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Postcolonial (Mock-)Epic Narratives:  
Reading Mário de Andrade with Jorge Luis Borges

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Joao Paulo Temporao Albuquerque

2022

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2022

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Postcolonial (Mock-)Epic Narratives:  
Reading Mário de Andrade with Jorge Luis Borges

by

João Paulo Temporao Albuquerque  
Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures  
University of California, Los Angeles, 2022  
Professor José Luiz Passos, Chair

In my dissertation, I analyze some problems raised by contemporary Latin-American (Mock-)epic narratives, both from Jorge Luis Borges' (theoretical) perspective and through the reading of *Macunaíma* (1928), from Mário de Andrade. This dissertation is divided in two parts. In the first part, I elaborate a theory of the (Mock-)Epic through a review of several Jorge Luis Borges's essays. In view of this context, I thus outline the main aims of my research, namely: a) to analyze the critical role of the epic narratives in the contemporary world; b) to analyze the *Poetics* of the contemporary epic narrative, that is, to question the form and the literary devices which make an epic narrative somehow effective. In the second part, I carry out a double-sided analysis of *Macunaíma*. Firstly, as a reflection around two axes and respective articulation (the collective psychological Brazilian reality and the language used to express it), in order to

understand what is specifically at stake in what concerns a possible epic feature found in *Macunaíma* marked by protest and non-conformity. As follows, *Macunaíma* is envisaged as: a) a dialogue with (medieval) literary traditions where the (mock-)epic discourse repeats its “original” forms and simultaneously, strays away from them; b) a literary work which satirically criticized the cultural and economical (neo)colonialism to which Brazil was (yet) subjugated in the early twentieth century, while destabilizing the rational, realistic and logical-positivist categories of colonial thought. In a second moment, in confrontation with a critical tradition which defends that *Macunaíma* searches for and attempts to reach a homogeneity of a Brazilian identity, in service of Mário de Andrade’s supposed nationalist program, the hypothesis for a different reading shall be considered. More specifically, the possibility that *Macunaíma* opens up a vision of the Brazilian reality regarding cosmopolitanism, heterogeneity and the unknown, with the concepts of desire, eroticism, variable rhythm and childishness operating a dynamic articulation which leads to the production of Alterity.

The dissertation of João Paulo Temporão Albuquerque is approved.

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2022

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2. “Roleta russa: o desejo e o jogo – leituras de Dostoievsky” in *O Jogo do Mundo*. Lisboa: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa. 2017: 117–130. <https://ielt.fcsh.unl.pt/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/o-jogo-do-mundo-novembro.pdf>
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Problematization and Objectives

When, in 1569, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, an element from Philip II of Spain's court, published the first part of his poem *La Araucana* (1569-89) [*The Araucaniad*] (dedicating it to the monarch), he was certainly on the antipodes of imagining that his work would be read, centuries later, as the national epic narrative of a country other than Spain. Moreover, he would hardly imagine that his poem would have the significance of a birth certificate to a country whose independentist movement only started in 1810 and consummated its purpose in 1818. The poem narrates the warring events that occurred in the territories nowadays comprising Chile and which were a part of the Spanish imperialist expansion movement on the New World. The description of such events emphasizes the indigenous rebellion against the Spanish authority, which is legitimated there due to an alleged civilizational superiority (religious, moral, technical, etc). Consequently, the poem was read by Zúñiga's contemporaneous countrymen as a fair punishment for such insubordination. The narrative possesses a strong epic tone, which can never be achieved through easy victories. Throughout the book the warrior qualities of the Araucanians are exalted, as well as other merits of its civilization, to elevate the glory of the Spanish victory:

Cosas diré también harto notables  
de gente que a ningún rey obedecen,  
temerarias empresas memorables  
que celebrarse con razón merecen;

raras industrias, términos loables  
que más los españoles engrandecen;  
pues no es el vencedor más estimado  
de aquello en que el vencido es reputado. (Zúñiga, 2007)

[I shall dwell on deeds distinguished  
Of a monarch-scorning people,  
Feats of gallantry deserving  
Memory's shrine and celebration,  
Rare accomplishments of merit  
Crowning Spanish might with grandeur;  
For the victor most is honored  
By repute of vanquished hero. (Zúñiga, 1945: 11)]

Due to the self-promotional characteristic of the poem, done less at the expense of the representation of the Spaniards themselves than of their enemies, who would end up defeated, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's text ended up generating, in the post-colonial era, an interpretative tradition diametrically opposed to its enunciated intention. The poem left an intellectual mark, with a pronounced anti-imperialist trace, on the foundation of the Chilean nation, as Craig Kallendorf underlines in «Representing the Other: Ercilla's *La Araucana*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the New World Encounter» (2003):

Menéndez y Pelayo, for example, notes that the natives had little direct influence on much of Latin American literature, but a significant indirect impact on poetry in Chile, for the determined resistance of the Araucanians became the principal theme of early colonial literature in that country. This resistance was heroic, and

in the process of writing about it, Ercilla ended up “presenting his clear preference for his enemies.” The female characters are treated with special sympathy, so that in the end, one can argue that the poem is presented from the perspective of the Indians. From here, the next step is the appropriation of the poem into the national culture of Chile as “un libro national i querido: él es la fé de bautismo de nuestra nation” [“a beloved national book: it is the baptismal certificate of our nation”]. Thus Ercilla becomes in the words of Pablo Neruda the “inventor y libertador” [“inventor and liberator”] of Chile, and *La Araucana* stands as an anti-imperialist poem. (Kallendorf, 2003: 395)

This appropriation of the Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga’s poem into the national culture of Chile is quite problematic inasmuch as the heroes represented on it are none other than Chile’s native peoples, whose integration into the Chilean nation, born in 1818, was not peaceful whatsoever. In a way, Chile’s independence resulted in a replica of the colonial model of government, founded upon the concentration of power in the State institution, led by authoritarian groups hostile to self-determination and to the indigenous civilizational values set out in *La Araucana* [*The Araucaniad*]. The Mapuche, for example, who inhabited the southern territories of the American continent, and who were never subjugated by the Spanish colonial forces, were the victims of a double invading campaign, between 1861 and 1883 from the Chilean side, and, between 1878 and 1885, from the Argentinian side. The war led to the decimation of the Mapuche population and to the subsequent integration of the surviving generations into those nations paved by their chronic condemnation to a state of subalternity. We are near the end of 2021 and the indigenous peoples remain unrecognized by the Chilean Constitution.

Besides these historical reasons, of racial nature, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's epic poem contains in itself complexities, tensions and several paradoxes which put into question any totalitarian moral we might want to attach to it, whether such moral is colonial or post-colonial. If *La Araucana* [*The Araucaniad*] is an useful book to think about the concept of nation, whether Spanish or Chilean – and it certainly is –, and in this role is defined as a national book, that is precisely due to the fact that it does not let itself be appropriated by a *nationalist ideology* – which the historian José Mattoso conceives, in *A formação da nacionalidade* (1986), as «uma forma tendente a fortalecer a consciência nacional e a criar obstáculos aos fenómenos de desagregação a que todos os países estão sujeitos» (Mattoso, 1986: 7) [«a system of ideas with the tendency to strengthen the national conscience and to create obstacles to the phenomena of disaggregation to which all countries are susceptible»], underlining, however, the caveat that such ideology «é em si mesma independente do fenómeno nacional: os estados nacionalistas não são forçosamente mais coerentes do que aqueles em que não vigora a mesma ideologia.» (Mattoso, 1986: 7) [«is in itself independent from the national phenomenon: the nationalist states are not forcefully more coherent than the ones ruled by that same ideology.»] Considered either from a colonial or post-colonial perspective, the national conscience expressed in *La Araucana* [*The Araucaniad*] is prone at any moment to be fissured by Zúñiga's double-conscience, which problematizes the actions of each of the contentious forces always in relation to its enemy, in other words, to the Other who at the outset would supposedly be external to such totality and not a part of that conscience.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> «Though Ercilla was a member of the military force sent to “pacify” the Araucanians and dedicated his poem to the King of Spain, many scholars have observed criticism of Spanish imperialism in the Americas within the poem. Those who have addressed this anomaly have tended to place Ercilla's allegiances entirely with either the Spanish or

As interesting as these reading phenomena generated by Alonso Ercilla y Zúñiga's renaissance epic are the possible interpretations derived from the narrative-essay *Os Sertões* (1902) [*Backlands*], from the Brazilian Euclides da Cunha. This book describes, in the last of its three parts, the events of the bloody War of Canudos, which occurred in the backland of Bahia, Brazil, between 1896 and 1897. Such war pitted the local population, leaded by the religious leader Antônio Conselheiro, against the forces of the Brazilian army, culminating with the destruction of the municipality and the death of almost all the 25.000 persons who lived there. Euclides da Cunha accompanied the army on their fourth expedition to Canudos as a war correspondent for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, with his book being based on that report.

The war occurred in the historical context of a republican regime recently installed (1889) after deposing the previous monarchic regime, which was ruling since the advent of Brazil's independence in 1822. Triggered by trivial motives (related with a timber business), the conflict escalated first at a regional level, gaining a national dimension when rumors started to circulate that Canudos was arming itself to attack neighboring cities and to advance towards the capital to depose the republican government and reinstate the Monarchy – a regime supposedly founded upon many of the values inherited from the Brazilian colonial past<sup>2</sup>. The war lasted less than a

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the Araucanians. They cite his derisive descriptions of the Araucans as barbaric and inhuman in support of the former or else they explore the soliloquies against the licentious and violent Spaniards to empower the latter. While evidence bolstering both arguments has been extracted from the text, a comprehensive resolution of this incongruity becomes a much more complex issue.» (Shepherd, 1998: 121)

<sup>2</sup> «[Os canudenses] Eram contrários à República. Na verdade, eram contra certas medidas tomadas pelo novo governo como o aumento abusivo de impostos e o sistema de pesos e medidas que prejudicavam os mais pobres.

year, but the three first expeditions of the State army ended up defeated, which generated panic in public opinion and motivated a robust fourth expedition, with a strong component of heavy artillery, that consummated the massacre.

Euclides da Cunha was then a zealous republican, a political position he did not abandon after the War of Canudos, so there are good reasons to suspect that his report was an impartial one. Nevertheless, when doing a comparative reading of *Canudos: Diário de uma Expedição* (1939) [*Canudos: Diary of an Expedition*], who Cunha himself elaborated during the year the war lasted, and the literary report of *Os Sertões* [*Backlands*], written some years later, we find a profound contrast in what concerns the theme of heroism. While the entries from the *Canudos: Diário de uma Expedição* [*Canudos: Diary of an Expedition*] are permeated from the beginning to the end with glorifying references to the military, whose heroism is reinforced by the indomitability of an enemy constituted by a group of fanatics, in *Os Sertões* [*Backlands*] the issue is treated in a quite less partial and essentialist manner. On this text, the author-narrator's ethical conscience of the conflict varies substantially according to the updates of the balance of power between the warring factions. In the beginning of the war, the residents of Canudos are dubbed «guerrilheiros-thug» (Cunha, 1995: 266) [«guerrilla-thugs»]. Almost near the end of the narrative, and despite maintaining his moral and ideological position which, supported by

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Mas, principalmente, eram contrários à separação Igreja/Estado imposta pela nova ordem política, que instituía, entre outras coisas, o casamento civil, a secularização dos cemitérios e o registro civil de mortes e nascimentos.» (Cury, 2004: 73) [«[The Canudos residents] Were against the Republic. More precisely, they were against the Church/State separation imposed by the new political order, which instituted, among other policies, the legal marriage, the secularization of the cemeteries and the legal record of deaths and births.»]

positivist notions permeated with racial<sup>3</sup> and climatic determinisms, was translated in the conviction that there was both a national need for as well as justice in that war<sup>4</sup>, the same author-narrator emphasizes the shame which falls upon the combatants of the republic's forces, when they contemplate the misery of their enemies turned prisoners, by the victory they are about to consummate: «Contemplando-lhes os rostos baços, os arcabouços esmirrados e sujos, cujos molambos em tiras não encobriam lanhos, escaras e escalavros – a vitória tão longamente apetecida decaía de súbito. Repugnava aquele triunfo. Envergonhava. Era, com efeito, contraproducente compensação a tão luxuosos gastos de combates, de reveses e de milhares de vidas, o apresamento daquela caqueirada humana (...)» (Cunha, 1995: 510) [«The dark faces and filthy, emaciated bodies covered with wounds, scars, and gashes made the victory they so longed for shallow and shameful. They now saw the reward of all the battles they had fought, the

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<sup>3</sup> Euclides da Cunha's nationalism endorsed some European eugenicist theories, namely from the Austrian-Polish Ludwig Gumplowicz, inscribed in *Rassenkampf* (1883). However, according to Frederic Amory, such endorsement did not create in the Brazilian writer, as it could be expected, a full-fledged racism, it rather led him to enter into a racial ambivalence which: «slights the heavy African admixture to the coastal populations of Brazil and overestimates the vigour of the thin Indian stock of the backlands (a common romantic overestimation on the part of nineteenth-century Brazilian high culture).» (Amory, 1996: 673)

<sup>4</sup> «Um tenente, ajudante de ordens do comandante geral, fez conduzir do acampamento dezenas de bombas de dinamite. Era justo; era absolutamente imprescindível. Os sertanejos invertiam toda a psicologia da guerra: enrijavam-nos os reveses, robustecia-os a fome, empedernia-os a derrota.

Ademais entalhava-se o cerne de uma nacionalidade.» (Cunha, 1995: 504) [«A lieutenant, an aide-de-camp of the general commander, drove dozens of dynamite bombs from the camp. It was just; it was essential. The inlanders inverted the entire war psychology: they were stiffened by the setbacks, toughened by hunger, hardened by defeat. Moreover, the core of a nationality was being carved up.»]

reversals they had experienced, and the lives they had wasted. Here were their prisoners, an assortment of human jetsam.» (Cunha, 2010: 460)]

In sum, the capacity for resistance of the Canudos residents, who, without any chance to rise victorious from the contention, and under the most adverse circumstances – of hunger and thirst –, were consistently willing to fight to death, brought to Euclides da Cunha a conscience of the Other analogous to Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's. In both cases, it was not the political position nor the pragmatism of their moral convictions which changed, but, above all, their identitarian conceptualizations of the nation, which opened, due to the conflicts, unsuturable fissures through which the Other ("foreigner", "barbarian"<sup>5</sup>) got into, to never get out, at the expense of the unconditionality of his heroism. In «*Os Sertões*, de Euclides da Cunha: Espaços» (2004), Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury pertinently claims:

Em Canudos, porém, [Euclides da Cunha] defronta-se com a realidade de um Brasil inesperadamente diferente. A partir da observação da terra e dos sertanejos e do convívio com o exército, relativiza as noções científicas, muitas vezes dando-se conta de que os papéis de representantes da barbárie e da civilização se intercambiam entre sertanejos e soldados. Ora heróicos e superiores, ora ignorantes e degenerados, os homens do sertão e do exército repartem os mesmos

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<sup>5</sup> «O sertão era percebido como território da barbárie, tal como o conceberam, na primeira metade do século, a elite imperial e o olhar estrangeiro, marcadamente ilustrado. A idéia de sertão sintetizava a representação do outro indesejado e distante, símbolo daquilo que não se poderia conceber como nacional.» (Oliveira, 2002: 512-3) [«The backland was understood as the territory of barbarity, since it was conceived as such, on the first half of the century, by the imperial elite and the foreign eye, markedly illustrated. The idea of backland thus synthesized the representation of the undesired and distant other, the symbol of what could not be conceived as being national.»]

atributos. (...) Assim parece-me que, embora preocupado com a construção de um esquema explicativo para a nação e fazendo um esforço de adaptação das teorias européias em que acreditava, defronta-se, na realidade, é com a insuficiência da análise e do esquema teórico que montara. (Cury, 2004: 75) [In Canudos, however, [Euclides da Cunha] faces the reality of an unexpectedly different Brazil. From the observation of the land and the inlanders and due to the conviviality with the army, he relativizes his notions of scientism, often becoming aware that the roles of representatives of barbarity and civilization interchange themselves between inlanders and soldiers. Whether heroic and superior, or ignorant and degenerate, the men of the backland and of the army share the same attributes. (...) It thus seems to me that, although worried with the construction of an explanatory scheme for the nation and despite trying to adapt to it the European theories he believed in, he faces, in reality, the insufficiency of the analysis and of the theoretical scheme he had assembled.]

This phenomenon was not, however, an impediment for the appearance of critical readings of *Os Sertões* [*Backlands*] which appropriated the work in order to convey new forms of identitarian nationalism. Silvio Romero, for example, identified the Brazilians with the rural backland population, the «genuína população nacional (...) na qual palpita mais forte o coração da raça». (Romero, 1954: 1941) [«genuine national population (...) on whom the heart of the race beats harder.»] Ricardo de Oliveira, exhibiting the disenchantment which, at the end of his life, Euclides da Cunha felt in regard to the republican regime, described the backland as the profound and edenic Brazil where the latter conceived its own salvation: «O sertão, o interior, o coração das terras – onde há calma, repouso e paz para o espírito – surgia à sua imaginação como

a única possibilidade de felicidade e superação da condição de simples mortal. (...) [Euclides da Cunha] não teve outra saída senão sonhar com uma salvação, individual e, por vezes, coletiva, a esperá-lo lá onde o Brasil é profundo, nalguma vereda deste grande sertão.» (Oliveira, 2002: 533-4) [«The backland, the hinterland, the heart of the lands - where there is calmness, repose and peace for the spirit - appeared to his imagination as the only possibility for happiness and for overcoming the condition of merely being mortal. (...) [Euclides da Cunha] had no other way out but to dream with an individual, sometimes collective, salvation, waiting for him there, where Brazil is profound, in some lane of this great backland.»]

These brief readings of *La Araucana* [*The Araucaniad*] and of *Os Sertões* [*Backlands*] and respective scholarships illustrate one of the most problematically consensual subjects among the contemporary scholars of Latin-American epic narratives: *Nationality*. Why the term “problematically”? Let us check the reasons given by the organizers and authors of the preface to the compilation of essays *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World* (1999) to justify the discredit attributed to the epic discourse within the countries where post-colonial debates are currently being held: «The position of epic is especially vexed in those countries involved in postcolonial debates about the relation of their national literatures to the canons of Western and classical literature, which, as part of a colonial educational policy, often were imposed on school curricula.» (Beissinger et al, 1999: 3) The vexing status of this type of narratives comes from its instrumentalization by an authoritarian political power. An instrumentalization which, in reality, becomes symbiotic. Thus, just as political power strengthens itself by making an ideological appropriation of epic narrative, the latter canonizes itself, authoritarian, omnipresent and mandatory, cultural and in an educative way, by the strength of political power.

In what the Latin-American context is concerned, the emphasis should also be put on the often tenuous frontiers which exist between its colonial past and its neo-colonial contemporaneity. What the Brazilian State republican forces from the late nineteenth century and the Spanish colonizers from the sixteenth century have in common is the exercise of an authoritarian political power, oligarchical, patriarchal, centralized and concentrate, which socially excluded ethnic minorities and peripheral populations, totalizer and tendentially totalitarian, and of which Latin America did not get rid of with the early nineteenth century decolonization phenomenon. In sum, the post-colonial societies brought a change to the agents of power, which were no longer the European white colonialists and were now, in most cases, criollos (white colonialists' descendants, born in Latin-American soil), and also brought some political changes inspired in the European Enlightenment and in the French Revolution, but the decolonization process remained, up until today, far from the application of the best democratic principles and practices.

I thus postulate the hypothesis that the colonial and post-colonial tensions represented in modern Latin-American epic narrative, through unsuturable fissures opened on the concepts of nation or country, somehow impair the association of these concepts with the concepts of identity, essence, center, totality, and State. Such narratives thus show the possibility for the concepts of nation or country to be thought from peripheral, regional, frontier, exile perspectives, open to difference, becoming, utopia, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. To confirm this presupposition through the analysis of Mário de Andrade's (mock-)epic narrative *Macunaíma, o*

*herói sem nenhum carácter* (1928) [*Macunaíma, the hero without any character*<sup>6</sup>], is the main purpose of this dissertation.

In parallel to the study of this problematic and indissociable from it, the discursive modes and formal methods used by Mário de Andrade to compose *Macunaíma* shall also be studied. To decenter the conceptualization of country also implies the finding of a new language to do so, as well as the experimentation of formal techniques. Both these factors are necessary for a reperspectivation of Brazilian realities along with the imagining of untold life possibilities in that very same Brazilian context.

As Irlemar Chiampi demonstrates in her beautiful book *Barroco e Modernidade* (1998), the neo-baroque aesthetics, and with it the use of humor, has indelibly left a mark on Latin-American literary modernity and post-modernity. Jorge Luis Borges was one of the notable exponents of the aforementioned aesthetics, both in practical as well as theoretical terms. And since Borges' narratology is intimately connected with epic discourse, I propose the elaboration, from his collection of reflections on the topic, of (a draft of) a theory of the contemporaneous epic which may reveal itself useful for the understanding of the formal and linguistic aspects mentioned above.

It will be fundamental to understand these modes and methods in order to also understand the unheard-of contributions to the central hypothesis posited in this study. For example, in order to avoid the colonial and post-colonial hegemonic ballast to which so-called epic discourses are subject by part of a critical and political elite in the sense of finding there a national identity, is not *Macunaíma* (and other works of this modern (mock-)epic Latin-American tradition) forced to

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<sup>6</sup> Work henceforth referred to in this study solely as *Macunaíma*.

a deliberate “counter-genre politics”, fomented by the practice of the ironic discourse – a discourse that questions the institution, itself, and the coincidence of something with the same, stating without stating? What role shall be played, in this possible “counter-genre politics”, by the (anti-)hero Macunaíma, a “spineless” character, lazy – although industrious sometimes – metamorphic, nomadic, multiracial, etc.? Is he an anti-heroic hero, around whom are built both epic and anti-epic (cosmopolitan) discourses, which reflect an anti-tragic melancholy, a shipwreck in a tedious daily life, in parallel with a desiring, erotic, disordering joy, or perverse dark humor?

In sum, this study intends to problematize, politically and aesthetically, the notions of territory, religion, art, language, race, justice, history and tradition which, somehow, structure the concept of nation in the (mock-)epic narrative *Macunaíma*. To discuss the singularity of this work should show, in it-self, its usefulness and wider reach (mostly Latin-American, but who knows also Hemispheric, or even Universal), in other words, its potential for repetition.

## 1.2. Chapter Summaries

The first chapter of this dissertation is divided into two parts: the exposition of the dissertation’s main questions and aims; and the summary of the contents of each chapter.

In the second chapter, I elaborate a theory which associates the contemporary (Mock-)Epic with the concepts of *repetition* and *hybridity* through a review of several essays from Jorge Luis Borges. In view of this context, I thus outline the main aims of my research, namely: a) to analyze the critical role of the epic narratives in the contemporary world; b) to analyze the

*Poetics* of the contemporary Epic Narrative, that is, to question the form and the literary devices which make an Epic narrative somehow effective.

The chapter concerned with Jorge Luis Borges' critical works will be useful for a reading of *Macunaíma* from several perspectives, which I shall now introduce: 1. inasmuch as they postulate the epic discourse's potential for covering the multiple flows of desire from a specific community (Borges calls them the voices of the community). One of *Macunaíma*'s most pronounced characteristics is precisely the integration of the racial and cultural multiplicity of the Brazilian peoples, whether it is on the mythological and legendary level or from the linguistic point of view. 2. another characteristic of the epic is its power to integrate, recreate and merge several types of literary discourse, something which happens quite clearly in *Macunaíma* on its dialogue with the European epic medieval tradition, the Brazilian popular legends (mostly indigenous and African) and also with Brazilian post-colonial narrative tradition (namely, and most evidently, with Machado de Assis in what concerns the melancholic-satirical tone, and with José de Alencar, in regard to some indigenous thematics); 3. Finally, the aspects associated with the buildup of the plot, such as the magic causality, the writing style based upon a concept of selective memory and oriented towards a dynamic and concatenated articulation of the events, also find echo in Mário de Andrade's plot with notable clarity.

In the third part of this dissertation, I carry out a double-sided analysis of *Macunaíma*. Firstly, as a reflection around two axes and respective articulation (the collective psychological Brazilian reality and the language used to express it), in order to understand what is specifically at stake in what concerns a possible epic feature found in *Macunaíma* marked by protest and non-conformity. As follows, *Macunaíma* is envisaged as: a) a dialogue with (medieval) literary traditions where the (mock-)epic discourse repeats its "original" forms and simultaneously,

strays away from them; b) a literary work which satirically criticized the cultural and economical (neo)colonialism to which Brazil was (yet) subjugated in the early twentieth century, while destabilizing the rational, realistic and logical-positivist categories of colonial thought.

