

Psychoanalytic Considerations on Identity Based on Indigenous Women's Literature

Considerações Psicanalíticas Sobre as Identidades a partir da Literatura de Mulheres Indígenas

Consideraciones Psicoanalíticas sobre las Identidades a partir de la Literatura de Mujeres Indígenas

Considérations Psychanalytiques sur les Identités à partir de la Littérature des Femmes Autochtones

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Abstract

Engagements between psychoanalytic theory and Indigenous women's literature remain rare and insufficient to address the challenges faced by a psychoanalysis developed in the Brazilian context, which has been unable to recognize, within the specificities of its own territory, the “uncanny” that drives theoretical advancement. In response to this scenario, this theoretical essay prioritizes the writings of Freud and Lacan, complemented by recent articles that address Indigenous women authors and their respective works. The initial exploratory survey identified the recurrent presence of identity-related issues as a defining characteristic of literature authored by Indigenous women. As identity is a concept foreign to the psychoanalytic field, this article aims to problematize its use within Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis. Whether articulated through the signifier or referenced through images, this discussion led the debate toward the Lacanian concept of semblance, which is adopted here as a hermeneutic framework for dialogue with Indigenous women's literature. From this perspective, the article argues that calling upon the psychoanalytic field to contribute to the construction of solidaristic forms of social bonds requires recognizing that the validation of Indigenous identities cannot be reduced to the legitimization of alterity alone, since their identification as the “other” has historically implied their annihilation in favor of a presumed “same.”

Keywords: indigenous women, literature, identification, semblance, psychoanalytic theory.

Resumo

As aproximações entre a teoria psicanalítica e a literatura das mulheres indígenas são raras e não respondem aos desafios que se impõem a uma psicanálise forjada em solo brasileiro, incapaz de reconhecer, nas especificidades de seu território, “o inquietante” que impulsiona

o avanço da teoria. Em resposta a essa conjuntura, este ensaio teórico privilegiou a escrita de Freud e Lacan, acrescido de artigos atuais que abordam as autoras indígenas e suas respectivas publicações. O levantamento exploratório inicial permitiu identificar a participação recorrente da pauta identitária como uma característica da literatura assinada pelas mulheres indígenas. Sendo as identidades um tema estrangeiro ao campo psicanalítico, este artigo tem como objetivo tensionar o uso do conceito de identidade no seio da psicanálise denominada freudo-lacanianiana. Em vínculo com o significante ou em referência às imagens, sua abordagem direcionou o debate para o conceito lacaniano de semblante, adotado como suporte hermenêutico para o diálogo com a literatura das mulheres indígenas. Nesses termos, acredita-se que convocar o campo psicanalítico para a construção de formas solidárias de laço social passa pelo reconhecimento de que a validação das identidades indígenas não se resume à legitimação de sua alteridade, visto que sua identificação como “outro” sempre implicou sua aniquilação em favor de um suposto “igual”.

Palavras-chave: mulheres indígenas, literatura, identificação, semblante, teoria psicanalítica.

Resumen

Las aproximaciones entre la teoría psicoanalítica y la literatura de las mujeres indígenas son escasas y no responden a los desafíos que plantea un psicoanálisis forjado en suelo brasileño, incapaz de reconocer, en las especificidades de su territorio, “lo inquietante” que impulsa el avance de la teoría. En respuesta a esta coyuntura, este ensayo teórico privilegió la escritura de Freud y Lacan, complementada con artículos actuales que abordan a las autoras indígenas y sus respectivas publicaciones. El levantamiento exploratorio inicial permitió identificar la participación recurrente del tema identitario como una característica de la literatura firmada por mujeres indígenas. Siendo las identidades un tema ajeno al campo psicoanalítico, este artículo tiene como objetivo tensionar el uso del concepto de identidad en el seno del psicoanálisis denominado freudo-lacanianiano. En vínculo con el significante o en referencia a las imágenes, su abordaje dirigió el debate hacia el concepto lacaniano de semblante, adoptado como soporte hermenéutico para el diálogo con la literatura de las mujeres indígenas. En estos términos, se considera que convocar al campo psicoanalítico para la construcción de formas solidarias de vínculo social pasa por el reconocimiento de que la validación de las identidades indígenas no se reduce a la legitimación de su alteridad, dado que su identificación como “otro” siempre implicó su aniquilación en favor de un supuesto “igual”.

Palabras clave: mujeres indígenas, literatura, identificación, semblante, teoría psicoanalítica.

