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`` PEDRA DO REINO ``: WOMAN IN THE LITERATURE OF ARIANO SUASSUNA

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Abstract: The novel “Pedra do Reino” and “Príncipe do sangue do vai-e-volta” is written by Ariano Suassuna. It is an extensive, complex, hybrid work that does not fit into limiting classifications. Throughout the narrative there are reports of the way women were portrayed in the history of northeastern society. This novel is a milestone in the history of national literature, being considered one of the most important works of the armorial movement. Suassuna sought to rescue the cultural and folkloric roots of the Brazilian Northeast, valuing popular art and oral tradition. This study seeks to provide an approach to the treatment and position of women in the novel, exposing situations of violence, discrimination, abuse and female empowerment. Thus, it is observed that at that time women were discriminated against, raped and abused, but there were those with empowerment who were references both at the time and even today, of which the same factors of discrimination against women are still observed.

Keywords: Discrimination; Empowerment; Literature.

INTRODUCTION

The novel “*Pedra do reino*” and “*Príncipe do sangue do vai-e-volta*”, commonly known as “*Pedra do reino*” is written by Ariano Suassuna. The author began writing the novel in 1958, and it was only published in 1971, presenting a narrative of the story of Dom Pedro Dinis Ferreira, Quaderna, presenting his defense memorial before the magistrate, since he was arrested for subversion in Taperoá, interior of Paraíba. In this sense, the narrator-character talks about his family’s saga and declares himself a descendant of legitimate Brazilian kings, brown and “goats” from “*Pedra do Reino do Sertão*”, with no relation to the “foreigned and counterfeit emperors of the House of Bragança”. He also talks about

his involvement with the political, literary and philosophical struggles and disagreements in his kingdom. The book is currently in its 16th edition (Suassuna, 2017).

It is an extensive, complex, hybrid work that does not fit into limiting classifications. Throughout the narrative there is epic, poetry, chivalric romance, memorial and other forms that imply remembrance, tradition and experience in the integration of the popular with the erudite, with a personal touch of originality and improvisation (Student Guide, 2023). In addition, it has been reporting on the way women were portrayed in history. Through a complex and engaging narrative, the author presents a fictional universe that portrays the history and traditions of the Brazilian Northeast.

The novel: “*Pedra do Reino*”, is a work that brings to light the richness and complexity of Brazilian literature. This novel is a milestone in the history of national literature, being considered one of the most important works of the armorial movement. The novel was written amid the context of cultural and political effervescence in Brazil. At the time, the country was experiencing a period of intense social, cultural and political transformations, which directly influenced artistic and literary production. Ariano Suassuna, as one of the main exponents of the armorial movement, sought to rescue the cultural and folkloric roots of the Brazilian Northeast, valuing popular art and oral tradition. Thus, Romance is a work that carries with it the identity and particularities of northeastern culture, at the same time that it presents a universal and timeless narrative.

The characters in novel: “*Pedra do Reino*” are striking and emblematic, each with their own personality and unique characteristics. The protagonist, Pedro Diniz Quaderna, is a young man who seeks to find his place in the world and discover his true identity. Dom

Pedro Sebastião, the legendary Portuguese king, is an enigmatic and mysterious figure, who exerts great influence on the other characters. Furthermore, there are also a series of secondary characters that contribute to the construction of the plot, such as Dona Cândida, Pedro's mother; Zé Vicente, the faithful friend; and Father Silvestre, who represents the figure of religion and morality (Student Guide, 2023).

The book addresses relevant and profound themes, such as the search for identity, the relationship between past and present, the fight against authoritarianism and oppression. Added to this, the work is full of symbolism and metaphors, which further enrich the reading experience. An example of this is the constant presence of `` *Pedra do reino* `` , which represents the strength and resistance of the northeastern people in the face of adversity. Another striking symbol is the back-and-forth blood, which symbolizes ancestry and connection with cultural and historical roots (Student Guide, 2023).

One of the writer's first inspirations were the 1838 journeys in São José do Belmonte, in Pernambuco, which resulted in the deaths of dozens of people, victims of a messianic movement. As a result, there is currently `` *Pedra do Reino* `` Cultural Association in this city, due to the great cultural importance of this novel for the city, which regularly holds a popular festival called `` *Cavalcada à Pedra do Reino* `` , which presents a cavalcade with several reenactments of the novel. This festival attracts crowds and has great social, cultural and economic significance for the city of São José do Belmonte, in the backlands of Pernambuco.