In a second moment, in confrontation with a critical tradition which defends that *Macunaíma* searches for and attempts to reach a homogeneity of a Brazilian identity, in service of Mário de Andrade's supposed nationalist program, the hypothesis for a different reading shall be considered. More specifically, the possibility that *Macunaíma* opens up a vision of the Brazilian reality regarding cosmopolitanism, heterogeneity and the unknown, with the concepts of desire, eroticism, variable rhythm and childishness operating a dynamic articulation which leads to the production of Alterity.

In a last and brief chapter, I shall limit myself to an attempt at casting possible future lines of research which may expand the problematization around the contemporaneous epic discourse carried out on this PhD dissertation.

I would like to add that this chapter is not intended to be a conclusion precisely due to the fact that I consider the present dissertation a work in progress. On the one hand, the theory on epic inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' critical works will benefit from a thorough study of the comical nature of neo-baroque aesthetics and its articulation with the traits of heroic plots and characters. To be more specific, we must question the humor's potential to make heroism fade away or, on the contrary, to reinforce it – fulfilling, for example, a strategy of disguise, as it happens sometimes with the Ulysseic astuteness, or of refusal of power. On the other hand, the initial project envisaged two extra chapters, where I would analyze the double relationship of the mock-narrative *Uma Viagem à Índia* [*A Voyage to India*] (2010) with Luís de Camões' Portuguese renaissance narrative *Os Lusíadas* [*The Lusiads*] (1572) and with James Joyce's

*Ulysses* (1922). These chapters were indeed started and progress on them reached an estimated total of around fifty pages, but, due to constraints connected with covid-19, I did not manage to complete them in time to be able to integrate them on this dissertation.

One of the purposes of my future book is, through the comparative analysis of *Macunaíma* and *Uma Viagem à Índia* [*A Voyage to India*], to explore and contrast different aesthetical and political problematics which emerge from different contexts and, at the same time, how the contemporary (mock-)epic code proposes both discursive and pragmatic strategies to deal with such problematics. In the conclusion, I will connect these different movements and compare the ways in which they address aesthetics and politics, and draw conclusion on the possibilities and limitations of these approaches.

## 2. THE EPIC AS FORM: READINGS OF JORGE LUIS BORGES

### 2.1. Borgesian Subsidies for a Theory of the Contemporaneous Epic

Between 1967 and 1968, Jorge Luis Borges delivered six lectures at Harvard University, and among them we find «The Telling of the Tale», a text marked by the nostalgia of epic poetry. Amidst the several points of interest of the text, I begin by highlighting the antagonism, quite popular among the contemporaneous theorists of narrative literature, between the epic poem and the novel. In the penultimate paragraph of his lecture, Borges claims that the contemporaneous novel is currently in decline and attributes the responsibilities for such decline to the diverse forms of experimentalism<sup>7</sup> carried out by the novelists. It is not that Borges considers such formal experimentalism as something illegitimate or non-literary, on the contrary: he qualifies it as «interesting» and «daring» (Borges, 2000: 55). Borges' skepticism is based on the consequences of that same experimentalism to the community of readers seen in its entirety. In other words, Borges doubts the universal reach and perpetuity of such formal experiences. This does not occur with the classic way of telling a story: «But there is something about a tale, a story, that will be always going on. I do not believe men will ever tire of telling or hearing stories.» (Borges, 2000: 55) In a professedly revivalist prophetic tone, Borges adds that, if this classic narrativity is united with the additional pleasure of the dignity bestowed by the verse, that

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<sup>7</sup> Implying that there are several aspects which constitute this formal experimentalism, Jorge Luis Borges enunciates two: «the idea of shifting time, the idea of story being told by different characters» (Borges, 2000: 54-5)

is to say, if singing is added to the tale, all the conditions are met for the withering of the novel among the readers to be remedied by the return of epic poetry.

After more than 50 years, it is possible to say that neither the fate of the novel nor the one of epic poetry professed by Jorge Luis Borges were fulfilled. The novel, created using a formal experimentalism increasingly differentiated, persists as the dominating narrative form, and the interest in epic poetry has not increased significantly. However, much more important than to observe the greater or lesser recent historical prominence of each of these narrative forms, is to point out that both compete for the same place before the reader. This occurs because, to the eyes of Borges, the novel is nothing more nothing less than a development of the epic poem, being therefore prone to share almost all the characteristics<sup>8</sup> of the latter: «One is almost tempted to think of the novel as a degeneration of the epic, in spite of such writers as Joseph Conrad or Herman Melville.» (Borges, 2000: 48) The provocation directed at the novel in the first clause of this phrase is mitigated by the second clause, where Borges presents the examples of two authors who wrote epic novels (respectively, *Heart of Darkness* and *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*) which are not a degeneration of the tradition from whence they derivate. And those authors are not unique examples: in the text there are other mentions to works poured in prose from the beginning of the twentieth century, which satisfy the Borgesian criteria for epic, such as *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, from T.E. Lawrence, *Le Feu* from Henri Barbusse, or «A Sahib's War», a tale from Rudyard Kipling. In other words, in concomitance with the effort to differentiate the novel

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<sup>8</sup>The exception is that romance cannot be sung, thus lacking the mentioned dignity which verse grants.

from the epic poem (an effort which has dots all over the text), Borges admits the hybridity of these two literary forms in modernity<sup>9</sup>.

Although the conceptions from Jorge Luis Borges indicate that the novel assimilated the epic, leading to the latter's decline as an autonomous genre, the truth is that Borges also admits that the epic is a hybrid genre and has always been liable to hybridization. The synthetic view of the narrative's historical development contained in this text allows for the support of such claim. «The Telling of the Tale» begins by underlining that the epic has oral roots, and that, in antiquity, to tell a tale was, as aforementioned, to sing it as well, to execute a performance. The poet was at one time both lyricist and narrator of a tale, «A tale wherein all the voices of mankind might be found – not only the lyric, the wistful, the melancholy, but also the voices of courage and of hope.» (Borges, 2000: 43-4)

The oral roots of epic poetry, a characteristic for which there is consensus among the theorists of epic, does not allow for me to infer that these same roots were born out of a hybridization between a lyrical tradition and a narrative tradition, that is not the case, at all, but only that such poetry was, already in Ancient Greece, a hybridizable genre, open to all the voices of the community, past, present and future ones – to the emerging voices from the becoming of the human interactions –, and mostly to the voices of all the other genres of literature. Herein it

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<sup>9</sup> This idea of hybridity of the novel and the epic, moreover, was already contained in the first modern novel, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* [*Don Quixote*], where the postulation appears, in the voice of a Canon, of a multiform idea of literature, with several discursive tones: «la escritura desatada de estos libros da lugar a que el autor pueda mostrarse épico, lírico, trágico, cómico (...): que la épica tambien puede escribirse en prosa como en verso.» (Cervantes, 2004: 492) [«the openness of such books allows the author to display his talent for the epic, the lyric, the tragic and the comic (...); for epic can be written in prose as well as in verse.» (Cervantes, 2003: 442)]

is relevant to bring to the collation the thesis of Laura Slatkin on the complementarity and interdependence of the genres in the oral Greek tradition, formulated from a study on the poetry of Homer and Hesiod in «Genre and Generation in the *Odyssey*». A study where, only as an example, it is remarked that Greek cosmogony and theogony are presented in the Homeric poetry only in an allusive manner, and that the latter integrates both assuming their entire development in the poetry from Hesiod. For Slatkin,

genres can be viewed, like other cultural institutions, as existing in a relationship of interdependence, in which they have complementary functions in conveying different aspects of a coherent ideology or system of beliefs about the world. The crucial point about these distinctions or differentiations is their complementarity: they exist within, and serve to complete, a conception about the way the world is ordered. (Slatkin, 1986: 260)

A light that the article from Laura Stalkin casts over the conception of Jorge Luis Borges is concerned with the idea of totality inherent to epic poetry, due to the presence in the latter of *all* the voices from the community, thus removing from it any absolutist, centripetal or normalizing character. In other words, the epic genre, in Ancient Greece, did not dry out the other genres, by assimilating and dominating them, on the contrary, it established a symbiotic relationship with them, one where the vitality of any genre benefited from the increase in vitality of the genres which complemented it. We have therefore, on the classical context, a theory of the

genres where the latter are seen as open, porous, communicating, malleable and dynamic<sup>10</sup> totalities.

Another aspect of the citation from Laura Stalkin which is worthy of being highlighted is the conception of the world order which gains form through the mentioned complementarity of the genres. Jorge Luis Borges also sees in contemporaneous narrative literature the potential for the organization of the world, with the concept of open totality (as a form) fulfilling a decisive role for the production of that effect. However, notwithstanding the analogy, this phenomenon occurs, when it occurs, in distinct terms from the Greek context. Instead of being a mirror of a coherent reality, organized through a system of beliefs and an ideology, the coeval narrative (of epic roots) corresponds, to Borges, to a creative and singular vision of the reality which acts (in other words, establishes order) in a world which is disordered by the force of ideology and a dysfunctional system of beliefs.

A paired reading of Jorge Luis Borges and Laura Stalkin allows us to affirm that epic works, in the context of Ancient Greece, were a kind of “world machine” which suffered modifications, which re-projected and re-functionalized itself in accordance with the emergent literary creations, the (re)creations of the existing genres, and the update conferred by the

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<sup>10</sup> In «Epic as Genre», Gregory Nagy underlines that the thesis from Laura Stalkin even finds support in the Aristotelian *Poetics*: «For Aristotle (...) there exists a basic complementarity between epic and tragedy, as also between tragedy and comedy. If we follow Slatkin’s formulation of genre in oral traditions, it is the principle of complementarity here that defines epic as genre, in opposition to the genre of tragedy. Analogously, it is the principle of complementarity that defines tragedy as genre, in opposition to the genre of comedy, and so on.» (Nagy, 1999:27)

expressions and singular perspectives inherent to the performances of the poet<sup>11</sup>, induced by the occasion and the social and political context.

With some of the important aspects of the Greek epic which structure the Borgesian theory (as well as the practice) of the contemporaneous narrative having been introduced, I return to «The Telling of the Tale» and move forward to other fundamental aspects of his thesis. Jorge Luis Borges conceives the epic as a genre developed from three prototypical works: the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Bible*. The contents of these narratives gave origin, respectively, to three thematic traditions – the warrior epic, the one related with adventures, and the religious –, which were enough for humanity until the appearance in force of the novel, at the end of the eighteenth century. The works produced (approximately) up until the aforementioned date had not introduced, nor they intended to do so, new plots; Borges looks at them as retellings of one of those prototypes, without that imitative characteristic being seen, however, as a diminishment of the creative process or as a factor of disinterest for the reader<sup>12</sup>. In contrast, with the emergence of the novel, plots began to be invented. That is, the plots stopped being a rewriting of those epic prototypes. And Edgar Allan Poe opened a kind of Pandora box by determining:

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<sup>11</sup> Performances susceptible of having additions, lapses and modifications introduced by a non-linear functioning of memory.

<sup>12</sup> «Well, we have these stories and we have the fact that man did not need many stories. I don't suppose Chaucer ever thought of inventing a story. I don't think people were less inventive in those days than they are today. I think they felt that the new shadings brought into the story (...) were enough. Besides, it made things easier for the poet. His hearers or his readers knew what he was going to say. And so they could take in all the differences.» (Borges, 2000: 47-8)

that a story should be written for the sake of the last sentence, and a poem for the sake of the last line. This degenerated into the trick story, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries people have invented all kinds of plots. (...) Those plots, if merely told, are cleverer than the plots of the epics. Yet somehow we feel that there is something artificial about them – or rather, that there is something trivial about them. (Borges, 2000: 50)

As opposed to the entire history of the epic pre-romantic literature, where repetition was the decisive enabling factor for the absorption of the difference, the contemporaneous narrative relied on the practice and on the cult of novelty, with the aim of obtaining a differentiating effect. This has altered, as it may be assumed, the reader's standard of expectations. From this romantic period onwards, the narrative's value was on its surprise effect, to which decisively contributes the mystery achieved in the description of the characters and in the articulation of events<sup>13</sup>. To

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<sup>13</sup> Such a critique directed at Edgar Allan Poe is in sharp contrast with what Jorge Luis Borges defended and practiced for most of his literary career. Both *Poética narrativa de Jorge Luis Borges* (Guerrero, 2008: 25-6) and *Borges's Poe: The Influence and Reinvention of Edgar Allan Poe in Spanish America* (Esplin, 2016: 24-32) demonstrate not only the general influence of the essay «The Philosophy of Composition» in the Borgesian narratology, but also emphasize, in such influence, the centrality of the passage from Poe to which Borges is referring here and which I now quote: «Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen.» (apud Esplin, 2016: 24).

Specific examples of this influence can be glimpsed in the Borgesian tales of fantasy from the decade of the 40s, where the development of plots which converge into a surprise-effect are recurrent. Additionally, in critical pages, such as, for example, in the prologue to *La invención de Morel* [*The Invention of Morel*], Jorge Luis Borges praises, by underlining the application of the techniques of Detective Novel to the formulation of the theory of fantasy literature – an application analyzed by Suzanne Jill Levine in *Guía de Bioy Casares* (Levine, 1982: 24-6) –, the

intrigue the reader as much as possible, for a greater impact of the surprise effect, was what led, according to Jorge Luis Borges, to the use and abuse of formal experimentalism by novelists (and poets). Consequently, these experimental tricks began to be widely known and the form of the novelty itself, as original as its content was, became a commonplace<sup>14</sup>. In other words, the coeval reader experiences the exhaustion of novelty and, with it, the dissatisfaction of his desire, and sees himself as incapable as well to absorb the aesthetic and ethical differences of the narratives, which the repeatability of the epic provided.

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effect in a narrative work of art of the deciphering of a mystery, arguing that Adolfo Bioy Casares «Despliega una Odisea de prodigios que no parecen admitir otra clave que la alucinación o que el símbolo, y plenamente los descifra mediante un solo postulado fantástico pero no sobrenatural» (*in* Bioy Casares, 2012: 12) [«The odyssey of marvels he [Bioy Casares] unfolds seems to have no possible explanation other than hallucination or symbolism, and he uses a single fantastic, but not supernatural, postulate to decipher it.» (Borges, 1999: 244)].

It is also worth mentioning that, a few years before these conferences in Harvard, Jorge Luis Borges showed himself to be, in a prologue to *Los nombres de la muerte*, from María Esther Vázquez, a proponent of this idea from Edgar Allan Poe, although with some reservations: «Edgar Allan Poe sostenía que todo cuento debe escribirse para el último párrafo o acaso para la última línea; esta exigencia puede ser una exageración, pero es la exageración o simplificación de un hecho indudable. Quiere decir que un prefijado desenlace debe ordenar las vicisitudes de la fábula.» (Borges, 1996: 155) [«Edgar Allan Poe held the idea that every tale should be written for the last paragraph or even for the last line; this demand may be an exaggeration, but it is the exaggeration or simplification of an undoubted fact. It means that a prefixed outcome should put order on the vicissitudes of the fable.»]

<sup>14</sup> In the lecture which preceded «The Telling of the Tale», entitled «The Metaphor», Jorge Luis Borges claims: «(...) all literature is made of tricks, and those tricks get – in the long run – found out. And then the reader tires of them.» (Borges, 2000: 30-1)

This effect of obnubilation caused by the excessive cult of novelty is used by Jorge Luis Borges, further ahead in his discourse, to avoid the substantiation of his attempt on forcing the thesis of the historical development of the epic supported by the repetition of patterns:

Regarding the idea I spoke about at the beginning, the idea about there being only a few plots: perhaps we should mention those books where the interest lies not in the plot but in the shifting, in the changing of many plots. I am thinking of the *Arabian Nights*, of *Orlando Furioso*, and so on. (...) Here we may come to the idea I tried to work out in my last lecture, on metaphor – the idea that perhaps all plots belong to only a few patterns. Of course, nowadays people are inventing so many plots that we are blinded by them. But perhaps this fit of inventiveness may flicker, and then we may find that those many plots are but appearances of a few essential plots. This, however, is not for me to discuss. (Borges, 2000: 51)

I shall have the opportunity to show the interest of the hypothesis raised through the Borgesian theory of repetition, sustained by a circular conception of time. I shall not do it, however, without emphasizing that, by problematizing in one fell swoop some examples of medieval and renaissance epic poetry which lead the thesis of narrative unity at the centre of his argumentation to falter, Jorge Luis Borges is, in reality, admitting that one of the central factors which cause the degeneration of the epic – the formal experimentalism, to which I alluded to above – did not have its origin in the novel, but in the epic itself. To confirm this hypothesis, let us consider one of the works mentioned by Borges, *Orlando Furioso*, from Ludovico Ariosto, as well as its renaissance literary context.

*Orlando Furioso*, whose first final version was published in 1532, is in fact a sequel of *Orlando Innamorato*, from Matteo Boiardo, with both works manifesting the influence of the

Carolingian and Arthurian poetry, namely in what concerns the themes (of a romantic character), the nature of the events (predominantly magical), the ethics (chivalrous) of the heroes, and the narrative structure (a web of several autonomous plots, linked to multiple heroes, rather than a single multi-episodic plot which continuously unfolds around a single character). These medieval traditions, boosted by the enormous international success of *Orlando Furioso*, have contributed decisively for the establishment of a peculiar relationship of the poem with the dominating humanistic ideology, making of it «(...) se bem que provisoriamente, no único verdadeiro rival de Homero e Virgílio na concepção da comunicação literária e do sistema de representações da epopeia.» (Alves, 2001: 45) [«(...) even though provisionally, the only rival of Homer and Virgil in the conception of the literary communication and the system of representations of the epopee.»] This rivalry could best be called interference, since what happened in practice to the epic poetry produced in the forty-five subsequent years to the publication of the poem by Ariosto, in the context of the countries of neo-Latin languages, was a combined adoption of this poem and of the classical poems as models for imitation<sup>15</sup>.

Regarding the inquiry of the form, only after 1581, with the publication of *Gerusalemme Liberata* [*Jerusalem Delivered*], by Torquato Tasso, did the narrative unity, formed in accordance with the Aristotelian principles of necessity and verisimilitude, return in force and without interruptions to the renaissance epic scene. Nonetheless, other characteristics of the Ariostesque poem survived the recovery of the Aristotelian poetic norms and the revitalization of

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<sup>15</sup> The creation of epic poems in the renaissance period was done in accordance with an imitative-emulative process. Thomas Greene (1982: 1) characterizes the *imitation* as a perception and a multidisciplinary activity which included pedagogy, grammar, rhetoric, aesthetics, the visual arts, music, historiography, politics and philosophy.

the neoclassic aesthetics by Tasso, with one of the most notable ones being the ironic intertextuality and the self-reflexivity of the discourse<sup>16</sup>. Together with the fifteenth-century Italian works which served as its model<sup>17</sup>, *Orlando Furioso* led to the formation of a kind of series which, according to Ulrich Broich (1990: 8), was later called *medley epics* or *serious-comical romances*, a forerunner of the *heroic-comical* tradition generated in the seventeenth century in Italy, and continued in England, under the designation of *Mock-Epic*, in the end of the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth century.

In sum, if the example of the poem from Ludovico Ariosto can be seen as enough to confirm that the phenomenon to which Jorge Luis Borges calls the degeneration of the epic precedes the appearance of the modern novel, it can also be used to attest once again (now in the context of the renaissance) the hypothesis of a historical development of the epic genre as an irreversible process of hybridization.

What the undertaken analysis does not allow, however, to validate, or even deny, is the hypothesis that *all* the plots are modified versions of a few prototypical plots. Although Jorge

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<sup>16</sup> The ironic and auto-ironic tone of a comical character from *Orlando Furioso* opened up new interpretative perspectives, from what had been until then the model work of the renaissance epic poetry, the *Aeneid* from Virgil. By comparing the reception, in the sixteenth century and in the twentieth century, of the intertextual relation of the *Aeneid* with the ending of *Orlando Furioso*, Joseph Sitterson found a similar interpretative range, which led him to suggest «(...) that Ariosto simultaneously sees the extent to which Vergil's *Aeneid* seeks to be a poem of empire, sees limits to that aspiration, and does not deny one insight in favor of the other; that he achieves the same insights about his own poem; and that, like his readers, he might have mixed feelings about empire and its limits, and might remain uncertain about exactly where the limits are in both cases.» (Sitterson, 1992: 16-17)

<sup>17</sup> I am referring to *Morgante Maggiore*, from Luigi Pulci, and to the aforementioned *Orlando Innamorato*, from Matteo Boiardo, whose respective final versions were printed in 1483 and 1495, respectively.

Luis Borges identifies these prototypical plots and intends to achieve a definition of the constitutive essence of the latter, the verification of the compatibility of *all* the plots with the respective prototypes shows itself to be unfeasible in practice, considering, on the one hand, the interpretative variability to which literary works are subjected to and, on the other hand, the amount of works to be analyzed. As for the rest, Borges is aware that he is solely speculating, and his hypothesis even contains an element susceptible to be understood as contradictory. Such element is contained in the mention to the preceding lecture from this series, «The Metaphor»<sup>18</sup>. On this lecture it is argued, as can be observed in the citation, that the poetic metaphors are variants of a limited number of pattern-metaphors, but it is also admitted that the metaphors may be invented, in other words, may be eccentric in relation to those pattern-metaphors<sup>19</sup>. Transposing this thesis to the theory of narrative, we return to the initial point of Borges' argument, with emphasis on the admission that many (and not *all*) plots are variants of a few prototypes, thus being possible, after all, the invention of plots unaffiliated from such patterns.

However, to question the (un)verifiability of this thesis, or to point out its inconsistencies, is not that important perhaps (as maybe it was not for Jorge Luis Borges). What I am interested

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<sup>18</sup> Jorge Luis Borges produced countless considerations over the concept of *metaphor* in theoretical and fictional texts. Several essays focus on this thematic, amongst which I underline: «La metáfora en la estética de Borges» (1969), from Thorpe Running; e «Borges y la metáfora» (2000), from Mercedes Blanco.

<sup>19</sup> Quoting the last paragraph from «The Metaphor»: «Now we are led to the two major conclusions of this lecture. The first is, of course, that though there are hundreds and indeed thousands of metaphors to be found, they all may be traced back to a few simple patterns. But this need not trouble us, since each metaphor is different. And the second conclusion is that there are metaphors (...) that may not be traced back to definite patterns.» (Borges, 2000: 40-1)

in investigating is what is at stake in the theory of the Borgesian repetition, that may lead to the conception of a thesis which puts emphasis on the pertinence and the functionality(ies) of the contemporaneous epic, in the context of a literary and political modernity. And, contrary to what the theory of prototypical plots may lead one, at first sight, to think, a problem of origin, legitimization, literary authority or even modeling is not being questioned in the thought of Borges. In «The Metaphor», the question of knowing which texts or authors are the founders of the pattern-metaphors is not even raised, and the inquiry about the number (and even, to a certain extent, the definition) of these pattern-metaphors is depreciated and displaced for the reproductive potential of those patterns: «What is really important is the fact not that there are a few patterns, but that those patterns are capable of almost endless variations» (Borges, 2000: 33).

Having come this far, I can claim that the problem which is common to both lectures concerns the relation between literature and time. A problem which has integrated the writing from Jorge Luis Borges since the twenties, but which gained a theoretical dimension with a greater scope in 1953, with the publication of the expanded version of the book *Historia de la eternidad* [*A History of Eternity*]. In the prologue to this second edition, Borges issues a *mea culpa* regarding his interpretation of the Platonic theory of forms, produced in the essay «Historia de la Eternidad» [«A History of Eternity»] (published for the first time in 1936). While proposing that the added texts to this edition, «La metáfora» [«The Metaphor»] and «El Tiempo Circular» [«Circular Time»], rectify such interpretation, Borges declares:

*No sé cómo pude comparar a “inmóviles piezas de museo” las formas de Platón y cómo no entendí, leyendo a Schopenhauer y al Erígena, que éstas son vivas, poderosas y orgánicas. El movimiento, ocupación de sitios distintos en instantes distintos, es inconcebible sin tiempo; asimismo lo es la inmovilidad, ocupación de*

*un mismo lugar en distintos puntos del tiempo. ¿Cómo pude no sentir que la eternidad, anhelada con amor por tantos poetas, es un artificio espléndido que nos libra, siquiera de manera fugaz, de la intolerable opresión de lo sucesivo?*  
(Borges, 2009: 689) [Emphasis in original]

[I do not know how I could compare Plato's forms with "immovable pieces of a museum" and how I did not understand, by reading Schopenhauer and Erigena, that those forms are alive, powerful and organic. The movement, occupation of distinct places in distinct instants, is inconceivable without time; such is the case immovability, the occupation of the same place in distinct points in time. How could I not have felt that eternity, longed for with love by so many poets, is a splendid artifice which sets us free, even if in a fleeting manner, from the intolerable oppression of the successive?]

