



## EMBODY MOEMA: THE FEMALE BODY IN THE TIME-SPACE OF (RE) PRODUCTION OF BRAZIL AS A COLONY

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### ABSTRACT

Moema is an iconic character in the epic poem “Caramuru” written by José de Santa Rita Durão in 1781. This body that transforms itself continuously in many artistic manifestations, whether in literature, in historical narratives or in its manifestations in painting and sculpture during nineteenth century, has traces of the theme of Indianism, as well as of death in water, romantic death and the theme of the female nude. All of them are related with issues that concern aspects of the brutal process of (re) production of Brazil as a colony. Corporeal Moema is an invitation to think about the female body and dynamics proper to the transition to the Modern Era. The critical analysis brings a rereading of the character to debate the role of the female body in the transition to capitalist society.

Keywords: Moema; female body; Modern Era.

### RESUMO

Moema, personagem icônico do poema épico “Caramuru”, de José de Santa Rita Durão, de 1781, é assumida aqui como corpo que se transforma em modo contínuo, quer seja na literatura, nas narrativas históricas ou nas suas manifestações na pintura e escultura. Vestígios da temática do indianismo, assim como da morte na água, da morte romântica e da temática do nu feminino se entrelaçam com questões que dizem respeito a aspectos do brutal processo de (re)produção do tempo-espaço do Brasil Colônia. Embody Moema é convite para desdobrar, a partir do corpo feminino, a reflexão sobre dinâmicas próprias da passagem para a Era Moderna. A análise crítica opera a releitura da personagem para colocar em debate o papel do corpo feminino na transição para a sociedade capitalista.

Palavras-chave: Moema; corpo; feminino; Brasil Colônia; modernidade.



## MOEMA: HISTORY, LITERATURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

The beautiful Nymphs cried from Bahia,  
Swimming, they accompanied Moema;  
And seeing that they navigate without pain,  
To the white beach with fury they returned:  
Nor can the white Hero without pity see them,  
With so many proofs of love they gave him;  
He doesn't even remember Moema's name,  
Without the lover crying or moaning  
gratefully<sup>1</sup>.

Moema is one of the characters in the epic poem “Caramuru”, by José de Santa Rita Durão, from 1781, which narrates the discovery of Bahia in the 16th century<sup>2</sup>. The stanzas highlighted here narrate the last moments of Moema's life and the scene immediately after her death, after being rejected in favor of Paraguaçu. The story develops from the figure of Diogo Álvares Correa, a Portuguese castaway presented as a hero, who was celebrated by the natives of the new land (barbarians) as the son of divinities and a brave warrior, which is why he was offered several women, including Moema. It is a work written half a century before the Brazilian romantic and nationalist movement, but which had a great influence on it<sup>3</sup>. In the nineteenth century, the poem had six reprints and was vividly present in the imagination of the Brazilian artistic milieu. This helps to understand the appearance of the character in various artistic and literary plays/manifestations throughout the 19th century, such as

the painting “Moema” by Victor Meirelles<sup>4</sup> and the homonymous sculpture by Rodolpho Bernardelli<sup>5</sup>, notable links between text and image.

Based on her indigenous and female body, Moema puts us in contact with various aspects of the brutal process of colonization in Brazil. Starting with the fact that the very situation in which she appears in the narrative is her offering to a foreigner<sup>6</sup>. This proposal was based on the supposed tradition of the natives who welcomed the establishment of a degree of kinship with someone who stood out for his bravery in war or was ruled by some deity. Moema, which, according to the source, means ‘lie’ in ancient Tupi<sup>7</sup>, is not just any suitor, but a beauty who had already been courted countless times, but who was still without a husband worthy of the importance that union with her would represent<sup>8</sup>. Even so, she was rejected. Diogo/Caramuru preferred Paraguaçu, “with a valuable chest and a docile temperament”<sup>9</sup>. Envy and jealousy – feelings supposedly felt not only by Moema, but by all the despised suitors – would be the reason for Diogo's return to Europe, then with his beloved<sup>10</sup>. At the moment of departure, in desperation, the rejected suitors – the female mob – threw themselves into the sea, facing the furious waves. Among them, Moema, who “was no less beautiful than irate”, moans with envy and clings to the helm<sup>11</sup>.

