido argues:

[...] The writer, in a given society, is not only the individual capable of expressing their originality (which defines and specifies him among the others), but someone playing a social role, occupying a position relative to their professional group and fulfilling certain expectations from readers or auditors (2010d, p. 83).

In this regard, considering the content of the work and the author's social position, it is possible to think of literary creation as a historical document located in space and time, able to, through the elements of its structure, reveal aspects of the organization of social relations, specifically with respect to the formation of identity and the development of nationalism. That's because elements such as values and ideologies contribute significantly to the determination of the content (Candido, 2010c) of the work, which seeks to convey the message given to a certain audience, also defined socially and historically.

O GUARANI AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE BRAZILIAN NATION

The book *O Guarani*⁴, by José de Alencar, was originally published between January 1 and April 20, 1857, as a feuilleton, which indicates its social impact. The format of the work, in the words of Candido, is meaningful to the type of communication that you want to establish with

⁴ The passages and references from *O Guarani* used in this article were taken from the first edition. The information can be found on the bibliographical references.

the reader. In 19th century Brazil, the general public of readers was almost entirely made up of readers of feuilletons, arranged in order to keep the attention of the ladies during the months of its publication.

The feuilleton, whose formula was imported from a French experience (*feuilleton-roman*), is a form of fiction presented in parts, with daily chapters, in order to feed the appetite and the curiosity of the readers. The genre was established by adventure stories and stories of family conflicts. Published in specially reserved spaces in newspapers, the feuilleton is widely spread among the Brazilian public, as explained by Nadaf's study:

From the *Jornal do Commercio*, the feuilleton spread to other newspapers in Rio de Janeiro, and then to publications from other cities in Brazil. It was so easily accepted for two main reasons. Firstly, the restructuring of the national press which, after the crowning of Don Pedro II, was expanding and seeking more quality and diversity of themes so as to escape the boring and outdated political-doctrinaire issues of the time. Secondly, the fact that Brazilians and, especially, the Court, embraced the French culture very easily and completely. With the intensification of the nationalist and patriotic fervor during the post-revolution of April 7, 1831, Brazil began to hold Portugal responsible for its backwardness, and at the same time began to absorb everything that came from France, which represented progress and modernity (2009, p. 124).

It is curious to notice that, although firm in its purpose to establish an identity, Brazil adds to its construction process elements imported from the French culture, as cultural opposition to the metropolitan figure represented by Portugal. According to the interpretation by Nadaf, which is consistent with the hypothesis of this work, the feuilleton writers make up a group of artists committed to an almost pedagogical project, since "such writings reveal the historical, political, civilizing and moralizing ideals of their creators, as well as their limitations of an aesthetic-literary character" (2009, p. 126).

When writing his novel, Alencar acknowledges having done no more than "giving some color to national customs" (Alencar, 1857, p. 1), a statement that seems to indicate a purpose of verisimilitude with reality, even though it is through fiction. Reality here is the human and cultural substrate that can be "colored" by feuilletonistic fiction.

The study of *O Guarani* reveals a book divided into four parts: *Os Aventureros* (The Adventurers) (I); *Peri* (II); *Os Aimorés* (The Aimorés) (III); and *A Catástrofe* (The Catastrophe) (IV). The book tells the story of the indian Peri, a romantic hero in love with Cecília, the daughter of the Portuguese gentleman Dom Antônio de Mariz. The story happens at the banks of the *Paquequer* river, located at the Serra dos Órgãos. Brazil is represented as a “land of freedom”(Alencar, 1857, p. 4) characterized by its exuberante nature, as can be seen in this passage of the opening chapter:

The vegetation in these parts bears all its luxury and vigor; virgin forests stretch along the river banks, which run amid the greenery of arches and capitals adorned by fans of palm trees (Alencar, 1837, p. 4).

Scenario of several adventures, the story refers to a historical past – the year of 1604 is indicated -, revealing a representation of the colonial times in Brazil, represented by the figure of the Portuguese colonizer. The narrative emphasizes the ressignification of the social importance of the indian. The “savage” here is the major symbol of Brazil, an *ideal* of morality, represented by his courage and pure feelings (Peri’s passion, although present throughout the novel, never becomes physical, sexual). The noble savage is presented by Alencar in the character of Peri as “a savage soul, free as the birds that flew in the air, or as the river that ran in the lea, that strong and vigorou nature that created prodigies of strength and courage” (Alencar, 1857, p. 46)

It is possible to affirm that, through literature, the author seeks a new version for the origins of Brazilian society, considering the indigenous element as constituting the race. The following passage clarifies the way the indian is *built*, by recovering his character, “*unjustly slandered*”, according to Alencar, by the official records:

A broad line descending from the top until the place where Cecília had been laying down showed the path the rock had made when going down, plucking the grass and hurting the ground.

D. Antônio, still pale and shaking because of the danger Cecília had been in, moved his eyes from that land that seemed to him to a be a grave to the savage that had appeared as a good-samaritan genius from the forests of Brazil.

[...]

As to the feeling that governed this procedure, D. Antônio was not surprised; he knew the character of our savages, so unjustly slandered by historians; he knew that outside of war and vengeance, they were generous and capable of grand gestures, with noble stimuli (Alencar, 1857, p. 20).