Résumé

Les rapprochements entre la théorie psychanalytique et la littérature des femmes autochtones sont rares et ne répondent pas aux défis imposés à une psychanalyse forgée sur le sol brésilien, incapable de reconnaître, dans les spécificités de son territoire, « l'inquiétant » qui impulse l'avancement de la théorie. En réponse à cette conjoncture, cet essai théorique a privilégié l'écriture de Freud et de Lacan, en y intégrant des articles actuels qui abordent les autrices autochtones et leurs publications respectives. L'enquête exploratoire initiale a permis d'identifier la récurrence de la thématique identitaire comme une caractéristique de la littérature écrite par des femmes autochtones. Les identités étant un thème étranger au champ psychanalytique, cet article vise à mettre sous tension l'utilisation du concept d'identité au sein de la psychanalyse dite freudo-lacaniennne. En lien avec le signifiant ou en référence aux images, sa démarche a orienté le débat vers le concept lacanien de semblant, adopté comme support herméneutique pour le dialogue avec la littérature des femmes autochtones. En ces termes, on croit que l'appel au champ psychanalytique pour la construction de formes solidaires de lien social implique la reconnaissance que la validation des identités autochtones ne se limite pas à la légitimation de leur altérité, puisque leur identification à « l'autre » a toujours impliqué leur anéantissement au profit d'un supposé « égal ».

Mots-clés : femmes autochtones, littérature, identification, semblant, théorie psychanalytique.

The emergence of psychoanalysis was marked by the possibility of listening to women and to their forms of suffering. However, the decades that have elapsed since the introduction of psychoanalysis in Brazil have not been sufficient for it to break with the double silencing that characterizes Indigenous women, both as representatives of Amerindian cultures and as women. Similarly, literature has long been an object of interest for psychoanalysts; nevertheless, the dialogue between psychoanalysis and the literature of traditional peoples has remained significantly rare. This gap motivates the present effort to characterize the existing publications on these narratives and to subsequently examine them in articulation with psychoanalytic theory.

As an emergent practice, the literary writing of Indigenous women resists the invisibility produced by major Brazilian publishing houses, which are responsible for assigning value to and circulating specific forms of cultural production (Melo & Silva, 2021). Fifty years after the first literary writings of the pioneer Eliane Potiguara, published only from 2004 onward,

there are currently approximately 60 Indigenous women writers actively engaged in disseminating their work in Brazil. They produce books across a wide range of literary genres and are affiliated with diverse publishing groups (Martinez, 2021).

In contemporary contexts, literature has figured as a privileged instrument for the inscription of plural subjectivities. It has served as a means for expressing forms of femininity constituted alongside Brazil's traditional peoples. This understanding guided the decision to characterize this body of literature in search of an overarching view of the field. Accordingly, the dialogue with psychoanalysis was not established through the selection of a single literary work, but rather through scientific articles that address Indigenous women's literature in their analyses.

A significant obstacle encountered in this process was the lack of satisfactory descriptors capable of encompassing themes related to Indigenous culture. This limitation reflects the political and cultural minoritization discussed by Dorrico et al. (2020) and contributes both to the scarcity of publications and to the fragility of dialogue among existing studies. Because of the difficulty of accessing meaningful references in traditional databases, the Mendeley¹ platform search engine was adopted as an alternative source, as it proved more effective in meeting the aims of this study.

In this context, the initial stage of the research was designed as an exploratory survey intended to support a theoretical essay, without any commitment to conducting a systematic, replicable, or methodologically rigid review. Using the descriptors "mulheres indígenas AND literatura" and "literatura indígena," 15 articles were selected. These studies supported the characterization of Indigenous authorship and the thematic axes addressed in the literature.

Among Brazilian Indigenous women writers most frequently cited in the consulted scientific articles are Eliane Potiguara and Graça Graúna, both from the Potiguara people. As renowned pioneers, they have inspired other women writers and are characterized by works marked by the struggle for rights and strong lyrical expressiveness. In other words, their writing combines denunciation and self-affirmation, articulating meanings at the intersection of the poetic and the political.

Julie Dorrico, a Brazilian writer from the Macuxi nation, emerges as a prominent contemporary figure among literary authors and as one of the academics who most frequently publishes on this theme in broader terms. Her writing, like that of her predecessors, transforms literature into an act of resistance and disrupts the silencing long imposed on Indigenous women (Calixto, 2019; Guimarães, 2018; Melo & Silva, 2021).