In the aftermath of events, she even begs him to shoo her with his powerful lightning<sup>12</sup>, but soon she faints, lets go of the helm and has her body pulled to the

<sup>1</sup> DURÃO, 1781, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Salvador was the first capital of the colony, between 1549 and 1763.

<sup>3</sup> Candido (1985) makes this statement and adds that Durão's poem was the first “to express in poetry an exhaustive and systematic use of indigenous life” (p. 184).

<sup>4</sup> Moema. Oil on canvas (129x190 cm). Victor Meirelles. 1866. MASP, São Paulo.

<sup>5</sup> Moema. Sculpture, cast bronze (25x218x100 cm), 1895. Rodolpho Bernardelli. National Museum of Fine Arts collection. Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>6</sup> She appears in the narrative only in stanza IV of Chant VI, when she is presented as a beautiful maiden offered as wife to Diogo.

<sup>7</sup> This meaning is contained in the Small Tupi-Portuguese Vocabulary, from 1951, by Lemos Barbosa.

<sup>8</sup> The narrative operates here by dignifying the indigenous character as pointed out by Antonio Candido (1985).

<sup>9</sup> DURÃO, 1781, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> This seems particularly to be a trace of the European perception of Diogo's relationship with his various women, considering that, according to historical accounts, in cases of polygamy, all women live in peace and without jealousy (RAMINELLI, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> DURÃO, 1781, p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> Which is also one of Zeus/Jupiter's weapons.

bottom of the water. The dramatic death by drowning is witnessed up close by the beautiful nymphs from Bahia, who accompanied Moema swimming and who, after her death, decided to return to the beach. As at the time of Persephone's abduction, the outcome is witnessed by other female figures who seem unable to intervene in the course of events<sup>13</sup>. With the difference that Moema has a tragic and fatal destiny, while Persephone remained alive, although divided between the two divine worlds. Still, in the poem "Caramuru", divine punishment does not fall on the companions due to what happened. The punishment seems to fall solely on Moema, who ends up paying with her own life for not complying with what is imposed on her. That is, for challenging the logic of the feminine marked by modesty. Her death seems to serve as an example<sup>14</sup> for the others who, like her, did not accept that they were not chosen. It is the rereading of this character that interests us here in particular, because what is questioned is the female body itself and its link with the dynamics of the passage to the Modern Era and the colonization process.

## BODY AND POWER

Moema's dead body is linked to the construction of a feminine freed from the possibility of deciding on the course of things, but also an assertive, brave and courageous feminine. Finally, she throws herself into the water and grabs the ship's helm, an emblematic gesture of her attempt to effectively change the direction of events. Although the others saw it all until they decided to save themselves by returning to the beach, it doesn't seem appropriate to attribute

a particularly passive attitude to Moema. The construction of the feminine represented by Moema contrasts and speaks of a masculine that is both virile and desired, as well as cruel and authoritarian, who legitimately has the power of decision. It tells of all these possibilities in relation to each other. Because power, as Foucault (2017) teaches us, does not exist in itself, but in power relations<sup>15</sup>. Agreeing with the feminist critique of Foucault's thought, it is worth considering that sexual differentiation cannot be omitted when talking about body and power. For Silvia Federici (2017), who replaces and ratifies the construction made by feminists since the 1970s, "women's bodies constituted the main objectives – privileged places – for the implementation of power techniques and power relations"<sup>16</sup>. This, in turn, would make it impossible to omit sexual differentiation in the debate on body and power and lead her to assert that "in capitalist society, the body is for women [...] the main terrain of their exploitation and resistance"<sup>17</sup>. In this bias, Moema's body has, therefore, several marks, including her exploration and resistance.

