

ENVIRONMENTAL SURROUNDINGS DEFINING NATIONAL IDENTITIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Susan Quinlan)

ABSTRACT

Throughout this thesis, three books will be discussed: *A Bagaceira* by José Américo de Almeida, *Iracema* by José de Alencar, and *A Senhora* by José de Alencar as well. These works will be interlinked based on their principle female characters and how their feminine characteristics are always in comparison with their environmental surroundings. Because they all deal with the flora and fauna of a specific historic place based on where the specific story takes place, all of them also correspond with the search for a national identity. In addition to the search for a national identity, each female character exemplifies the Persephone – Demeter myth and cyclical events that pertain to fertility. All of these works attempt to center on ecofeminism and the search for a “matrifocal” society rather than a patriarchal society.

INDEX WORDS: Brazilian national identity, Persephone – Demeter, Objectification, Environment, Journey, Historic place, Matriarchy, Ecofeminism, Iracema, A Bagaceira, A Senhora, Alencar, Almeida, Woman and Nature, 19th Century Brazil

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DEDICATION

I am eternally grateful to my parents, who never lose faith in me...Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION: IN SEARCH OF A MATRIARCHY IN AN ECOFEMINISTIC WORLD

Within the context of searching for a national identity, the search for a female identity also arises in *A Bagaceira* in 1928 by José Américo de Almeida, and the works *Iraquéma* in 1865 and *A Senhora* 1875 by José de Alencar. The main female characters in each of these works is searching for and or representing her own identity through her surroundings, actions, and environment. To be careful, however, it would be better to understand that none of the female characters in these novels actually empowers her own representation or characterization because they are defined through the male characters except for Aurélia in José de Alencar's *A Senhora*. Also, the authors of these works are all male as well. In other words, for the most part it is a male author creating a male dominant character in order to control, portray and represent a main female character. The main female characters are objectified throughout the novels in reference to historic places, physical environments and mental states. Almost all of the female characters in these novels are objectified by their male counterparts. The exception to this statement is Aurélia. She does not allow any male character to dominate her nor tell her how to live her life.

Soledade, the main female character in *A Bagaceira*, represents cyclical events such as rainy, fertile seasons and dry harsh conditions, and is controlled by the male characters in her life as her surroundings change with the migration from the sertão to the city. Not only do the male characters dominate and control her, they also control the economies of the region and who earns money. For example, Dagoberto, the owner of

the ranch where Soledade's father works, controls Soledade by raping her and also controls everyone else by determining who is allowed to work for him and when they are allowed to work. Throughout the novel Soledade, who migrates back and forth from the barren sertão to the farmland ranch of Dagoberto, is compared to the seasons of drought and rain in the sertão. Her beautiful characteristics are also opposed by the way in which the narrator blames her for the sexual promiscuity prevalent in the sertão (Ellison 28). Opposing this idea in the novel occurs, at one point, when her love is described as a rainbow: "O amor de Soledade era uma sinfonia de chuva com sol" (Almeida 93).

It is easy to see how Iracema, the female protagonist in *Iracema*, represents an America through the comparison of her physical attributes with the flora and fauna of Brazil and by the anagram of her name. Her representation depends on her surroundings. For example, at the beginning of the novel, she is loyal to her father, who is a tribal medicine man. However, once she accidentally strikes Martim with an arrow, she immediately falls in love with him. She was willing to give up her natural environment, also known as her home, in order to be with the man she loved. Her identity, although strictly compared to the flora and fauna in both the surroundings of her natural place (in her own homeland and tribe) and the place where she fled with Martim begins to form when she asserts her freedom. She simply decided not to return back to the Pajé. Although she was not fleeing per se, she was intending to not return to her homeland. However, after awhile, her husband had longing feelings of returning back to his motherland, Portugal. In order for these two characters to merge cultures, Iracema had to give up her homeland, but was still compared to her environmental surroundings. Martim is molding her identity by controlling her heart. She realizes that he no longer

loves her the way he used to and decides that after she gives birth to their child she will die. The child's identity is then the actual merging of two societies and cultures into one. Once Iracema sacrificed her own culture and way of life, she sacrificed her own identity and then is left with the child that had formed from the relationship with Martim.

The last novel to exemplify a controlling patriarchal society is *A Senhora*, by José Alencar. Aurélia, the main female protagonist appears to be an example that breaks away from the society of the time. Aurélia inherited a lot of money from an estranged grandfather. Her other family members had abandoned her and her mother because they believed that her mother had become pregnant out of wedlock and was then abandoned by the father. However, this was not the case. A change of fate would allow Aurélia to control her own destiny. Before inheriting the money she falls in love with Seixas. The problem is that Aurélia has no dowry and Seixas leaves her in order to marry someone else so that he could support his social habits, such as drinking, parties and going to the theatre. She then uses her inheritance money as a method of control not only over her uncle Lemos who is supposed to be her guardian, but also over Seixas. In her attempts to control her life and her own destiny, Aurélia realizes that she does need to get married in order to live a proper life for a woman. It is in this realization where she attempt to find her own identity and is able to break away from a patriarchal society because she is not simply turning back to a life guided by a man. Even though she does control her husband until the last page of the novel, she is using money to control him, something that exemplifies a patriarchal society and a political connection to ecofeminism. Aurélia's behavior demonstrates an attempt to break away from a patriarchal society and then succumbing to it in the end, because there is no other choice.

The main problem I encounter in analyzing these characteristics as female or feminine is problematic; each of these are created by the popular male authors during their respective time periods. For example, José Américo de Almeida wrote during a time when Brazil was searching for regional identities. During the initial period of Modernism in Brazil in 1922 many works were created in order to create a sense of national identity. The backlands and the sertão are principle characteristics of the real Brazil. In other words, the dry, harsh and unfruitful backlands are what define the true Brazilian of this region as enduring and hard working and migratory. However, these characteristics are also harsh in their portrayal. For example, the *retirantes* are described as people who, “Não tinham sexo, nem idade, nem condição nenhuma. Eram os retirantes. Nada mais.... Mais mortos do que vivos” (Almeida 8). Opposite the rest of Brazil in cultural characteristics is the sertão. Hospitality, for example, is one quality that the rest of Brazil seems to possess, yet is lacking in the sertão:

*Eu não vou na sua casa,
Você não venha na minha,
Porque tem a boca grande,
Vem comer minha farinha.* (Almeida 9).