Across the analyzed studies, identity-related issues predominate as a central thematic axis (Costa & Feldman, 2019; Danner et al., 2019; Guanaes, 2019; Guimarães, 2018; Molina, 2019; Olivieri-Godet, 2017; Pachamama, 2019; Soares-Pinto et al., 2020; Vieira, 2019). These themes are often accompanied by forms of literary activism, and the convergence of these approaches is a defining feature of this body of work. As expressions of identity-based agendas, these arguments call for the visibility of Amerindian peoples, their cultures, and their traditions, in opposition not only to symbolic erasure but also to the material extermination of their bodies and territories.

In their discussion of Brazilian literature produced since the 1990s, Danner et al. (2019) highlight historical violence, forced migration, threats to identity loss, and political struggle as the core and driving forces of Eliane Potiguara's Indigenous authorship. They argue that the author was deeply affected by the symbolic and material violence to which she was subjected, and that her literary production constitutes a response to these experiences, which are often obscured by processes of modernization.

The valorization of identity emerges as a key operator of Indigenous protagonism, enabling the construction of subjectivities through writing. Literary narratives inherently incorporate recognition of Indigenous existence and culture, providing the discursive structure that underpins these narratives. Additionally, these works foreground demands for the visibility of literature authored by traditional peoples, while simultaneously denouncing the exclusionary parameters produced by the literary canon.

By exposing the stereotypes associated with Indigenous peoples and the lack of visibility and erasure of their cultures, traditions, bodies, and territories, this literature also addresses the ongoing struggle for literary expressions to be recognized and valued as literature in their own right (Danner et al., 2019; Guimarães, 2018; Molina, 2019; Olivieri-Godet, 2017; Soares-Pinto et al., 2020). Within these narratives that seek literary legitimacy, identity-based concerns occupy a central position.

The recognition that identity agendas characterize the literary works of Indigenous women was therefore fundamental to the emergence of the present proposal, which seeks to engage this literature in dialogue with psychoanalytic theory. Accordingly, this theoretical essay aims to problematize the use of the concept of identity within Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis. Achieved through the articulation between psychoanalytic conceptions of identity and the characterization of Indigenous women's literature, this endeavor required moving beyond the theoretical limitations historically established within the psychoanalytic field.

Identity and Identification in Freud

I am the daughter of Makunaima, who created my grandmother: first out of wax (but she melted!) and then out of clay, resisting the sun and thus coming to exist forever (Dorrico, 2019, p. 17).

¹ Mendeley is a free reference management and academic collaboration software that allows you to organize, cite, and share scientific research.

Entering the theoretical field surrounding the notion of identity proves to be a complex and audacious undertaking, as it requires breaking with certain conceptions long consolidated in Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis, such as the claim that psychoanalysis does not work with the concept of identity (Krinski, 2020, p. 16). Although this position is not entirely unanimous, its predominance has discouraged more sustained theoretical developments on the subject.

Indeed, there is no conceptual definition of identity in Freud, and many occurrences of the term throughout his work refer to its common, colloquial usage (Cunha, 2000). Taking this condition as a caveat, it may be assumed that establishing interlocutions with this field can generate difficulties. At the same time, it is argued that such difficulties must be addressed directly and examined in depth. Although the idea of identity is foreign to the psychoanalytic field, its persistent presence in culture renders it a fundamental theme (Cunha, 2000).

In this regard, points of tension commonly associated with the first and second topographies become apparent. The first circumscribes a subjective division in which the unconscious is positioned as the primary bearer of the subject's truth. The second attributes to the ego qualities associated with consciousness, from which self-recognition emerges, albeit grounded in limited knowledge, since the ego is not master in its own house. Although the ego is not restricted to consciousness, it is commonly associated with it, which grants it lesser theoretical prestige and contributes to an understanding of identity that is always limited in relation to subjective truth (Krinski, 2020).

More closely aligned with the incorporation and development of the notion of identification, psychoanalytic theory distances itself from the substantivized character that accompanies the idea of identity in its claim to essence or substance. Instead, it adopts the features of a verb and, therefore, of action and construction (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2001). Defined in Portuguese as the act or effect of identifying oneself, identification in psychoanalytic theory represents a process that unfolds through the relation to the other and accompanies the development of subjective constitution.