In addition, one cannot ignore the fact that the author of the poem is not only a man, but a man who speaks of Moema from his point of view as a religious, in line with the idea that indigenous people were creatures that needed to be saved. Thus, the narrative follows and extols the natural wealth of the new land, but emphatically registers that the liberation from paganism – classified as unclean – would be a boon that Portugal offered to the barbarians. Boon that was also a duty that not even the deep sea that separates the old from the new world would be able to prevent from being fulfilled<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Here we allude to the myth that narrates the abduction of the Greek goddess Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter who was condemned to live between the two divine worlds, Hades and Olympus. According to Ovid, Persephone's companions were supposed to have been present at the time the goddess was kidnapped. Maidens known for their beautiful singing would have been transformed into mermaids.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding punishment, it is worth remembering that it was not always destined to set an example. It was "alternately subjected to the need to take revenge, to exclude the aggressor, to free from the victim, to terrorize others" (FOUCAULT, 2017, p. 66).

<sup>15</sup> MACHADO, 2017, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Candido (1985, p. 176) states that "Durão extolled the colonizing work mainly insofar as it was a religious enterprise, an incorporation of the gentiles into the universe of the Catholic faith".

Glorious Nation, that vast land  
 It will get rid of filthy Paganism,  
 To whom this ancient Orb is no longer enough,  
 Nor the immense expanse of the deep sea:  
 In this hidden country that the sea moves away,  
 It has its zeal to field a new world;  
 And when so much faith forbids his terms,  
 Another World will be found, if another one  
 hides<sup>19</sup>.

The discourse of Santa Rita Durão's poem, which brings the indigenous people into a narrative that places them as the element to be rescued and, simultaneously, presents Portuguese as the agent that performs this rescue, can be seen as a construction used to justify the high level of violence to which entire populations were subjected. It is emblematic that in the poem the natives were called barbarians, as this categorization was linked to the perception of an "other" seen as an object of aggression and helped to legitimize the conquest of America<sup>20</sup>. What would be linked to the "persecuting society" that would have developed in medieval Europe based on militarism and Christian intolerance<sup>21</sup>, where the rule became to perceive difference as a deviation of faith<sup>22</sup>, as an error. The perception of Europeans about the new lands was divided between positive and negative, as the innocence of the natives referred to an idea of paradise, while their wild habits alluded to the opposite<sup>23</sup>. This is in line with the duty of Christianization referred to in the poem by Santa Rita Durão and is related to the central role of the Church in the process of colonization in Brazil.

Moema is dead and there is a whole new territory to be (re) known, (re) appropriated, (re) ordered. The body that opens the way for such an order of things in Santa Rita Durão's narrative is feminine. It is a punished body as an example. On the body, the complement that we agree with what Foucault (2017, p. 65) says: "it is the surface of inscription of events [...] volume in perpetual dissemination". Thus, Moema is the "inscription surface of events" that graph a "new world" in a patriarchal, Christian way and in transition to capitalism<sup>24</sup>.

## FEMALE BODY AND THE ENTRY INTO THE MODERN ERA

In Marxist thought, the distinction between modes of production (for example, feudal, capitalist and socialist) is marked by the instance (economic, legal-political or ideological) that is dominant at a given moment in time, considering that the economic instance is always supposed to be the determinant<sup>25</sup>. Silvia Federici (2017) criticizing Marx, questions the coincidence of the rise of capitalism with the war against women at the beginning of the Modern Era. According to this author, there is "a world of female subjects that capitalism had to destroy: the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dares to live alone, the *obeab* woman who poisoned the master's food and incited the slaves to rebellion"<sup>26</sup>. After all, "the global plunder and degradation of women are necessary conditions for the existence of capitalism at any time"<sup>27</sup>. Moema looks like others, a female subject

<sup>19</sup> DURÃO, 1781, p. 121.

<sup>20</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, p. 383.

<sup>21</sup> FEDERICI, loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup> RAMINELLI, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, Biron (2010, p. 45) states that in Chant III, Santa Rita Durão brings Eden's Garden closer to the regions of the shepherds of Arcadia, a resource that, according to this author, would accentuate the Arcadian or neoclassical aspects of the poem and which, in our view, illustrates the polarized view that Europeans had about the new lands that Federici tells us about (2017).

<sup>24</sup> In agreement with Federici (2017), the use of the term transition to speak of the passage from feudalism to capitalism says more about a prolonged process of geographically uneven change than a supposed gradual and linear historical development.