The commentary to this citation deserves a considerable development. I shall leave the mention to Plato to a moment further ahead of these considerations, inquiring, for now, about the artificial nature of eternity, the release from the oppression of the successive which this concept provides, as well as the loving desire that poets feel for it.

For such inquiry, I resort to the two essays that Jorge Luis Borges introduced in the second edition of the book, starting by «La metáfora» [«The Metaphor»]. This essay is nothing more than a reduced version of the lecture «The Metaphor», with both texts including the same central argument and some common examples – both in what concerns pattern-metaphors as well as variants. Nonetheless, I quote a passage from the essay from 1953 which introduces a very interesting temporal nuance in the question of reproducibility which was raised above: «Equiparar mujeres a flores es otra eternidad o trivialidad;» (Borges, 2009: 718) [«To equate

women with flowers is another eternity or triviality.»]. By classifying, even though disjunctively, the pattern-metaphor simultaneously as eternity and triviality, Borges is implying several ideas. The pattern-metaphor is an eternity because it repeats itself over time, and in the exact extent that it is repeated, it gains the statute of triviality. The given example is perfect, few comparisons are more trivial, in poetry (as in life), than the one of women with flowers. Therefore, the repetition only gains the value of eternity when the variant provides a singular perception which triggers an unparalleled emotional-intellective unity of the text with the reader. If the established relationship is not of this kind, the repetition does not become eternal, instead it gains the statute of repetition of the same thing, namely, of an undifferentiated particularity, incommunicative, that only joins the other particularities to allow itself to be subsumed by a generality, without adding to the latter any productivity in the creation of sense or order.

The eternity materializes itself, therefore, in literature, through a non-identical repetition, to be clear, an analogical repetition of patterns that may extend itself into nearly infinite variants, counting to that end on the complex and multifaceted Borgesian idea of a circular time which, in one stroke, complements the, and resists to, diachronic time. The circular time, a central characteristic of the neo-baroque aesthetics of Jorge Luis Borges<sup>20</sup>, without denying the irreversibility of the becoming, resists the idea of progressivism, whether the latter is political or civilizational<sup>21</sup>. In order to substantiate the ways in which this resistance operates, let me

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<sup>20</sup> In *Barroco e Modernidade*, Irlemar Chiampi (1998: 89-92) dedicates a subchapter to the analysis, with a neo-baroque perspective, of the Borgesian tale «El Milagro Secreto» [«The Secret Miracle»] (1943).

<sup>21</sup> Some of the ideas postulated on this study around the circular conceptions from Jorge Luis Borges can be found to have an affinity with the considerations from Saúl Yurkievich in «Borges, poeta circular» (1968), who writes that: «Quise titular mi ensayo de otro modo: Borges en su paulatina anulación del presente. (...) Produce un alejamiento

comment the passage which concludes the essay «El Tiempo Circular» [«Circular Time»], published in the midst of World War II, in the year of 1943: «En tempos de auge la conjetura de que la existencia del hombre es una cantidad constante, invariable, puede entristecer o irritar; en tiempos que declinan (como éstos), es la promesa de que ningún oprobio, ninguna calamidad, ningún dictador podrá empobrecernos.» (Borges, 2009: 729) [«In times of ascendancy, the conjecture that man's existence is a constant, unvarying quantity can sadden or irritate us; in times of decline (such as the present), it holds out the assurance that no ignominy, no calamity, no dictator, can impoverish us.» (Borges, 1999: 228)] The reference from Borges to man in terms of constant and unvarying quantity is an inference of two ideas associated to circular time.

On the one hand, when time circulates – in the sense of the aforementioned analogical repetition –, it becomes an integral part of man instead of a kind of stage where the events unfold diachronically – a visual metaphor of the Kantian time: an *a priori* form of sensitive knowledge. Therefore, circular time is constituted by the affirmation of the present as the only form of real

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creciente de la actualidad, una renuncia a lo novedoso, una resistencia al cambio. Y no se trata de esclerosis, de envejecimiento, sino de una concepción del mundo (es decir, una estética, una metafísica y una ética) que condiciona no sólo su pensamiento sino su percepción y su representación de la realidad» (Yurkievich, 1968: 34) [«I wanted to start my essay differently: Borges in his gradual annulment of the present. (...) He produces an increasing estrangement from current events, a renunciation from novelty, a resistance to change. And it is not a matter of sclerosis, of aging, but rather of a conception of the world (that is to say, concerning aesthetics, metaphysics and ethics) which curtails not only his thinking but also his perception and his representation of reality»].

life, denying the past and the future of any reality<sup>22</sup>. The lived experience is at the same time an anticipation of the future and an actualization of the past.

The second idea associated with circular time is nothing but a logical deduction of the previous one and consists in the denial of all novelty. If all the human experiences are analogues, then each singular experience of man is, to a certain extent, the experience of all mankind. The validity of this proposition implies, paradoxically, the experience itself of novelty, or, to put it in better terms, the exhaustion of the experience of novelty (as the one which Jorge Luis Borges mentions above in regard to the contemporaneous novel):

Marco Aurelio afirma la analogía, no la identidad, de los muchos destinos individuales. Afirma que cualquier lapso – un siglo, un año, una sola noche, tal vez el inasible presente – contiene íntegramente la historia. En su forma extrema esa conjetura es de fácil refutación: un sabor difiere de otro sabor, diez minutos de dolor físico no equivalen a diez minutos de álgebra. Aplicada a grandes períodos, a los setenta años de edad que el Libro de los Salmos nos adjudica, la conjetura es verosímil o tolerable. Se reduce a afirmar que el número de percepciones, de

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<sup>22</sup> On this stage of his argumentation, Jorge Luis Borges quotes Schopenhauer: «“La forma de aparición de la voluntad es sólo el presente, no el pasado ni el porvenir: éstos no existen más que para el concepto y por el encadenamiento de la conciencia, sometida al principio de razón. Nadie ha vivido en el pasado, nadie vivirá en el futuro; el presente es la forma de toda vida” (*El mundo como voluntad y representación*, primer tomo, 54)» (Borges, 2009: 729) [«The form of the phenomenon of the Will is really only the *present*, not the future or the past. Future and past are only in the concept, exist only in the connection and continuity of knowledge in so far as this follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the *present* alone is the form of all life. (*The World as Will and Representation* I, 54)» (Borges, 1999: 227)]

emociones, de pensamientos, de vicisitudes humanas es limitado y que antes de la muerte lo agotaremos. (Borges, 2009: 729)

[Marcus Aurelius affirms the analogous, but not identical, nature of multifarious human destinies. He affirms that any time span – a century, a year, a single night, perhaps the ungraspable present – contains the entirety of history. In its extreme form, this conjecture is easily refuted: one taste is different from another, ten minutes of physical pain are not the same as ten minutes of algebra. Applied to lengthier periods, to the seventy years of age that the Book of Psalms allots us, the conjecture is plausible and tolerable. It becomes no more than an affirmation that the number of human perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and vicissitudes is limited, and that before dying we will exhaust them all. (Borges, 1999: 228)]

This citation makes differential conscience of time quite clear: while repetition presupposes a long time, that is, a conceptualizing conscience of an extended, multiple, experience of life, the brief time only allows the access to the immediacy of the particular, disconnected experience, where the multiplicity is multiplied, without man being able to access, through it, an abstract dimension of sense.

These two consciences of time are the ones which are being discussed, respectively, in the two theories of the Borgesian contemporaneous narrative, the one of repetition and the one of novelty. The (subtle) evidence of this assertion appears at the end of «The Telling of the Tale», already in the midst of the prophetism of the resurgence in force of the epic, when Jorge Luis Borges declares: «I have been thinking about the subject only rather late in life;» (Borges, 2000: 54). If the second half of the phrase indicates that the time where Borges moves himself is the long one, that is, presumes his vast experience with the act of reading, the first part of the phrase

«I have been thinking (...)» shows that that time which allows access to eternity – the singular experience of the poetic repetition – is also a slow time, of a weighted meditation. It is the time of love, whereupon the slow accumulation of the textual representations provides an addition of meaning (the absorption of the differences) to the life of the reader and vice-versa (the reader also adds meaning to the texts – a meaning which overflows from the latter), forming, thus, an untimely unit, de-multiplier of meaning, between subject and object<sup>23</sup>.

What has been exposed provides an important contribute to understand the change in the positioning of Jorge Luis Borges in relation to the Platonic theory of forms. Nevertheless, before making considerations about the substance of the problem, I should indicate that the version from 1936 of the essay «Historia de la eternidad» [«A History of Eternity»] was left intact, despite the *mea culpa* in the prologue from the second edition of the homonym book, from 1953. There is no interest in assessing the motives which led Borges not to rewrite the essay and to opt to add two other essays, whose function would be to correct that first one. However, it is relevant to point out that his gesture was quite correct, even considering that Plato is read, in «Historia de la eternidad» [«A History of Eternity»], through the work of Plotinus, *The Ennads*.

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<sup>23</sup> In 1930, Jorge Luis Borges was already postulating, synthetically, this relation between slow time, love and eternity (although this concept, as well as the concept of repetition which supports it, were not exactly the same ones from the fifties), in the fictional biography of *Evaristo Carriego*: «Yo pienso que la sucesión cronológica es inaplicable a Carriego, hombre de conversada vida y paseada. Enumerarlo, seguir el orden de sus días, me parece imposible; mejor buscar su eternidad, sus repeticiones. Sólo una descripción intemporal, morosa con amor, puede devolvémos lo.» (Borges, 2009: 224) [«I believe that a chronological account is inappropriate to Carriego, a man whose life was made up of walks and conversations. To reduce him to a list, to trace the order of his days, seems to me impossible; far better seek his eternity, his patterns. Only a timeless description, lingering with love, can bring him back to us.» (Borges, 1984: 55)]

The central idea of the citations from the work of Plotinus presented by Jorge Luis Borges consists in the affirmation of a single firm reality, the reality of the intelligible forms. As in Plato's work, these archetypal forms, of a divine origin, are immutable and are tangled in another archetype, the one of eternity (where there is no past, present nor future), and the fragmentary time of the human soul, as well as the material multiplicity which the latter inhabits, they limit themselves to be imperfect and transitory copies, or simulations of that true Reality. Thereby, the rational coldness of the stable unity of those archetypal forms anticipates and regulates the multiplicity of the matter, which, in the case of human life, is ruled by passions. Taking into account this (correct) characterization of the Platonic intelligible forms, Borges calls them «*inmóviles piezas de museo*» (Borges, 2009: 689) [«"immovable pieces of a museum"»]. Also, he considers them a mistake, thus proposing an inversion of two postulates from those classical thinkers: on the one hand, he declares eternity as an image made out from the substance of time – a concept which is not a determination for him, but rather a (metaphysical) problem; on the other hand, he confers to matter itself the statute of ultimate reality, from which the intelligible forms are nothing more than erratic or imperfect representations, even though of a practical utility.

In the prologue to the edition from 1953, quoted above, Jorge Luis Borges shows regret for not having understood the movement, vitality, potency and organicity of the Platonic forms. The Argentine writer evokes the works from Schopenhauer and Erigena as the inspiring sources for his paradigm shift. However, the analysis of the Platonic thought itself, enlightened by the interpretation carried out above of the essays which Borges elects as corrections of «*Historia de la eternidad*» [«A History of Eternity»], should clarify the evolution of Borges' interpretation of Plato's theory of forms.

Moving therefore to Plato, I reiterate that I do not glimpse any major error in the Borgesian analysis. The criticism which may be aimed at Jorge Luis Borges is in the negligence of a crucial problem in the Platonic thought: if one can get insight about the material world only through the knowledge of the intelligible forms, Borges did not address, in «Historia de la eternidade» [«A History of Eternity»], the way on how Plato conceived the possibility of gaining knowledge about those invisible and incorporeal Realities. Effectively, what was grasped from the citations of Plotinus as an explanatory hypothesis – the simple existence of the divine world of forms – is not enough for itself. It is necessary to admit the knowledge of the intelligible forms separated from the knowledge provided by the senses, which only access the material world. According to the Platonic theory of the immortality of the soul, the latter would have, before birth, contemplated the intelligible forms while it followed the parade of the gods. By incarnating, the soul forgets such incorporeal archetypes, but due to their copies it may slowly and incrementally recover the remembrance of them, moved by an erotic desire for Wisdom (philosophy). Seen in light of this process, the Platonic anamnesis performs a similar movement to the one defended by Borges in the essay being analyzed: it is from the multiplicity of the material experience that the unity of the intelligible forms is investigated. This does not shake the primacy of unity over multiplicity, with the anamnesis having a reductionist function, but it is also important to point out another elementary function of this process of knowledge: the interpretative one. The construction of a retrospective sense is done with basis on the interpretation of the data from conscience. Since this data is subject to alterity, the concepts formed from its interpretation are, therefore, progressively modified, gain nuances, are rethought, redefined, and even repudiated.

There is, therefore, undecidability in the thought of Plato, which justifies Jorge Luis Borges' faltering and even the conscious upholding of his error. This allows me the exciting possibility of postulating a thesis on the contemporaneous epic, preambulating it with a reflexive draft about the term *epic*, related to a limited perspective, constituted from some examples with which I have elective affinities, of the modern artistic reality.

Thus, I propose to use the term epic in a manner which goes beyond the ideas of genre, thinking it as an open concept, always variable, since its value is not based on a definition, but rather on a relation with other concepts which is singularized in its practical uses, and supposes common codes of understanding which are spatially and temporally limited. To illustrate what has been exposed with examples analyzed in this subchapter, the epic assumed codes of understanding and fulfilled diverse functions in Ancient Greece, in the pre-Tassian Renaissance, in the Italian and English comical traditions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and also in the modern tradition. And it is not enough to say, as Mikhail Bakhtin did, that the epic has a stable foundation in the Aristotelian theoretical principles, since the rich renaissance European epical production, in the period between the Petrarchan *Africa* and the aforementioned Torquato Tasso, was done in ignorance of such principles.

Considered in these terms, I see the epic as a concept immiscible in, or applicable to, several mediums of artistic expression, as cinema (Sergei Eisenstein, Sergio Leone, Glauber Rocha), music (Richard Wagner, Sergei Prokofiev, Ennio Morricone), drama (Bertold Brecht), painting (Diego Rivera, Pablo Picasso), and, of course, literature, where it is pervasive to (almost?) all the (sub)genres and discursive modes: in the serious mode, the essay (Euclides da Cunha), the chronicle (Gabriel García Márquez), the lyrical verse (Walt Whitman, Fernando Pessoa), the classic narrative in verse (José Hernández, Derek Walcott), the narrative in prose

(Herman Melville, Joseph Conrad, Mario Vargas Llosa, Roberto Bolaño); in the comical mode, or comical-serious, whether of a parodic and/or satirical nature, the poem in prose (Isidore Ducasse), the narrative in verse (Lord Byron, Gonçalo M. Tavares), the narrative in prose (James Joyce, Mário de Andrade).

I believe that a creative and cultured mind would be able to affiliate, with greater or lesser difficulty, this panoply of examples to the Borgesian epic prototypes. It would be harder to do it if such comparison was done having the purpose of achieving eventual determinations of the essences of the aforementioned prototypes. My proposal, therefore, falls in a decentralization of the epic, in accordance with the reflection about the term which has been carried out. To see in each of those examples an analogical repetition (with the character of eternity) amplifies, due to a simultaneous movement of continuity and discontinuity, the concept of epic, although the comparison can be made with models that the writer decided to use, or with others chosen by the reader, and not necessarily with one of the Homeric epopees or with the *Bible* (even though a major influence of these plots in the world's narrative imaginary must be admitted). Let it be remembered that the character of eternity in the analogical repetition does not value the repetitions more than it does the differences, whether these are formal, relative to ethics and justice, the substance of heroism, or others. In order for work's epic character to be confirmed, it is necessary much more than just to validate its descendancy from a model epic narrative. The work must establish a singular, unprecedented, relationship with the reader by inducing them to a rereading both of the chosen models<sup>24</sup> and of the tradition from which the concept of epic is

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<sup>24</sup> This is the main thesis of the Borgesian essay «Kafka y sus precursores» (Borges, 2009b: 80-1) [«Kafka and His Precursors» (Borges, 1999: 363-5)].

abstracted. In other words, the epic work should allow itself to be read, at a certain extent, as an opposition, a deviation, a perversion of the models and the epic canon from where it emerges, forcing them to a reinterpretation, a reconfiguration and a refunctionalization.

## 2.2. Order and Disorder in Contemporary Fiction: a Sketch of the Borgesian *Narratology*

Let it be clear, if it is not already, that the path which I intend to follow in this study is not exactly the same to which Jorge Luis Borges points towards in «The Telling of Tale», that is, the one concerned with a return to the classic epic, but rather the one which is possible to apprehend from probing the aporias of his thought. If what henceforth results from this, in what regards the contemporaneous narrative, is a hybrid development and an analogical repetition of the ancient epic, then it seems to me that it is quite relevant to discuss Borges' theoretical texts on the contemporaneous narrative, even if the concept of epic does not occupy a central and explicit space in these texts. I reaffirm that I do not intend to treat the contemporaneous epic as a genre, but rather as a functional concept, a mode yes, but of postulating and thinking certain problems, which are simultaneously artistic and political. A mode of, in the construction of an artifice which is both repeated and differentiated at the same time, setting into motion the desire of spreading the forces which inhabit the world, of inducing metamorphoses, of testing the triggering of new relations (in language and between men), of moving away from the prescriptive moral and of asserting ethics and justice as problems which are in permanent re-equation, and of doing all this while introducing order into the world.

In fact, any attentive reader of the work of Jorge Luis Borges cannot but recognize in its entirety, if not an obsession, at least a keen interest in the concepts of *order* and its negative,

*disorder*, with particular emphasis in the writings of the 1930s and the 1940s. Borges' commentaries connect these concepts with visions on: language and its uses; the proceedings which are specifically literary (and cinematic); and social organization. More than often, such commentaries articulate the connections between the prisms of these concepts. Through a critical review of some Borgesian texts, this subchapter intends to problematize the concepts of order and disorder in contemporary narrative literature, taking into consideration yet another antagonism which Borges establishes between the modern traditions of epic roots (which include the adventure novel, the fantasy novel, the detective novel, the Western, etc.) and the modern traditions of non-epic roots (such as the psychological novel, the realist novel and the novel of manners).

In his 1932 essay, «El arte narrativo y la magia» [«Narrative Art and Magic»], Jorge Luis Borges proposes an analysis of the proceedings of novel writing. Claiming that such proceedings are scarcely advertised, Borges ascribes this fact to «la casi inextricable complejidad de los artificios novelescos, que es laborioso desprender de la trama.» (Borges, 2009: 401) [«the novel's many complexities are not easily disentangled from the techniques of plot.» (Borges, 1999: 80)] Actually, this very same complexity is not simplified in the Borgesian work. Not that his analyzes are not illuminating, but they are often elliptic, finding sometimes a proper development in another essay or short story among his works. In other words, one of the difficulties in understanding Borges' ideas on the proceedings of narrative writing resides in the absence of a systematized thought. One might therefore think that it is enough to compile such reflections and to organize them orderly for the sake of creating a treaty on the subject. However, this is far from being the best research method, for his ideas are not always prone to be easily associated with continuity or to exhibit an unequivocal coherence. It is necessary to closely

identify Borges' referents in order to understand the reasons why he uses certain concepts, at different moments, in what is apparently a contradictory manner.

Having outlined the problem in need of research and after due warning, let us return to the aforementioned «El arte narrativo y la magia» [«Narrative Art and Magic»]. As a corollary of the analysis of some passages from *Life and Death of Jason* and *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*, two adventure narratives authored by William Morris and Edgar Allan Poe, respectively, Jorge Luis Borges postulates causality as the central problem of the novel. He distinguishes between two causal processes of writing narratives: the natural process and the magical process.

The natural process represents «Una de las variedades del género, la morosa novela de caracteres, finge o dispone una concatenación de motivos que se proponen no diferir de los del mundo real» (Borges, 2009: 404-5) [«One kind of novel, the ponderous psychological variety, attempts to frame an intricate chain of motives similar to those of real life» (Borges, 1999:80)]. Due to Jorge Luis Borges's vision of a chaotic real world, this natural process continuously results in an endless and uncontrollable number of operations. In Borges's mind, however, the novel should not be natural, but artificial. As opposed to the disorder of the real world, the novel «debe ser un juego preciso de vigilancias, ecos y afinidades. Todo episodio, en un cuidadoso relato, es de proyección ulterior» (Borges, 2009: 405) [«should be a rigorous game of attentions, echoes, and affinities. Every episode in a careful narrative is a premonition»]. The magical process allows this to happen, since it obeys a general law: «la de la simpatía, que postula un vínculo inevitable entre cosas distantes» (Borges, 2009: 405) [«the law of sympathy, which postulates an inevitable link between distant things»]. That is, it obeys not just natural laws, but also the laws of imagination. The frenetic and precise causality of this process makes the resulting plot fully reasoned, limited, and teleological.

The above-mentioned processes are implicit in Jorge Luis Borges's prologue (1940) to Adolfo Bioy Casares's *La invención de Morel* [*The Invention of Morel*]. The comparison between psychological and adventure novels relies a great deal on a similar rationality. Since the psychological novel tends to portray the real world with its infinite possibilities, it is shapeless. Its intrinsic and boundless freedom is equivalent to total disorder. For Borges, the psychological novel:

*prefiere que olvidemos su carácter de artificio verbal y hace de toda vana precisión (o de toda lánguida vaguedad) un nuevo toque verosímil. Hay páginas, hay capítulos de Marcel Proust que son inaceptables como invenciones: a los que, sin saberlo, nos resignamos como a lo insípido y ocioso de cada día. La novela de aventuras, en cambio, no se propone como una transcripción de la realidad: es un objeto artificial que no sufre ninguna parte injustificada. El temor de incurrir en la mera variedad sucesiva del Asno de Oro, de los siete viajes de Simbad o del Quijote, le impone un riguroso argumento. (in Bioy Casares, 2012: 11) [Emphasis in original]*

[have us forget that it is a verbal artifice, for it uses each vain precision (or each languid obscurity) as a new proof of verisimilitude. There are pages, there are chapters in Marcel Proust that are unacceptable as inventions, and we unwittingly resign ourselves to them as we resign ourselves to the insipidity and the emptiness of each day. The adventure story, on the other hand, does not propose to be a transcription of reality: it is an artificial object, no part of which lacks justification. It must have a rigid plot if it is not to succumb to the mere sequential

variety of *The Golden Ass*, the seven voyages of Sinbad, or the *Quixote*. (Borges, 1999: 243-4)]

This quote deserves to be unpacked. In the first sentence, it is said that the psychological novel, despite aiming at giving a sense of reality through the method applied in its construction, shall never stop from being a verbal artifice. Words are solely a part of the world, carrying out limited and specific functions. In view of this fact, if a verbal artifice intends to provide a representation of the world, such representation cannot configure but a radical opposition to what the world is in it-self. The precision which realist writers intend to obtain is futile, since every event is strictly motivated by an infinite set of causes, with any description thus demanding a compulsory selectivity<sup>25</sup>, no matter how detailed that description is. In the case that this selectivity is not judicious and focuses on unrelated events which, instead of producing the

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<sup>25</sup> See the opening paragraph of «La poesía gauchesca» (1931) [«Gauchesque Poetry»]: «Es fama que le preguntaron a Whistler cuánto tiempo había requerido para pintar uno de sus *nocturnos* y que respondió: “Toda mi vida”. Con igual rigor pudo haber dicho que había requerido todos los siglos que precedieron al momento en que lo pintó. De esa correcta aplicación de la ley de causalidad se sigue que el menor de los hechos presupone el inconcebible universo e, inversamente, que el universo necesita del menor de los hechos. Investigar las causas de un fenómeno, siquiera de un fenómeno tan simple como la literatura gauchesca, es proceder en infinito; básteme la mención de *dos* causas que juzgo principales.» (Borges, 2009: 359) [«It is widely known that Whistler was once asked how long it had taken to paint one of his *nocturnes* and that he answered: “All my life”. With equal rigor he could have said that he had needed all the centuries which preceded the moment when he painted it. Of that correct application of the law of causality follows that the smallest of deeds presupposes the inconceivable universe and, inversely, that the universe needs the smallest of deeds. To investigate the causes of a phenomenon, even of a phenomenon as simple as Gauchesque literature, is to proceed infinitely; the mention of *two* causes which I believe are some of the main ones is enough for me.»]

impression of a set, produce the impression of dispersion (filling the novel with “loose ends” and “dead ends”), then it is most probable that the feelings of *languor* and *vagueness* accompany the reading of the text. For Jorge Luis Borges, however, these are precisely the impressions that literature should avoid inducing on the reader. What remains of the quote proves it.