Food, being a vibrant part of Brazilian celebrations and culture, is rationed in the sertão because of its scarcity. It seems as if no one wants to share their possessions, as they are in short supply. This inability to share causes many of the hardships in the region.

The most obvious outcomes of a patriarchal society in literature appear in the novels by José Alencar, *Iracema* and *A Senhora*. Alencar wrote in the early to mid 1800s at a time when Brazil was searching for an identity that its people could call their own,

separate from that of Portugal. For this reason the portrayal Alencar's female characters in these two novels are still controlled by a male dominated society. During this time, Brazil was, for the first time, attempting to find its own national characteristics and define what it really meant to be a Brazilian. These two particular novels from Alencar give very different examples of what it means to be a Brazilian. On one hand, the character Iracema is defined by her environment. For example, she is bound by her physical attributes:

Além, muito além daquela serra, que ainda azula no horizonte, nasceu Iracema.

Iracema, a virgem dos lábios de mel, que tinha os cabelos mais negros que a asa da graúna e mais longos que seu talhe de palmeira.

O favo de jati não era doce como seu sorriso; nem a baunilha recendia no bosque como seu hálito perfumado. (*Iracema* 17).

However, when she migrates into and becomes a member of another tribe, her beauty dissipates as she loses her own identity within her enemy's tribe, "A lembrança da pátria, apagada pelo amor, ressurgiu em seu pensamento" (*Iracema* 113). Her attributes are then described as being dried out like a certain flower that does not blossom any more: "A jovem mãe suspendeu o filho à teta; mas a boca infantil não emudeceu. O leite escasso não apoiava o peito" (*Iracema* 132). In these examples, Alencar is trying to indigenize Brazilian characteristics. In other words, he is taking native characteristics of the landscape of indigenous Brazil and its inhabitants in order to form an "idealized" Brazil.

On the other hand, Alencar includes a prime example of Brazilian characteristics that comes from Europe. In the novel *A Senhora*, Aurélia is modeled after women in a weekly European Journal. However, in this case, it appears as if Alencar modeled her

after the women in a Brazilian version of this journal entitled, “O Carapuceiro.” There is no specific journal entry with which to provide an adequate example of these female characteristics because there is no index in which to find certain articles. However, in a secondary source, an article by Pallares-Burke discusses the themes in “O Carapuceiro” and how they are closely linked to those same themes within *A Senhora*. Such themes include women’s education and place in the home. An argument will be provided later for how Father Lopes da Gama, the main editor and writer of “O Carapuceiro” “Brazilianized” the journal before publishing the weekly periodical. Whatever the case may be, this journal discussed women’s issues and rights as far as education and their place in the domestic world. The portrayal and representation of Aurélia by Alencar bases itself in the characteristics of a typical “Brazilian” woman as described in “O Carapuceiro.” For example, Alencar describes her as being courteous:

“A maneira afável por que a moça o tratava tinha, senão desvanecido completamente, ao menos embotado, as suscetibilidades de sua consciência acerca do ajuste que fizera com Lemos. Não que se absolvesse da culpa; mas esperava remi-la pelo amor” (*A Senhora* 64).

Here the description of speaking to one another is almost romantic in its presentation; meaning that there were certain ways to have a proper conversation with one’s partner.

This brings up an important aspect during the appropriate time period in Brazil, which was Romanticism. Alencar wrote this novel during the period of Romanticism in Brazil where concerns with love and identity and the personae were important and idealized. Characteristics include the “eu-lírico” where the emphasis was placed on the first person narration. Doris Sommers comments on romance novels stating that:

[N]ationalist romance valorizes virility as a self-evidently male attribute while it tries to distinguish between good and bad men...they (the romance novels) reveal remarkable points of contact in both plot and language...Their coherence comes from their common project to build through reconciliations and amalgamations of national constituencies cast as lovers destined to desire each other ...they are moved by the logic of love...the romances are invariably about desire in young and chaste heroines, the nation's hope for productive unions (23-34).

We see this both with Aurélia and Seixas as they attempt to justify their actions toward one another by talking about how to maintain a proper appearance in society by others. In other words, their whole relationship is a set-up or a front to everyone else in society, including their closest friends.

One needs to keep in mind that these works need to be interpreted in light of the male narrators and authors controlling female characters; in terms of how each female character breaks away from a patriarchal society or breaks away from male control, is idealized, and is compared to the flora and fauna of their surrounding environment. This association with nature could also represent the breaking away from a patriarchal society in an attempt to form a matriarchal one. On the surface, if we do not include the portrayal or the representation of a female character, all of these works incorporate an historic place and a search for nationhood, a patriarchy, and the attempt to break away from this patriarchal structure and move toward a more matrifocal society. In *A Bagaceira*, Soledade journeys back and forth from the city to the sertão. Here, the

historic place is the sertão and its harsh backlands with scarcely any living plants or animals. The journey itself is cyclical and represents the changing seasons of death and life, drought and rain. Iracema in *Iracema*, has a different journey. Although the entire novel is supposedly based in Ceará, her journey from her homeland to another place not only represents a physical migration from her native tribe into her enemy's, but also a mental migration because, as stated before, she loses her own cultural identity as another one forms (even though the descriptions of her physical beauty do not cease to be compared and objectified with the same characteristics of the surrounding forest). The historic place or places in *A Senhora* are slightly more difficult to discern. The most important place is upper class society in Rio de Janeiro. This society is informed by the courts from Portugal. People who belonged in this high-class group were largely influenced by European standards of behavior. Rio is then significant because it is the first part of Brazil to lose its close ties with Portugal in the search for independence and nationhood. In other words, the most important historic place in this novel is also the place where the ruler of Brazil (the next in line for the throne of Portugal) declared to his father that Brazil was to be an independent country free of any relations with its father country. The character Aurélia can represent this separation.

Within the journeys toward a search for identity, there also exists the idea of journey in relation to the Persephone myth. In Greek mythology, Persephone is known as the "...queen of the Lower World" (Virgillo and Linstrom 28). In Greek mythology, Demeter is the sister of Zeus and is the "primordial earth mother..." (Virgillo and Linstrom 29). Demeter's daughter, Persephone, is almost identical to her mother. Hades, the lord of the Under World abducted Persephone down into the Lower World to make

her his queen because he fell in love with her (Virgillo and Linstrom 31-32). Abduction is considered to be an arranged or a forced marriage with death, and is used to explain the changing seasons. It is imperative that the connection be made with each of the female characters in relation to Persephone. Persephone, in her prime was struck down and forced to marry death, only to return to earth in the spring and summer. Susan Gubar points out in her article “Mother, Maiden and the Marriage of Death: Women Writers and an Ancient Myth” exactly what it means for a female character to marry death (40):

The marriage of death becomes a symbol of daemonic male power which simultaneously effects the destruction of the girl and the desecration of nature....