Certain considerations regarding identity can be found in Freud's work, as exemplified in the Schreber case, in which Freud (1911/2010a) refers to the persistence of aspects of identity despite the changes undergone over the years. Nevertheless, priority is given here to the discussion of identification presented in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, a text that intentionally schematizes identification through three distinct moments, in contrast to other writings in which the term lacks clear delineation and definition.

In this work, Freud (1921/2020a, p. 178) defines identification as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person and develops it with reference to three constitutive passages. The first concerns the direct incorporation established with the maternal figure, elsewhere explicated in *Totem and Taboo*, when the incorporation of the father occurs through his devouring, by analogy with the mechanism of introjection.

This primordial experience is followed by the Oedipus complex as a second passage, in which the desire to have is replaced by the desire to be like the parent. Parental figures are thus responsible for imprinting culturally shared modes of being, which are introjected into the subject's ego and may be designated as the ego ideal.

[...] the incitement to form the ego ideal, whose guardianship was entrusted to the moral conscience, stemmed from the critical influence of the parents, mediated by the voice, to which were added over time educators, instructors, and, as an innumerable and indefinable host, all other people in the social environment (neighbors, public opinion) (Freud, 1914/2010b, p. 29).

Accordingly, the ego ideal emerges as a product of the subject's constitutive process, in which identification with objects replaces the ideal self-image characteristic of primary narcissism. Cumulative with secondary identifications, ideals may become sources of pleasure or suffering, depending on how elevated they are and on the possibilities available for attaining them. Linked to moral conscience, they allow the subject to experience gratifying achievements or tyrannical self-demands. They should not be confused with the superegoic domain, which operates through imperative injunctions.

The third passage that schematizes identification in Freud refers to symptom formation. Without presupposing a positive libidinal bond, the subject adopts characteristics of the object through the incorporation of a symptomatic trait, mobilized by the desire to occupy the other's place, to be like the other, or to punish oneself for having wished to be so. As Freud (1921/2020a, p. 181) states, identification through the symptom thus becomes an index of a point of coincidence between the two egos, a point that must remain repressed.

At this juncture, the role of desire in identificatory processes once again becomes explicit, making it impossible to speak of identity in psychoanalysis without addressing desire. Just as representations establish a combinatory relation with drive life, identification is oriented by desire, manifested in the recognition of substitutes for something that was primordial, even though not identical (Cunha, 2000). This mobilization, in turn, gives rise to a series of successors whose identifications bear the marks of the unconscious.

As identifications come to encompass elements of diverse origins, it becomes possible to infer identity as that which persists across multiple identifications. In Freud's words (1921/2020a, p. 207), each individual is a constituent part of the mental life of many groups: his race, his class, his religious community, his state, and so on. What endures from this complex combination of references is what may be designated as the subject's identity dimension.

In sum, direct identification with the maternal other, combined with the integration of parental imagos and the incorporation of ideals, constitutes a legacy that supports both the formulation of identity and symptom formation. Desire, in turn, appears as the common element that enables the conjunction of these circumstances, marking the incidence of the unconscious on ego structuring (Freud, 1921/2020a). This framework opens the way for further debate and guides the present discussion toward a Lacanian approach to identities.

Identity and Semblance in Lacan

And I will tell you my pains, oh Identity. And between one fact and another, I will bite off your head, as one who seeks the source of your strength, your youth, the power of your people, the power of time that has already passed but that we will reclaim (Potiguara, 2018, p. 114).

In Lacan, the term identity can also be found in its colloquial sense. However, a closer engagement with his work reveals a more complex picture, as different meanings are offered throughout his theoretical development, culminating in a sustained engagement with the theme in *Seminar IX: Identification* (Lacan, 2003). Averse to the possibility of an identitarian essence conceived outside the social structure, Lacan does not refrain from using the term identity frequently in his *Écrits*, while simultaneously encouraging the mobility of the meanings attributed to it.

In *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function*, Lacan (1949/1998a) situates identity within the imaginary register, which corresponds to Freud's theory of narcissism (1914/2010b) and is responsible for orienting the pursuit of sameness. Drawing on ethology to think about the infant's process of subjective constitution, Lacan (1949/1998a) describes the child's jubilation upon recognizing itself as an integrated whole through the visualization of its image in the mirror. The accompanying adult plays a crucial role in confirming this specular image.

Previously experienced as a fragmented body, the organism encounters its image at a pre-verbal stage that exposes its alienation and consequently gives rise to an alienating identity. As Lacan states, it is in the other that the subject identifies and even initially experiences itself (Lacan, 1946/1998b, p. 182). This self-recognition enables an immediate identification with the similar other, while simultaneously revealing the failure of the image to account for what will emerge as a subject of language and desire. It is therefore inevitable that the imaginary dimension fails to disclose the truth of the subject of the unconscious (Lacan, 1956/1998c).