Currently, just like the novel mentioned above, there are several other books to be explored in the literature regarding education involving gender and cultural and artistic expressions. However, Braga (2021) highlights

that access to digital technology has caused students to move away from reading in conventional printed formats, making it necessary to build bridges between cultural modalities, so that works like this can be widely explored in literary reading.

However, Conte, Kobolt and Habowski (2022) believe that digital inclusion in schools and education has come to add to the teaching process, enabling education to reconstruct the vital link with cultural traditions to recontextualize educational practices. Mass, the authors state that digital or printed texts "only receive meaning in the critical interrelationship with different languages in metamorphosis, in the linguistic-expressive and social tension of writing that only takes place in the projection of the pedagogical encounter with the other" (Conte; Kobolt; Habowski, 2022, p. 1).

The high school curriculum in Pernambuco highlights the importance of students from this region understanding the diversity of cultures during their education. According to the above, this training aims to develop the subject in all its dimensions, cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and physical (Pernambuco, 2021). Among the general skills of the curriculum are "Valuing and enjoying the various artistic and cultural manifestations, from local to global, and also participating in diverse practices of artistic and cultural production" (Pernambuco, 2021, p. 23).

In that regard, Braga (2021) states that if the individual does not incorporate the practice of reading, they do not satisfactorily develop the skills necessary for the use of knowledge to be able to understand, understand and grasp. Therefore, the teacher has this commitment, through the search for alternatives to carry out this task, which is both difficult and pleasurable, to mobilize feelings, promote debates, establish connections and, by expanding their horizons. (Bezerra, 2019).

Thus, the central theme will be to analyze how women were treated in the context of novel: ``Pedra do Reino``, seeking to understand the gender relations present in the work. Souza Leite (1898), more discreet, refuses to tell everything in detail. Even so, his words are strong enough to give an idea of that royal and bloody scene. He says:

The sacrifices continued on the following days, May 15th and 16th, 1838, with the same, if not greater, madness, as the monstrous and execrable João Ferreira Quaderna had managed to plunge that mob into a kind of delirium or continued drunkenness. At the supreme height of this drunkenness, a brown man named João Pilé Vieira Gomes, in order to obtain the best share of the Kingdom, climbed to the top of a nearby rock and rushed down, with two grandchildren in his arms. Then, José Vieira takes a ten-year-old son, places him on the Rock of Sacrifices and cuts off his arm from the first blow. The victim, kneeling down, cried out to him, with folded hands: My Father, didn't you say you loved me so much?

A widow, named Francisca, harboring the crazy claim of being Queen, self-immolates her two youngest children. Isabel, sister of Pedro Antônio and the first King, João Antônio, pregnant with the monster, is designated for sacrifice by the Execrable João Ferreira-Quaderna, who responded to her pleas and allegations of pregnancy by shouting to Carlos Vieira and José Vieira: 'Immolai' just like that, so that she wouldn't suffer two pains, that of childbirth and that of enchantment! So advanced was the state of pregnancy of this unfortunate woman that, moments after receiving the blow to the throat, the child rolled down the ramp of the Stone and stretched out. down on the floor.

Finally, Josefa, sister of Isabel, Pedro Antônio and the first King, João Antônio, known as Queen Josefa, for having also married the monster João Ferreira-Quaderna, receives seventy or so stab wounds. This way, at the end of the third day of slaughter, the

Execrable João Ferreira-Quaderna had managed to wash the bases of the two granite Towers and flood the adjacent lands with the blood of thirty children, twelve men — including his own Father — and eleven women, whose bodies, as well as the skeletons of fourteen dogs, were being placed at the foot of the Stones (Souza Leite, 1898, p. 61).

As it can be seen in Souza Leite's narratives, there were many barbaric crimes. However, even today, more than half a century later, we still face significant challenges in the pursuit of gender equality. Female representation in literature and other forms of art is essential to combat stereotypes and prejudices and to inspire new generations of women to fight for their rights.

OBJECTIVE

This study seeks to analyze the violence, devaluation and female empowerment present in Suassuna's work. In addition, we intend to analyze how women were treated in the context of novel: ``Pedra do Reino``, seeking to understand the gender relations present in the work.