<sup>25</sup> It should be said that, in the capitalist mode of production, the economic sphere is, in addition to being determinant, also the dominant one.

<sup>26</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

who needed to be destroyed. Her drowning silences the body and voice that drink the water, enunciating the words that affirm Diogo (the colonizer) as a cruel man, while in the rest of the narrative he is constructed as a hero. However, it is not just a question of silencing the character in the objective situation in which she finds herself. The destruction of this female body symbolizes the silencing of her desire. Moema seems to personify disobedience, especially female, which needs to be disallowed. The creed that, as it is not the Catholic faith, needs to be disqualified. The body that is not servile and subservient gains another usefulness when transformed into an example.

## INDIGENOUS AND BLACK FEMALE BODY IN THE COLONIZATION PROCESS

As Federici (2017) shows, capitalism is not only necessarily linked to sexism, but also to racism<sup>28</sup>. Which leads us to reflect on the place of the indigenous and the enslaved black people in the construction of discourses about Brazil and its colonization process. Both are susceptible to the defamation carried out by capitalism<sup>29</sup>, but they have some important differences with regard to the relationship between body and power.

According to the analysis bias of modernist historiography presented by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (2008), the Indians, in Brazil, distanced themselves from the social stigma of slavery by having their civil freedom recognized in the mid-eighteenth century, even if tutored or protected. While black men and women, associated with servile and disgusting work, were marked by a historical aversion that reached

not only the individuals directly involved in slavery, but also their descendants. While the mixed union with indigenous people was constructed as something that enjoyed legal prerogatives to preserve the honor of the betrothed, that established with black women was seen as something that “stained” the blood and defamed the partners<sup>30</sup>.

On enslaved black women, it is worth mentioning, particularly, as puts by Angela Davis<sup>31</sup>, that in a slave system that defined black people as property:

Women [...] suffered differently because they were victims of sexual abuse and other barbaric abuse that could only be inflicted on them. The attitude of masters towards female slaves was governed by convenience: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were seen as genderless; but when they could be exploited, punished, and repressed in ways that only women could, they were reduced exclusively to their status as females<sup>32</sup>.

Thus, even though it is not appropriate to rank the oppressions, it is necessary to be careful to remember that in the new patriarchal world installed from colonial systems, indissolubly marked by slavery, black women were subjected to a level of violence that was not only high but also perverse and that marked their bodies in ways that only female subjects were susceptible to.

Although this argument is built from the American example, “slave” and “slavery”, as shown by Barros (2009), re notions existing since antiquity that were appropriated by white Europeans and transformed from the 16th century on into “key pieces of the

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<sup>28</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> FEDERICI (2017, p. 37) states that “capitalism needs to justify and mystify the contradictions embedded in its social relations – the promise of freedom in the face of the reality of generalized coercion, and the promise of prosperity in the face of the reality of generalized penury – defaming the ‘nature’ of those it exploits: women, colonial subjects, descendants of African slaves, immigrants displaced by globalization”.

<sup>30</sup> HOLANDA, 2008, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> DAVIS, Angela. *Mulheres, raça e classe*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> DAVIS, 2016, p. 19.

colonial economic systems” in several places. About the “black” social construction, this author points out that it is a western and European (“white”) idea consolidated over four centuries, which suppressed several ethnic differences to facilitate the practice of modern slavery. Similarly, it can be said that the term “Indians” places under a generic and homogenizing term a wide range of ways of life. This can be illustrated by the propagation of the idea that there would be a Tupi language when, in fact, there is a linguistic trunk with dozens of languages<sup>33</sup>.