Distancing himself from metaphysical and, therefore, essentialist approaches to identity, Lacan's formulations also incorporate a dimension of non-knowledge embodied by the other within oneself, in reference to the concept of the unconscious and to the notion of subject he privileges. Initially, the dialectical relation with the other captivates the child; however, it is within this same dual relation that the child will experience a high degree of aggressivity. This aggressivity mobilizes processes of disalienation and separation, favoring the constitution of a divided subject who integrates both an ego and an other within itself.

Therefore, the conjunction between identificatory processes and the imaginary dimension situates identity alongside qualifying nouns such as mirage, deception, and illusion, all of which stand in opposition to the truth of the unconscious. This truth can only be accessed through the symbolic register, the instance responsible for structuring the encounter with difference. Thus, an opposition is established between identification mediated by the image and that promoted by the signifier, the latter recognized as the organizing unit of the symbolic dimension and as the radical mark of alterity (Lacan, 2003).

According to Starnino (2016), identity in Lacan is anchored in three points: the signifier, the subject, and affect. With regard to the signifier, affinities between linguistics and psychoanalysis come to the fore, alongside divergences concerning the subject's insertion into the structure of language and the relationship between signifier and signified.

In linguistics, the relationship between signifier and signified is established as arbitrary yet interdependent, forming a linguistic sign that shares a common meaning. In Lacan's account (1956/1998c), arbitrariness is maintained, but the signifier is not bound to the signified. The latter is instead defined a posteriori, in reference to the signifying chain and to the subject of enunciation.

This implies that, for Saussurean linguistics, the signifier is subordinated to the signified, without interference from the subject of enunciation. In psychoanalysis, by contrast, the primacy of the signifier is asserted, and the subject is revealed through the production of meanings orchestrated by the unconscious.

While Freud (1914/2010b; 1921/2020a) situates primordial identifications in the relationship with maternal and paternal imagos, Lacan (1961–1962/2003) displaces them to the signifiers captured in primordial relations, understood as founding elements of both the subject and identity. As the subject is constituted in a state of alienation to the signifying chain as a dimension of the Other, it is through access to language that an original appropriation of each signifier becomes possible. Identity is thus inescapably articulated with language.

Regarding affect, it corresponds to the drive inclination already noted by Freud (1921/2020a), when he refers to the antiquity of the affective bond inherent to the speaking being. This ego–other relation constitutes the primordial basis of

identificatory processes that later unfold within the domain of language. Affect therefore traverses language as a structuring element of the subject, while also permeating the dual and specular relation in which love and hate are experienced with great intensity. It falls to the signifier to impose a limit on the pursuit of sameness, enabling a triangulation between ego, other, and signifier.

For Starnino (2016, p. 241), later identifications encountered by the psychoanalytic subject do not follow a specular logic but rather one based on the sharing of a common signifier, since A can recognize itself in B if and only if both identify with S, where S represents the signifier. Moreover, the radicality introduced by the signifier extends beyond the absence of equality between two subjects. It also entails the recognition of a subject divided within itself, which cannot be captured by the equation $A = A$ (Starnino, 2016). This shift directs the discussion toward the Lacanian concept of semblance.

Still drawing on ethology, the concept of semblance inverts the metaphysical rationale of identity in favor of a logic according to which being is insufficient; one must also appear (Lacan, 2009). This recuperates the value of the image as an emblematic element that, together with the signifier, enables access to truth. As Lacan states, “Truth is not the opposite of semblance. Truth is the dimension – or *dit-mansion*, if you will allow me to coin a new word – strictly correlated with that of semblance” (Lacan, 2009, pp. 25-26).

Initially addressed in relation to the imaginary and its power of deception, the conceptual development of semblance in Lacan’s work progressively articulates it with the symbolic field. No longer restricted to the imagistic dimension, semblance comes to be constituted as a discourse that, in convergence with identity, accommodates the signifier and promotes its imperative articulation with the image (Krinski et al., 2020).

These signifiers, in turn, are not exempt from the possibility of fixing identities, “precisely because discourse should not be confused with language (...), since it produces modes of intelligibility whose reiteration also grounds identitarian logics” (Krinski et al., 2020, p. 812). Thus, when a hegemonic discourse exists regarding a given group, it commonly establishes identitarian contours for the subjects to whom it refers.