In the second sentence, Jorge Luis Borges claims that Marcel Proust's literature is unacceptable, but not as a whole, solely certain pages and chapters. It is hereby unequivocally shown that Borges is more focused on an issue of writing methodology rather than literary genre, of form rather than content<sup>26</sup> – in fact, only by observing the narrative's formal proceedings is it possible to establish any parallel between *À la recherche du temps perdu* [*In Search of Lost Time*] and an adventure novel. What is unacceptable as literature, as *invention* (even though it is

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<sup>26</sup> In Alfred Mac Adam's essay on Adolfo Bioy Casares, «Satire and Self-portrait» (1977), he points out some insufficiencies concerning Jorge Luis Borges's dialectics, namely the fact that, at the time he wrote these texts («El arte narrativo y la magia» [«Narrative Art and Magic»] and the prologue to Casares's *La invención de Morel* [*The Invention of Morel*]), no significant contemporary authors were writing orthodox psychological novels anymore: «(...) it is clear that the psychological, realist novel had been on the wane since Flaubert. The moment novelists gave up their claims to be historians, the moment character ceased to be linked to history and began to exist as an excuse for itself, the orthodox novel no longer held hegemony among the other classes of extended narrative. While it is true that an author like Faulkner could revive it in *Sartoris*, the 'novel' in the second half of the nineteenth century was tending toward either satire or romance. Such dissimilar writers as Melville, George Eliot, Zola, and Machado de Assis do have one thing in common: they reduce society's role in their works to that of setting; they explore character either as a social phenomenon or as the result of a given set of circumstances, such as biological inheritance or property tenure.» (Mac Adam, 1977: 32) Here it is demonstrated that Mac Adam did not understand that Borges is concerned, above all, with the formal characteristics of the psychological narrative, not with psychology per se. The opportunity shall arise, in this study, to show how Borges is an admirer of literary works with a marked psychological density.

one), is everything which transports the reader to an atmosphere of *insipid* realism, because it is senseless, it makes him live literature *resignedly*, just as everyday life. The magical process, of which one can easily deduce, according to the last two sentences of the quote, that the adventure novel relies on, sets in motion a constructive inventive force, the creation of unique meanings, the conversion into a conceptual possibility of what is improbable and impossible in reality, inducing therefore on the reader a resistance to such resignation. The application of this method, which creates the sensation of verisimilitude through a causality which, rather than obeying the laws which govern the real world, occurs through an effect of nomination, leads to a literature which raises itself up as a snippet of order and vitality in an amorphous and anemic daily life.

The reading of both these Borgesian texts may be expanded and clarified through «La supersticiosa ética del lector» [«The Superstitious Ethics of the Reader»] (1931). In this text, Jorge Luis Borges criticizes the two aesthetic criteria of his contemporary literary scene: style and perfection.

Firstly, Jorge Luis Borges accuses the literary agents of giving primacy to a stylistic criterion, which leads to «a una distraída lectura de atenciones parciales» (Borges, 2009: 381) [«an inattentive reading that favors certain affections» (Borges, 1999: 52)], to the detriment of «la eficacia del mecanismo» (Borges, 2009: 381) [«the efficacy of the mechanism»]. In his defense of *Don Quijote* [*Don Quixote*] against its detractors, Borges claims that the greatest value (and perhaps the only irrefutable one) of the Cervantian work is the *psychological* one, adding that «basta revisar unos párrafos del *Quijote* para sentir que Cervantes no era estilista (...) y que le interesaban demasiado los destinos de Quijote y Sancho para dejarse distraer por su propia voz.» (Borges, 2009: 381) [«one need only review a few paragraphs of the *Quixote* to

realize that Cervantes was not a stylist (...) and that he was too interested in the destinies of Don Quixote and Sancho to allow himself to be distracted by his own voice» (Borges, 1999: 53)].

The second aesthetic criterion which Jorge Luis Borges rejects is the one concerned with perfection. Borges' arguments are focused on the idea of text where no word can be changed, under the penalty of a degradation of that same text. More specifically, the alterations would end up having the effect of erasing the lateral meanings and shades of signification of the text itself. As a consequence, the hypothetical perfect text is subject to a greater wear, since it does not benefit from the imperfections of a text with the vocation for immortality, namely the imperfections which lead to: the errata, the approximated versions, the distracted readings and the misunderstandings, which extend the text beyond itself, in time, in space and in the significance, without the loss of the soul of the text. The imperfections, when issued voluntarily, are usually the proof that «la pasión del tema tratado manda en el escritor, y eso es todo.» (Borges, 2009: 383) [«the writer's overriding passion is his subject, and that is all.» (Borges, 1999: 54)]

Three meaningful inferences regarding narrative art arise out of this recension.

The first and most obvious inference is the Borgesian refusal of any aestheticization of language. In other words, narrative art is not concerned with any concept of beauty or aesthetically recommendable adequacy of expression to what is expressed through language, with the latter being seen as the sole credible element of analysis to any explanation one may wish to give regarding what happens in the construction process of meaning.

The second point of analysis concerns Borges' commentary on Don Quijote [Don Quixote], which becomes more complex read in comparison with other Borgesian commentaries on this very same work, such as the one included in the prologue to *La invención de Morel* [*The*

*Invention of Morel*], quoted above. Even though Borges considers it an adventure novel, *Don Quijote* [*Don Quixote*] does not possess a rigorous plot from the causal point of view, merely being constituted by a successive variety of episodes. The pairing of these two comments regarding the Cervantian masterpiece allows us to observe that Borges maintains the conviction that the joint (emotional) effect of a narrative, associated with the predominance of the action (even if it constitutes an imperfect plot – endowed with an inaccurate causality), is sufficient to guarantee its functioning.

A question which arises from the pairing of these two commentaries is concerned with understanding how an adventure novel may have a psychological value, above any other, since the adventure/fantasy novel and the psychological/realist novel are, as stated above, antagonistic. In «Magias parciales del “Quijote”» (1949) [«Partial Magic in the “Quixote”»] Jorge Luis Borges declares that a collation of *Don Quijote* [*Don Quixote*] with other classics of literature allows for its categorization as a realist novel, even though its rendition of realism is essentially different from the nineteenth century’s realism. The difference between both types of realism is that nineteenth-century writers see the real as poetic, while for Miguel de Cervantes the real is prosaic and the poetic is imaginary. For Borges, Cervantes impregnates his realism with magical proceedings, mostly through the parody of chivalric romances, which he ironically recreates, criticizing them while simultaneously paying them homage. In the conversations with Antonio Carrizo, carried out in 1979, Borges comments his essay in the following manner:

«Magias parciales del “Quijote”» se refiere, precisamente, a esas magias parciales, al hecho de que en el *Quijote*, sobre todo en la segunda parte, hay continuamente hechos mágicos. Por ejemplo: los personajes han leído la primera parte; los que parecen enemigos de don Quijote, son sus cómplices: los duques. Es

decir, no es una novela realista. Es una novela entre realista y fantástica. Creo que lo admirable es eso. (Borges / Carrizo, 1982: 254)

[«Partial Magic in the “Quixote”» refers, precisely, to that partial magic, and it is a fact that in the *Quixote*, mostly in the second part, there are constantly magical deeds. For example: the characters had read the first part, those who seem to be enemies of Don Quixote, are his accomplices: the dukes. In other words, it is not a realist novel. It is a novel which is between the realist and the fantasy genres. I believe that is what is admirable in it.]

Jorge Luis Borges' indecisions and contradictions regarding the categorization of the Cervantine work are nothing more than the acknowledgment of the hybridity of the latter, and allow us to understand how he conceives the inclusion of reality in the contemporaneous adventure novel. The latter, although it does not resort to the antinomic technique of Miguel de Cervantes<sup>27</sup>, and in the opposite direction of *Don Quijote* [*Don Quixote*], may parody the

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<sup>27</sup> The antinomy of prosaic real / poetic imaginary is a recurring theme in the studies on *Don Quijote* [*Don Quixote*]. From a formal point of view, the use of antinomy as a literary technique is a proceeding quite common in the literary periods of the Renaissance and of the Baroque. Insofar as the psychologization of literature is manifested through it, Jorge Luis Borges seems to be suspicious of such proceeding: «A *Shakespeare*, a *Cervantes*, les agrada la antinómica idea de una muchacha que, sin disminución de hermosura, logra pasar por hombre; ese móvil no funciona con nosotros...» (in Bioy Casares, 2012: 11) [«Shakespeare and Cervantes were both delighted by the antinomian idea of a girl who, without losing her beauty, could be taken for a man; but we find that idea unconvincing now.» (Borges, 1999: 244)] Further below the technique used by Borges to introduce reality in the magical process shall be exposed.

psychologizing discourse and undermine the known techniques<sup>28</sup> of the realist novels, as well as satirize the real that these very same novels attempt to reproduce. It is in that sense that we may understand the notable admiration which Borges has for literary works with a profound relation with everyday or psychological realities, such as *The Trial*, from Franz Kafka, or *Ulysses*, from James Joyce.

The third conclusion is that the construction process of meaning has a double inseparable strand: the *narrative mechanism* works insofar as the text, as a whole, produces an effect which,

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<sup>28</sup> By undermining some of the recurring techniques in the realist novels, Jorge Luis Borges compromises the tacit agreements (rooted in notions of *credibility*, of *truth*, of *mimesis*, of *diachrony*, etc.) that these narratives establish with the reader. In «*The Book of Sand and Shakespeare's Memory*», Efraín Kristal catalogues some of the most recurring Borgesian tricks, underlining how the ingenuity with which the latter are used for the development of the plot leads the reader to accept other type of agreements, rooted in other notions (of *absurd*, of *unlikeliness*, of *fictionality*, etc.): «Many readers of Borges's signature tales were likely to accept his most preposterous narrative twists and turns because they were outmaneuvered by a writer with many tricks up his sleeve, including the false start and the use of unreliable narrators with a limited, perverse, or distorted understanding of unaccountable situations. Borges was also masterful in his ability to endow absurd objects with plausibility by presenting them in stories with an array of erudite and apocryphal sources, or in elaborate and intriguing plots in which matters of life and death endow his impossibilities with an air of necessity. In stories like "The Garden of Forking Paths" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," studied ambiguities, lacunae, and contradictions abound; for that reason they have lent themselves to a myriad of engaging but incompatible philosophical projections which tend to reveal more about a critic's theoretical commitments than about the stories themselves. The last stories do not allow for projections of this kind with the same ease. In them, the reader is presented with Borges's impossibilities without subterfuges, and is invited to consider the consequences of situations that could only take place in fictional realms. In "A Weary Man's Utopia," for example, time travel happens without explanation so that the reader can consider an encounter between a man of the past and a man of the future.» (Kristal, 2013: 161)

nevertheless, suffers variations in accordance with the meanings that the imperfections keep opening. Consequently, for Jorge Luis Borges, the narrative is not limited to the fulfillment of a particular utilitarian function for the reader. Constituted by a profound human reality – conceptual, rigorous, intelligent and rational, whilst being passionate, subjective and imperfect (and, due to that, a differentiator) –, the narrative does not have a sole meaning but rather provides access to meaning, creates meaning(s) – it keeps the construction process of meaning in a continuous operation. For that to succeed, the reader has a crucial role. Borges does not assign a greater importance to the effect(s) that each sole literary work exerts over the reader than to the effects that each reader, through the singularity of each reading, exerts over the work<sup>29</sup>.

Notwithstanding these considerations, it is granted that the last two sentences of the recension of «La supersticiosa ética del lector» [«The Superstitious Ethics of the Reader»] devised above are prone to raise several questionings regarding the nature and necessity of imperfections in the narrative. For, when one thinks about the consequences of a vague and misplaced word in a literary text, one thinks, firstly, in degradation, and not in an improvement of the overall set effect, let alone immortalization. Nonetheless, Jorge Luis Borges associates degradation to the perfect word, which cannot be replaced in the context of the literary work, and

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<sup>29</sup> In the first lecture given in Harvard College, «The Riddle of Poetry», Jorge Luis Borges evokes Bishop Berkeley, remarking that «he wrote that the taste of the apple is neither in the apple itself – the apple can not taste itself – nor in the mouth of the eater. It requires a contact between them. The same thing happens to a book or to a collection of books, to a library. For what is a book in itself? A book is a physical object in a world of physical objects. It is a set of dead symbols. And then the right reader comes along, and the words – or rather the poetry behind the words, for the words themselves are mere symbols – spring to life, and we have a resurrection of the word.» (Borges, 2000: 3-4)

that, for this very reason, wears away due to operating in a limited interpretative spectrum. Consequently, only imperfections may guarantee the interpretative differentiation of a text, and must be introduced in the latter consciously. But how to do so without writing carelessly and undermining the set effect of the mechanism? The answer to this question might be conceived starting with the essay «La postulación de la realidad» (1928) [«The Postulation of Reality»], of which a passage must here be quoted:

la imprecisión es tolerable o verosímil en la literatura, porque a ella propendemos siempre en la realidad. La simplificación conceptual de estados complejos es muchas veces una operación instantánea. El hecho mismo de percibir, de atender, es de orden selectivo: toda atención, toda fijación de nuestra conciencia, comporta una deliberada omisión de lo no interesante. Vemos y oímos a través de recuerdos, de temores, de previsiones. En lo corporal, la inconciencia es una necesidad de los actos físicos. Nuestro cuerpo sabe articular este difícil párrafo, sabe tratar con escaleras, con nudos, con pasos a nivel, (...), sabe dormir, sabe tal vez matar: nuestro cuerpo, no nuestra inteligencia. Nuestro vivir es una serie de adaptaciones, vale decir, una educación del olvido (Borges, 2009: 395)

[imprecision is tolerable or plausible in literature because we almost always tend toward it in reality. The conceptual simplification of complex states is often an instantaneous operation. The very fact of perceiving, of paying attention, is selective; all attention, all focusing of our consciousness, involves a deliberate omission of what is not interesting. We see and hear through memories, fears, expectations. In bodily terms, unconsciousness is a necessary condition of physical acts. Our body knows how to articulate this difficult paragraph, how to

contend with stairways, knots, overpasses (...), how to sleep, and perhaps how to kill: our body, not our intellect. (...) For us, living is a series of adaptations, which is to say, an education in oblivion. (Borges, 1999: 61)]

The first inference which emerges from the quote is related to the title of the essay. For even though it implies invention and artificiality in its conception, narrative literature is not strictly opposed to reality after all: it imitates the manner how human beings perceive the external matter and, concomitantly, how they do a selective use of memory (in other words, educate the forgetfulness) in their daily lives, although they do not possess an awareness of such operations. In *Evaristo Carriego* (1930), Borges defends a writing based on memory in opposition to a writing which transcribes reality: «Afortunadamente, el copioso estilo de la realidad no es el único: hay el del recuerdo también, cuya esencia no es la ramificación de hechos, sino la perduración de rasgos aislados.» (Borges, 2009: 215) [«Fortunately, reality comes to us not only in this copious way but also through memory, the essence of which lies not in the proliferation of facts but in the enduring nature of particular elements.»] Let us analyze these two types of writing from the point of view of the use of perception and memory.

In what concerns the copious style of reality, it was mentioned above that Jorge Luis Borges, in the prologue to the *La invención de Morel* [*The Invention of Morel*], repudiates a literature which has the pretensions to achieve omniscience and omnipresence; in other words, the pretension to transcribe what reality is in it-self, in all its plurality and relational rigor. Additionally, it should be noted now that this type of writing simulates a perception and a memory which are closer to the ones of Ireneu Funes, of whom it is said, at the end of the tale «Funes, el memorioso» (1942) [«Funes the Memorious»], «que no era muy capaz de pensar. Pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar, abstraer. En el abarrotado mundo de Funes no había

sino detalles, casi inmediatos.» (Borges, 2009: 883) [«that he was not very good at thinking. To think is ignore (or forget) differences, to generalize, to abstract. In the teeming world of Ireneo Funes there was nothing but particulars – and they were virtually *immediate* particulars.» (Borges, 1998: 137)]<sup>30</sup> The accident which victimizes Funes not only provides a magical justification for the prodigious memory and perception which he suddenly acquires, but also deprives him of the possibility to act. Disconnected from the possibility to act, the elementary operations of the spirit, perception and memory, are taken over by operations of pure knowledge. What fills Funes's consciousness «c'est tantôt le duplicat inutile d'une réalité extérieure, tantôt la matière inerted'une construction intellectuelle toute désintéressée» (Bergson,1990:256) [«is either the useless duplicate of an external reality or the inert material of an intellectual construction entirely disinterested» (Bergson, 1988: 227)]. Consequently, a writing based in these premises for the operations of the spirit cannot but constitute a useless reproduction method and a passionless intellectual construction.

In opposition to realist literature, literature which is centered on memory is better at simulating the human experience of reality and of time. This experience, carried out through the association of perception and memory, it is a mutilation, a simplification of the relational complexity of everything that exists and, as a consequence, it has a tendency for imprecision and

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<sup>30</sup> Jon Stewart demonstrates that «Funes, el memorioso» [«Funes the Memorious»] constitutes a critique to nominalist philosophy, which has as the center of its rationality the idea that «abstract concepts do not adequately represent things in the empirical world. Thus, if our goal is to make language veridical, it would be desirable to purge language as far as possible of general concepts such that it could more accurately reflect what is actually given in our perception. This would involve having individual words for every individual thing or even individual perception.» (Stewart, 1996: 71-2)

for error. Let it be underlined that at the end of the passage from «La postulación de la realidad» [«The Postulation of Reality»] which was cited, Jorge Luis Borges insists on placing on the same level, in what concerns the ways on how those operations of the spirit are used, the act of writing and any other physical act performed by the human being in his relationship with matter in his daily life. It is an act, as previously pointed out, driven by passion, with everything that the latter comprises of reiterative obsession and unconsciousness. The act of writing which arises from the prevalence of the use of this type of physical memory has the tendency to incorporate a more abstract consciousness of a reality which is clearly more delimited, with these two factors being the ones into which the element *imperfection* is introduced. The acquisition of knowledge is, on a first moment, of an analytical character, that is, it occurs through the division and selection of things under several adopted perspectives. On a second moment of synthetic reconstruction of such multiple perspectives (where the relational factor already comes in) that analytical knowledge is completed. This synthesis never gives the reader more than a general concept of things and events, thus simulating a contracted intuition of multiple times. Such an abstract writing leads that same reader to be put in charge of completing or animating those very same things and interactions among them<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> This may be confirmed by returning to the essay «La postulación de la realidad» [«The Postulation of Reality»]. The citation highlighted above appears as the corollary of a dispute between two methods of writing: the romantic and the classic. Proposing an alternative to the doctrine of Benedetto Croce, who defends an identity between the aesthetic and the expressive (a contribution to his defense of the autonomy of art), Jorge Luis Borges exposes in detail the classical method and the possibilities of writing which are opened by it, including the non-realist ones. The general exposure of the classical method, which obeys the aforementioned technique of selection and conceptualization of complex states, appears in the commentary to the first quoted example, a passage from *Decline*

Let it be noticed how, on the texts under analysis, Jorge Luis Borges uses a language which is more technical (when it is not plain scientific) rather than aesthetic. Following such language, let us propose, in order to wrap up this subchapter, the presentation of a schematic sketch of the main ideas of Borges on narrative art. Towards that purpose, let us invoke the thought of Gilbert Simondon, who, in the introduction to his text *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* [*On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*] (1958), claims that:

Une machine purement automatique, complètement fermée sur elle-même dans un fonctionnement prédéterminé, ne pourrait donner que des résultats sommaires. La machine qui est douée d'une haute technicité est une machine ouverte, et l'ensemble des machines ouvertes suppose l'homme comme organisateur

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*and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XXXV, from Edward Gibbon: «Basta el inciso “Después de la partida de los godos” para percibir el carácter mediato de esta escritura, generalizadora y abstracta hasta lo invisible. El autor nos propone un juego de símbolos, organizados rigurosamente sin duda, pero cuya animación eventual queda a cargo nuestro. No es realmente expresivo: se limita a registrar una realidad, no a representarla. Los ricos hechos a cuya póstuma alusión nos convida, importaron cargadas experiencias, percepciones, reacciones; éstas pueden inferirse de su relato, pero no están en él. Dicho con mejor precisión: no escribe los primeros contactos de la realidad, sino su elaboración final en conceptos.» (Borges, 2009: 394-5) [«The clause “After the departure of the Goths” suffices to reveal the mediate character of this writing, generalized and abstract to the point of invisibility. The author presents us with a play of symbols, no doubt rigorously organized, but whose eventual animation is up to us. He is not really expressive; he does no more than record a reality, he does not represent one. The sumptuous events to whose posthumous allusion he summons us involved dense experiences, perceptions, reactions; these may be inferred from his narrative but are not present in it. To put it more precisely, he does not write reality's initial contacts, but its final elaboration in concepts.» (Borges, 1999: 60)]

permanent, comme interprète vivant des machines les unes par rapport aux autres. Loin d'être le surveillant d'une troupe d'esclaves, l'homme est l'organisateur permanent d'une société des objets techniques qui ont besoin de lui comme les musiciens ont besoin du chef d'orchestre. (...) Il est *parmi* les machines qui opèrent avec lui. (Simondon, 1958: 11-2)

[A purely automatic machine completely closed in on itself in a predetermined way of operating would only be capable of yielding perfunctory results. The machine endowed with a high degree of technicity is an open machine, and all open machines taken together presuppose man as their permanent organizer, as the living interpreter of all machines among themselves. Far from being the supervisor of a group of slaves, man is the permanent organizer of a society of technical objects that need him in the same way musicians in an orchestra need the conductor. (...) He is *among* the machines that operate with him. (Simondon, 2017: 17-8)]

We may realize, through this quote, how the use by Jorge Luis Borges of scientific terminology to exhibit conceptualizations on narrative art is not merely rhetoric. The type of narrative which the Argentine writer considers to be the most effective is the one which has the characteristics of a technical object – a mechanism –, being constituted by an articulation of artifices which forms a complex structure, and whose conception must be oriented for the intensification of the interactivity with the reader.

By advocating the magical method to the detriment of the natural method, Jorge Luis Borges is advocating a technically simpler mechanism; let us be clear, a mechanism which, by condensing the routes of causality, works less as an interaction of multiple subsystems that fulfill

a limited and specific number of functions than in the integrated multi-functionality of the biggest number of elements in the global system<sup>32</sup>. The advocacy of this technical simplicity is eloquently postulated in the critique to those to whom «la concisión es una virtud y tienen por conciso a quien se demora en diez frases breves y no a quien maneje una larga.» (Borges, 2009: 381) [«brevity is a virtue and consider concise the use of ten short sentences rather than the command of one long locution.» (Borges, 1999: 52)] In other words, if the mechanism is technically simpler, that is due to its synthetic conception rather than analytical, a factor which makes it more complicated from the logical<sup>33</sup> point of view.

In what concerns the intensification of the interactivity between narrative art and the reader, I must discuss the articulation of the imperfections with the synthetic conception of the literary mechanism. The inaccuracies allow for a technical simplification of the literary mechanism mentioned above, thus avoiding an exhaustive exposure of the narrated events through a process of selection and conceptualization of complex states, synthesizing them. In the opposite direction, because such complex states are not accessible to the reader and because this process of selection and conceptualization which constitutes the imperfections is not more than

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<sup>32</sup> An essay from Jorge Luis Borges which illustrates this assertion is «La máquina de pensar de Raimundo Lulio» (Borges, 1996: 320-3) [«Ramón Llull's Thinking Machine» (Borges, 1999: 155-9)], where the multiple combinatorial possibilities of a limited number of words are thought of as a literary and poetical instrument.

<sup>33</sup> By using the word “logical” in this context, it is intended to make a reference to a logic that, doing justice to Borgesian literature, transverts formal logic.

an operation which intensifies the subjectivity of the text<sup>34</sup>, the narrative art, even though it is much more rigorous from the logical and macro-structural point of view, becomes much more differentiated (singular) and a differentiator. And this is how the author, in a simultaneously conscious and unconscious manner, and bearing in mind the aim of immortalizing the text, integrates the effects of the global functioning of the mechanism (to be clear, meaning the critical readings which arise out of the interaction between the text and the reader) in the functioning of the mechanism in it-self. It is thereby proven how, for Borges, in a literary hyper-causal mechanism, the condensation of multiple functions in its structures corresponds to a process of differentiation of those same structures.

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<sup>34</sup> A subjectivity which realist writing, while aiming to reflect the events rather than thinking them, does not eliminate, but diminishes.

### 3. DECOLONIZING BRAZIL: MINOR HEROISM IN *MACUNAÍMA*

#### 3.1. Introduction

On the April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1942, Mário de Andrade, (1893-1945), one of the founding and most prominent figures of the Brazilian modernist movement, held the conference *O Movimento Modernista* [*The Modernist Movement*] in the Conference Hall of the Library of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he did a critical retrospective, from his very personal view, of the history of such movement since its formation, in 1916-7. At a given moment, Andrade accused a large part of the agents (the bourgeois) of that movement of adherence to a form of nationalism which is a facade, whose action is marked by an effusive protest which, in substance, merely covers a «conformismo acomodaticio» (Andrade, 1942: 48) [«conformist accommodation» (Andrade, 2008: 105)]. Conversely, a true conscience of the country «levava fatalmente ao não-conformismo e ao protesto» (Andrade, 1942: 48) [«inevitably led to non-conformism and protest» (Andrade, 2008: 105)].