Language was notably at the center of the measures adopted with a view to exercising power more directly over the indigenous people during the colonization process. The obligation to teach the Portuguese language to indigenous populations, with a view to eliminating the need for intermediaries to contact the monarch, was among the guidelines established by the Crown in the 18th century and was linked to the objective of strengthening metropolitan authority<sup>34</sup>. This measure was part of the Directory of Indians, one of the most important legal instruments of the colonial period, inscribed in the context of the Pombal Reforms and created in 1757 to regulate the freedom granted to indigenous populations two years earlier<sup>35</sup> and which established a plan of civilization for the Indians. The new directives were linked to the need to requalify manual work, marked by the pejorative connotation, and to guarantee the settlement of the colony – especially in more fragile areas, such as those located in the north of Brazil<sup>36</sup>. In this context, the

encouragement of mixed marriage between indigenous and white women stands out, guaranteeing that the spouses and their offspring, in addition to not being defamed, would also have advantages in accessing employment, honor and dignity<sup>37</sup>.

These policies adopted by the Crown in relation to the indigenous people, which implied the suppression of the power of the Jesuits throughout Brazil, must be read in the context of the strategies drawn up by the Portuguese government to strengthen its own power<sup>38</sup>. However, according to the current historiographical review, the Directory constitutes a turning point in indigenous policy and dialogues with the problematization of indigenous populations as agents in the historical process<sup>39</sup>. In this sense, Coelho (2007) states that the learning of Portuguese by the indigenous was linked to the strengthening of the chiefs of the Principals<sup>40</sup> in the villages and that the possibility of occupying a prominent position was echoed among the Amerindians<sup>41</sup>. However, it is worth noting that the granting of the principal’s patent, for example, “inserted the indigenous authorities into the administrative apparatus of the colony, thus consummating the process of dismantling the structures brought by the village populations”<sup>42</sup>.

Speaking specifically from the case of Spanish colonization, Federici (2017) states that no indigenous woman was safe from rape or abduction. According to this author, “America was a naked and voluptuous Indian woman, reclining on a hammock, who

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<sup>33</sup> In addition to the trunk identified as Tupi, there is also the Macro-Jê. According to 2010 Census data tabulated by IBGE in Brazil, there are a total of 274 indigenous languages spoken by 305 different ethnic groups (IBGE). These data contrast with those of the UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages, according to which there are 190 languages in Brazil, among which 12 are already extinct (MOSELEY, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> COELHO, 2007, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> COELHO, loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup> “The lands to the north of Brazil received privileged attention from the Crown, given its dispersion and lack of control by the colonial authorities” (ROCHA, 2015, 175-176).

<sup>37</sup> This normative appears at the center of Holanda’s argumentation (2008, p. 56), when he makes his own reading of the relative distancing of Indians from the social stigma of slavery.

<sup>38</sup> ROCHA, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> COELHO, 2007, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> With the deposition of the missionaries, the villages began to be managed by the chiefs themselves, the Principals (Ibid., p. 30).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

invited the foreigner to approach”<sup>43</sup>, which would be aggravated by the fact that “at certain moments, it was the ‘Indian’ men themselves who offered their relatives [...] in exchange for some economic reward or public office”<sup>44</sup>. Reasons why “women became the main enemies of colonial rule, refusing to go to Mass, baptize their children or any type of cooperation with colonial authorities and priests”<sup>45</sup>. Framing them as witches.<sup>46</sup> persecutorily, in that territory, was a strategy that, coated with religious justification, served to combat individuals who opposed the colonial onslaught and redefined the spheres of activity in which they could participate<sup>47</sup>. Generally speaking, from colonization onwards, women were subjected to a system that degraded and inferiorized them, since “Indians or Europeans, they were daughters of Eve and had the worst attributes”<sup>48</sup>.

Admitting that the Portuguese as a colonizing people also share this worldview that America was this naked woman who insinuated herself and that Moema is part of a plot that presents her as one of the indigenous female subjects offered to the colonizer, it seems reasonable to extend Federici’s argument (2017) on the vulnerability of indigenous women to the case of Portuguese America. The encouragement of mixed marriages in the 18th century still seems to represent an example of how indigenous women were co-opted in the colonization process to achieve the objective of territorial domination by the Metropolis through the increase of the population contingent, even if such alliances have interested to some degree the village chiefs themselves at certain times are among their strategies of action in the process of change. Therefore, despite differing from enslaved black women and the

positive perspective in relation to mixed marriages between white men and indigenous women, there is no way to sublimate the very high symbolic load of the violence to which the indigenous woman’s body was susceptible in the Brazilian case.