At the same time, it is through language that subjects can invent themselves, drawing on new arrangements and other signifiers without abandoning the image. Because identity, in both Freud and Lacan, unfolds through a proliferation of imagistic dualities, Lacanian theory does not stand in opposition to Freud’s elaboration, even though it introduces modifications informed by the framework of structural linguistics.

Associated with truth and, therefore, with the desire of the subject of the unconscious, semblance emerges as a concept that brings together the symbolic and imaginary registers. It offers contours that exceed the image and serves as a key analytical tool for examining the identitarian narratives found in the literature of Indigenous women.

The Identity-based Literature of Indigenous Women

I wear a necklace made of many stories and different ethnicities. If they do not recognize it, so be it. We will continue to cry out the anguish accumulated for more than 500 years (Graúna, 2025, p. 8).

The literature produced by Indigenous women is predominantly described as political literature, one that claims concrete possibilities of existence, both lived and literary, systematically marginalized by colonial discourses and practices that remain entrenched in capitalist societies (Calixto, 2019). While Indigenous literature in Latin America is characterized by its richness in genres and approaches (Neves, 2018), the recurrence of identity-based agendas, combined with the comparatively lesser emphasis on cosmologies, suggests a form of suffering that persistently seeks recognition. This suffering cannot be remembered and worked through insofar as it remains continually actualized.

Studies that foreground identity-based agendas in Indigenous women’s literature problematize the stereotypes and expectations projected onto these authors, the construction of identities, and the connections between literary representations and their cultures and traditions (Costa & Feldman, 2019; Danner et al., 2019; Guanaes, 2019; Guimarães, 2018; Molina, 2019; Olivieri-Godet, 2017; Pachamama, 2019; Soares-Pinto et al., 2020; Vieira, 2019). In this sense, in the face of identities imposed by Eurocentric standards, whether social, racial, ethnic, or gendered, Indigenous literary constructions propose elevating the term Indigenous to the status of a signifier. This move detaches it from forced meanings, confining images, and signs determined by the colonizer.

The centrality granted to identity-based discussions makes it possible to articulate critiques of the problems generated by coloniality, such as the imperative of homogeneity that pervades representations of Indigenous women. Identity discourse emerges from the recognition that these women share common colonial incursions, while acknowledging the multiplicity of forms of resistance and creation that traverse ethnic, ecological, epistemological, and gendered dimensions. As Vieira (2019, p. 164) notes:

[...] Indigenous women are not a monolith; they do not all know one another, they are not immune to patriarchal structures, and they do not possess ready-made answers to the problems of coloniality. Commitment to ethnic, ecological, and sovereignty-related agendas does not erase the gender agenda, but rather accumulates layers of oppression that must be overcome.

The frequent use of the pronoun *we* in Indigenous writing functions as a linguistic operator that simultaneously conveys a shared collective meaning and disrupts stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples. Traditionally portrayed in the third person as pure, yet also sexualized and animalized by Western literature, these authors assert their own voices while marking ethnic specificities in writing, in light of the cultural plurality that characterizes Indigenous peoples. In doing so, they converge with the maxim that difference is always presupposed within identity (Krinski, 2020, p. 10), while also inviting identity to be considered as a category grounded in collective ancestry.

According to Starnino (2016, p. 243), collective identifications are structured through ‘individuals’ who identify affectively with certain signifiers or, in Freudian terms, individuals who identify with shared representations and ideals among members of the group. What emerges, then, is a literary ego that reflects these identificatory processes and is implicated in the recognition of a shared ancestry, distributed as an ideal among Indigenous women.

Moreover, it is through this convergence of identificatory fields that the recognition of desire becomes bound to the desire for recognition (Lacan, 1961–1962/2003, p. 529). With regard to the desire for recognition, this dynamic becomes explicit in the ongoing struggle for Indigenous women’s literary expressions to be recognized and valued as literature (Danner et al., 2019; Guimarães, 2018; Molina, 2019; Olivieri-Godet, 2017; Soares-Pinto et al., 2020). Thus, even in publications predominantly characterized by identity-based agendas, there is a clear convergence with the pursuit of literary recognition.