The grievous separation of mother and maiden implies that in a patriarchal society women are divided from each other and from themselves. The renewal promised by the birth of a divine child can never cancel out the pain and sorrow of its conception since it means the continuance of the myth, which is no less a tragic cycle than the rhythm of the seasons. (40-41).

Soledade, Iracema and Aurélia all exhibit this sort of cyclical life. In other words, they all are separated from their natural environment or place of birth by either a male or by the patriarchal society around them and forced to die or “marry death.” Each of these characters and how they specifically pertain to the Persephone myth will be discussed in more detail for the duration of the paper.

There is also a visible journey, be it mental or physical, in each of these novels as well. The journeys can be partly related to the Persephone myth in which Persephone herself journeys into the Under World and has to start a new life.

In *A Bagaceira*, Soledade journeys to and from the sertão and also goes away to have her child and then returns (once her child is born) to Dagoberto and his ranch. Her journey coincides with cyclical events of rain and drought or dry and fertile.

The journey in *Iracema* represents a domination of one culture and the diminution of another culture. This occurs when Iracema gives up her native homeland, culture and way of life in order to live with the man with whom she falls in love. In other words, she fled from own territory and pursued a new life with Martim in order to please him. She was willing to sacrifice herself because she loved him.

In *A Senhora*, the journey is somewhat different because there is hardly any physical traveling, only a mental journey. The only physical journey happens when Seixas returns from Pernambuco after having worked there for a while. The important journey however, is the one that Aurélia mentally takes upon herself as she moves from one social class to another. At first she and her mother are merely struggling to survive. All of the sudden, Aurélia inherits a fortune from her estranged father via her very estranged grandfather. She then moves from not having any money and barely being able to survive to the extreme opposite of having too much money and being corrupted by it. This is obviously a critique of what happens when a patriarchal society allows money to control its actions. The different changes that Aurélia goes through are from a loving, caring and broken hearted woman, to a deceitful and vindictive one. She also states that when she and Seixas meet for the first time after her inheritance that she was born only a year ago: “Esse tempo não existe para mim. Nasci há um ano” (*A Senhora* 64). Aurélia prefers to think that neither she nor Seixas existed before she came into money. The fact

that Seixas broke her heart because she did not have a dowry is so painful that she did not want to remember those memories.

Before any of these journeys end, it is imperative to analyze why they started and what they represent. This same idea of a matriarchy escaping a patriarchy and the Persephone myth will also be used to divulge in depth the two characters Soledade (from *A Bagaceira*) and Iracema (from *Iracema*). In addition to this theme, nationhood and politics must also be brought in to help critique these female characters. The last character to be analyzed will be Aurélia in *A Senhora* in order to incorporate more contemporary themes.

One theme that has subliminally appeared, yet has not been formally introduced is ecofeminism. The word comes from a combination of economy and feminism and it is a “...recent development in feminist thought which argues that the current global environmental crisis is a predictable outcome of patriarchal culture” (Salleh 1998). Even though feminists and ecofeminists differ in many ways, they all agree on one idea:

[T]here are important connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an understanding of which is crucial to feminism, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy. A main project of ecofeminism is to make visible these ‘woman-nature’ connections and, where harmful to women and nature, to dismantle them. (Warren 2)

For this reason, *A Bagaceira*, *Iracema*, and *A Senhora* will be analyzed to see if, in fact, the “women – nature” connections are harmful or objectifying to women so that these negative connections may be dismantled. This is why a re-reading of these novels from a female perspective is important to the understanding of how and why these female

characters are compared to their environmental surrounding and nature. In order to have a better understanding of these three novels and the search for an identity, one first needs to realize when and where this term originated:

The term 'ecofeminism' originated with Francoise D'Eaubonne in her 1974 book, *Feminism or Death* (Merchant 1992). D'Eaubonne believed that feminism holds the key to confronting the environmental and inequality problems that beset contemporary societies. The term became a rallying point for a subculture within feminism which holds that women are especially attracted to environmentalism because of their reproductive biology and culturally defined role as nurturer (Somma and Tolleson-Rinehart 153).

One ecofeminist perspective is connected closely to the Persephone – Demeter myth because "...the perspective emerges from nature-based religious beliefs centered around a female deity..." (Somma and Tolleson-Rinehart 154). It is in this connection where Soledade and Iracema are closely linked with ecofeminism and Persephone. An idealized deity and fertility goddess, such as Persephone, is closely linked to ecofeminism because she deals with "mother nature" and reproduction. Some eight connections exist between woman and nature in the opinion of ecofeminists. Although these particular links are fluid, meaning they can change with time, they offer a good explanation of their interconnectedness to Soledade and Iracema as they are always compared to their environmental surroundings. "...[T]hese eight alleged connections help to identify the range and variety of ecofeminist positions on woman-nature connections" (Warren 2). They are:

1. Historical, Typically Causal, Connections. One alleged connection between women and nature is historical. When historical data are used to generate theories concerning the sources of the dominations of women and nature, it is also causal.
2. Conceptual Connections. Many authors have argued that, ultimately, historical and causal links between the dominations of women and nature are located in conceptual structures...three such conceptual links have been offered...value dualisms, conceptions of power, and logic of domination...
3. Empirical and Experiential Connections. Many ecofeminists have focused on uncovering empirical evidence linking women (and children, people of color, the underclass) with the environmental destruction.
4. Symbolic Connections. Some ecofeminists have explored the symbolic association and devaluation of women and nature that appears in religion, theology, art, and literature.
5. Epistemological Connections. The various alleged historical, causal conceptual, empirical, and symbolical woman-nature connections...have also motivated the need for new, ecofeminist epistemologies.
6. Political Connections...Ecofeminism has always been a grassroots political movement motivated by pressing pragmatic concerns. These range from issues of women's and environmental health, to science, development and technology, the treatment of animals, and peace, antinuclear, antimilitarist activism.