METHODOLOGY

This is a case study of a qualitative nature, which was carried out through analysis of the novel: ``Pedra do Reino`` and ``Príncipe do sangue do vai-e-volta``, written by Ariano Suassuna. An approach was made to the issues involving violence and empowerment of women who are part of the work. To this end, the book was used in its most updated version, from 2017, the 16th edition. The book consists of 800 pages, divided into 85 leaflets or chapters (Suassuna, 2017). In this sense, some passages from the book were used for this analysis.

Therefore, this study will be of great importance and representativeness, since this work is a landmark in literature of a social and

liberating nature, thus the treatment given to women in novel: ``Pedra do Reino`` reflects and denounces the gender inequalities present in Brazilian society, since this work was written at a time when the fight for women's rights was still in its infancy in the country.

From this perspective, Pontes (2012, p. 55) states that "the literary work does not end in itself, nor with the author, but expands from the reader who understands it and associates it with their different worlds and experiences". Therefore, a discussion on the topic can go beyond the teaching that the novel wishes to bring.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

HOW WOMEN WERE TREATED IN NORTHEASTERN SOCIETY, THE CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

The novel ``Pedra do Reino`` faithfully portrays the reality of northeastern society, marked by social inequality and the oppression of women. However, the work also presents female characters who fight against this reality and seek empowerment.

Despite the unequal and violent treatment, they receive throughout history, the study investigates how women in ``*Pedra do reino*`` novel were treated, whether they were portrayed as passive or resigned beings or whether some of them demonstrate strong resistance to the standards imposed by patriarchal society. This resistance manifested itself in different ways, from the refusal to accept arranged marriages to the fight against oppression and violence. In the work of the novel of the Loss of the Kingdom, these female characters are examples of strength and courage, which inspire other women to fight for their rights and gender equality.

Below we will discuss some passages from the novel that demonstrate inequality, violence and female empowerment:

"My great-grandfather would perhaps have stopped the killings sooner: it turns out, however, that, excited by them, his sexual desire exacerbated. He ordered his wife, Princess Isabel, to be brought in, wanting to possess her in front of everyone, while the blood of the beheaded men ran. She, however, was nine months pregnant, ready to give birth, and she refused. Then Dom João II, the Execrable, took her sister, Queen Josefa, and, while he was preparing to possess her, he ordered her to be stabbed seventeen times, which was done during the possession, achieving, as he said, a pleasure like I had never experienced" (Suassuna, 2017, p. 68).

In this passage it is possible to verify the empowerment of Princess Isabel who refused to have sexual relations with her husband in front of other people, one of the facts of her refusal was a pregnancy that was already at the end. However, in this same passage we observe an act of extreme violence against Queen Josefa, which was carried out solely to satisfy a sexual desire. This demonstrates how vulnerable and unprotected women in that context were.

Despite Isabel's courage in refusing to have a relationship with her husband, she was later beheaded. In figure 1 you can see an engraving by Taparica, based on the priest's drawing and representing the ``*Pedra do reino*`` , on the right, with scepter and cloak, you can see my great-grandfather Dom João Ferreira Quaderna, the execrable, and, on the left, my great-grandmother, Princess Isabel, being beheaded, under the stone, the newborn that she gave birth to in the throes of death and that, later, was my grandfather, Dom Pedro Alexandre.

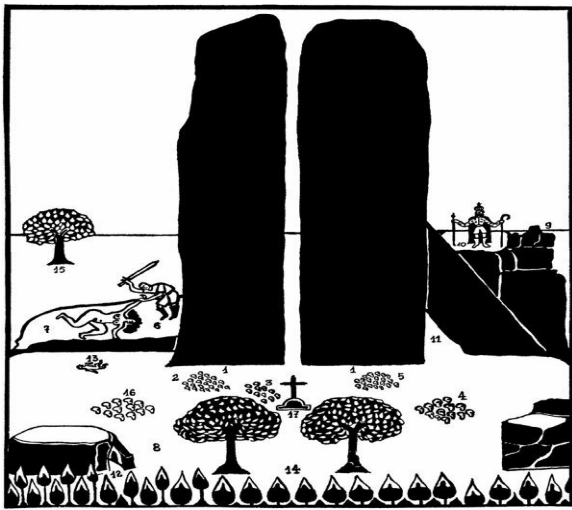


Figure 1: Engraving by Taparica, showing Isabel's beheading

Source: (Suassuna, 2017, p. 60)

Marinho and Melo (2018) state that one of the main characteristics of the treatment given to women in patriarchal society was submission. Female characters are often portrayed as subordinate to men, whether in relation to their father, husband or other men in society. This submission manifests itself in different ways, from blind obedience to male orders to passive acceptance of situations of violence and abuse. It is important to highlight that this submission is not natural or inherent to women, but rather a social construction that reflects power inequalities between genders (Mattos, 2015).