The recognition of desire, in turn, is revealed in the interstices of fictional construction. Although, from the standpoint of literary classification, these narratives may be described as realist – rather than aligned with the denunciatory modes of Romanticism or Naturalism, for example – in psychoanalytic terms they are understood as fiction, the site from which the truth of the subject and of desire emerges (Lacan, 2009). Desire therefore functions as the driving force behind the literary and academic protagonism assumed by these authors in addressing matters that concern them directly.

Correlatively, everything that belongs to the effects of language, everything that institutes the *dit-mansion* of truth, arises from a fictional structure (Lacan, 2009, p. 73). As exemplified in the works of Eliane Potiguara and Graça Graúna, it is through fictionality that the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred, allowing these authors to express their truths as Indigenous women (Calixto, 2019). Through narratives anchored in fiction, they are able to reveal their truth as desiring subjects.

Conceiving Indigenous women’s literature in these terms requires assuming that everyday life offers clues for its construction. Yet this literature exceeds the events it references without diminishing its truth value, which becomes unmistakable in the encounter with its fictional structure. Once subjected to language, direct access to facts becomes inconceivable, leaving the possibility of rewriting poorly told histories (Molina, 2019, p. 137). This movement directs the discussion toward the Lacanian concept of semblance, understood as a notion that operationalizes the structure of identities.

For Dunker (2019; 2021), semblance functions as the discursive operator that reveals how each subject relates to appearance and mobilizes it within the social bond. Far from promoting falsification in opposition to a hidden truth, semblance carries a truth that can be sustained in discourse. As Lacan (2009, p. 14) asserts, living blood does not refute semblance; it colors it, renders it *re-semblance*, and propagates it. Through the suspension of contradictions between the imaginary and the symbolic, bringing reality and fiction onto the same plane, Eliane Potiguara renders unmistakable the stain of blood spilled by projects that deny Indigenous humanity.

If discourse cannot dispense with the image, the image alone is insufficient to sustain semblance. This allows the author to uphold her “Indigenous face” in both imagistic and discursive terms, as powerfully illustrated when Eliane Potiguara asks, What am I to do with my Indigenous face? (Potiguara, 2018, p. 32). More than an image, she mobilizes her physiognomy to inaugurate a discourse that enables her existence as a subject, revealing Indigenous womanhood beyond appearance, without relinquishing it.

The semblance that permeates identities also accompanies shifts in discourse, often facilitated by changes in place, whether figurative or literal. Urban life, frequently invoked to question Indigenous identities, finds in writing an intermediate space between village and city. This space invites Indigenous women to devise ways of preserving traditions and ancestry, which are often intrinsic to their literary texts (Calixto, 2019).

Importantly, Indigenous women do not cease to be who they are when they reside in urban areas. At the same time, urban life precipitates discursive production concerning the experience of non-place encountered outside Indigenous territory (Pachamama, 2019). Every identitarian narrative thus reveals, through its authorship, a discursive structure and shared arrangements that recount the history of a specific time and place (Hall, 2017).

Lacan (2009) situates authorship within a collective discourse that particularizes, thereby undermining the notion of a statement that could exist outside structure. In resonance with cultural studies (Hall, 2017), by removing identity from the essentialist domain and treating it as a strategic concept, Lacan (2009) shares the understanding that structure creates the conditions for discursive formulation. This is evidenced by the convergence with the collective, assumed as the place of enunciation among Indigenous women writers.

A sense of collectivity prevails in these texts, reflecting the *modus vivendi* of Indigenous peoples. No author seeks to privilege her own voice in isolation, but rather the voice of her people and culture as a whole. Moreover, this literature is

not addressed solely to Indigenous readers, but primarily to non-Indigenous audiences, so that they may encounter the other side of a history that has long been silenced (Calixto, 2019, p. 51).

It cannot be overlooked that the need for representation in Indigenous literature arises from an expropriative economic system that establishes exclusionary identitarian references, invariably relegating Indigenous peoples to images detached from living speech. In response, cooperative editorial arrangements reveal a stance of resistance to exclusionary publishing systems. At the margins, Indigenous women's literature advances by reclaiming forms of solidarity that have been denied in the contemporary world.

By implicating the psychoanalytic field in the construction of solidaristic ways of being in society, the strategies developed by Indigenous women inspire the crafting of alternative modes of relation, in which identification is not converted into an object of consumption and the ego ideal is not subordinated to capitalist purposes that objectify and dehumanize Indigenous persons. In this sense, it becomes necessary to ask whether this conceptual framework offers a viable path for thinking Indigenous identities, or whether it is more productive to employ its hermeneutics to understand the forces that shape Indigenous existence in Brazilian territory.