In this context, it is possible to perceive the reception of the idea of “mixing” as positive, as was emphasized by the historian von Marius in a famous text published originally in 1845:

[...] it would be a big mistake for all major historiography and pragmatic, if we despised the forces of important indians and blacks, forces that also contributed to the physical, moral and civil development of the entire population (Martius, 1956, p. 442).

The characters constitute an equally rich material for the perception of the discourse built by the author: the figure of the Portuguese patriarch as a reference of morality; the indian as a brave young man, capable of great growth (the symbolic ending with the indian carrying the Portuguese girl in his arms); the disastrous effects of colonization, represented by Loredano; the virgin with blond hair and blue eyes, Cecília, as a reference to purity and chastity. The linear behavior and the exaltation of the virtues of each of the characters representing the *good* end up emphasizing the civilizing aspects of the book, with the teaching of habits proposed by Alencar. The characters, seen as models of behavior – belonging to different social statuses – personify the image of virtue and make the assimilation of certain values easier.

The adventure plot imagined by Alencar is put in motion by a *mistake* committed by Dom Antônio de Mariz when he killed an indian from the Aimoré tribe; the unintentional death provokes the tribe to attack, which culminates in a family tragedy: at the same time the uncivilized indians, represented by the Aimorés – and whose image opposes that of Peri, the indian incorporated into a domestic life, who recognizes, as said by Alencar, (1857, p. 27) in “civilized creatures” the “superiority of education” – attack the family, the image of degeneration is represented by Loredano, an Italian ex-friar who intends to take over Dom Antônio’s fortune and seduce Cecília. Alencar uses an interesting resource as a narrative strategy, a resource that allowed him to escape simple Manicheism: the image of virtue represented by Peri is not associated to the figure of the Portuguese, but to the native

element, even though, in order to save Cecília, receiving a task from D. Antônio, Peri must be baptized. The baptized indian symbolizes the congregation of two important elements for the construction of a typically Brazilian identity: on one side, the “freshness” and “bravery” of the native come from the virgin forests; on the other, the reception of civilization from the virtuous Portuguese represented by the patriarch.

The tragic ending of Dom Antônio and the Portuguese house he represents also serves as indication of a new beginning: Peri and Cecília survive the explosion caused by the Aimoré attack, but their survival is threatened by a flood. Peri, whose strength and bravery have already been proved by the author, represents an ancestral myth: the indian Tamandaré saved himself and his partner from a similar situation by climbing a palm tree, a strategy used by Peri to save Cecília (Alencar, 1857, p. 164 e ss). The mythical ending of the book, which projects a new beginning for the couple in the middle of the wilderness, seems to indicate a path of “new life” for Brazil, with an original sense of national identity. Peri and Cecília, indian and civilized Portuguese, may, bravely facing the challenges presented by nature while still being enchanted by it, build, according to the metaphor of family and fruits, the symbol of a “mixed” Brazil, more virtuous and full of courage.

Cecília, when opting to remain in the “desert” with Peri, does not fail to notice an evangelizing function that is her responsibility as a civilized Brazilian “virgin”: “she wanted to open to her friend the heavens she saw because of her Christian Faith; she wanted to give him a place next to hers in eternal life” (Alencar, 1857, p. 152)

The understanding of *O Guarani* and of the biographical and literary path followed by its author serve to indicate a new intellectual and political movement: the effort for the crystallization of an ideology capable of mobilizing people for the Republic. When the connection of the book with its context, the intentions of the author expressed in his manuscripts and the relationship between the form of publication and the civilizing project is understood, it is possible to interpret the symbology inherited from literature and integrated to many discursive spaces – formal or not, artistic or not.

CONCLUSIONS

A shared sense of Brazilian-ness is a necessary condition for constituting a political society rooted on common values. To perform the Republic project through political and cultural untying from Portugal demanded not only the originating legal pact - the Constitution - but building an idea of nation that was contrary to Portugal. Although recognizing the hybridity and plasticity of symbolic constructions of culture, it was necessary, at least on the level of discourse, that "being Brazil" be opposed to "being Portugal." Brazil, emancipated, had to discover itself detached from the European figure.

In this historical process, it is possible to speak of an articulation - often intentional - between the legal-political discourse, the artistic discourse and the popular discourse. The traffic of symbols and meanings between the various discursive plans favored and enabled the construction of an ideology able to settle a sense of Republic - however artificial it was - in the newly emancipated nation.

The literature recognizes itself as the protagonist in the role of *civilizing* a people in need of a reference of nation. The literary text takes over the function of teaching what it meant to be Brazilian, from building an origin myth, the myth of the noble savage, a rhetoric figure that can be found not only in the pages by Alencar or in the poetry of Gonçalves Dias, but in the French Enlightenment philosophers like Rousseau, who settles his contractual basis State in the original idea of a state of nature where men are intrinsically good, like Peri, the romantic hero.

Establishing a dialogue between literature and legal knowledge is presented as an interesting methodological resource for understanding the construction of the law as a historical product reframed by the application through a hermeneutics permeated by temporality. The interpreter/applicator is also a being marked by his horizon of understanding, symbolically forged in culture, so the inherited Law is a law built and rebuilt from various discursive plans, among which stands out the literary discourse. What the interpreter projects - like a supposed sense - when interpreting the law is actually a universe of references, meanings and shared cultural heritage through art, orality, family environment, the

media, and the world. The direction of Brazil is, thus, *a construct*, as well as the Brazilian sense of law, republic and constitution.

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Original language: Portuguese

Submetido: 09/12/14

Aceito: 27/04/15