Another aspect present in the treatment given to women in literature and in society is sexualization. Female characters are often reduced to objects of male desire, with their physical appearance and sexuality explored in an exaggerated way (Johanson, 2020). This sexualization manifests itself in scenes of sexual violence, such as rape, and in everyday situations, such as the objectification of the female body at parties and social events. This representation reinforces gender stereotypes and contributes to the perpetuation of rape culture and violence against women.

In the novel there are other passages that demonstrate the violence committed against women, as follows:

[...] And finally, the old “Fortaleza de São Joaquim da Pedra”, located on the coast of Rio Grande do Norte and also belonging to the father of Clara and Heliana, the two girls who, due to a mistake that was disastrous and enlightening, they ended up carrying out the “crossroads of love and blood” that crossed and crucified Sinésio’s destiny (Suassuna, 2017, p. 427-428).

In the novel: “Pedra do Reino” brochure there is a passage about abuse and violence against women “BROCHURE LXVI The Father’s Bride Daughter, or Love, Guilt and Forgiveness. In the passage below, a story will be described in which the father himself makes intimate caresses to his daughter, as follows:

[...] Thus, in the vast, silent and now almost deserted mansion, only the powerful and dark Antônio Moraes, his daughter Genoveva, his youngest son Miguel — a sick boy, considered a bit of an idiot and to whom no one gave importance — and, finally, “Teodoro Barba-de-Bode”, asleep on the horizontal boards of his high scaffolding [...]

[...] And, what was more serious, he didn’t see when Genoveva went into her room after lunch, lying down on the old bed that served as her maiden bed. Genoveva was wearing, at that moment, a “pearl-colored” linen dress [...] The dress that Genoveva Moraes wore that afternoon was the type dictated by the “monastic and laid-back” taste that, as I said, only rich people could afford. to use. Made of very expensive fabric, it was made up, almost exclusively, of a wide tunic, tightened at the hips by a kind of “San Francisco cord”. She, who was tall and dark, with black hair and eyes, had magnificent hips and bust. I’m not particularly attracted to dark-skinned women, Doctor! Samuel, every time he starts to get very excited about his bouts of nobleness and whiteness, likes to draw attention to my dark complexion, and says that I have “brown horse blood”, which,

in his language, is an allusion to the hints of black, red, gypsy, Jewish and Moorish blood that I carry [...].

[...] — Well done! Despite this desire of my brown blood for the women in arms, I tell Your Lordship, frankly, that I have never been able to remain calm in front of Genoveva Moraes! She was one of those women who, when they enter a room, leave the men upset and the other women in a bad mood. Mainly because those magnificent breasts, which I mentioned just now, she had the audacity to wear them loose, underneath that linen monastic dress. People on the street even said that, “on days when she was oiled up, she just wore the dress, over the clean leather”. I don’t think anyone has ever proven that. But the first fact and the simple possibility of the second were enough to scandalize and outrage half of the Village and fascinate the imagination of the other half. On her feet, Genoveva wore only a sandal, attached to her ankle with a leather strap. Now, when, that Saturday, Teodoro woke up — around two-thirty in the afternoon, more or less — Genoveva was lying in her bed, asleep, taking a nap [...].

[...] The bedrooms and living rooms were separated only by half-walls, so that our Teodoro, from the top of his scaffolding, as soon as he woke up, immediately saw the girl Genoveva, lying in the most complete abandonment and disheveled, in the charms of your intimacy. It is true that, in the house, the semi-darkness common to the interior of country mansions reigned when the windows were closed. But the light from the recently opened embrasures was enough to make things clear.

[...] So, that afternoon, Teodoro, seeing the girl asleep in that mess of intimacy and comfort, was terrified, fearing that the Moraes, if they discovered him, would think that he had stayed there on purpose, hidden, to spy on her. Teodoro had news of the violent, proud, dark and malicious genius of the enigmatic Antônio Moraes, and knew that, if he were discovered, he would not come out of the adventure

alive. He remembered the stories that were circulating on the street about a man who, one day, had turned up dead next to an old ruined house that existed nearby, next to the Salt Lake located in the Moraes lands. The man had been killed by a rifle shot, and had been found without the leather on the soles of his feet, castrated and mutilated with a knife, which indicated that, before dying, he had been subjected to terrible torture.