Aware that the abyss produced by colonization is far from eliminated, as it persists in contiguity with the capitalist system, it must be emphasized that meaningful change requires more than merely problematizing the concept of identity within theory. It demands the mobilization of ethical dimensions that traverse the very process of national constitution. Rather than psychologizing Indigenous identities, it is necessary to apprehend the conditions that lead to the native being marked with the insignia of the foreigner and, through territorial dispossession, cast as an other to oneself.

By recognizing in semblance the possibility of breaking with the stereotypes that strip Indigenous peoples of their dignity as subjects, psychoanalysis can also denounce the image of the Indigenous person as a foreigner. This image reflects the uncanny that inhabits what was once, and remains, profoundly familiar (Freud, 1919/2019). In a context marked by ignorance regarding the 305 ethnic groups that inhabit and resist within Brazilian territory, the mirror fails to enable recognition of the Indigenous person as a similar other. The refusal of alterity thus reverberates as genocide, carried out in favor of a supposed sameness that mirrors the colonizer.

Final Considerations

The prejudices that shape Indigenous women's experience contribute to their silencing in society, academic research, literature, and literary representation, thereby restricting their access to and sense of belonging within these spaces. Although not all literature authored by Indigenous women in Brazil can be situated within identity-based agendas, it is within this domain that many of these writers have positioned their engaged and solidaristic work, articulating a discourse that holds together what is collective and what is singular in their experience.

Indigenous-authored literature argues for the plurality of Indigenous identities, countering reductive and stereotyped figurations that persist across cinema, painting, literature, and the arts more broadly. From their position as writers, these authors incite resistance and struggle, highlighting strength, wisdom, and the power of the word to generate dialogue, transformation, and learning. There is therefore no justification for psychoanalysis to continue to avoid this encounter.

This proposal does not minimize the challenges inherent to such engagement, including those posed by the thematic prominence of identity and others well known in Freudian texts that border on anthropology. Indeed, interest in Indigenous women and their narratives demands a careful approach, since it operates across distinct cultural frameworks and is thus vulnerable to misunderstanding.

It may be assumed that the caution required contributes to the scarcity of references; however, it does not justify the omission evident within the psychoanalytic field, as assessed through databases committed to scholarship produced in Latin America. This gap is further reinforced by the lack of a controlled vocabulary that would enable this topic to be more effectively indexed and promoted beyond the limits exceeded here.

In the absence of more adequate descriptors and a larger volume of publications, we explicitly acknowledge the limitations of this theoretical essay, which was grounded in an exploratory survey that did not include gray literature. Despite these constraints, we hope to encourage further immersion in this theme, also in dialogue with other disciplines, with the aim of supporting future theoretical and methodological developments.

In keeping with principles established within psychoanalysis, we propose the development of studies that engage directly with the literary text or that rely on listening to these women, recognizing them as protagonists who must be considered. By rejecting the idea that theory is an obstacle to listening, our aim is not to submit them to psychoanalytic clinical practice. Rather, we defend the possibility of listening to them and thinking culture with them.

For a long time, Indigenous peoples were treated only as objects of study, frequently represented in texts but rarely granted their own voice or authorship (Pachamama, 2020). Psychoanalysis has also contributed to this distortion. If, for

Freud (1933/2020b), weaving would be a way for women to cover over lack, we identify in the loom of Graça Graúna's words the possibility of opposing this alienating discourse, amid many others that still prevail regarding Indigenous identities.

Finally, we argue that approaches to Indigenous identities may benefit from the psychoanalytic concept of semblance. While the signifier sustains an ethical encounter with alterity, the image creates possibilities for recognizing the other that exceed the reflection returned by the colonizer's mirror. From this perspective, we hope that a psychoanalytic reading of identities will open paths for further dialogues on the directions of social life and the ethics that traverse culture, beyond the identitarian processes addressed in this discussion.

For future engagements, we recommend consulting the *Bibliografia das Publicações Indígenas do Brasil* (*Bibliography of Indigenous Publications in Brazil*), created by Aline Franca, Daniel Munduruku, and Thúlio Gomes. This collaborative initiative compiles a list of Brazilian Indigenous authors and their publications in books, theses, and dissertations. In response to the exclusionary parameters produced by the canon, this repository not only aggregates Indigenous-authored knowledge but also facilitates access to local Amerindian productions (Ferreira, 2021) since traditional platforms have not developed affirmative resources that could meaningfully support such access.

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