About the witch hunt in Portuguese America, it should be considered that in Portugal, unlike northern Europe, there was no effective persecution against magical-religious practices, as pointed out by Carolina Rocha (2015). However, also in Brazil “white men saw the Amerindian culture as the work of the Devil”<sup>49</sup> – even though the “Indians were seen by the Jesuit priests as ‘blank sheets’ who did not know Christ and, therefore, maintained the idolatries that brought them closer together of the devil”<sup>50</sup>, reasons why they should be Christianized. Speaking specifically about the colonization process in Piauí, in the Brazilian hinterland, this author questions discourses that framed mestizo and indigenous women – placed at the center of the narrative – as practitioners of the Sabbath ritual. Focusing on the specific case of a document that narrates the encounters of women with the devil in colonial Piauí, the researcher did not doubt that the participants of the said Sabbath were practitioners of magical-religious rituals, but she opened “hypothesis that the Sabbath, as described, had been practiced by them”<sup>51</sup>. Starting from a position that, in our view, questions the narrative woven by the winners, the author identified in the consulted sources that the supposed participants of the Sabbath, accused of abjuring the Catholic faith, were repeatedly described as women who did not take Communion, did not go to Mass and did not go to confession<sup>52</sup>. On the fact that women occupy the center of this narrative, he adds

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<sup>43</sup> FEDERICI, 2017, p. 402.

<sup>44</sup> FEDERICI, loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup> FEDERICI, loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Accusing them of making pacts and fornicating with the devil, of prescribing herbal remedies, of using ointment and amulets, among others (Ibid., p. 404).

<sup>47</sup> FEDERICI, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> RAMINELLI, 1997, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup> ROCHA, 2015, p. 197.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 225, emphasis added.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

that “the misogynist Christian mentality of the modern era believed that female ‘fragility’ made women more vulnerable to the actions of the devil”<sup>53</sup>. In this sense, preserving due proportions, it seems equally reasonable to say that there was also the act of persecuting here – in a manner similar to that carried out in the witch hunt – women who somehow opposed the colonial enterprise<sup>54</sup>. Likewise, the colonial enterprise here also appears to have redefined the spheres of activity in which women could participate.

## FEMALE BODY AND ROMANTIC DEATH

The romantic connotation of the character’s death can be seen as a narrative maneuver, as it created the idea that America’s unified desire was to unite with Europe and concealed the barbarism carried out by the colonizers. In agreement with Candido (1985)<sup>55</sup>, we can complement by pointing out that we perceive Durão’s poem, in the literary field, as an “epic attempt to give dignity to tradition, aggrandize the settlers and justify the colonial policy”. The outcome chosen by the poet points to the permanence and multiplication of the America that married Europe and converted to the religious dogmas of the old world. According to the intention of praising the work of catechesis done by the Jesuits<sup>56</sup>, he indicates that there is a path to salvation through the Catholic faith. In turn, the misogyny of the Christian tradition should not be sublimated, as it was present in historical accounts that particularly showed women as degenerate beings<sup>57</sup>. In addition to the colonizer, represented in the figure of

Diogo, the bodies, of Moema and Paraguaçu, which the poet chooses to describe this appropriation and creation of the new world, are feminine. Emblematic gesture that signals the central place that female subjects occupied in the colonial enterprise, even though they were subjugated or silenced –, which can be seen less as a side effect and more as a strategy of domination. The act of narrating her death, disguising it as romanticism, therefore, constitutes a gesture that covers and simultaneously reveals the power relations that permeate it.

Biron (2009) perceives Moema’s death as the symbolic death of the wild element of Paraguaçu and the beginning of her conversion to Catholicism<sup>58</sup>. For this author, Moema dies with the dignity of an epic hero and exalts the sacrifice of the uncivilized world. We understand that, markedly and symbolically, Moema’s death refers to the disappearance of several Amerindian populations and the violence that marks the process—especially for female subjects – of transformation of their ways of life based on contact with the white man. We also understand, in a perspective similar to that of Candido (1985), who perceives Diogo as an ambiguous hero – who sometimes appears adapted to living with the Indians and sometimes imposing his colonizer customs – and that the poem questions the transformation not only of the colonial subject, but also of the colonizer, who also changed through contact with indigenous peoples.