7. Ethical Connections. To date, most of the philosophical literature on woman – nature connections has appeared in the area of environmental philosophy known as ‘environmental ethics’...[T]he goal of ecofeminist environmental ethics is to develop theories and practices concerning humans and the natural environment that are not male – biased and provide a guide to action in the postfeminist present.
8. Theoretical Connections. The varieties of alleged woman – nature connections discussed above have generated different, sometimes competing, theoretical positions in all areas of feminist and environmental philosophy (Warren 3-6).

These eight connections will be used to analyze and dismantle the objectification of Soledade, Iracema, and Aurélia in their environment along with their relationship to the Persephone – Demeter myth.

CHAPTER ONE: PERSEPHONIC CYCLES IN *A BAGACEIRA* PROBING FOR A NATIONAL BRAZILIAN IDENTITY

José Américo de Almeida's novel *A Bagaceira* focuses more on regionalism and migration in the northeastern part of Brazil. Soledade, whose female character and representation is the main focus throughout the entire novel, is portrayed as beautiful and almost untouchable. She, like Iracema, is idealized through her surroundings. The Persephone – Demeter myth is more prominent in *A Bagaceira* through the characterization of Soledade in relation to the disappearance and subsequent return of the character. The journey of womanhood represents the inability of women to function in society alone without the help of a man. It is not necessarily that a woman could not live on her own, but it is a fact that both Persephone and Soledade were disabled objects chosen by men, Persephone by Hades and Soledade by Dagoberto. So in essence, these men could not live without these women. They did not consider their lives to be complete without taking what they wanted: a woman to be their wife. Although both Persephone and Soledade are closely linked by cyclical events, such as rain and drought and for the simple reason that both of their "husbands" chose them first, Soledade's character and environment also epitomize the very central distinctiveness of what it really means to be a unique Brazilian. In other words, the fact that Soledade lives in the sertão and migrates with her father in order to find work during the drought period signifies the very fact that to be a Brazilian woman means to lead a dry life always searching for work and being underpaid. The sertão in itself within this novel has its own characteristics and it is compared with Soledade's supposed sexual promiscuity. The only problem is that Soledade is not sexually promiscuous. Instead, the sertão represents the harsh reality of

life with its trials and tribulations. It is interesting that Soledade, whose beauty is almost always compared to something immaculate, came from the sertão. It is an odd observation to make that someone so beautiful could come from such a dry, harsh place that rarely ever shows any signs of life. However, the reason that she is portrayed with such a luscious fervor is because she represents the cycles of life and death and the return to the after life. Her digression and return to Dagoberto is also in sync with the fertile and dry seasons of the land as well. Soledade, in her own way, is representing not only the fertility of the land, but the fertility of future generations as well. What is the central focus for the remainder of this chapter is how Soledade and Persephone are closely linked to one another and also to the natural cycle of life and how life is linked to Soledade's return after her disappearance. What also remains to be discussed is how Soledade represents an ecofeminist character because she is defined and objectified through her environmental surroundings my a male – biased perspective.

First and foremost, it is important to remember that José Américo de Almeida is: ...an important forerunner of the Brazilian novel in the 1930s and 1940s, especially of the regionalist and sociologically oriented 'novel of the Northeast' that has attracted international attention. It is also an example of the somatic features is the drought cycle, involving the unusually severe occurrences in the years 1877, 1898, and 1915 in the arid backlands or sertão (Ellison 27).

A Bagaceira takes place in 1898. The cycle of drought and rain is significant in the fact that it relates to Soledade and her fertility or a lack of fertility. Along with this reference to fertility or new life, Soledade's beauty is also compared with nature and her environmental surroundings (similar to *Iracema*). Soledade can be linked to a fertility

goddess (Ellison 28). The myth of Demeter – Persephone shows that Persephone, Demeter’s daughter, is almost identical to her mother who is in fact the fertility goddess because she was Zeus’ sister. The Demeter – Persephone relationship corresponds with the Persephone – Soledade connection as well because their beauty and fertility were always compared with nature because life is flourishing when she is in the brejo and barren when she is not. Persephone is compared to, “nature in its powers of fecundation and growth, with plants, trees, foliage, flowers, water, earth”(Ellison 29). Soledade’s characteristics are no less impregnated with the same sort of terminology as Ellison quotes Almeida:

Soledade seemed to have been impregnated with all the fragrances of nature. The powerful exhalations clung to her still wet skin, as if nature’s own blossoms had been spilled over her, as if her own sexual charms were there in bloom. Even her green eyes exuded a fragrance....This dizzying and seductive atmosphere drugged his senses, and Lúcio seized the girl’s hand, tugging at her fingers as if plucked petals from a daisy(Almeida 31, 44).

The above passages occur during an encounter between Lúcio, Dagoberto’s son, and Soledade. The very last line is somewhat de-autonomizing to Soledade as an individual by comparing her with characteristics in nature. The symbolism also states that her beautiful characteristics are virgin-like because her fingers were compared to petals of a flower. It is this relationship of being both fertile and virginal where the reader sees Soledade become objectified as a fertility goddess.

The word objectification infers something else about Soledade. According to Martha C. Nussbaum, a character who is objectified has one or more of the following seven characteristics throughout the discourse of the novel or any written or visual text:

1. Instrumentability: The objectifier treats the object
as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in
autonomy, and self – determination.
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps
also in activity.
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other
objects of the same type, and / or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary –
integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by
another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose
experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.(Nussbaum
257).

Of these seven characteristics of objectification, Soledade can be linked to Denial of Autonomy, Fungibility, Ownership, and Denial of Subjectivity. Although there are many different theories of what autonomy and subjectivity are, for the purpose of this paper, the focus will remain on the initial denial of autonomy, or objectification, and the attempt to break away from ownership. In regards to Soledade, she is denied autonomy because she

is always compared with her environmental surroundings. Because of this she is subjugated to certain terminology relating to seasons of the year including droughts and rainy seasons, which symbolize the fertility and barrenness of the land. Her beauty is only visible through the relation of “dew on the morning grass” or by a comparison to the Demeter – Persephone myth. For the very reason that her own autonomy depends on the characteristics and fixations and / or similarity of other weather conditions and her relationship to a sexually desirable mythical goddess. Her own identity has little chance to be formed on its own. As Ellison states, “Soledade is sometimes a goddess of agriculture,” (Virgilio and Linstrom 30) for example referring in the passage where Lúcio discovers her digging up a flowerbed that was in the ground (Almeida 74). José Américo de Almeida might not have specifically intended to correlate Persephone with Soledade, but he does include other “...references to figures or motifs from Greco – Roman mythology, including titans, centaurs, an odyssey, and a sacred wood” (Ellison 30). The very fact that these are mythical creatures, objects or journeys signifies that Soledade is nothing more than a symbol, a daydream or a vision. In reference to the “denial of autonomy” and “ownership,” Soledade is not specifically able to create her own autonomy because she is always compared with the seasons and with a goddess of beauty. She does not or is not able to identify herself. Although many readers would beg to differ that she is capable of self – identification because she chooses to disappear and raise her child on her own only to return the end of the novel, the point of the matter in question is that she is governed by both her father’s actions and the actions of her environment. At some point Soledade might even be considered to represent a religious rite of passage (Cohen 343). Personally she may not be considered as an actual religious