A bit further ahead in his speech, and in the only moment where he evokes *Macunaíma* in this conference, Mário de Andrade enunciates the central task that the bourgeois of the Brazilian modernist movement left unfinished: the creation of a Brazilian language which, freeing itself from its colonial shackles, could better collaborate with the national psychological reality, thus producing a literature with *a* Brazilian identity. Apologies in advance for the long quotation:

O estandarte mais colorido dessa radicação à pátria foi a pesquisa da “língua brasileira”. Mas foi talvez boato falso. Na verdade, apesar das aparências e da bulha que fazem agora certas santidades de última hora, nós estamos ainda

atualmente tão escravos da gramática lusa como qualquer português. Não há dúvida nenhuma que nós hoje sentimos e pensamos o *quantum satis* brasileiromente. Digo isto até com certa malinçoncia, amigo Macunaíma, meu irmão. Mas isso não é o bastante para identificar a nossa expressão verbal, muito embora a realidade brasileira, mesmo psicológica, seja agora mais forte e insolúvel que nos tempos de José de Alencar ou de Machado de Assis. E como negar que estes também pensavam brasileiromente? Como negar que no estilo de Machado de Assis, luso pelo ideal, intervem um *quid* familiar que o diferencia verticalmente de um Garret e um Ortigão? Mas se nos românticos, em Álvares de Azevedo, Varela, Alencar, Macedo, Castro Alves, há uma identidade brasileira que nos parece bem maior que a de Brás Cubas ou Bilac, é porque nos românticos chegou-se a um “esquecimento” da gramática portuguesa, que permitiu muito maior colaboração entre o ser psicológico e sua expressão verbal. (Andrade, 1942: 49-51)

[The most colourful standard in this 'rooting in the fatherland' was the search for a 'Brazilian language'. But perhaps it was a red herring. In fact, despite appearances, and the fuss being made by some latter-day saints, we are today as much the slaves of Lusitanian grammar as any Portuguese. There is no doubt that today we feel and we think as Brazilians *quantum satis* [as much as is required]. I say this even with a certain melancholy, friend Macunaíma, my brother. But this is not enough to mark out our verbal expression, despite the Brazilian reality being, even psychologically, much stronger and more indissoluble than in the days of José de Alencar or Machado de Assis. And how can we deny that they too thought as

Brazilians? How can we deny that into the style of Machado de Assis, modelled on the Lusitanian, there enters a familiar quid [something] that differentiates him vertically from Garrett or Ortigão, say? But if in the Romantics, in Alvares de Azevedo, Varela, Alencar, Macedo, Castro Alves, there is a Brazilian identity that is greater than that of Brás Cubas or Bilac, it is because the Romantics achieved a 'forgetting' of Portuguese grammar that allowed a much greater synergy between psychological make-up and its verbal expression. (Andrade, 2008: 106)]

Supported by considerations about the literature produced by some of the most important Brazilian writers from the generations which immediately preceded his own, Mário de Andrade's diagnosis of Brazil focuses on a historical process of decolonization being put into action. The rise of Romantic Nationalism at a global scale found very favorable conditions for germination in the Brazilian writers from the subsequent decades to Brazil's independence in 1822, who, according to Abel Barros Baptista, raised for themselves «um novo problema e uma nova missão, os quais seriam os de procurarem delimitar o caráter brasileiro da literatura a fazer no Brasil e de, assim, contribuírem para a edificação do Brasil como nação independente.» (Baptista, 2003: 22) [«a new problem and a new mission, namely to attempt to delimit the Brazilian character of the literature thereafter made in Brazil and, therefore, contribute to the edification of Brazil as an independent nation.»] This problem and this mission were not abandoned by the following literary generation, where Machado de Assis pontificated at the level of contributions, with emphasis to the essay published in 1873, «Instinto de nacionalidade. Notícia sobre a atual literatura brasileira» [«Nationality Instinct. Report on the current state of Brazilian literature»].

Even if Mário de Andrade's diagnosis about the generations which were predecessors to his own is arguable, it is not in the scope of this research to engage in an exhaustive discussion of its pertinence. It is enough to affix to it the caveat that such statements are merely general and impressive, liable for reperspectivation, as it occurs in the letter sent to Anita Malfatti, dated February 9, 1927, where Andrade admits that the writing of *Macunaíma* had been inspired on the works from Machado de Assis, Brazilian even in the use of the language<sup>35</sup>. Such impressiveness is also confirmed by the paradoxical self-irony with which Andrade makes a "melancholic" evocation of *Macunaíma*, inasmuch as if at this time, in 1942, he defends that the Brazilian reality already has a notable consistency, he does not do so, however, without conscience that his opinion was the opposite at the time he wrote the history of his *yet* "brother". Let us observe a passage from the preface written by Andrade immediately after finishing the first draft of *Macunaíma*, in 1926:

O que me interessou por *Macunaíma* foi incontestavelmente a preocupação em que vivo de trabalhar e descobrir o mais que possa a entidade nacional dos brasileiros. Ora depois de pelejar muito verifiquei uma coisa me parece que certa:

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<sup>35</sup> «se o sr. Mário de Andrade se *inspira* em Machado de Assis é porque quis *tradicionalizar* a orientação humorística brasileira representada por Machado na literatura de ordem artística, Machado que a gente pondo reparo mais íntimo é mais brasileiro do que parece à primeira vista. Até na língua? Até na língua que estudada de mais perto mostra uma aversão quase sistemática pelos modismos especializadamente portuguesas.» (*in* Andrade, 1996: 491) [«if Mr. Mário de Andrade takes his inspiration from Machado de Assis it is because he wanted to create a tradition out of the Brazilian tendency in comedy, a trait which is represented by Machado in artistic literature. Machado whom, if we take a more intimate look at him, is more Brazilian than it seems at first sight. Even in the language? Even in the language, which demonstrates an almost systemic aversion to the specialized Portuguese fashions when it is closely studied.»]

o brasileiro não tem caráter. Pode ser que alguém já tenha falado isso antes de mim porém a minha conclusão é (uma) novidade pra mim porque tirada da minha experiência pessoal. E com a palavra caráter não determino apenas uma realidade moral não em vez entendo a entidade psíquica permanente, se manifestando por tudo, nos costumes na ação exterior no sentimento na língua na História na andadura, tanto no bem como no mal.

O brasileiro não tem caráter porque não possui nem civilização própria nem consciência tradicional. (*in* Andrade, 2017: 190-1)

[What interested me in Macunaíma was indisputably the concern which I have for working on and discovering as much as I can the national entity of the Brazilian people. Well after struggling a lot I have verified something which now seems certain to me: the Brazilian individual does not have a character. It might be possible that someone already mentioned it nevertheless my conclusion is (one) novelty to me because it is drawn from my personal experience. And by the use of the word character I am not determining solely a moral reality, no, instead I comprehend the permanent psychic entity, manifesting itself in everything, in the traditions, in the external action, in the feeling, in the language, in History, in its gait, for better and for worse.

The Brazilian individual does not have a character because he does not possess neither his own civilization nor a traditional conscience.]

By the year 1926 Mário de Andrade was already conscious of the relativity and singularity of his conclusions about the *national entity*. The assertion of the Brazilian people's lack of character is the result of a *discovery* and of the *work* of an individual, that is to say, of an

inextricable conjunction of re-searchable elements with a creative, playful, inventive and transforming personal vision about Brazil. Since the inextricability of that conjunction has its origin in a two-way relation, which covers the contingencies and mutual transformations arising from the interactions between the national entity and the individual, Brazil is solely liable to be represented as a living being, able to obtain singularity in its inseparability from the historical becoming of the individual that provides its representation.

Regarding the substantial characterization of the *national entity*, it could not be more complex. The Brazilian's lack of character comes from an impermanence of its psychic entity, resulting from the sparse consolidation of historical processes on the former. All this is a consequence of colonial politics of economic extraction and human predation, which guaranteed to its agents the success of the activity and the preservation of the *status quo* through the organization of the population into a structure of hierarchical domination established resorting to racial criteria. In concomitance, the population was kept under a widespread educational underdevelopment which generated in it an inability to depart from the categories of thought that kept it debased. These historical consequences of colonial politics remained active in Brazil<sup>36</sup> not

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<sup>36</sup> The 1920s are precisely the decade which mark the beginning of the secular tendency for Brazil's literacy, which nevertheless was never extended, throughout the 20th century, to the entire country. During this historical period, Brazil kept a continuous regime of blatant discrimination of the deep rural areas exerted by the centers of power, which have always channeled the entirety of the country's resources towards the urban centers and the economically developed regions or with potential for industrial development. These are the conclusions of the study «Analfabetismo no Brasil: configuração e gênese das desigualdades regionais» (2004), from Alceu Ravanello Ferraro and Daniel Kreidlow, summarized in the following terms: «The factors that have been reducing the illiteracy rates in Brazil are mainly the concentration of public administration (first in Rio de Janeiro and later in Brasília), the small farmers (in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina), the combination of urbanization and industrialization (in

only because they were present in the forms of habits of action and structures of thought (moral, political, cultural, etc.), but also because they were (and are) reintroduced economically and ideologically in the post-colonial societies through the phenomenon of globalization<sup>37</sup>.

In *Politiques de l'inimitié* (2016) [*Necropolitics*], Achille Mbembe exposes, through the decolonial psychiatric critique of Frantz Fanon, the difficulties of the colonized subject to achieve emancipation, which do not consist solely of «avoir été assigné à une race, mais d'avoir intériorisé les termes de cette assignation; d'en être arrivé à désirer la castration et à s'en faire complice. Car la fiction que l'Autre avait fabriquée à son sujet, tout ou presque tout incitait le colonisé à l'habiter, à manger sa peau et sa vérité.» (Mbembe, 2016: 12) [«one's being assigned a race but one's internalizing of the terms of this assignation, that is, one's coming to the point of desiring and becoming the accomplice of castration. For everything, or nearly everything, encouraged colonized peoples to inhabit as their skin and their truth the fiction that the Other had produced in their regard.» (Mbembe, 2019: 5)] In other words, the representations that the colonized subject has of himself, when he has them, are exclusively conceived by a power that at no time gave him an active role, a voice, a participation in such conception. Condemned to a sole and absolutist vision of History, whose documentation befalls on a writing which operates

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São Paulo and more recently in Minas Gerais and Paraná), the geographical closeness to the centers of political and economic power. But illiteracy has never been reduced by the latifundia, not even those used for coffee plantations.» (Ferraro / Kreidlow, 2004: 179)

<sup>37</sup> Analyzing the thought of Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo defends that the modern colonialism reinvented itself to the point of dispensing the effective human presence in post-colonial territories, thus surpassing the phenomena of «decolonization and nation building: coloniality is the machine that reproduces subalternity today in the form of global coloniality in the network society.» (Mignolo, 2001: 426)

anthropological reductions, cultural appropriations, and, in the best of cases, exotic visions of the Other tinged with condescension, such representations end up being very unrepresentative. This unsatisfactory quantity and quality of the representations of the immense multiplicity of populations, groups and ethnicities which constituted the totality of the Brazilian people provide a full justification for the insufficient consolidation on the latter of historical processes, something which according to Mário de Andrade is the cause for their lack of character.

Prevented from self-representing themselves in their differentiated multiplicity, the Brazilian people therefore have an essential human faculty stunted: memory. Memory is the faculty which guarantees a minimum of continuity in the impermanence of things in order for us to (re)make sense(s) out of them, a faculty which connects and untangles, in a process which goes from what we were until what we are, what remains and what changes, repetition and difference.

Born from a wide research and work on the national entity of its author, *Macunaíma* attempts to counter this “unmemory” of the popular, regional, non-white Brazilian civilizational traditions. Taking inspiration, on the one hand, from the Brazilian literary traditions with a decolonizing potential, and, incorporating, on the other hand, sayings, proverbs, vocabularies, legends, grammatical structures with roots in oral tradition, diverse elements from fauna and flora, and a wide variety of customs from the peoples of Brazil, Mário de Andrade creates, as paradoxical as such formulation may seem like, a radically historical narrative «debaixo de um carácter sempre lendário porém como lenda de índio e de negro.»<sup>38</sup> (*in* Andrade, 1996: 492) [«with an approach that is always legendary, but using Indian and Black legends however.»]

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<sup>38</sup> Letter from the March 1, 1927, addressed by Mário de Andrade to Luís da Câmara Cascudo.

With this gesture, the work ends up containing, in a certain way, a proposal for a refoundation of the Brazilian nation in terms which are completely alien to the terms commonly used to narrate its History in official documents.

Despite the strong presence of legendary elements associated to the Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cultures in *Macunaíma* being a fact easily confirmed, to this must be appended the information that the weight of the first element prevails, in a significant way, in relation to the weight of the second. Much of this is due to chance, since the idea to write *Macunaíma* was born from the correspondence that Mário de Andrade found between the lack of character that he saw in the Brazilian people and the heroic Amerindian figure Makunaima, from the studies of Theodor Koch-Grünberg<sup>39</sup>. From the bibliographical sources directly used for the conception of the narrative, it is consensual that the most important was the second volume (and, secondarily,

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<sup>39</sup> In the unpublished preface from 1926 previously cited, Mário de Andrade reveals how the idea to write *Macunaíma* came about: «quando matutava nessas coisas [ie, na falta de carácter do brasileiro] topei com Macunaíma no alemão de Koch-Grünberg. E Macunaíma é um herói surpreendentemente sem caráter. (Gozei.) Vivi de perto o ciclo das façanhas dele. Eram poucas. (...) Então veio vindo a ideia de aproveitar pra um romancinho mais outras lendas casos brinquedos costumes brasileiros ou afeiçoados no Brasil. Gastei muito pouca invenção neste poema fácil de escrever.» (*in* Andrade, 2017: 191) [«when I was pondering about those things, [ie, in the lack of character of the Brazilian individual], I came across Macunaíma in the German language of Koch-Grünberg. And Macunaíma is a hero surprisingly without character. (I enjoyed it.) I closely delved into the cycle about his feats. They were only a few. (...) Then the idea arose to make use of more legends, cases, funny stories, Brazilian customs or attached to Brazil for a little novel. I did not spend much of my inventive energy in this poem which was so easy to write.»] I shall analyze with more detail, throughout this study, some aspects of the Macunaímic indigenism.

the third volume) of the work *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* (1917), from the German ethnologist<sup>40</sup>. There are several myths and legends from the Taulipang and Arekuná indigenous groups narrated in the aforementioned work to which Mário de Andrade makes an allusion or recreates, to a greater or lesser extent and faithfulness to the original, in the process of composition of his narrative.

In light of the foregoing, it follows that *Macunaíma* translates into conscious memory the unconscious memory of a Brazil and a homophone hero which are profoundly traditional. As such, the work critically recreates the uncritical unconsciousness that the Brazilian individual has of his traditions and also of himself. On this process, a refoundation of Brazil at the linguistic level also takes place. The narrative carries to the extreme the project for creating a Brazilian language (freed from the *enslavement* imposed by the Portuguese grammar) that its author had been developing since the early 1920s, combining the languages of all those traditions and the forms of perceiving the world which are inherent to the latter in a sole language, characterized by Haroldo de Campos in the following terms: «Uma das riquezas de *Macunaíma* é justamente essa “fala nova” (“impura” segundo os padrões castiços de Portugal), feita de um amálgama de todos os regionalismos, mescla dos modos de dizer dos mais diferentes rincões do país, com incrustações de indigenismos e africanismos, atravessada por ritmos repetitivos de poesia

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<sup>40</sup> *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco* (1917) emerges from the trip of Theodor Koch-Grünberg to the Amazon (1914-17). The work is divided into five volumes, which include the following contents: travel diary: description of the journey through the Branco river until Roraima, the Uraricuera, the Ventuari and the Orinoco (vol. 1), collection of narratives: myths and legends of the Taulipang and Arekuná Indians (vol. 2), ethnographic observations, songs, healing formulas, maps and drawings made by the indigene (vol. 3), dictionary (vol. 4), and photographic archive (vol. 5).

popular e desdobrada em efeitos de sátira pela paródia estilística.» (Campos, 1992: 179) [«One of the rich elements of *Macunaíma* is precisely that “new speech” (“impure” in accordance to the quaint patterns of Portugal), made from an amalgam of all regionalisms, a mishmash of the manners of speech from the utmost different corners of the country, with inlays of Indigenisms and Africanisms, crossed by repetitive rhythms or popular poetry and unfolded into satirical effects by the stylistic parody.»]

Regarding the racialized psychic alienation of the colonized subject which Achille Mbembe elaborates from the thought of Frantz Fanon, Mário de Andrade satirizes it in *Macunaíma* through its systematic representation in the action of the protagonist as well as of the other characters which belong to subjugated economical classes (as the relatives of Macunaíma, for example), reproducing to the point of absurdity the colonial oppression in its iniquitous, vexatious, merciless and without remorse attitude towards the Other. Read from this angle, *Macunaíma* cynically highlights its determinations, putting forward an unequivocal protest directed at the Brazilian reality.

Simultaneously, in the inevitable quality as victims of this system which they intensify themselves, Macunaíma and the other (neo)colonized subjects adopt, not always consciously, subversive behaviors in relation to the oppressive structures of such system, thus drawing escape lines from where they might get away. Such escape lines go through imaginary and magical strategies, becomings, deceptions, camouflages, the creation of other forms of action and thought which are not only the rational, the realistic and the logical-positivist. By destabilizing the categories of colonial thought with its uncertainties, *Macunaíma* shows them a non-conformist narrative and, consequently, not liable for being reappropriated.

This psychological paradox of the colonized subject, which mirrors the uncritical mutability of the Brazilian collective psychic entity, its character without a character, is thus reconverted through literature into an instrument which generates an emancipating movement, without which the Brazilian sees himself unable to create his own *civilization* and a *traditional conscience*.

Therefore, the pertinence of the observations produced in the conference *O Movimento Modernista* [*The Modernist Movement*] is found in the highlight of the fact that the problem and the mission with which Mário de Andrade endowed himself are the same of the generations that preceded his own. Problem and mission embodied in the articulation of two axis of action: the one of the collective psychological reality and the one of the language used to express it. Through an analysis of *Macunaíma*, this chapter proposes a reflection around these two axes of action and respective articulation, in order to understand what is specifically at stake in what concerns a possible epic characteristic of the narrative marked by protest and non-conformity.

### 3.2. A Minor Heroism: Carnivalization and Indigenism

Among the several categorizations that Mário de Andrade attributed to *Macunaíma* (1928) in several moments of his life, *rhapsody* was the one that ended up prevailing, at least in the eye of literary critique. And rightly so, it should be added, due to the strong presence of oral, popular and musical traditions in the narrative, along with an inescapable epic<sup>41</sup> dimension.

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<sup>41</sup> In the *E-Dicionário de Termos Literários*, it is stated in the entry for the word «rapsódia» [«rhapsody»], elaborated by Latuf Isaias Mucci: «Originário do grego *rhapsodía*, significando “canção costurada” (...), o termo “rapsódia” designa, desde a Grécia arcaica, tanto cada um dos livros de Homero (século VIII a.C) quanto os poemas

Narrating the life of its homonymous hero, the plot begins with the advent of Macunaíma's birth, in the middle of the Brazilian Amazonian jungle, in the State of Roraima, and ends (if we exclude the epilogue) with his death, in the same location. In between, there are multiple episodes and adventures which are told of a character who is in constant movement throughout the most diverse places of the Brazilian geography, with some sporadic incursions into neighboring countries.

Some of the narrative's most pronounced characteristics are a dynamic and magical causality between events and short episodes, and concision in contextual information and in the characters' physical and psychological characterization (done predominantly through the description of the action). The exception to this focus on a narrative sequentiality in constant mutation is chapter IX, «Carta pras Icamiabas», consisting of an epistle, which besides being extensive and prolix, is poured in a language widely incongruous in relation to the one used in the remaining chapters, where Macunaíma addresses the Icamiabas with the trivial motivation of asking for money.

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épicos cantados por alguém que não fosse o criador dos poemas, como o aedo o era. Rapsodo (em grego clássico ραψῳδός / rhapsôidós) é o nome dado a um artista popular ou cantor que, na antiga Grécia, ia de cidade em cidade recitando poemas, principalmente epopéias. Diferia-se do aedo, que compunha os próprios poemas e os cantava, acompanhado de um instrumento (lira ou fórminx).» (Mucci, acesso em 26 de Novembro de 2021: <https://edtl.fcsh.unl.pt/encyclopedia/rapsodia/>) [«Originating from the greek *rhapsodia*, meaning “stitched song” (...), the term “rhapsody” refers to, since Archaic Greece, to each one of Homer’s books (8<sup>th</sup> century b.C.) as well as to the epic poems sung by whoever was not the creator of the poems, as an aoidos was. Rhapsode (in classical greek ραψῳδός / rhapsôidós) is the name attributed to a popular artist or singer who, in Ancient Greece, would go from town to town reciting poems, mainly epopees. It was different from an aoidos, who composed his own poems and sung them, accompanied by an instrument (lyre or phorminx).»]

The axis of the narrative spins around the *muiraquitã*, an indigenous amulet which is offered to Macunaíma by the amazon Ci before she dies (at the end of chapter III), and in the sequence of the romantic envelopment between these characters. After it was offered to him, Macunaíma loses the *muiraquitã*, which ends up falling into the possession of his antagonist, Venceslau Pietro Pietra, the Giant *Piaimã*, who lives in São Paulo. Unresigned with the disappearance of the gift from his late wife, Macunaíma sets off on a search for the *muiraquitã*, which is filled with tribulations and conflicts. When the amulet is finally recovered and his antagonist is defeated, Macunaíma decides to return to the jungle. The reacquisition of the *muiraquitã* ends up not being an auspicious one and the return to his place of origin is marked by a series of unfortunate events, which culminate in the hero's tragic ending. In the last chapter of the story, Macunaíma is the victim of a trap set up by Vei, the sun-goddess, who performs an act of vengeance due to the fact that the hero had broken the promise (in chapter VIII) of marrying – with an oath of faithfulness included – one of the goddess' three daughters, preferring a Portuguese woman over one of them. Vei causes a heatstroke that leads Macunaíma to fall into the temptation of diving into a cold lake, where *Uiara*, the Mother of Waters, rips apart the body of the hero and makes him lose the *muiraquitã* once more. Tired of life, Macunaíma goes to meet the sorcerer *Pauí-Pódole*, who turns him into the constellation of Ursa Major, and thus ends the story.

On this macro-structural narrative axis, which constitutes, in the Borgesian sense of the word, a unified totality, there are several micro-narratives grafted with a relative autonomy however, and which, despite being centered in the celebration of the individual hero

(Macunaíma), possess a secondary role in the progress of the main action<sup>42</sup>. Such characteristic allows us to point out a common feature between *Macunaíma* and the European medieval epic tradition. However, the similarities are far from stopping here.

Manoel Cavalcanti Proença, with *Roteiro de Macunaíma* (1955), a fully detailed and erudite study, was the first critic to point out the similarities of Macunaíma with the heroic figures of the *chansons de geste*, thus adding further elements for the comparison in general of the work of Mário de Andrade with medieval epic poetry. The aspects in common listed by the critic are a causality of events and a depiction of magical characters, which differ from historiography, notwithstanding the historical dimension previously discussed, due to the absence of explanations in a space-time context which is aprioristic to the sensitive (Kantian) experience<sup>43</sup>. In an essay from 1936, entitled «The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of

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<sup>42</sup> I shall have the opportunity to demonstrate, further ahead, that the deadlocks generated by these digressions frequently add value to the economy of the text.