[...] With this story in his head, Teodoro thought it best to remain, for the moment, absolutely silent: when Genoveva woke up and left the room, he would decide what to do, according to the direction things were going. Either he would start working again, pretending that he had gone out for lunch and come back later to continue his work, or he would try to go down without being noticed, taking the street route, which would perhaps be better, since the house was almost empty. He continued, therefore, lying on the scaffolding, still and silent, without imagining that, from up there, he would soon see below, a scene that would increase the danger that his life might be in a thousand times more. * * * I noticed that, despite themselves, Margarida and the Corregidor were lighting up their eyes and nostrils, which is why I took courage and continued: — Half an hour had passed since Teodoro woke up. He told me that same day, at night, that, no matter how great his fear was and no matter how much he made the virtuous resolution of “not looking”, from time to time Genoveva, asleep, changed position, displaying such charms that all his prudent decisions were annihilated and he “looked”. He looked at him eagerly, as if he knew that these occasions are rare for a bricklayer and that one must take advantage of them, under penalty of regret and remorse for the rest of his life. And it was there, Mr. Corregidor, that, after a good while, Teodoro heard the sound of footsteps coming down the corridor. With the utmost caution, he turned his head, preventing the scaffolding from creaking and revealing his presence there. He then saw Antônio Moraes approaching and stopped in front of his daughter’s room.

He seemed to hesitate a little, but then, raising his hand, he pushed the door which, being barely closed, gave way and opened, giving him passage. He entered, placing his chile hat and cane in a corner on a chest. He then approached the bed and looked at his daughter for a long time. Afterwards, he sat on the edge of the bed and made a gesture that, at first, seemed to Teodoro to be simple paternal affection.

[...] When I stopped there, the Inspector asked, somewhat sternly and curiously: — Are you insinuating that the bricklayer saw, that day, between Antônio Moraes and his daughter, a scene like that? — Mister Corregidor, that's what he told me! Teodoro thought, at first, that Antônio Moraes was simply waking his daughter up. Thus, the surprise and fear he had was terrible when he saw the man, over her dress, groping and caressing Genoveva's breasts, breasts that, according to what he knew from hearsay, should have been bare underneath. But even so, it seems that, after some time, this caress over the dress began to be insufficient for the mill owner. There, through the wide boat-shaped neckline, he caressed her uncovered shoulder and then insinuated his hand inside, now directly caressing the soft skin and the peaks of her breasts. As Genoveva didn't wake up, Teodoro told me, "the sin and madness of that Devil man continued to grow": he lay down next to the girl and, without ceasing to caress her breast with his left hand, he slid his right underneath, under the dress that, as a result, rose up. Then, the man mounted, laying down on Genoveva. — What's this story, Mr. Quaderna! — interrupted the Corregidor, harshly, but already a little angry. — That's what they told me! — I defended myself. — And the girl didn't wake up? — That's what I was saying when you interrupted me! Teodoro said that, when Antônio Moraes actually mounted himself, like a mare sire who doesn't distinguish his daughter from the other fillies in the herd, he had the impression that Genoveva had already woken up, as he saw a strange expression on her face, of who smiled despite themselves. But, at the same time, she kept her eyes half closed and

her head tilted back, so that he could not, in good conscience, explain to me whether she was sleeping or not, whether or not she was complicit in what was going on. In fact, Teodoro's doubt is explained, because, at that moment, terrified by what he had already seen, he cowered on the scaffolding and, with his eyes closed, his teeth clenched and his heart beating, he remained, for the rest of the scene, without looking at anything else.

But the rest of the scene didn't last long and, if he didn't see anything, he didn't close his ears, so that soon he heard a dull moan, a muffled moan, from Genoveva.