rite of passage, but at least she might as well represent one because of the migration factor, linked to the ever – changing environment. In other words, the migration of the sertanejos from the sertão to the cities looking for work in a time of drought can be compared to the aversion of the nature in the sertão, as represented by the myth of, Sebastiãoismo.

Originating from Portugal, the myth Sebastiãoismo comes from the former king of Portugal, Dom Sebastião. During a time of war with one of their colonies in Africa, Dom Sebastião disappeared and was thought to be dead. Because of his disappearance, Portugal lost its autonomous rights as an independent country and Spain took over it's rule. During this period, the citizens of Portugal prayed for Sebastião's return so that they could regain their independence. They were searching for their king so that they could have their lives back. In the same way as Soledade and her father's migration in search of a better way of life, it is within the actual nomadic movement that Soledade represents a religious rite of passage. As Durkheim points out:

Myth is part of the religious system, and expresses in words what ritual expresses in actions: both have a social function of maintaining and expressing solidarity. The content of myth, like that of ritual, is symbolically significant: in the first place, it represents certain values which are embodied in social like; secondly, it reflects certain features of social structure. Thus, (...) totemic myths concern the objects which have sacred value for the group and so symbolise its unity...the linking of a myth with a group gives 'it' an identity as against another group with another such myth. The concrete objects or persons which are the 'dramatis personae' of the narratives are accorded sacredness; and the sharing of sacred

attachment binds the social group and differentiates it from others...(myth) also provides the basis of all cultural means of categorising the world (Cohen 343). It would not be precisely correct to comment that Soledade is a myth because she is actually a physical character in a novel. However, she can be compared as having myth-like qualities because both she and Persephone exhibit similar characteristics.

In another comparison to the fertility goddess motif, Ellison correlates Persephone's abduction with the rape of Soledade by the senhor do engenho, Dagoberto Marçau. Here Soledade does not own herself and can in no way escape being forced to make love with Dagoberto. The result of this union is a child. The connection after this event is imperative to the correlation between Persephone and Soledade. For example, it is obvious that after Soledade's disappearance for almost fifteen years after the scandal of her and Dagoberto's love has been made known to the other characters, she returns to her family's ranch in the sertão. However, her return back to the brejo years later signifies another cycle in death and rebirth. As Ellison notes:

Soledade's supposed death fifteen or sixteen years earlier corresponds to Persephone's descent into the underworld and is explained in the story by the family's acceptance as truth of the report by Pirunga that he, to save his own life, had throttled her. The fact that she did not die can be interpreted, for purposes of the myth, as a ritual death followed by a rebirth. In terms of imagery, at both the beginning and the end of *A Bagaceira* Soledade is identified with death and the underworld when, as a victim of drought, her beauty is eclipsed and she is described as a skeleton (Ellison 32).

Soledade is linked to the myth of the fertility goddess. In comparison to the aforementioned features of a myth, one must think about the social functions of Soledade and how does she unites and solidifies a group of people and helps to distinguish those people from other groups. How does she provide the basis of “all cultural means of categorising the world” and does the category that Soledade creates and / or fits into have any political meaning? In terms of category and stereotyping, Soledade represents the typical lifestyle of the sertanejos in regards to migration. She solidifies a group of people by befriending a different group of people in the brejos. Although befriending might not be the appropriate wording, she does befriend Lúcio and also has a baby with his father. Her child represents a mixing of people, not necessarily the miscegenation of the races, but a least a mixing of different ways of life. Herein lies the political motive that keeps two groups from the same country separated. The fact that Soledade goes off to have the baby and survives ensures a unity or solidarity between these two different ways of life.

Two important factors in this novel include the link between Persephone’s child and Soledade’s child and how gender is represented. First off, the fact that both Persephone and Soledade have a child means that there is hope for survival. This does not mean that Persephone and Soledade and later in the next chapter, Iracema, will all survive; however, it does mean that their children will live on and survive. It is in this survival where a new beginning is formed, a new cultural identity. It is important that this identity is formed and created through specific events, cultural and religious practices that only pertain to a specific people. What this means is that it is important for each culture to differentiate itself so that it can be solidified into a group of people.

One characteristic that Soledade and Iracema have in common is how their gender is represented. It is interesting that none of these characteristics seem to complement or talk about themselves. It is always a narrator making a comment or comparing them to their environmental surroundings. They are not entirely free to begin to form their own identities; they are constantly surrounded by their male counterparts throughout the entire novel. If they are alone, there is always an omnipresent narrator comparing their surroundings to their beauty. The problem with this in the first place is that the words themselves come from a male dominated society. Men create these words so women are bound by men's interpretations of beauty and their understanding of beauty. In Amy Kaminsky's "Translating Gender," she states that "...language was not a transparent vehicle for the expression of reality. Words and experience create each other within culture..." (1). Here Kaminsky discusses the difference between gender and sex. One of the most important discussions in her article deals with the concept "fatherland." This is important because of its relation to Soledade and Iracema. For the most part, the narrators of these three characters define beauty. Soledade and Iracema are all defined by their environmental surroundings. In doing this the author and or narrator (there are not always correlations between the two) are attempting to define or create a new cultural identity for their nation essentially creating a nation. This word "nation" is often linked with fatherland. What is interesting, as Kaminsky points out, is that the actual gender of this word appears to be masculine. In other words, nation is masculine and represents a brotherhood of people. How is it that the land where one resides is the fatherland where all of the fruit and life within this land are referred to as Mother Nature? However, Soledade and Iracema represent "la patria" and are compared with Mother Nature, which

is clearly feminine and all of them are defined through their “patria’s” environmental surroundings. In Portuguese and Spanish, the word itself is clearly feminine (a pátria, la patria). Why is it that a word that is masculine and defined by masculine words and ideals feminine? Two of the novels, especially *A Bagaceira* and *Iracema*, are portrayed with feminine characteristics in such a way that their “nationhood” is being redefined through feminine characteristics, turning patria into matria.