<sup>43</sup> «[Macunaíma] Tem de comum com aqueles heróis [as figuras de gesta medievais] a sobre-humanidade e o maravilhoso. Está fora do espaço e do tempo. Por isso pode realizar aquelas fugas espetaculares e assombrosa em que de São Paulo foge para a Ponta do Calabouço, no Rio [de Janeiro] (...). E as fugas são várias, são motivo frequente no livro, e sempre com essa revolução espacial, e absoluto desprezo pelas convenções geográficas. Enquanto subverte itinerários, ziguezagueia no tempo em avanços e recuos que só um herói de gesta pode ter. Como aquele Carlos Magno da *Canção de Rolando* que era um ancião de barba florida quando apenas – historicamente se sabe – tinha trinta e cinco anos.» (Proença, 1978: 7-8) [«[Macunaíma] Has in common with those heroes [the medieval figures of the *chansons de geste*] the super-humanity and the fantastic. He is out of space and time. Therefore he can do those spectacular and astonishing getaways where he goes from São Paulo to Ponta do Calabouço, in Rio [de Janeiro] (...). And there are several getaways, its a frequent motif on the book, and always with that spatial revolution, and an absolute contempt for the geographical conventions. While he subverts

Nikolai Leskov», Walter Benjamin extends the understanding of this dialectic between magical and historical narratives, by stating that historiography represents, in its relation with epic forms, an undifferentiated creation zone, from whence it is established the need, in the study of any of those forms, to research the relation between that form and historiography. The differences between both types of discourse can be scrutinized through a comparison between the chronicler and the historian. While the historian is constrained to explain, whatever the case, the events which he is working on, the chronicler, free from such constraints, may present such events as models representing the flow of the becoming of the world. Walter Benjamin adds that this was the procedure of the chroniclers in the Middle Ages, who were the forerunners of contemporary historians:

By basing their account of history on a divine plan of salvation – an inscrutable one – they [the chroniclers of the Middle Ages] have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders. Its place is taken by interpretation which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of history. (Benjamin, 1963: 91)

In the wake of this dialogue between *Macunaíma* and medieval epic discourse, Gilda de Mello e Souza, in *O tupi e o alauíde* (1979), proceeds to a comparative reading between *Macunaíma* and *La quête du Saint Graal* [*The Quest of the Holy Grail*]. Not limiting herself to simply point out the influences and similarities between the texts, Souza clarifies the parodic itineraries, he zigzags back and forth in time as only a hero from a *chanson de geste* can. As Carlos Magno from the *Song of Roland*, who was an elder with a lively beard when he was only – it is historically known – thirty-five years old.»]

dimension of *Macunaíma* in relation to the epic code of *La quête du Saint Graal* [*The Quest of the Holy Grail*] in every respect, by analyzing in detail the plans of the plot, the description of the heroic character, and the object itself that is the motivation for the quest – *muiraquitã versus* holy grail. It is a study which highlights the way how the several forms of humor and comicality permeate the heroic elevation of the characters, the rhetorical grandiloquence, and the seriousness which characterize the aforementioned code, hybridizing it<sup>44</sup>.

In fact, the study from Gilda de Mello e Souza falls within the robust tradition of reading *Macunaíma*<sup>45</sup> in the light of Bakhtinian theories. In the introduction to his book from 1965, *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin advocates the existence of a popular European comical and carnivalesque medieval culture which continued throughout the renaissance. According to this Russian theorist, this medieval carnivalesque culture had essentially three modes of manifestation: forms and rituals of spectacle (carnavalesque celebrations, comical works represented in public squares, etc.); verbal comical works (where parodies are included) of a diverse nature: oral and written, in Latin or in the common language; several forms and types of familiar and rude vocabulary (insults, oaths, popular mottos, etc.).

In its parodic and satirical manifestations, such culture reflected an opposition to the official culture of that epoch (which included the epic), characterized by a serious, religious and feudal tone, that was used for the preservation of the structures and figures of power in the very

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<sup>44</sup> The separation between the epic speech and the comical speech was firstly theorized in *Aristotle's Poetics*.

<sup>45</sup> This tradition was initiated by Mário Chamie, with the study *Intertexto* (1970), and had continuation in: *Macunaíma – ruptura e tradição* (1977), from Suzana Camargo; *O tupi e o alaúde* (1979), from Gilda de Mello e Souza; *Macunaíma: carnaval e malandragem* (1982), from Robson Pereira Gonçalves; and also *Ruínas de linhas puras: quatro ensaios em torno a Macunaíma* (1998), from José Luiz Passos.

same positions they had always held. The carnivalesque culture was, therefore, a minor culture, not in the sense of being the culture of a minority of the population, but rather in the sense of being the culture of a minoritized people, subjected to a grinding power. *Macunaíma* is precisely the prototype of the fusion of all the minoritized people of Brazil, constituted by ugly, poor, fatherless, black, indigenous people – in the very first chapter, the protagonist is presented as being an ugly child, a «preto retinto e filho do medo da noite» (Andrade, 1996: 5) [«jigaboo and son of the fear of the night»], born from an Indian woman, and who does not know who his father is nor does he care, in other words, his orphanhood is a naturalized condition.<sup>46</sup>

From the point of view of the epic nature of the narrative, to proceed with a Bakhtinian reading of *Macunaíma* implies, therefore, a comprehension of the operativeness which the parody of the epic medieval code embodied in *La quête du Saint Graal* [*The Quest of the Holy Grail*] has in the satire of the official coeval Brazilian culture of Mário de Andrade. The purpose of such endeavor is not to revisit the theme of parody in all its extension, but rather, through the use of an example, to analyze how *Macunaíma* draws some escape lines from the mechanisms of oppression which were at the center of Mário de Andrade's concerns in relation to the Brazilian reality from the beginning of the twentieth century. Let us quote a passage of the study from Gilda de Mello e Souza:

As ações cujo encadeamento constitui a narrativa arturiana fixam um tempo e um lugar estáveis, de paz e justiça, de onde o agente principal parte no começo da trama e para onde retorna no fim, reintegrando-se à antiga ordem. *Macunaíma* é

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<sup>46</sup> It is curious to observe that *Macunaíma*'s family shares the characteristic of single parenthood with the mulatto family of Mário de Andrade, «não incomum entre as classes mais pobres daquele tempo» (Tércio, 2019: 16) [«not uncommon amongst the poorest classes in those times»].

em larga medida a paródia desse esquema: o Uraricoera é apresentado em várias instâncias como o espaço das privações, da fome, da disputa com os irmãos, da luta com a própria mãe, da aventura erótica tumultuosa e sangrenta. É desse lugar carente, punitivo, injusto que o herói parte em busca da muiraquitã; é a ele que retorna no final, para ser expulso e destruído. (Souza *in* Andrade, 1996: 285)

[The actions whose sequence constitutes the Arthurian narrative set an established time and place, of peace and justice, from whence the main agent departs in the beginning of the plot and to where he returns at the end, thus reintegrating himself into the old order. Macunaima is by and large the parody of such scheme: the Uraricoera is presented in several instances as the space of deprivations, of hunger, of the dispute with his brothers, of the struggle with his own mother, of the tumultuous and bloody erotic adventure. It is from this needy place, punitive, unfair, that the hero departs in search of the muiraquitã; it is to it that he returns at the end, to be expelled and destroyed.]

As I had the opportunity to point out above, the Uraricoera is the place where both the beginning of the narrative and the birth of the protagonist coincide. *Macunaíma* does not begin *in media res*, but rather in this moment of origin, wherefore such needy, punitive and unfair place is its "natural" context. The hunger which plagues the mocambo<sup>47</sup> leads the protagonist to

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<sup>47</sup> To name the place of origin of Macunaíma, where the latter lived among his community, Mário de Andrade alternates between the use of two words: «mocambo» (Chapters I, II, XI e XVII) and «maloca» (Chapters I, II, III, V, VIII, X, XII, XVI, XVII and Epilogue). According to Manuel Cavalcanti Proença, «maloca» is an indigenism, and has the following significations: «Aldeamento de índios. Theodoro Sampaio o deriva do tupi, como corruptela de *mâr-oca* – a casa de guerra. Significa aldeia, ranchada de índios.» (*apud* Andrade, 2017: 249) [«Indian Village.

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Theodoro Sampaio derives it from the tupi, as a corruption of *mâr-oca* - the house of war. It means village, filled with indians.»] In what «mocambo» is concerned, Diléa Zanotto Manfio, in the glossary of the digital edition of *Macunaíma*, assigns to it, with basis on the work from Manuel Cavalcanti Proença and from Aurélio Buarque de Holanda Ferreira, an African origin «do quimbundo *mu'kambu*, 'cumeeira. Habitação pobre, feita de folhas de palmeira. Palhoça, choça'» (in Andrade, 2017: 252-3) [«from the Kimbundu *mu'kambu*, 'ridge. Poor habitation, made from palm-tree leaves.»] The linguist José Horta Nunes adds further meanings of the word relevant for this study, by also associating it to the Afro-Brazilian communities. By means of interpreting a merciless colonial portrait of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Nunes attributes to «mocambo» two additional designations: a refuge for black enslaved individuals; and an agglomeration of precarious habitations located in the woods where the black communities lived in clusters. This researcher emphasizes that the colonial account associates to such place the notions of «desordem» [«disorder»] and «ladroeira» [«thieving»], since the *settlement* of Brazil is at stake in relation to such matters and «os mocambos são vistos como obstáculos a esse povoamento, de maneira que, diferentemente dos brancos que vivem nas fazendas, a formação dos mocambos não é considerada um processo de povoamento.» (Nunes, acesso em 14 de Setembro de 2021: <https://www.labeurb.unicamp.br/endici/index.php?r=verbete%2Fview&id=246>) [«the mocambos are seen as obstacles to such settlement, in a manner that, differently from the whites who live in the farms, the formation of mocambos is not considered as a process of colonization.»] Being seen as a place of gathering rather than a settlement, the «mocambo» acquires the connotation of site of resistance, being distinguished from the word usually used as its synonym, «quilombo», which points towards the idea of a place for settling, with an ingrained sense of community. The words «maloca» and «mocambo» thus designate precarious, isolated or group habitation sites associated to warrior (or resistance) activities from minor communities which are eventually (semi-)nomad.

I suppose that Mário de Andrade was at least partially conscious of these significations when he wrote *Macunaíma*. This supposition is based on the use by the latter of the word «tapera», which only occurs at the end of the narrative (Chapters XV, XVI, XVII), mostly when Macunaíma returns to the jungle and sees himself in a situation more precarious than the initial one, scarred by diseases and with his group reduced to the nearest familiar nucleus. According to Diléa Zanotto Manfio, «tapera» is a word of indigenous origin: «do tupi *tape'ra*, aldeia extinta. Casa pequena, pobre ou abandonada em lugar ermo.» (in Andrade, 2017: 264) [«from tupi *tape'ra*, extinct village.

participate, from an early age (chapter I), in the family activities in search for food. However, when Macunaíma uses his intelligence to hunt a tapir, his own family wields a form of domination over him, denying him the tastiest parts of the meat during the division and only allowing him to have the guts. The social and family context of Macunaíma block his desire, submit him to humiliating oppressions; which the protagonist himself reproduces in a mimetic, gratuitous and vengeful fashion: in chapter II, Macunaíma moves, through an act of magic, the house of his own family to the other margin of the river, where there is plenty of food, but, observing that his mother does not limit herself merely to eat the food and accumulates bananas to feed the other members of the family clan, he undoes the magic and lets everyone starve; in the first episode of chapter XI, Macunaíma goes out to hunt with his brothers, Jiguê and Maanape, but the enterprise goes wrong and everything he manages to hunt, through the use of fire, are two charred rats, which he proceeds to eat without sharing with his brothers. Despite the failure of the initiative, Macunaíma returns to the inn where he was lodged and lies shamelessly to the people who were there, claiming that he had hunted two deers, and had shared the food with his brothers. When the latter return to the inn, the lie is promptly uncovered, and, when he is confronted about it, Macunaíma confesses that he had lied without any objectifiable goal or any intention to gain an advantage from such attitude.

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Abandoned, poor or small house in a desolate place.»] In the second paragraph of the Epilogue, the narrator tells the fatal fate of the tribe from which the protagonist descended: «Dera tangolomângolo na tribo tapanhumas e os filhos dela se acabaram de um em um. Não havia mais ninguém lá. (...) Um silêncio imenso dormia à beira-rio do Uraricoera.» (Andrade, 1996: 167) [«There was a tangolomango in the tapanhumas tribe and her children died one by one. There was no one else there. An immense silence slept by the shore of the Uraricoera.»]

The proof that the precarious economic context directly influences the limitation to a minimum of connections arising out of desire is the sexual involvement of Macunaíma with the wives of Jiguê, his brother. The cheating of his first wife, Sofará, with Macunaíma (chapter I) is not what leads Jiguê to beat her first and foremost, but solely the fact that she had not work to bring food home: «Nem bem [Macunaíma e Sofará] voltaram do passeio, tardinha, Jiguê já chegava também de prender a armadilha no rasto da anta. A companheira não trabalhara nada. Jiguê ficou furo e antes de catar os carrapatos bateu nela muito.» (Andrade, 1996: 11) [«When they were just returning [Macunaíma and Sofará] quite late from the walk, Jiguê was also returning from his tasks of arming the traps in the trails of the tapir. His wife had not worked at all. Jiguê became angry and before he pulled the ticks out he beat her a lot.»] Later on, when Macunaíma gets involved with Iriqui (chapter II), the second wife of Jiguê, the latter understood what had happened, but makes an assessment of the balance of power – Macunaíma by then has the body of an adult – and decides that it is not worth picking up a fight, since there is an abundance of food on the site: «Jiguê viu que a maloca estava cheia de alimentos, (...) todos esses comes e bebes bons... Jiguê conferiu que não pagava a pena brigar com o mano e deixou a linda Iriqui pra ele. Deu um suspiro catou os carrapatos e dormiu folgado na rede.» (Andrade, 1996: 19-20) [«Jiguê saw that the maloca was bursting with food, (...) all those good meals and drinks... Jiguê acknowledged that it was not worth picking a fight with his brother and left the beautiful Iriqui for him. He sighed, pulled the ticks out and loosely slept in the hammock»].

If the maloca in Uraricoera is so precarious, why does the protagonist return to this place at the end of the narrative? Well, the fact is that his experience in the urban centers, and especially in São Paulo, is in the antipodes of having proved itself to be auspicious, notwithstanding the recovery of the muiraquitã, since it was marked not only by precariousness

but also by conflicts, tribulations and deceptions (which led, among other nefarious events, to two deaths and resurrections by Macunaíma himself). Although the experience of an unsuccessful migration was not *the* Brazilian reality, it was certainly *a* truly Brazilian reality. For the poorer classes that lived in very difficult contexts in the rural zones, the city was the promise of a better life<sup>48</sup>, a promise which justified significant migratory movements. Nevertheless, such promise was far from being fulfilled for most people, and it was not infrequent for many to find, in an urban environment, equal or even greater ordeals, submissions and even death. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other notable narratives, such as the theatrical play *Morte e Vida Severina* [*Severine Life and Death*] (1955), from João Cabral de Melo Neto, or the documentary-film *Brasília, contradições de uma cidade nova* [*Brasilia, Contradictions of a New City*] (1967), from Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, went on to depict the egregious ordeals inherent to these migratory movements converging to the big cities, in other regions of Brazil (Northeast and Center respectively).

I believe that the listed examples sustain the argument that *Macunaíma* exhibits a critical portrait of Brazil, with determinations which are relatively easy to identify to whoever has the minimum of knowledge about the country. Nonetheless, to limit the reading of the narrative to a portrait of Brazil, even though a partial one, would mean that it is solely being attributed to it a mere function of protest.

Since *Macunaíma* is a literary work, it makes sense for the analysis of the transposition of the medieval carnivalesque culture to the Brazilian context of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to

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<sup>48</sup> In chapter III, Macunaíma exerts an exaggerated (o)ppression on his newborn son in order for him to grow up fast with the purpose of «ir pra São Paulo ganhar muito dinheiro.» (Andrade, 1996: 26) [«going to São Paulo to earn a lot of money.»] The baby does not resist to life's hardships on the jungle and dies, poisoned, immediately afterwards.

instinctively point towards the parodistic questions, as I have underlined previously. However, since this narrative contains representations of forms and rituals of spectacle, as well as of coarse vocabulary, the attention of the critique cannot ignore them. With the aim of demonstrating how *Macunaíma* also exhibits a potential for non-conformity, let us proceed to an analysis of the two episodes which constitute chapter X, whose scenery is the center of the city of São Paulo.

In the micro-narrative which opens «Pauí-Pódole», a flower vendor crosses paths with Macunaíma. Such vendor places a flower in the hero's lapel with the aim of forcing a sale, and the latter, feeling quite thwarted for not knowing how to name the hole where the flower now rested – named *botoeira* [buttonhole] in urban culture – and after considering several possibilities for naming it, decides to use a word originating from the Taulipang Amerindian culture of the Guiana: *puíto*, which in that context means *anus*<sup>49</sup>. Ignoring such signification, the flower vendor is seduced by the word and starts using it, leading to its dissemination, in the short period of a week, throughout the general population of São Paulo (demonstrating that the latter also ignored the Amerindian cultures). The brief episode ends with a satire of the Brazilian academia, which, also in that same short span of time, had already produced research results on the word *puíto*, attributing to it a (fake) Latin root, in common with the word *botoeira* [buttonhole].

This episode around the word *puíto* shows how language, whether regarded as creation or as the aspects which determine its daily use, is subject to factors of indetermination, to an incalculable contingency at the outset. Furthermore, it introduces a familiar and coarse

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<sup>49</sup> In *Namoros com a medicina*, Mário de Andrade proposes a free translation of the scatological Amerindian legend of Puíto (Andrade, 1939: 98-9) told by the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg in *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* (1917).

vocabulary in the representation of the spoken form of the language, and does it in a jesting manner, by contrasting the actual creation of the Brazilian speech (of popular provenance, with a root which is specifically indigenous), based upon simple analogies and which correspond to practical needs of oral communication, with the scientific, bookish and erudite pseudo-justifications of an academia disconnected from the events of the real world, and which have the practical effect of leading to a colonial cultural appropriation.

Something more might be added to this interpretation through the analysis of the Amerindian scatological legend of the Pu'íto itself, of which Mário de Andrade became aware, wherefore I shall quote a translation, from the quill of Henrique Roenick (with proofreading from Manoel Cavalcanti Proença), of the tale collected by Theodor Koch-Grünberg in 1905, transcribed in *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* (1917):

**Pu'íto, como as pessoas e os animais receberam o seu ânus**

Antigamente, os animais e as pessoas não tinham ânus para defecar. Acho que defecavam pela boca. Pu'íto, o ânus, andava por aí, devagar e cautelosamente, peidando no rosto dos animais e das pessoas, e depois fugia. Então os animais disseram: “Vamos agarrar Pu'íto, para dividi-lo entre nós!”. Muitos se juntaram e disseram: “Vamos fingir que estamos dormindo! Quando ele vier, vamos pegá-lo!”. Assim fizeram. Pu'íto veio e peidou na cara de um deles. Então correram atrás de Pu'íto, mas não conseguiram pegá-lo e ficaram para trás.

Os papagaios Kuliwaí e Kaliká chegaram próximos de Pu'íto. Correram muito. Finalmente o pegaram e o amarraram. Então vieram os outros, que tinham ficado para trás: a anta, o veado, o mutum, o jacu, o kujubim, o pombo... Começaram a reparti-lo. A anta pediu logo um pedaço para ela. Os papagaios cortaram um

grande pedaço e o jogaram para os outros animais. A anta imediatamente o pegou. Por isso ela tem um ânus tão grande.

O papagaio cortou para si um pedaço pequeno, como lhe era adequado. O veado recebeu um pedaço menor que o da anta. Os pombos tomaram um pedaço pequeno. Veio o sapo e pediu que lhe dessem também um pedaço. Os papagaios jogaram um pedaço na sua direção, o qual grudou nas suas costas: por isso o sapo ainda hoje tem o ânus nas costas.

Foi assim que adquirimos nossos ânus. Se hoje não o tivéssemos, íamos ter que defecar pela boca, ou então arrebentar. (*apud* Viveiros de Castro, 2011: 890-1)

#### **[Pu'uito, how people and animals received their anus**

In the deep past, animals and people lacked an anus with which to defecate. I think they defecated through their mouths. Pu'uito, the anus, wandered around, slowly and cautiously, farting in the faces of animals and people, and then running away. So the animals said: —Let's grab Pu'uito, so we can divide him up between us! Many gathered and said: —We'll pretend that we're asleep! When he arrives, we'll catch him! So that's what they did. Pu'uito arrived and farted in the face of one of them. They ran after Pu'uito, but couldn't catch him and were left trailing behind.

The parrots Kuliwaí and Kaliká got close to Pu'uito. They ran and ran. Finally they caught him and tied him up. Then the others who had been left behind arrived: tapir, deer, curassow, Spix's guan, piping guan, dove. . . . They began to share him out. Tapir eagerly asked for a piece. The parrots cut a large piece and

threw it to the other animals. Tapir immediately grabbed it. That's why his anus is so huge.

The parrot cut a small, appropriately-sized piece for himself. The deer received a smaller piece than tapir's. The doves took a little piece. Toad arrived and asked them to give him a piece too. The parrots threw a piece in his direction, which stuck on his back: that's why even today the toad's anus is on his back.

That was how we acquired our anuses. Were we without them today, we'd have to defecate through our mouths, or explode. (*apud* Viveiros de Castro, 2012: 30)]

This Taulipang narrative presents a process of mythical speciation common to virtual proto-humans and proto-animals, when they still denoted preorganic states. In «O medo dos outros» [«Immanence and fear»], the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro denotes that the story focuses on the moment when an organ (the anus) with a life of its own:

deixa sua existência intensiva, de parte idêntica a seu próprio todo, e é extensivizado, coletivamente investido e distribuído (repartido) entre as espécies animais. (...) Note-se que não se trata, no mito, de dar a cada indivíduo um ânus idêntico mas que lhe seja *próprio*, no sentido de ser sua propriedade privada, mas de dar aos representantes de cada futura espécie um órgão que lhes seja *específico*, isto é, que caracterize cada espécie como multiplicidade distinta; ainda não estamos no regime do equivalente geral. Mas toda espécie terá um ânus – porque, como o mito faz questão de esclarecer *in fine*, toda espécie tem uma boca. E é pela boca que se travam as relações mais decisivas entre as espécies no mundo pós-mítico: pela devoração intercorporal. (Castro, 2011: 893) [leaves its – “intensive” existence, as a part identical to its own (w)hole, and is “extensified,” collectively

invested and distributed (shared) among the animal species. (...) We should note that the myth does not involve giving each individual an identical anus that is his/her *own* in the sense of his/her private property; instead it involves giving the representatives of each future species an organ that is *specific* to it – in other words, one that characterizes each species as a distinct multiplicity. We are not yet within the regime of general equivalence. Still, every species shall have an anus because, as the myth endeavours to explain *in fine*, every species has a mouth. And it is through the mouth that the most decisive relations between the species in the post-mythic world take place – through inter-corporal predation. (Castro, 2012: 31)]

A metaphorical interpretation of this legend may allow the proposal of a theory of (re)creation of the Brazilian language of Mário de Andrade, supported by an Amerindian cosmology which is opposed to an organic State<sup>50</sup>. It should be understood that I propose the rejection of the abstract idea of language as an organ which articulates itself with other organs (borders, territories, religion, History, mythologies, etc.) in an organicity enclosed in itself, imposed, coordinated and subsumed by a body-State to form a national unity (one *country*, one *nation*, in the hegemonic pragmatic meaning that such concepts historically imply worldwide). Thus, in this scope, the listed organs are viewed under a monochromatic vision, solidified: each and every single one of them becomes easier to manage, to control and to manipulate if they hold a well-known definition, established and unequivocal limits, particular roles in the functioning of

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<sup>50</sup> A formulation inspired on the thought of the ethnologist Pierre Clastres, *La Société contre l'état* (1974) [*Society Against the State* (1989)].

society – one interested in perpetuating power and privilege. Conversely, we shall have a much more democratic idea of language, plural and suchlike to the world's own otherness, if we envision it from the perspective of this Amerindian mythology, conceiving it in the capacity of a preorganic intensive organ which is subdivided (into several languages) by the multiplicity of the several “species” (I place this word between quotation marks to give it a symbolic meaning of groups, communities, ethnicities, etc.), and always resisting to the statute of private property (the equivalent to the language of a single man, which, due to its absolute incommunicability, would be doomed to die along with that same man), hybridizing itself permanently by the phenomenon of deglutition. And this is how a language-other, unidentified from the languages which gave it origin, requires an organ-other unidentified from the organ which ingested them, because if that did not happen the result would be defecation through the mouth (“*falar merda*” [“*talking shit*”]), or a burst due to maladjustment, that is to say, due to a double inability for processing: the adjustment of the used language to the representation of the world’s otherness; and the ability to propose the world's own otherness (ethic, aesthetic, politic, etc.) through the transforming imagination of language.