[...] You said that the girl made a muffled moan: in your opinion, what happened? The mill owner came to — how shall I say? — to complete the crime? — Teodoro said he couldn't say yes or no! — It could be, then, that the girl only woke up at that moment: she screamed, in surprise, and the Father then muffled the scream by putting his hand over her mouth! — This is what Teodoro also thinks is most likely, mainly because, as he assured me, Antônio Moraes remained dressed the entire time! - Dress? — Yes, Your Excellency, Teodoro always stated that Antônio Moraes did not take off his clothes, neither when he entered nor afterwards! It's true that this doesn't guarantee much, and Teodoro said that he couldn't put forward any hypothesis with certainty, because only when the muffled noises and murmurs that followed Genoveva's moans below ceased, did he have the courage to look back. new there. By then, Antônio Moraes was leaving the corridor and Genoveva was standing in the middle of the room, looking somewhat indecisive. Antônio Moraes walked out the front of the house, and Teodoro saw Miguel, his youngest son, standing in the doorway of his room, which was on the other side of the corridor, in front of Genoveva's bedchamber. Due to the position Miguel was in, it was also impossible to say whether or not he had seen anything of what had happened. Genoveva left the room and went out into the hallway. When they came across their brother, the two looked at each other for a while, in silence. Then, Miguel re-entered the room, closing

the door behind him, and Genoveva, head down, walked out to the side of the living room, the one in front. Teodoro, taking advantage of the opportunity, went down the scaffolding ladder like a cat, crossed the corridor on tiptoe to the kitchen side and, leaving behind the house, entered the bush of the enclosure, made a long circuit around the State Reservoir — thus avoiding passing through the front courtyard — and managed to reach the village without anyone seeing him (Suassuna, 2017, p. 427-433).

This representation is important for valuing the culture and history of the Brazilian Northeast, as well as for the fight for women's rights throughout the country. Through literature, Suassuna contributes to the construction of a more egalitarian and fair society. The passage above tells the story of a bricklayer who was carrying out a job at Antônio Moraes' house and came across a very strange and dubious scene. The man saw his father caressing his daughter intimately, but it is not known whether the daughter surrendered to her father's wishes.

In this context, the father, being a powerful man, seemed to have unbridled desires, which would also include his daughter. These acts of fathers allying daughters happened in the past and are still recorded today, the lack of control over the sexuality of men who do not even respect their ranks (Moura; Koller, 2008). This daughter's consent to being enticed by her father usually occurs due to threats she receives from the man, who intimidates them into telling what is happening.

Another fact narrated in the novel presents women and children as the most fragile beings, from which it is observed that they were burned, as stated in BROCHURE VI, the First Empire:

[...] The reign of Dom Silvestre I, in Rodeador, was short, but it already had all the traditional characteristics of our Dynasty. His throne was a country rock, cathedral, fortress and castle. From there, he preached

the resurrection of that ancient, bloody, chaste and spotless King, who was Dom Sebastião, The Desired. He also preached the Revolution, with the beheading of the powerful and the establishment of a new Kingdom, with the People in power. The renowned Pernambuco academic, Doctor Pereira da Costa, wrote his Chronicle, which I am not transcribing for rhetorical economy. I limit myself to informing that, fearful of the surrounding owners due to the spread of such a revolutionary Kingdom, they appealed to Governor Luís do Rego, who sent a troop there, commanded by Marshal Luís Antônio Salazar Moscoso. They set fire to Arraial, killing women and children in the flames, while the men who escaped the fire and the shooting were put to the sword (Suassuna, 2017, p. 58).

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE FOR FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Literature is a powerful tool for female empowerment, as it allows the representation of strong and independent female characters. The novel *Pedra do Reino* is an example of this, featuring female characters who challenge patriarchy and fight for their rights and freedoms.

Furthermore, literature is also capable of inspiring and motivating women to fight for their rights in real life. When reading stories about courageous and determined women, readers can identify with these characters and find the strength to fight for their own causes. In BOOKLET XXXVI – “*O Gênio da Raça*” and “*Cantador da Borborema*” there is a description of a woman writer who was praised for her profession and position:

— The “life, passion and death” of my Godfather, Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia-Barretto! I had never said anything to you only because I was afraid that you would steal the idea from me! Now, however, that they both assure me that they will never write a novel, I can speak, and I can say, right from the start, that I already have the recipe

for the book!

— The recipe? — said Samuel, half intrigued and disdainful.

— Yes! I got this recipe, first, from the Illustrated Practical Dictionary, which I received from my Father. Then, from the book by the brilliant Albertina Bertha, which Samuel lent me. This woman is the feet of the Beast, Samuel! She is the daughter of a Councilor of the Empire, Lafayette Rodrigues Pereira, so her word is worth almost as much as that of Doctor Amorim Carvalho, Rhetoric of the Impostor Dom Pedro II! (Suassuna, 2017, p. 214).

