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Doctoral dissertation abstract:

Construction and expression of Afro-Brazilian identity in *Cadernos Negros*

- interdisciplinary perspective

[Construção e expressão da identidade afro-brasileira em *Cadernos Negros*

– perspectiva interdisciplinar]

The theme of the dissertation is the analysis of the modes of construction and expression of Afro-Brazilian identity in the literary series *Cadernos Negros*, in the period between 1978-2019, in which 42 issues of poetry and short stories were published, alternately. The *Cadernos Negros* series was created in São Paulo, in 1978, and belongs to the Afro-Brazilian strand of Brazilian literature. It turned out to be the most important and long-lasting literary initiative of its kind in the country, contributing decisively to the consolidation of Afro-Brazilian literature and to the development of critical and theoretical reflection on it. The literary project of the Quilombhoje group, responsible for the creation and development of the series, from the very beginning, aimed to contribute to social transformation, raising the black reader's awareness and strengthening his ethnic identity.

In order to analyze the identity dimension of the texts published in *Cadernos Negros*, the dissertation adopted an interdisciplinary methodological perspective, situated in the scope of post-colonial and decolonial studies. The Afro-Brazilian identity process and the literary production of black writers were studied as phenomena taking place within the system of social, political and cultural relations structured by the colonality of power, inserted in the project of western modernity. Within this system, the category of race is established as one of the main factors structuring the network of multiple and heterogeneous social and cultural hierarchies (Quijano 2005) (Grosfoguel 2008) The second methodological axis encompassed post-colonial studies and Cultural Studies, focused on the processes of construction of collective and individual identities, including ethnic and subaltern identities (Hall 2000, 2005) (Appiah 2000) (Ferreira 2004) (Pinho 2004).

The dissertation consists of two main parts. The first part - the methodological one - consists of three chapters. The first chapter, after a brief sight on the history of the “decolonial turn” in Latin American social sciences, presents the main ideas and concepts of decolonial thought, focusing on the concepts adopted in the research, such as: coloniality of power/knowledge, corpo-geopolitics of knowledge, transmodernity, liminal thinking, and ecology of knowledge.

The second chapter discusses the presence of Blacks in Brazilian national identity projects, discussing, among others, themes such as miscegenation ideology, cultural whitening and the myth of racial democracy, as well as the particularities of Brazilian racism. The third chapter develops a study of Afro-Brazilian identity, placing it in the context of the “explosion” of political identities of subaltern groups in the last decades of the 20th century and of Black social, political and cultural resistance in Brazil, present since colonial times. The chapter explores several dimensions of Afro-Brazilian identity, understood as a dynamic process of assumption or rejection of multiple cross-identifications at the collective (national, ethno-cultural, racial, religious, etc.) and individual (psychological processes) levels. Afro-Brazilian identity is also discussed in reference to the identity and decolonial projects of the two Black Brazilian thinkers: Lélia González (*amefricanity*) and Abdias do Nascimento (*quilombismo*), as well as in its diasporic dimension within the Black Atlantic space described by Paul Gilroy.

The second part - the analytical one - dedicated to the representation of the black man in canonical Brazilian literature, Afro-Brazilian literature and the identity theme, also consists of three chapters.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation discusses the presence of blacks in canonical Brazilian literature as authors and subjects of writing, showing that the Brazilian literary field is a space structured by the coloniality of knowledge, characterized by the marginalization of subaltern groups, among them the black population. Brazilian literature still remains a very homogeneous space, which preserves white supremacy and reveals itself to be very resistant to welcome new social voices, dissident to the dominant patterns.

The fifth chapter presents the theoretical-critical reflection on Afro-Brazilian literature, seeking to define its constitutive factors, its relationship with the dominant literary field, as well as the historical trajectory of black textuality in Brazil.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the expression of Afro-Brazilian identity in the selected texts of *Cadernos Negros*. Selected short stories and poems published over the forty years of the series' existence were analyzed. We observed which elements of the identity

process were contemplated in them and which literary strategies were adopted by the writers in order to express the Afro-Brazilian identity. The chapter was organized around the thematic axes that explore different dimensions of the process of the construction of Afro-Brazilian identity which include, among others: the reconstruction of the Afro-Brazilian historical, cultural and religious legacy and the search for a mythical Africa, the common cradle of all members of the black diaspora, black corporeality and eroticism, the denunciation of racism and oppression experienced by the black population followed by the declaration of revolt and the efforts to overcome the subaltern condition towards full liberation.

The analysis allowed us to observe that the series thematizes a series of phenomena present in the Afro-Brazilian identity process, revealing its complexity, the (dis)continuities and ambiguities inherent to it and assuming different strategies to express it. The writers seek to transgress the dominant models and codes and construct an alternative frame of reference, based on the affirmation of Afro-Brazilianity. Their literary proposals, arising in the gaps of the dominant literary field, by dialoguing with the literary tradition from a subaltern locus, are inscribed in the notion of liminal thinking conceived by Mignolo (2003). They also realize the ecology of knowledges project, conceived by Santos (2008, 2009), by including in literature the cultural practices, memories, and knowledges produced from a subaltern locus and marginalized by Western knowledge structures.

The research developed in the dissertation shows that both the formation of black identity and the emergence and consolidation of the Afro-Brazilian strand of literature develop as counter-hegemonic projects, which unveil the hidden face of modernity and the permanence of coloniality, question Western epistemology and seek solutions and resources to overcome the subalternity imposed on the Afrodescendant population. Thus, they aim at the decolonization of social power relations within Brazilian society, as well as at the decolonization of the Brazilian literary field that increasingly opens itself to welcome the voices of historically marginalized and silenced groups.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian literature; Brazilian literature; Afro-Brazilian identity; *Cadernos Negros*; post-colonial studies; decolonial studies