In the second micro-narrative of that very same chapter X, there is a reversion of the process of colonial cultural appropriation carried out by a State institution (the academia) in the episode of the *puíto*, with Macunaíma interrupting a public speech exalting the “official” mythology associated to the Southern Cross in order to convey the Amerindian mythology, by telling the legend of the Pauí-Pódole, the Father of the Curassow. There is, in this performance by Macunaíma, a demonstrable parallel with the comical forms and rituals of the medieval spectacle, which Mikhail Bakhtin claims to be noticeably different from the official Church or Feudal State ceremonies and forms of cult. The aforementioned forms and rituals offered a

vision of the world, of man and human relations completely different from the official version, in particular predefined periods of time. Due to its specific and sensitive character, and on account of a powerful element of *gameplay*, these carnivalesque forms, notwithstanding having great affinities with art (in particular with theatrical plays), are however distinguished from the latter, being located in the frontier between art and life, in an indiscernible zone: «Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part.» (Bakhtin, 1984: 7)

The observation of these manifestations in the episode of the legend of Pauí-Pódole renders the approximation of *Macunaíma* to this carnivalesque medieval and renaissance culture intuitive. Although the episode does not constitute the formal representation of Carnival, it does represent, however, a festive day (day of the Crux) where the carnivalesque culture blends itself. First and foremost, precisely due to the intervention of the people in a space where everyone is potentially both a spectator and an actor. The first speaker, who intends to convey the official mythology, is not a politician or other figurehead from society, but rather an anonymous mulatto who improvises his own stage on the public square, by climbing on top of a statue. Macunaíma, who is there by chance and has, at the beginning of the scene, the contemplating stance of a mere spectator, ends up inadvertently assuming the role of protagonist quite easily.

The second aspect of the carnivalesque culture we should highlight in the episode of Pauí-Pódole (but also in the puíto one) is its important civilizational element. The official celebration only looked at the past, which was used to consecrate the current social order. It

tended to consecrate, therefore, the stability, the immutability and the perpetuity of the rules that governed the world. It was the triumph of a dominant, victorious, prefabricated truth, which assumed thereby the appearance of being eternal, immutable and peremptory. Conversely, death, resurrection, successions and renovation always constituted the essential aspects of the carnivalesque celebration, where, due to the effect of the strong presence of these concepts, there was an abolition of hierarchies, values, norms and religious taboos, and where the presence of a critical conception of the past can be found, as well as a transformation of the present and a construction of the future on a basis of uncertainty<sup>51</sup>. Since the performance by Macunaíma fulfills its goal, by convincing and moving the crowd, who returns home «feliz no coração cheio de explicações e cheio das estrelas vivas» (Andrade, 1996: 93) [«happy with their heart filled with explanations and filled with living stars»], even the perceptions usually associated to the contextual scenario (the urbanity of the city of São Paulo) undergo an alteration, with the power of the machine which prevails there being converted into the refreshing Amerindian mythology: «Pauí-Pódole estava rindo pra ele [Macunaíma], agradecendo. De repente piou comprido parecendo trem de ferro. Não era trem era piado e o sopro apagou todas as luzes do parque.

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<sup>51</sup> The abolition of the social rules in effect, along with the ideas of perpetuity, improvement and predictability of the future created «(...) during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. (...)

This experience, opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability, sought a dynamic expression: it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities.» (Bakhtin, 1984: 10)

Então o Pai do Mutum mexeu uma asa mansamente se despedindo do herói. Macunaíma ia agradecer, porém o pássaro erguendo a poeira da neblina largou numa carreira esparramada pelo campo vasto do céu.» (Andrade, 1996: 93) [«Pauí-Pódole was smiling at him [Macunaíma], while giving thanks. Suddenly, he made a long squeak which seemed like the sound of a cogwheel train. It was not a train it was squeaking indeed and its blow put out all the lights of the park. Thereupon the Father of the Curassow tamely moved a wing saying farewell to the hero. Macunaíma was going to thank him, but the bird raised the dust of the mist and departed towards a path sprawled throughout the vast field of the sky.»]

Macunaíma thus fulfill, in both episodes of chapter X, a role of transformation of the world analogous to the hero which is his homophone in Amerindian civilization, described by Lucia de Sá, in «*Macunaíma e as fontes indígenas*» [«*Macunaíma and its indigenous sources*»], as: «um herói transformador, em grande medida responsável pelo mundo ser como é. Suas motivações para transformar o mundo são variadas, e podem incluir tanto a necessidade legítima de melhorar as coisas, como o desejo pelo poder, a busca de vingança, a maldade, e o tédio. A maior parte do tempo, no entanto, Makunaíma transforma o mundo por acaso, quase sempre na tentativa de consertar erros que ele próprio cometeu.» (in Andrade, 2017: 207) [«a transforming hero, largely responsible for the world being as it is. His motivations to transform the world are varied, and may include both the legitimate need to improve things, as well as the desire for power, the quest for vengeance, evilness, and boredom. Most of the time, however, Makunaíma transforms the world by chance, most frequently in an attempt to fix the mistakes he has done himself.»] Inspired by this description, Mário de Andrade puts into practice the carnivalesque civilizational impetus through an active forgetfulness, a form of learning to unlearn, by representing his Macunaíma as a character who is impertinent, impetuous, circumstantial,

untimely, uncapturable, senseless, and ignorant of the urbanized wisdom of State, who, due to these same characteristics, is capable to destabilize the signification of language, myths, and structures as well of the official hegemonic, allegedly immutable, and homogenizing values of the Brazilian culture of colonial origin.

### 3.3. Macunaíma, my Brother

In a note for the preface of 1926, immediately after writing the first version of *Macunaíma*, Mário de Andrade defends that this narrative is an expected consequence of a research that he had been developing over time, liable therefore to be read within a line of continuity and coherence throughout his works: «ando sentindo já uma certa precisão de mostrar que minhas mudanças de pesquisa de livro pra livro, nem são tanta mudança assim, antes é transformação concatenada, desbastada e completada da mesma pesquisa inicial. // (...) nada mais provável na minha obra depois de *Amar, verbo intransitivo* e *Clã do jabuti*, do que o livro de agora.» (Andrade, 2017: 193) [«I have been feeling a certain need to show that my changes, in terms of research, from one book to another, are not that much of a change and are rather a completed, trimmed and concatenated transformation of the very same initial research. // (...) nothing was more likely to appear among my works, after *To Love, Intransitive verb* and *Clã do jabuti*, than the present book.»]

Declarations of this nature led most of the scholarship on *Macunaíma* to adopt a critical proceeding whose central premise relies on the idea that a broad understanding of the work benefits from a wide view on everything around the author. In the third chapter of the book *Ruínas de linhas puras: quatro ensaios em torno a Macunaíma* (1998), entitled «Recordare»,

José Luiz Passos contextualizes *Macunaíma* in the scope of two poetic works from its author, *Paulicéia desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] (1922) and *Clã do jabuti* (1927). In a first moment, Passos advocates that Mário de Andrade's abandonment of the canonical poetic forms in *Paulicéia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] has caused him to undergo a form of vertigo for which the solution was the creation of a carnivalesque figure of himself: the harlequin. After finding the Brazilian counterpart to this character (who was imported from *Commedia Dell'arte* [*Italian Comedy*]) in Mário de Andrade's ethnographic research, Passos emphasizes that «o arlequim se converte no primeiro locus da mistura e da adaptação, da busca por uma nova linguagem que traduzisse o hibridismo do cenário cultural brasileiro» (Passos, 1998: 58) [«the harlequin is converted into the first locus of mixture and adaptation, of the search for a new language which may translate the hybridism of the Brazilian cultural scene»], in order to emphatically conclude that his «traje de losangos seria a primeira roupa de Macunaíma.» (Passos, 1998: 59) [«diamond-checked costume would be Macunaíma's first attire.»]

Secondly, José Luiz Passos argues that the poems which integrate *Clã do jabuti*, written between 1923 and 1927, constitute a geographical expansion of the research that Mário de Andrade, moved by his enthusiasm for the arrival of the modernist aesthetics to the heart of São Paulo, had carried out in *Paulicéia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] (1922). Such an expansion covered a wide "Brazilianness" which would be fully manifested in *Macunaíma*. By analyzing the poem «Carnaval Carioca» (1923), Passos expands the reading lines of the carnivalesque theme in the Mariodeandradrian lyric by extracting, from the psychological realities of the individual, concurring social determinations for the formation of structuring concepts (of *mixture, displacement and revelation*) of the Macunaimic narrative.

The summary of José Luiz Passos' analysis illustrates the level of complexity of the exhaustive studies about *Macunaíma*, which weaved together, on a dense web, the reading of the narrative with: Mário de Andrade's personal experiences; the modernist aesthetics that the latter embraced in the early 1920s; his nationalistic projects, aimed at the creation of a Brazilian language that would be connected to a collective psychology and be able to integrate the cultural heterogeneity of the various groups, ethnicities and traditions which composed Brazil at that moment in History.

Since I am favorable to the enunciated procedure, I would like to raise a discussion stemming from the paradoxical self-irony which Mário de Andrade demonstrates by calling Macunaíma his brother in the quoted passage from the conference *O Movimento Modernista* [*The Modernist Movement*] highlighted in the introduction to this chapter. A discussion which integrates the potential common psychological characteristics, acquired through the inheritance of a similar Brazilian macro-historical process, in specific events or contexts which are analogous or alike, experienced by both the protagonist of the novel as well as by its author. This is due to the notion that Mário de Andrade's conscience of the country certainly also implies a very specific personal experience, which possesses a politic and aesthetic dimension invariably reflected in the Macunaimic narrative. For this reason, it is worth to go back a few years to a time before the creation (1926/7) and publication (1928) of *Macunaíma*, narrating an episode from 1920, around the time of the conception of *Pauliceia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] (1922), the first work of the author marked by modernist aesthetics.

According to an account from Mário de Andrade himself, the context of such episode was the formation period of the Brazilian modernist movement, between 1916, when the members of the São Paulo's group established their first contacts, and 1922, with the event of the Modern Art

Week. The apogee of the thrill lived by the group on this phase was triggered by the aesthetic novelty introduced in São Paulo's society by the paintings of Anita Malfatti and the sculptures of the Italian-Brazilian artist Vitor Brecheret – artists who had had European and American cosmopolitan experiences. These first artistic avant-garde manifestations had continuation due to a steady spreading of the movement throughout São Paulo, and the scandal created by it became something permanent in Brazilian society, which was still built upon a colonial structure and mentality, from the state institutions to the closest circle of the individual – the family.

The episode which motivated the writing of *Pauliceia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] illustrates quite well some of the aforementioned tensions between the modernist aesthetics and the Brazilian society. For the conceptualization of this book, the author had found inspiration in his readings of the symbolist works *Les campagnes hallucinées* [*Hallucinated Plains*] (1893) and *Les Villes Tentaculaires* [*The Tentacular Towns*] (1895), from the Belgian author Émile Verhaeren. However, the trigger for starting to write it had origin in an alleged family discussion which occurred in 1920, brought about by his acquisition of *Cabeça de Cristo* [*Head of Christ*], a sculpture from Vitor Brecheret. Let us transcribe the narration of the incident:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The factuality of this version related by Mário de Andrade himself is put into question by Jason Tércio, his biographer: «Há uma versão (estimulada pelo próprio Mário) de que ele começou a escrever esses poemas na noite em que chegou em casa com a *Cabeça de Cristo* e ficou emocionado com as reações negativas da família. Não pode ser verdade, porque a escultura foi adquirida no primeiro semestre de 1920 e o início de *Pauliceia desvairada* foi em dezembro, como ele próprio datou.» (Tércio, 2019: 119-20) [«There is a version (fostered by Mário himself) which claims that he started writing those poems on the night that he got home with the *Head of Christ* and got emotional with the negative reactions from his family. It cannot be true, because the sculpture was acquired on the first semester of 1920 and he started to write *Hallucinated City* in December, has he had claimed himself.»] I shall

Foi quando Brecheret me concedeu passar em bronze um gesso de que eu gostava, uma "Cabeça de Cristo", mas com que roupa! eu devia os olhos da cara! Andava as vezes a-pé por não ter duzentos réis pra bonde, no mesmo dia em que gastara seiscentos mil réis em livros... E seiscentos mil réis era dinheiro então. Não hesitei: fiz mais conchavos financeiros com o mano, e afinal pude desembulhar em casa a minha "Cabeça de Cristo", sensualissimamente feliz. Isso a notícia correu num átimo, e a parentada que morava pegado, invadiu a casa pra ver. E pra brigar. Berravam, berravam. Aquilo era até pecado mortal! estrilava a senhora minha tia velha, matriarca da família. Onde se viu Cristo de trancinha! era feio! medonho! Maria Luisa, vosso filho é um "perdido" mesmo. (Andrade, 1942: 20-1)

[Just then Brecheret agreed to do me a bronze copy of a plaster cast I liked, a 'Head of Christ'; but how the devil to pay? I owed a small fortune! Sometimes I went around on foot because I didn't have 200 réis for the tram, when the same day I had spent 600,000 réis on books! And 600,000 réis was serious money then. I did not hesitate: I made another financial arrangement with my brother and finally I could bring home my 'Head of Christ' to unwrap with absolutely sensual happiness. The news went around in a trice, and the relatives who lived nearby invaded the house to take a look. And to brawl. They bellowed and bellowed. That's a mortal sin, shrieked my elderly aunt, the matriarch of the family. Who

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proceed with my analysis ignoring the question of the fictionality or factuality of this episode, since the relevance of the latter is in its representative factor, with our discussion going therefore into another direction.

had ever seen a Christ with plaits? It was ugly, fearful! Maria Luisa, your son really is a 'good-for-nothing'. (Andrade, 2008: 97)]

This personal report brings to light, in fact, two phenomena which, more than having a provocative effect, constitute a threat to the family institution as a social nucleus of colonial organization: the economic, posed by Mário de Andrade's lifestyle, antagonistic to the prudent and (self-)sacrificial bourgeois accumulation; and the aesthetic, posed by a representation of Christ which is divisive in relation to the traditional Latin-Catholic ones.<sup>53</sup>

On this same line of subversion, one of the poems from *Pauliceia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*], the «Ode ao Burguês» [«Ode to the Bourgeois Gentlemen»], expands itself towards the Brazilian society in general, by directly attacking the judges of normalized taste, the bourgeois and catholic morality, the politics aimed at achieving power or pursuing strictly economic goals, the oppression of the state and family authorities, the binding and predatory instinct of a capitalist aristocracy.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> As was the case with Anita Malfatti, whose paintings were inspired by German Expressionism, Vitor Brecheret also «importava escurezas menos latinas, pois fora aluno do celebre Maestrovic» (Andrade, 1942: 17-8). [«brought with him darker, less Latin, tones, having been a pupil of the celebrated Maestrovic» (Andrade, 2008: 96)].

<sup>54</sup> «Eu insulto as aristocracias cautelosas!

Os barões lampeões! os condes Joões! os duques zurros!

Que vivem dentro de muros sem pulos;

E gemem sangues de alguns milréis fracos

Para dizerem que as filhas da senhora falam o francês

E tocam o *Printemps* com as unhas! //

Eu insulto o burguês-funesto!

O indigesto feijão com toucinho, dono das tradições!

The denouncing and confrontational tone contained in that family dispute and on the verses of this poem is not exactly the tone of the Macunaimic rhapsody, whose dialogues and narrations are consistently more humorous, subtle and, sometimes, suggestive, while the events and the consequences of the interactions among characters might be way more catastrophic and crueler. One of the factors that leads Macunaíma's rejection of the colonial values not to be a

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(...)//

Come! Come-te a ti mesmo, oh! gelatina pasma!

Oh! *purée* de batatas morais!

(...)

Ódio aos sem desfalecimentos nem arrependimentos,

Sempiternamente as mesmices convencionais!» (Andrade, 1987: 88-9)

[«I insult the cautious aristocracies!

The querosene lamp barons! the count Johns! The jackass-braying dukes!

who live inside walls never scaled;

and lament the blood of a few puny pennies

to say that their lady's daughters speak French

and play the "Printemps" with their fingernails! //

I insult the fatal-bourgeois!

The undigested beans and bacon, guardian of traditions!

(...)//

Eat! Oh, eat yourself up! stupefied gelatine!

Oh, moral mashed potatoes!

(...)

Hatred to those without weakness or repentance,

ever eternally the conventional samenesses!» (Andrade, 1968: 43-4)]

direct verbal one is concerned with the rawness of his despise for such values, inasmuch as the protagonist does not have the conscience that he feels such despise. On the other side, despite such rawness, it also cannot be said that there is total despise, because, as I have already suggested above, and as I shall have the opportunity to illustrate with specific examples further ahead, there is some mimicry by Macunaíma of the *modus operandi* characteristic of a colonial mentality. Notwithstanding that there are formal differences, it is worth observing how the values and the creative process embodied in those early 1920's texts from Mário de Andrade provide valuable clues for the interpretation of *Macunaíma*. I'll start with the values.

Alongside with Vitor Brecheret's *Cabeça de Cristo* [*Head of Christ*], Macunaíma is on the antipodes of being represented as an aesthetically pleasurable hero. This happens not only because the representations of his figure are opposed to a certain Latin-Catholic concept of ideal beauty, but also because his figure undergoes several processes of metamorphosis, thus not preserving a stable representation. As mentioned before, Macunaíma is initially described as a black and ugly child who is birthed by a Tapanhumas Indian woman. However, also in chapter I, in order to become desirable for his sister-in-law Sofará and consummate the sexual act with her, he transforms into a «príncipe lindo» (Andrade, 1996: 10) [«beautiful prince»]. In the passage of the hero from child to adult, which happens due to a magical event, namely a washing gush that just hits a part of his body (chapter III), he turns into a hybrid man, becoming truly monstrous, inasmuch as his body grows disproportional and mismatched in relation to his head, which maintains the dimensions and features that preserve his original childish ugliness: «[Macunaíma] Foi desempenando crescendo fortificando e ficou do tamanho dum homem taludo. Porém a cabeça não molhada ficou pra sempre rombuda e com carinha enjoativa de piá.» (Andrade, 1996: 19) [«[Macunaíma] was straightening himself up, growing, getting stronger and got to the size of

a tall man. His head however, which did not get wet, remained forever blunt with the dull face of an Indian boy.»] A new transformation of the protagonist occurs in the journey along with his brothers down the river Araguaia towards São Paulo (chapter V), where the undesirability of the non-white races comes up again. Due to the heat, and since the river is full of piranhas, Macunaíma sees an opportunity to take a bath in a puddle (supposedly the mark of a giant footstep from the deity Sumé) found upon a large rock in the middle of the river. Let us observe the subsequent events:

Quando o herói saiu do banho estava branco loiro e de olhos azuizinhos, água lavara o pretume dele. E ninguém não seria capaz mais de indicar nele um filho da tribo retinta dos tapanhumas.

Nem bem Jiguê percebeu o milagre, se atirou na marca do pezão do Sumé. Porém a água já estava muito suja da negrura do herói e por mais que Jiguê esfregasse feito maluco atirando água pra todos os lados só conseguiu ficar da cor do bronze novo. Macunaíma teve dó e consolou:

– Olhe, mano Jiguê, branco você ficou não, porém pretume foi-se e antes fanhoso que sem nariz.

Maanape então é que foi se lavar, mas Jiguê esborrifara toda a água encantada pra fora da cova. Tinha só um bocado lá no fundo e Maanape conseguiu molhar só a palma dos pés e das mãos. Por isso ficou negro bem filho da tribo dos tapanhumas. Só que as palmas das mãos e dos pés dele são vermelhas por terem se limpado na água santa. Macunaíma teve dó e consolou:

– Não se avexe, mano Maanape, não se avexe não, mais sofreu nosso tio Judas!

(Andrade, 1996: 37)

[When the hero got out of his bath, he was white, blonde and with blue eyes, the water had washed his blackness. And no one else would be able to point him out as a son of the jigaboo tribe of the Tapanhumas.

When Jiguê noticed the miracle, he threw himself immediately on the mark of the big foot of Sumé. However, the water was already too dirty from the blackness of the hero and no matter how desperately Jiguê rubbed himself, while throwing water all over the sides, he only managed to turn into the color of new bronze. Macunaíma had pity on him and gave comfort:

– Look, Jiguê my brother, you did not turn white, but the pure blackness is gone however, and better to be snotty than without a nose.

Maanape then also washed himself, but Jiguê had splashed all the enchanted water out of the puddle. There was only a little bit at the very bottom and Maanape managed to just get the palm of his hands and feet wet. So, he remained as black as a true son of the tribe of the Tapanhumas is. Only the palm of his hands and feet became red because they were washed in the holy water. Macunaíma felt sorry for him and gave comfort:

– Do not vex yourself, Maanape my brother, do not vex yourself no, our uncle Judas suffered more!]

In order to interpret this episode, let us start by invoking the Christian appropriation of the indigenous legend of Pay Sumé, done through the myth of Saint Thomas. According to the Bible, Thomas, one of the apostles, was not present at the Cenacle when Christ first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. When Thomas heard the news of Christ's resurrection, he did not believe it, and stated that he would not believe it unless he saw the holes made by the nails in

Christ's hands and put his own finger on their openings (John XX, 24). When, eight days later, Jesus appeared to the apostles once again, with Thomas now standing among them, he was allowed to touch the sacred wounds of Christ so that he had no doubts about what had happened (John XX, 27). Due to this attitude, Saint Thomas became, in Western culture, the symbol of human skepticism, incapable of belief without the use of his senses. Nevertheless, his legend did not end here nor is it limited to such a symbolic value. Reproached due to his disbelief by Christ himself, who considers those who did not see but still believed to be blessed (John XX, 29), over time Saint Thomas ended up fulfilling the mission of converting the most incredulous peoples in many of the legends created around his figure. In fact, the idea that he had been in India, converting its peoples, dates back to the first centuries of Christianity – a narrative which was given credibility through the invocation of alleged physical remains having been found in oriental territory.<sup>55</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the myth of Saint Thomas assumed great prominence in the sparse Portuguese empire. By replicating the oriental reports, the Jesuits narrated the alleged sighting of the same type of physical remains (the footprints<sup>56</sup>) proving the presence of Saint Thomas throughout several parts of Brazil. Moreover, firstly they attributed to

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<sup>55</sup> «marcas de pegadas no chão e nas pedras; aparecimento de relicários e entalhes de madeira que seriam da própria cruz de Cristo, levados para a Índia por Tomé; e logo sua possível sepultura na costa do Ceilão passaria a ser lugar de adoração e peregrinação.» (Brocco, 2020: 130) [«marks of footprints on the ground and on the rocks; the appearance of reliquaries and wood carvings which were said to be from Christ's cross, taken to India by Thomas; and before long his possible grave in the coast of Ceylon would become a place of worship and pilgrimage.»]

<sup>56</sup> The myth was also exploited by the Spanish settlers, with the existence of alleged testimonies of the apostle's footprints in Peru and Paraguay.

the apostle the responsibility of having brought the myth of Sumé to the Americas, and secondly, they identified Saint Thomas as he himself being the deity to whom the natives called Zumé. To the coastal Tupis and other indigenous groups, Sumé had the role of a civilizing deity, primarily responsible for the knowledge that they had about agriculture and their own social organization. Due to such characteristics, the legend was prone to colonial appropriation, thus fulfilling two functions: the attribution of a foundational and legendary origin to the Christian civilizational indoctrination of the indigenous peoples; and to further validate the universality of western history (namely as being the history of the salvation of mankind), thus safekeeping it from incoherencies and geographical relativism. The obvious consequence of this colonizing gesture for the indigenous peoples was the dispossession of their own mythology, of the origins of their civilization, with them now assuming merely a role of receptors of knowledge, without a voice in the writing of (their) History.<sup>57</sup>

In the narrated Macunaímic episode, Mário de Andrade proceeds with the Christian appropriation of the indigenous myth, satirically exposing the kind of civilization to which the colonization of Brazil truly led to. In the first place, the mythical footprints of Saint Thomas undergo, in the miscegenation with the myth of Sumé<sup>58</sup>, an expressionist hypertrophy<sup>59</sup>, creating

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<sup>57</sup> In the chapter «Mário de Andrade's Antropofagia and Macunaíma as Anti-Imperial Scene of Writing» from the book *Anti-Empire: Decolonial Interventions in Lusophone Literatures*, Daniel Silva points out the passive role of the subaltern individual in History: «the subaltern is inside of History, that is, as a historical being, but not a historicizing one. The subaltern's place within the signifying field of History is that of the written sign, as opposed to the sign that writes; as inscription, not inscriber.» (Silva, 2018: 73)

<sup>58</sup> In the book *Visão do Paraíso: os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil*, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda extensively analyzes the miscegenation of the myth of Saint Thomas with the indigenous myth of Sumé.

a puddle deep enough for a human being to take a bath there. Furthermore, the miraculous water only applies to Macunaíma, the privilege of being white is only awarded to him, as were all the privileges instituted by their mythologies awarded to white colonizers. The eager desire for whiteness shown by Macunaíma's brothers is paradigmatic of what it means to be non-white: it is to be worthy of pity and in need of comfort. Jiguê desperately rubs himself but, although he loses some of his blackness and gains the color of bronze, such a condition is not satisfactory for him. Maanape, only able to whiten a bit the palms of his hands and feet, is doomed, as a black individual, to a condition of perpetual suffering, which is normalized, familiarized and relativized by resorting to the very same Christian mythology (the comparison with uncle Judas) which had place him at the bottom of the social pyramid. The outcome of this episode is for the three brothers to be left with their respective skins pigmented with the colors which gave origin to the miscegenation of the contemporary Brazilian people (white, red and black), but not without a satirical glimpse at the iniquities inherent to the stratified pigmentocratic<sup>60</sup> scheme which has shaped such phenomenon through violence.