Redefining a nation to underscore a more feminine ideal with regards to politics and the environment is where ecofeminism and Soledade unite. Of the eight previously mentioned characteristics of ecofeminism, Soledade can be linked to the following “Connections”: Historical, Conceptual, Empirical and Experiential, and Ethical. The “Historical Connection” is obvious because Soledade’s father and Dagoberto attempt to control her and the harsh conditions of the sertão by either migration or determining when and how long workers are allowed to work. In other words nature and Soledade are dominated by the men or male characters in the novel. These men feel that they can control their own lives by dominating nature and women. They need to feel as if they have control; hence not only the migration away from infertile land, but also the rape of Soledade by Dagoberto. It is interesting to note here that if land is infertile or does not produce fruit or other foods, it is usually abandoned and deemed barren. It is part of nature, a part in which Soledade’s father does not want to have anything to do with. If a woman were not fertile, she is then considered barren.

The “Conceptual Connection” to Soledade is somewhat more difficult to place; however, it is obvious that she and Dagoberto are a “value dualism.” In other words, their pairing in nature is oppositional. One of the reasons for this is because Soledade is a

young, beautiful woman who escapes the sertão every year with her father. They are considered to be from a lower class than Dagoberto and Lúcio. Not only is Dagoberto from a higher class in society, but he is also almost twice Soledade's age. This makes them an unlikely pair for marriage. Here the reader also sees a "logic of domination" because:

[A] structure of argumentation that provides the moral premise that superiority justifies subordination. On this view, it is oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks, and the behaviors that they give rise to, that sanction, maintain, and perpetuate the twin dominations of women and nature" (Warren 4).

Dagoberto is portrayed as a superior to Soledade and her father; therefore, he apparently maintains the right to dominate both of them as he sees fit.

An "empirical and experiential connection" to Soledade is maintained because, as mentioned beforehand, she is blamed for the environmental destruction. However, all of the descriptions of her beauty pertain to fertility and nature. Because she is so beautiful, she is blamed for the sertão's sexual promiscuity. This, in turn, leads to environmental destruction of her surroundings.

An "ethical connection" to Soledade states that the majority of the literature manipulates the identity and objectification of female characters through a male – biased eye. In other words, *A Bagaceira* needs to be re-read and analyzed from a female perspective in order to correlate the "...conceptualizations and treatment of women, animals, and (the rest of) nature" (Warren 6). In doing so, the goal here would be to show how Soledade is a victim of a patriarchal society. By analyzing this structure, one would then be able to dismantle the patriarchy and move toward a more all-inclusive

matrifocal society allowing female figures to begin to form their own identities and opinions about how they want to be correlated to nature and their environmental surroundings, if they desire to link themselves at all.

CHAPTER TWO: IRACEMA AND THE SEARCH FOR A NATIONAL IDENTITY

One characteristic that Soledade, Iracema, and Aurélia have in common is that they are fictional characters. Although there has been some speculation as to whether or not Iracema was an actual person, for the purpose of this paper, she is perceived as the myth and legend, rather than if she were an actual person. Iracema, like Soledade appears to have a stronger correlation in regards to the Persephone – Demeter myth. But aside from that, Soledade and Iracema have much more in common because they both are Brazilians and depend on strong male figures in a male dominated society. After defying their father figures and their culture, they attempt to redefine themselves. In this respect they are searching for a “matrifocal” society instead of remaining bound by a patriarchal society. “Matrifocal” in this sense does not mean a matriarchy necessarily; however, it does mean that the focus of a male dominated society that includes the subjugation and objectification of women leans toward a more feminine friendly society. For example, at the beginning of the novel, Iracema does what she is told to do by the Pajé, the tribal leader or her father as Ellison cites Alencar: “Iracema returned with the maidens summoned to serve the guest of Araken and the warriors who came to obey him” (Alencar 9). At this point she is to obey the Pajé and his commands closely. Her significance is later noted on the same page when the reader finds out that she is someone important to the tribe because she can produce all of the special elixirs for medicines, dreams and tribal ceremonies:

Estrangeiro, Iracema não pode ser tua serva. É ela que guarda o segredo da jurema e o mistério do sonho. Sua mão fabrica para Pajé a bebida de Tupã
(*Iracema* 25).

Here she is portrayed as a vital part of the cultural and religious survival of her tribe. The most important point is that she is a woman and still maintains total respect toward the Pajé and obeys all of his requests. However, just a short while later in the novel when she is ordered to lead the Portuguese stranger (Martim) back to his Indian brother Poti and his tribe, Iracema decides to follow her heart and disobey the Pajé:

Os guerreiros tabajaras dormem. A filha de Araquém vai guiar os estrangeiros. Seguiu a virgem adiante; os dois guerreiros após... Quanto mais afunda a raiz da planta na terra, mais custa arrancá-la. Cada passo de Iracema no caminho da partida é uma raiz que lança no coração de seu hóspede... A filha dos Tabajaras já deixou os campos de seus pais; agora pode falar. Iracema não pode mais separar-se do estrangeiro... Araquém já não tem filha (*Iracema* 75-7).

It is significant that Iracema must first leave the land where her tribe dwells in order to make her own decisions. She must first break away from her father (the Pajé) and the ties that are keeping her captive. It is not a physical captivity because it is her family; however, she is not free to simply do as she pleases either. It is only after she falls in love that she chooses to make her own decisions as an individual and begin the necessary steps toward her own autonomy.

However, it is not until the end of the novel, when she dies from a broken heart, that Iracema actually begins to form her own identity because all she did was exchange one man's rules (her father's) for another's (Martim's). What this then means for Iracema is that she is more able to lead her own life and choose to make her own decisions without as many repercussions. In other words, she can defy her original

patriarchal society and live her own life as she pleases. This is when she makes her own conscious decision to stay and be Martim's bride and live with him among his people.