However, in ``*Pedra do Reino*`` novel, women play a prominent role in the plot. They are portrayed as strong and independent characters, who fight for their rights and freedoms. An example of this is the character in BOOKLET XI “The Adventure of Rosa and La Countess”

SUMMARIZED HERE, therefore, are some of the reasons that ended up making me consider my Quadernesque descendants honorable. Another, also fundamental, was the Cantiga de La Condessa, which prepared me, in turn, to receive two terrible influences in my life, that of my Aunt, Dona Filipa Quaderna, and that of my Confirmation Godfather, the singer João Melchiades Ferreira. In fact, Your Excellencies could only understand the influence that my Aunt Filipa had on me, if they knew both, aunt and nephew. I say today, after much reflection on this, that, as a boy, I loved my mother very much, the soft and kind Maria Sulpícia. But what I really admired was my Aunt Filipa, who, on the day she was oiled, would take four or five laps, ride a wild horse, go through the fair, breaking the clay crockery scattered on the floor, and slap her until in the faces of the brave. I, who was born and raised admiring hunting, horseback riding, shooting, knife fights and other sertanejo chivalry and heroism, had the misfortune of being a bad knight, a bad hunter and a bad fighter. Perhaps for this reason, I admired my Aunt Filipa, in whose person, tall, thin

and scruffy, most of the Quaderna family’s courage seemed to have gathered. Now, it was Aunt Filipa who raised me, after the death of my mother, Maria Sulpícia. Being the youngest of my Father’s legitimate children, I was my Aunt’s favorite, and many of the courages that I was forced to practice in life, I did in fear of her (Suassuna, 2017, p. 75).

In this passage, Filipa is described as a courageous woman, full of strength, brave and unafraid to face different situations in life. In this way, she faces patriarchy and fights to be recognized as a free woman who owns her choices. Furthermore, women are also responsible for preserving the cultural and religious traditions of the region. They are the guardians of the secrets and mysteries of the backlands, transmitting this knowledge from generation to generation.

In another passage, it is described about a woman’s power to seduce a man and also know how to make him feel good around her, as mentioned below:

[...] Ah, Pedro, how good this contact between us and women is! How good it is for us to say certain things and hear others, in that tone in which, suddenly, everything becomes possible! How different this is from our harsh masculine understandings, in which we are looked at with hostile impartiality and judged at every moment! With women, it’s the opposite. If they like us, they don’t judge us and are even more affectionate when we reveal ourselves to be weak and full of defects.

From time to time, we feel, not with our head, but with our blood, that we can rest our head on that lap, on those breasts, that we can cry without being despised, kiss without being repelled, feeling the perfume that comes off our skin. and the hair that wraps us in great peace and the most ardent desire! That day, talking to Maria Safira, I felt that way. I was not ashamed to confess that, since the day before, I had been feeling like the least of men. He would never again be able to please a woman. Or, even if it were, I

would no longer have the courage to desire her, because now I myself was convinced that I would never be a man again. Safira then invited me to try with her. She said that, in turn, she felt a strange attraction to me. [...] So I agreed, seeing in Maria Safira my last hope of being a man again (Suassuna, 2017, p. 291).

In this sense, this passage of the novel exposes the woman's power to make a man happy, who at that moment no longer felt like anyone else.

The search for women's empowerment is a current issue throughout society. The theme regarding empowerment expands as women are understood as social protagonists in history (Hübner, 2016). The World Health Organization (1998) defines empowerment as: a social, cultural, psychological or political process through which individuals and social groups become capable of expressing their needs, explaining their concerns, realizing strategies for involvement in decision-making and act politically, socially and culturally to satisfy their needs.

CONCLUSION

The novel: ``Pedra do Reino``, by Ariano Suassuna, presents a complex and multifaceted portrait of gender relations in northeastern society. Although women are often portrayed in a submissive and sexualized way, they are also presented as strong and courageous beings, capable of resisting the standards imposed by patriarchal society.

Female empowerment is a central theme in the novel, through strong and independent female characters, Ariano Suassuna contributes to the appreciation of northeastern culture and the fight for women's rights.

Analyzing the treatment given to women in the novel helps us understand the gender inequalities present in our culture and reflect on the importance of female representation in literature and the arts in general. Furthermore, the novel also highlights the importance of literature as a tool for female empowerment, inspiring and motivating women to fight for their rights and freedoms. In short, Suassuna's work is an example of how literature can be used to promote gender equality and social justice.

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