The sentimental outline given to Moema’s death can also be explained by the emotionally based ethics, which, according to Holanda (2008), is what guides

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>54</sup> According to Rocha (2015, p. 202) “the local authorities were sometimes more rigorous in identifying and punishing deviations of faith than the Court [of the Inquisition] itself”. What could be explained by the bureaucracy involved in investigating the accused; in the greater concern on the part of the Inquisition in Portugal with the New Christians than with “sorcerers”; and the erosion of the image of the Inquisition in the kingdom (ROCHA, loc. cit.).

<sup>55</sup> CANDIDO, 1985, p. 174

<sup>56</sup> According to Candido (1985, p. 176) “Durão wanted to show that civilization was identified with Catholicism and was due to the catechist – in particular to the Jesuit”. And that “it is an eminently religious and anti-Pombal epic” (ibid, p. 177). Biron (2010) states that the poem praises the catechesis undertaken by the Jesuits in Portuguese America. This could be linked to a kind of retraction of Santa Rita Durão made years before for having publicly attacked this same religious order.

<sup>57</sup> RAMINELLI, 1997, p. 42.

<sup>58</sup> According to this author, there is also the fact that they have water as a common element. Considering that both Moema’s death and Paraguaçu’s baptism later, in France, when she changes her name to Catarina, have water as a common element (BIRON, 2009, p. 41).

the cordial man. Acting based on emotions is linked to passionate behavior that should not, however, necessarily be taken as positive. So much so that Moema dies in violent passion, fighting to the limit against the force of the waters that link here and there.

## EMBODY MOEMA

Embody Moema is a gesture that multiplies, from the female body, the reflection on the dynamics of the transition to the Modern Era in Western society and the invention of the “new world” that emerged with the colonial enterprise. It is a critical analysis that meets the marks of resistance that furrow the debate on the relationship between body and power in its various versions.

Resistance, in turn, would be a mark associated with her name and, by extension, with Bahia and the Bahians in the discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Luís Henrique Dias Tavares points out, Brazil, formed by many Brazils, experienced the separation of Portugal in a different way in the Northeast and the South of its territory and had as a decisive factor the liberation of Bahia from the Portuguese yoke on July 2, 1823, after a war that lasted seventeen months and was marked by the resistance of the Bahians to the onslaught of the Portuguese<sup>59</sup>. Recurrently associated with the July 2 event, there is a reference to Bahia as the land of Moema and to the Bahians as Moema’s children in several newspapers and periodicals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, if Diogo is the “father” of those who converted<sup>60</sup>, Moema is the “mother” of those who resisted.

From the link between literature and history, what is questioned is the role of the female body in the

transition to the capitalist mode of production. It is a plot whose elements do not refer to a supposed origin that explains in a linear way the unfolding of events, but which is carried out from the notion of opening. When rereading the character, we assume that the scrutiny of her features also operates her actualization. We do not come into contact here with Moema exactly as she was, but rather as she presents herself to our eyes in the present. Furthermore, even though Caramuru narrates a story that takes place in the 16th century, his writing from the end of the 18th century assimilates and transforms many layers of meaning and information that go beyond the outline of the beginning of the colonization process<sup>61</sup>.

Embody Moema is done as an action and movement that speaks of the forces placed in relation in the various processes that shape it and intertwine under the key that we name here as: the female body in the time-space of the (re)production of Brazil Colony.

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<sup>59</sup> MOURA, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Diogo Alvares is considered a “discoverer” of Bahia and a “father” of those who converted (BIRON, 2010, p. 43).

<sup>61</sup> According to Biron (2009, p. 47), when writing Caramuru, the “friar-poet was based on reports, letters, documents and textbooks written from the 16th to the 18th century”. Among the “historical texts and reports about the tribes that inhabited the New World [...] we highlight those by Jean de Léry, Hans Staden, Father Manuel da Nóbrega, Pedro Correa, among others” (BIRON, loc. cit., emphasis added).

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