Soledade and Iracema can almost be compared as one in the same person because their beauty is defined through their environmental surroundings. They both have a relationship with a man with whom they are not supposed to, and they both end up conceiving a child, like Persephone. Although Soledade has a child out of wedlock, she still loved Dagoberto as Iracema loved Martim. The fact that both of them have a son is irrefutable evidence that these male children are meant to conceive children as well so that they can help form the true Brazil. This is imperative in order to ensure Brazil's survival as an independent nation. With Iracema's son, Moacyr, the first "true" Brazilian was born linking Brazil to Portugal. Alencar was attempting to establish a national identity through literature by the:

...realization of the tenuousness of all efforts, including the literary, to recover the vast emptiness of the nation with words and fictions...like Iracema, all Brazilians are strangers in their own country...(Wasserman 817).

It is interesting that both Soledade and Iracema are created by male authors and bear a strong connection to the Persephone – Demeter myth. It was male authors, such as Alencar and Almeida, who established female figures who would essentially represent an idealized female identity for Brazil. The problem with the novels *Iracema* and *Bagaceira* is that they do not take into account the feelings of Iracema nor Soledade. A narrator tells the reader how they are feeling. According to Ria LeMaire this represents:

- o princípio de renversement. Elementos, idéias, conceitos, até hoje considerados positivos (como unidade de sentido, continuidade), devem ser analisados em seus aspectos negativos: a exclusão de sentidos, idéias e personagens que não se adequem a quadros preestabelecidos” (66).

In other words, the books themselves are fluid and this should be considered as a negative aspect because the continuity of the text eliminates room for sentimental feelings of the female characters. The fact that neither author managed to take into account what the women figures were feeling is apparent. Even though their feelings are revealed through a third person narrator, they themselves do not ever speak in the first person. Therefore, according to Lemaire this is not an accurate representation of female thoughts and feelings. However, these books have been analyzed in the respect that neither *Iracema* nor *Soledade* fit specifically into one category. *Iracema* especially by having her son is ensuring Brazil's survival. Instead *Iracema* should be analyzed in a way that allows its readers to make their own interpretations about unifying Portugal and Brazil while forming individual Brazilian characteristics.

Legend has much to do with the story behind *Iracema* and how she helped to establish Brazilian identity. There is something mythical about a legend and something legendary about a myth. In other words, the legend of *Iracema* holds mythical characteristics and can be easily compared to the Persephone – Demeter story. *Iracema's* beauty is idealized and naturalized; this also coincides with the ecofeministic aspects of “historical” and “empirical and experiential” connections. She is graceful, obedient and yet strong and important. She is the perfect woman to conceive a child, begin a new race and establish a new cultural identity. It is the legend of *Iracema* in which the

miscegenation of the races in Brazil formed a new identities; ones that let each Brazilian know Brazil is a cultural hybrid: indigenous (Native Brazilian), Portuguese. This hybridity would form an ideal race, the first mixing of the Portuguese with the Native Brazilians in *Iracema*.

Returning to the earlier statement that Iracema is defined and characterized by her environmental surroundings can indicate that her physical beauty is subjugated to the flora and fauna of her surroundings. In this description:

...Iracema, a virgem dos lábios de mel, que tinha os cabelos mais negros que a asa da graúna e mais longos que seu talhe de palmeira. O favo de jati não era doce como seu sorriso; nem a baunilha recendia no bosque como seu hálito perfumado (*Iracema* 17).

In the above example, Iracema does not have her own autonomy, or she is denied autonomy because she cannot define her own being in her own terms. It is the role of the narrator who objectifies her beauty through her environmental surroundings. Every characteristic defining Iracema deals with the natural beauty and fertility of nature. Even "...as palavras de Iracema passaram por ele, como a brisa pela face lisa da rocha, sem eco nem rumores" (*Iracema* 108). She is objectified through characteristics of weather and through regional plants and animals. One of the reasons for this might be because her beauty is only found in Brazil. In other words, Alencar attempts to define what it means to be Brazilian and what Brazilian characteristics are like through a comparison of what the land has to offer. The reason for doing this might be so that Brazil and its citizens would be able to establish a separate identity from Portugal. As Renata Wasserman points out:

Brazilian literature arises in a multiplicity of relations – with Portugal, a colonial power devalued itself relative to other European cultures; with those other cultures themselves, England, France, Germany; and with the United States, a postcolonial culture still under construction (189).

In other words, when trying to form a national identities, Alencar uses a relationship between an indigenous person (Iracema) and a Portuguese person (Martim) in hopes of creating the first Brazilian with an origin that is solely “Brazilian.” Wasserman describes Alencar and how he was viewed while being a prestigious author. Again Wasserman notes:

Meanwhile, at a time when the ability to adopt and adapt cultural forms from the metropolis was considered a sign of increasing national cultural competence, the unusual congruence between how Alencar saw himself and how he was seen by his public and most of his critics allowed him to function as a kind of cultural prism, refracting the light of his place and age. This a not an idle image, though I do not use it as those contemporaries might have wished, for the character of any given time is made up of differences and contradictions, their interaction more representative than any individual trait. The work of Alencar, like that of many writers who receive both popular and critical approval, has such incongruities (Wasserman 190).

One of the reasons for these “incongruities” in *Iracema* might be because Alencar was not sure where to start writing. He simply wanted to answer the question of what it meant to be Brazilian and what being Brazilians might mean:

[For Alencar]

...the question of nationality occupies a central position. At issue is not how the nation presents itself to itself but what constitutes its core and its difference (Wasserman 190).

Throughout *Iracema* Alencar "...attempts to reproduce the rhythms and accents of the oral tradition" (Wasserman 206). This is why Alencar uses all of the natural flora and fauna to describe Iracema. It is significant that Iracema is an indigenous sounding name and also an anagram for America. It seems as if Alencar attempts to correlate the beginnings of America and how it was formed as a nation with the establishing of a Brazil and it's specific characteristics. (Alencar is letting the reader know that these two regions, Brazil and the Americas, have a lot in common.)

The fact that Iracema is compared to her environmental surroundings is "historical" to ecofeminists because it shows that both Iracema and nature are both dominated by male figures including the author. These "historical connections" can be traced to "...patriarchal dualisms and conceptions of rationality in classical Greek philosophy and the rationalist tradition" (Warren 3). Herein lies the reasoning as to why Iracema can not survive at the end of the novel: she is no longer dominated by Martim and her idealized beauty diminishes to a withered flower. She is no longer beautiful, she is the barren backland of the sertão, barren, dry and infertile. She has already served her purpose and therefore, must be abandoned. It is this particular moment that sets up the "historical connection" with nature and women being fertile or barren.

The other connection that can be linked to ecofeminism is “empirical and experiential.” This theory links women with environmental destruction (Warren 4). With respect to *Iracema*, once she has decided that she will die after the birth of her and Martim’s son, her environmental surroundings begin to diminish as well. For example, she becomes unhappy at her abandonment by Martim and her beauty begins to be compared with nature that appears mostly barren:

Os lábios suspirosos da mísera esposa se moveram como as pétalas do cacto que um sopro amarrota, e ficaram mudos. Mas as lágrimas debulharam dos olhos e caíram em bagas (*Iracema* 129).

Here, *Iracema*’s beauty is compared with a cactus, a generally harsh plant that pierces anyone who tries to come near it. The flowers of a cactus do not bloom frequently, and must use the nourishment that they have sparingly, otherwise they will die. *Iracema*, like the cactus flower, must conserve the love that she had from Martim in order to survive. However, the love has already dried out. These “connections” also reveal “...important cultural and spiritual ties to the earth honored and celebrated by (some) women and indigenous peoples,” in this case, *Iracema* (Warren 5).

In the previously mentioned novels, *A Bagaceira* and *Iracema*, the common themes dealt with a search for valor and identity formation. One other novel by Alencar, *A Senhora*, like the other two novels, deals with the migration toward a “matrifocal” society. This novel will be briefly discussed in the conclusion to show how a woman can survive and form her own identity without having her identity compared with the flora and fauna of her environment.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION: FORMING NATIONAL IDENTITIES

In the previously mentioned novels, *A Bagaceira*, and *Iracema*, the common themes dealt with a search for valor and identity formation of a nation through objectification of their environmental surroundings, exemplifying the aspects of ecofeminism. Iracema and Soledade represent the quest for origin, roots, and the foundation of a national identity in Brazil. The method in which the authors of these characters create a female figure and then use her to create or form an identity is similar to one other novel. *A Senhora*, also by Alencar, like the other three novels, deals with the migration toward a “matrifocal” society. However, the novel discusses how a woman can survive and form her own identity without having her identity compared with the flora and fauna of her place of birth or origin. Although the previous three novels deal with the objectification of women, Aurélia is not necessarily objectified. Aurélia is not objectified through the flora and fauna of her environment; however, she is objectified through her environment. Because she lives in Rio, a large city, she is objectified through the surroundings of upper class social events such as parties and theatre. Her beauty is objectified through her money. In other words, the more money Aurélia has, the more beautiful she becomes. For example, she spares no expense in order to always buy the most expensive dresses and have the most lavish of parties. The night of her wedding to Seixas, he found that she had purchased him the most expensive of silk pajamas. So even though Aurélia is not objectified through the flora and fauna of her environment, she is objectified through her social class.

From an ecofeminist point of view, *A Senhora* is closely linked to “Political Connections” because of the themes of “...women’s...health, to science, development,

and technology” (Warren 6). Throughout the novel, Aurélia’s education and her behavior were deemed as important qualities. Also, development and technology are addressed through parties, soirées, and theatre, all of the entertainment pertinent to those times.

These three novels all have something in common: they are all searching for a distinct national identity. The only difference is that Father Lopes Gama, the writer of “O Carapuceiro,” can be correlated to the actions of Aurélia in *A Senhora*. Gama was a priest who believed that society needed to be reformed and the values and morals that had been lost a long time ago needed to be reinstated in Brazil. For this reason he decided to publish a periodical that would inspire woman and Brazilian citizens in general to respect traditional rules, rules regarding women’s place in society and education. “O Carapuceiro” correlates to Aurélia in *A Senhora* because it describes Aurélia’s lifestyle. This periodical that had a weekly issue in Pernambuco and was read by the upper class literate citizens. Father Lopes Gama attempted to Brazilianize essays that were originally from a different periodical called “The Spectator.”

‘O Carapuceiro’ became a rather powerful element in the new and influential communication network which crossed provincial frontiers and political barriers in the first half of the nineteenth century in Brazil (Pallares-Burke 679).

In comparison to Aurélia, this periodical and its contents describe almost word for word the daily life and routine of Aurélia. The reason for this is because of the frequent discussions “...about what women are and what they should be”(Pallares-Burke 680). Its almost as if the character, Aurélia, were reading this paper and living her life according to what “O Carapuceiro” said she should do; this is also “political” because it is dictating

her lifestyle. For example, an excerpt describing daily life of upper class women from “O Carapuceiro” actually mirrors Aurélia’s daily routine:

[S]he wakes at midday, when an entourage of slaves takes care of her toilet: Each takes turns combing her hair, tightening her corset, putting on her dress, slipping on her socks and lacing up her shoes. After two hours of intense preparation, the girl is ready to be ‘put on stage’ in the ‘theatre of the verandah’ overlooking the street. From this ‘stage’ she only retreats for piano, dance, French lessons or for dinner. The evenings are spent either at the theatre, balls and soirées or at home, stretched on a sofa, acquiring ‘knowledge from pernicious erotic novels (Pallares-Burke 681).

This excerpt, taken from Pallares-Burke, exactly describes the daily routine of Aurélia. The only problem with this supposed article describing the daily routine of a Brazilian woman is that it actually mimics another famous periodical “The Spectator” that was published from 1711-12, 1714), almost 100 years before Father Lopes Gama became the editor of “O Carapuceiro.” Some of the passages from “The Spectator” are even identically translated into Portuguese and placed in “O Carapuceiro.” What this then means is that Lopes Gama was taking another cultures ideas from the “Enlightenment” period in order to implement changes within his own Brazilian society. Since “The Spectator” came from Europe, the question that remains then is how can an individual be assured that something that is published in their own country be authentic with specific qualities and characteristics that pertain only to, in this case, Brazil?

Two of the novels, *Iraçéma* and *A Senhora*, both deal with the search for a national identity through the mirroring of another country. Even though, for Alencar,

Brazil is America, with *Iracema*, the reflection in the mirror was Portugal; *A Senhora* mirrors Europe. In other words, the search for national identities is difficult and does not always originate from within the country. It is necessary to combine cultural characteristics of the environment, and ecofeminism along with social behavior of the immigrants, being from Europe and Africa, in order to begin to establish a unique and individual Brazilian identity, even if it is not a stable or concrete one. It also includes a miscegenation of the races, such as Moacyr (Iracema and Martim's son):

Moacyr is a new breed, where an unmistakably Brazilian past blends with an unpredictable future; he is the answer to Brazilianess, both Tupí and not Tupí.

(Sommers 171)

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