This event allows me to proceed with a smooth transition from the unstable aesthetic phenomenon inherent to *Macunaíma* to other modes of rejection of the colonial values associated with libidinous issues. Macunaíma's hedonistic, unproductive and squandering attitude connects economic factors with factors related to desire and pleasure, a connection which is also present in

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<sup>59</sup> As I suggested in footnote n.18, Expressionism was brought to Brazil by the hand of Anita Malfatti, influenced by her experience in Berlin. Other notable modernist Brazilian painters, as Tarsila do Amaral or Lasar Segall, adhered to the expressionist aesthetics by adopting hypertrophic deformative practices.

<sup>60</sup> Term inspired by the book from Edward Telles, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America*, which consecrates a chapter to the Brazilian case. (Telles, 2014: 172-217)

Mário de Andrade's texts previously quoted. Such a coincidence does not erase, however, some differences between these cases. The objects of desire which lead Mário de Andrade to be considered a hedonist, a squanderer and an unproductive individual are essentially cultural and artistic – and *Macunaíma*, along with the rest of his works, are products of such intellectualized<sup>61</sup> desire. Macunaíma, in turn, has his desire oriented towards objects which may provide an immediate carnal satisfaction, eminently emotional and sensory – women, refreshing baths, food, resting, money, the *muiraquitã*, the vengeance on his brothers, etc. Made from a multiplicity of objects which, above everything else, satisfy instinctive, basic and immediate needs, the image of Macunaíma's desire undergoes constant modifications. It is factual that the narrative possesses a main syntagmatic axis which unfolds around the loss and recovery of the *muiraquitã* – a gift of love from Ci –, but it is also verifiable that the driving desire of the hero's movement towards such object is constantly interrupted and is dispersed in favor of other objects which appear on the microcosmic contexts which he experiences. In other words, his desire finds his purpose on its own objects, frequently casting into forgetfulness the central cause and the teleology of the protagonist's journey<sup>62</sup>. A proof of this claim can be found by looking at what happens to

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<sup>61</sup> Mário de Andrade's unproductivity is not absolute, but relative to a social paradigm built upon the concept of economic utilitarianism.

<sup>62</sup> Example: «Todas as estrelas tinham descido do céu branco de tão molhado de garoa e banzavam pela cidade. Macunaíma lembrou de procurar Ci. Êh! dessa ele nunca poderia esquecer não, porque a rede feiticeira que ela armara pros brinquedos fora tecida com os próprios cabelos dela e isso torna a tecedeira inesquecível. Macunaíma campeou campeou mas as estradas e terreiros estavam apinhados de cunhãs tão brancas tão alvinhas, tão!... Macunaíma gemia. Roçava nas cunhãs murmurejando com doçura: “Mani! Mani! filhinas da mandioca...” perdido de gosto e tanta formosura. Afinal escolheu três. Brincou com elas na rede estranha plantada no chão, numa maloca mais alta que a Paranaguara. Depois, por causa daquela rede ser dura, dormiu de atravessado sobre os corpos das

Macunaíma after recovering the muiraquitã from his antagonist, an event which does not produce on him any stabilization, orientation, or moderation of his desire – with the narrative ending with the consummation of the most paroxysmic of desires: his own death.

These brief considerations about the objects of Macunaíma's desire already allow us to outline an opposition to the mentality of the (neo)colonial individual, who orientates his desire towards a single object: wealth. Thus, the ability to accumulate capital is the only human faculty which he develops, since the role of overdetermination played by capital allows him to guarantee any other object of desire. Macunaíma's sexual experiences in São Paulo are often consummated not due to a pure physical attraction between him and the women, but rather due to the venality to which the latter subject their bodies. By understanding the inseparability of the economic factor from libido, an association materially idealized in a (pseudo-)lust which integrated an urban fascination with Europe (prostitutes were, in reality, called «Frenchwomen»), Macunaíma disguises himself as a Frenchwoman to seduce his antagonist, the Piaimã Giant, in order to attempt to recover the muiraquitã. However, the Giant refuses to engage in a mere commercial exchange, thus denying to lend or sell the stone to the false Frenchwoman, but attempts to

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cunhãs. E a noite custou pra ele quatrocentos bagarotes.» (Andrade, 1996: 39-40) [«All the stars had descended from the sky, white from being so wet from the drizzle, and staggered throughout the city. Macunaíma remembered to search for Ci. Êh! he could never forget that one, since the sorceress' net that she had armed for the toys had been woven with her own hair and that makes the weaver unforgettable. Macunaíma tracked and tracked but the roads and yards were so full of young girls so white, so pale, so!... Macunaíma was moaning. He brushed himself against the young girls while muttering with sweetness: "Mani! Mani! daughters of the manioc..." lost in the middle of so much delight and beauty. He ended up choosing three. He played with them in the weird net planted on the ground, in a maloca higher than the Paranaguara. Afterwards, due to the hardness of that net, he slept across the bodies of the young girls. And the night cost him four hundred dollars.»]

deceive her/him by suggesting an offer of the *muiraquitã* which may occur through the concession of sexual favors. It is quite clear that the intention of the *Piaimã* Giant is to be able to obtain such favors without losing the amulet, which merely has an ornamental and economic value for him. When *Macunaíma* insults him, calling him «regatão» [«huckster»], *Venceslau Pietro Pietra* retorts: «– Regatão uma ova, francesa! Dobre a língua! Colecionador é que é!» (Andrade, 1996: 50) [«Huckster my ass, Frenchwoman! Watch your tongue! Collector is more like it!»]; and he shows off all the stones in his possession. *Macunaíma*'s antagonist thus shows himself to represent the paradigm of the man who lives predominantly in function of the teleology of wealth accumulation, the main point of faith towards which all his actions converge.

While *Macunaíma*, his brothers, *Mário de Andrade*, “a nossa gente” [“our people”] (the Brazilian people), refuse to abandon their manifold desire, allowing it to have free rein (in its productive-squandering-hedonistic attitude) until the external barriers and constraints are broken or they break them, the urban people, contaminated by the colonial and bourgeois mentality, castrate their own desire, by eliminating its positive and expanding function, creator of new ways of life. The apology of arduous work, the prudent and calculated business, the honest marriage, etc., form a group of virtues and merits, in short, a mimetic, mechanized and totalitarian morality, from where the bourgeois starts off to judge the world and punish the guilty – the ones who are different from him, however small that difference might be. That is what happens in chapter XI, when *Macunaíma* decides to exact revenge on his brothers once more, leading them to track a tapir in front of São Paulo's Commodity Exchange, which leads to a phenomenon of imitation by the persons who engage in their commercial daily life there. The scene becomes a humorous one on account of a family lie generating a societal effect, making the commercial heart of the city stop. People ask *Macunaíma* where he had seen the tapir's trail and the former,

without ceasing his tracking, incessantly repeats a tupi phrase: «– Tetápe, dzónanei pemonéite hêhê zeténe netaíte.» (Andrade, 1996: 97) When the day reaches its end and after the chase has led to naught, and with all that crowd being tired, the hero attempts to repeat the phrase, which several persons interrupt by asking its meaning, to which the former answers: «– Sei não. Aprendi essas palavras quando era pequeno lá em casa.» (Andrade, 1996: 97) [«I do not know. I learned those words back home when I was a child.»] The hilarity of the scene increases with the rise of the crowd's frustration (a crowd which, first of all, had been generated solely by its constituents' own greed<sup>63</sup>), and reaction of displeasure to the nonsense brought about by Macunaíma's answer. Feeling the fury directed at him, Macunaíma attempts to fix the situation, exempting himself from responsibilities with an answer that does not explain anything: «– Calma, gente! Tetápe hêhê! Não falei que tem rasto de tapir não, falei que tinha! Agora não tem mais não.» (Andrade, 1996: 97) [«– Take it easy, everyone! Tetápe hêhê! I didn't say there are tapir tracks, I said there were! But there are not anymore.»] As Lúcia de Sá points out, this «resposta é, na verdade, a tradução da frase arekuna que Macunaíma diz não saber.» (*in* Andrade, 2017: 217) [«answer is, actually, the translation of the Arekuna phrase that Macunaíma claims not to know.»] The tension increases and one of the merchants together with a reporter get upset with Macunaíma and his brothers, and raise economic reasons for it: «– Isso não vai

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<sup>63</sup> «[Macunaíma e os irmãos] Chegaram lá, principiaram procurando o rasto e aquele mundão de gente comerciantes revendedores baixistas matarazos, vendo os três manos curvados pro asfalto procurando, principiaram campeando também, todo aquele mundão de gente. Procuraram procuraram, você achou? nem eles!» (Andrade, 1996: 97) [«They [Macunaíma and his brothers] arrived there and started to look for the trail, and everyone in that huge crowd, merchants, retailers, bassists, matarazzos, seeing them bending over and looking for something on the asphalt, also started tracking, all of them. They searched and searched, did you find it? Neither did them!»]

assim não! Pois então a gente vive trabucando pra ganhar o pão nosso e vai um indivíduo tira a gente o dia inteiro do trabalho só pra campear rasto de tapir!» (Andrade, 1996: 98) [«– That won't do for us! We live here working everyday to earn our daily bread and then this guy comes here and gets us out of our work for the entire day, only to track the trail of a tapir!»] The events escalate quickly, the indignation extends to the entire population, and a student makes a speech where the financial issue also becomes a moral, social, ideological, national, civilizational and legal one: «– Meus senhores, a vida dum grande centro urbano como São Paulo já obriga a uma intensidade tal de trabalho que não permite-se mais dentro da magnífica entrosagem do seu progresso sequer a passagem momentânea de seres inócuos. Ergamo-nos todos una voce contra os miasmas deletérios que conspurcam o nosso organismo social e já que o Governo cerra os olhos e delapida os cofres da Nação, sejamos nós mesmos os justiçaadores...» (Andrade, 1996: 98) [«– Gentlemen, the life of a big urban center such as São Paulo forces us to such a laborous intensity that even the momentary passage of innocuous beings inside the magnificent harmony of its progress cannot be allowed anymore. Let us all raise a voice against the deleterious miasmas which defile our social organism, and since the government closes its eyes and depletes our Nation's treasury, let us do justice ourselves!»] The fight becomes inevitable and Macunaíma moves towards the middle of the crowd and hits several persons, including a policeman, who arrests the hero. Other policemen gather around while speaking an incomprehensible language and the crowd that previously wanted to lynch the hero starts treating him like a victim and stands up for him. Macunaíma takes advantage of the confusion and runs away.

There is in the urban bourgeois population a firm belief in Progress which expels every human being that does not compete for the (economic) rationality set by that ideal. Despite the antagonism between the oppressed native language and the foreign language inherent to the

State's repression, Macunaíma and the police have in common the fact that they speak incomprehensible languages for that population, and therefore cannot have determinable and normalizable functions in that progressive sense conceived for society. Since the bourgeois thus limits his desire to a single object whose possibility for expansion is merely quantitative, he is set on a state of permanent indigence, falling short of the fortune to which he is always delusively close. Cautious, little by little, the bourgeois invariably places his stake on the security of a predictable result, thus reactively mechanizing himself as an organ of the capitalist apparatus. This man thus stultifies his own humanity on behalf of a straightforward social paradigm of utilitarian productivity, therefore eliminating the possibilities for questioning himself, for freeing himself, to change, to restart in a different mode, to be another.

I thus suggest, thereby, the hypothesis of an opposition between two concepts of desire: one stemming from the formal bourgeois way of dealing with it, another from the popular processing of desire, which adopts a procedural movement. A procedure and process which I propose to characterize in five points: 1. First and foremost, desire is born without a specific reason and does not possess any purpose that may overdetermine it, in other words, that may be beyond its own objects; 2. Secondly, desire is a producer, which drives Macunaíma to an intense action, where we have a glimpse of audacities, cunning, advances, escapes, comprehensions, incomprehensions, benevolences and cruelties which activate the regeneration of desire itself<sup>64</sup>;

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<sup>64</sup> Macunaíma's unproductivity is defined on this study in the same relative terms as it is for Mário de Andrade. Macunaíma's desire is thus read as a machinic manipulation which, according to Eliane Robert Moraes, pours out from the dialectic «entre a preguiça e a produtividade maquinal que está na base do programa de Marinetti, uma vez que a própria indolência do “herói de nossa gente” pode ser considerada como uma forma de produtividade.»

3. From what has been inferred, we may extract the third aspect liable to characterize this desire: excess. Excess of laziness, excess of speed, excess of libido, excess of cupidity, excess of irrationality, excess of impertinence, Macunaíma is certainly a character marked by excessive behavior. The obsessiveness of his desire often leads him to lose control over him-self, to forget everything that is not such desire every time that he experiences it, to adopt childish, unwise and unexpected attitudes. In sum, Macunaíma's desire leads his unconsciousness to guide his consciousness and not the other way around; 4. Another characteristic of desire is that it does not focus on an object, but on a plurality of objects, a singular world constituted by objects (predominantly Brazilian ones) apprehended together and during movement which gradually form differentiated images with each other. Desire is therefore not only modifiable but also buildable; 5. A fifth and last aspect, which is no more than a bifurcation of the previous point, is that desire, even though it is individual, lets itself to be crossed by strong social and political components.

With this said, after having exposed some aspects of the critique of (neo)colonial bourgeois values common to both Mário de Andrade in the early 1920s and to Macunaíma, it is now time to question how the events that triggered the writing of *Paulicéia desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] provide clues for understanding the association between the potential for protest and non-conformity inherent to the creative process of *Macunaíma*. A possible answer must start by signaling the parallel between those two figures in what concerns the “game” of cat and mouse that both maintain with their closest relatives. In the same manner that Macunaíma

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(Moraes, 2010: 155) [«between laziness and mechanical productivity which is the basis of Marinetti's program, since the indolence of the “hero of our people” itself may be considered as a form of productivity.»]

quickly becomes an active element of a punitive, subduing and oppressive family context, due to the humiliations and submissions that he undergoes since he was a child, so too does Mário de Andrade refuse to resign to the role of victim and adopts behaviors morally questionable and of seeming gratuitous violence, coincidentally against the brother who helps him<sup>65</sup> (by lending him money). Therefore, if Mário de Andrade shares with Macunaíma a heroic quality, the latter is not characterized by a moral conduct, as in the case of the heroes from *La quête du Saint Graal* [*The Quest of the Holy Grail*], primarily because their Brazilian original contexts were never ones of peace and order, and never allowed them to have an idealistic conception of conduct. It is a far more reconfigurable, malleable and complex heroism, because it intermingles itself in the contradictions and in the alterity of reality. Thus, it is important to understand how, from the inescapable condition of being a minority, both are able to draw movements of non-conformity whence they may escape the same oppression in which they participate.

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<sup>65</sup> Let us observe the report from Jason Tércio: «Sem dinheiro suficiente para pagar a *Cabeça de Cristo*, ele pediu emprestado a Carlos, já um advogado bem-sucedido e agora também professor do Ginásio Oswaldo Cruz. (...). Um dia Mário lhe mostrou um poema. Depois de ler e reler, Carlos deu de ombros:

– Não entendi nada.

Mário estourou:

– Não entende porque é burrrro! – com os erres tremidos.» (Tércio, 2019: 116) [«Without enough money to pay for the *Head of Christ*, he borrowed some money from Carlos, who at that time was already a successful lawyer and also a professor at the Oswaldo Cruz Gym. (...). One day Mário showed him a poem. After reading and re-reading, Carlos shrugged:

- I did not understand anything.

Mário snapped:

- You don't understand because you are "burrrro" [dumb]! – with the shaken "ar"»]

In *Macunaíma*, satire already allows for an ironic reading of the entire oppressive system, with irony per se being a rhetorical instrument prone to non-conformity, characterized for conveying an opposite truth to the literal meaning of its speech. Since the oppressive system embedded in Mário de Andrade's literary speech ironizes (in other words, questions) the real oppressive system in Brazil, one can only represent the latter through an interpretation of the former. As a consequence, the representations of such real oppressive system are prone to varying according to the subjectivity both of the text and its interpreter. Therefore, if this system does not have a single stable representation, then its seriousness, constancy and credibility are also destabilized, thus preventing its mechanical reproduction. However, the complexity of the narrative forces one to recognize on it an uprising which operates at another level.

In the reported episode from Mário de Andrade's life, it is interesting to observe that it is from within the family tension that non-conformity is born. The writing of *Paulicéia desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] is a direct consequence of the argument from that episode. It is through an act of economic submission to his family (the loan from his brother, which has the effect of alienating his economic independence) that Mário de Andrade manages to obtain the object that causes an uproar among it (the *Cabeça de Cristo* [*Head of Christ*]). It is through this object that desire draws its own escape line (he feels happy in a sensualistic way). There is an analogy with *Macunaíma* here, who manipulates the “natural” oppressions among the family to his personal advantage, whether to be able to escape from a tight spot or to enjoy life as it pleases him.

Due to the status of minority held by both, the possible heroism shared between them is one of escape<sup>66</sup>, even if one considers as progresses the success achieved by Macunaíma in the quest for the *muiraquitã*<sup>67</sup> and the cultural and social transformations attained by Mário de

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<sup>66</sup> The escape sets up a heroic act inasmuch as it preserves an indelible link to the only promise of happiness, victory, freedom, that the enslaved natives and (mostly) black could experience, during a large historical period in Brazil. In *O Povo Brasileiro: Formação e Sentido do Brasil* [*The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil*], the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro tells us how such a gesture, despite implying a huge risk for the fugitive of suffering immediate death, frequently occurred: «da condição de escravo só se sai pela porta da morte ou da fuga. Portas estreitas, pelas quais, entretanto, muitos índios e muitos negros saíram; seja pela fuga voluntarista do suicídio, que era muito frequente, ou da fuga, mais frequente ainda, que era tão temerária porque quase sempre resultava mortal. Todo negro alentava no peito uma ilusão de fuga, era suficientemente audaz para, tendo uma oportunidade, fugir, sendo por isso supervigiado durante seus sete a dez anos de vida ativa no trabalho. Seu destino era morrer de estafa, que era sua morte natural. Uma vez desgastado, podia até ser alforriado por imprestável, para que o senhor não tivesse que alimentar um negro inútil.» (Ribeiro, 1995: 118) [«the only escape from the condition of slave was through the door of death or that of flight. These were narrow doorways, through which may Indians and blacks did escape, whether by the willful flight of suicide, which was quite frequent, or by running away – even more frequent and quite daring, as it almost always turned out to be fatal. Every black bore an illusion of flight in his breast and was sufficiently bold to attempt flight when there was an opportunity; he was therefore closely watched during his seven to ten years of active working life. His destiny was to die of exhaustion, which was his natural death. Once worn out, he might even be manumitted as worthless so that the master would not have to feed a useless black.» (Ribeiro, 2000: 77)]

<sup>67</sup> The actions done by Macunaíma's progressive movement are systematically undermined by mishaps which convert them into dramatic-comedy escapes: from the *currupira* (Andrade, 1996: 18); from the *Capei's Head* (Andrade, 1996: 31-2); from the *Piaimã Giant* and *Xaréu the dog* (Andrade, 1996: 51-4); from *Miniaquê-Teibê* (Andrade, 1996: 71); from the old *Ceiuci* (Andrade, 1996: 107-8); from *Oibê the big worm* (Andrade, 1996: 142-5); from the *shadow* (Andrade, 1996: 152-4).

Andrade in the scope of his participation in the Brazilian modernist movement. An escape substantiated both in the capacity to dodge the oppressive agents of reality, as well as in the capacity to deregulate the conditions of possibility which facilitate to those agents the capture, the cornering<sup>68</sup>. Such conditions of possibility are the realism of reality, the common-sense which determines what may be conceived, imagined, seen, listened to, in sum, experienced – a Christ with a braid *cannot* be a part of the sensitive experience. To deregulate these conditions of experience encompasses, therefore, the creation of new relations of the I with itself, with its own body (the nature in the human being), with space, time, memory, nature, the world, with the contradictions which persist in it and also with what is subtracted from those same contradictions. It also implies moreover to modify the perspective of what move us, to create new means to rescue us from discouragement, to invent enthusiasms. And, when the determinations of these deregulations let themselves be appropriated by the territorializing forces, to ironically detonate its own symbolic codification, to reinvent new movements of deterritorialization.

All of this is found, to a greater or lesser degree, in *Macunaíma*. Let us see some illustrative examples related to Macunaíma's family. While simultaneously performing the reterritorializing role of blocking desire, Macunaíma's relatives, through, or benefiting from several becomings, are useful for the hero as means of escape – openers or lockers of entrances, communication pathways or interrupters, who connect or disconnect action zones. At the end of chapter II, when Macunaíma's mother dies, the hero is mourning, his tears make the belly of his

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<sup>68</sup> The escape locations sometimes create the sensation of a labyrinthine spatiality, inasmuch as the escape: either ends in the location where it had started; or leads to a dead end, thus imprisoning the hero.

buried mother to swell until it metamorphoses into a soft hill, through which he, his sister-in-law and his brothers escape the harsh context of the Uraricoera and set off on an adventure throughout the world: «Jejuaram o tempo que o preceito mandava e Macunaíma gastou o jejum se lamentando heroicamente. A barriga da morta foi inchando foi inchando e no fim das chuvas tinha virado num cerro macio. Então Macunaíma deu a mão pra Iriqui, Iriqui deu a mão pra Maanape, Maanape deu a mão pra Jiguê e os quatro partiram por esse mundo.» (Andrade, 1996: 21) [«They fasted as long as the precept dictated and Macunaíma spent his fasting heroically mourning. The belly of the dead woman swelled and at the end of the raining season it had turn into a soft hill. Then Macunaíma held Iriqui's hand, Iriqui held Maanape's hand, Maanape held Jiguê's hand and the four set off to see the world.»] In chapter V, Maanape only has access to the wine cellar of the Giant's house to rescue Macunaíma from death with the help of a tick who turns into a Yale key. Jiguê suffers the most interesting transformation, because he is converted, in multiple occasions, into a telephone-machine: twice by Macunaíma in chapter V, one to order «lagosta e francesas» (Andrade, 1996: 42) [«lobsters and Frenchwomen»] and at the end of the chapter to offend the mother of his antagonist, Venceslau Pietro Pietra; in chapter VI, for Macunaíma to call the Piaimã Giant again, now with the intention of scheduling a meeting with him in order to recover the muiraquitã through a negotiated seduction; in chapter XI, Macunaíma intends to carry out once again his desire to offend the Giant's mother, however, due to the confusion created in Jiguê by the lie of the hunt that the hero had told (briefly described above), in other words, due to an intersubjective reason (and not technical), the machine-brother does not work<sup>69</sup> – herein lies a situation where the escape line (the metamorphosis of the brother which

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<sup>69</sup> «[Macunaíma] Se lembrou de ofender a mãe do gigante com uma bocagem novinha vinda da Austrália. Virou

unlocks desire) continues to proliferate in the construction of exits, thus rejecting the reterritorialization of his first determination (the reiteration of the offense to the Giant's mother) – there must be observed, however, that the literary exit leads to a dead end, a deadlock, and the subsequent episodes where Jiguê turns into a telephone show the limits of such resource, the depletion of its potential for deterritorialization: it is what happens at the end of the very same chapter XI, when Maanape turned «Jiguê num telefone e deu queixa pra Polícia que deportou a velha gulosa. Porém Piaimã tinha muita influência e ela voltou na companhia lírica» (Andrade, 1996: 109) [«Jiguê into a telephone and filed a complaint to the police, who deported the old gluttonous woman. However, Piaimã was very influential, and she returned with the lyrical company»]; finally, right at the start of chapter XII, the transformation occurs in the narrative for the last time, but the operator simply does not forward the call from Macunaíma to Venceslau Pietro Pietra, thus thwarting, without any additional explanation, this last attempt by the protagonist to insult the Piaimã Giant's mother.

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Jiguê na máquina telefone porém o mano inda estava muito confundido com o caso da mentira do herói e não houve meios de ligar. O aparelho tinha defeito.» (Andrade, 1996: 96) [«[Macunaíma] Had the idea of offending the giant's mother with a brand-new mouthpiece from Australia. He turned Jiguê into the telephone machine, however, his brother was still very confused with the case of the hero's lie and there was no way to use the phone. The device was defective.»]

## 4. TOWARDS A COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM

### 4.1. Aesthetic-Political Considerations, Metatextualities and Immanence Plan

The critical method adopted in the previous sub-chapter – a method whose central premise was based upon the idea that a reading of *Macunaíma* benefits, in what concerns rigor, from a panoramic view on the life and work of its author - led me to discussions oriented mostly towards the theme of nationality. The majority of scholars dedicated to *Macunaíma*, having adopted to a greater or lesser degree a similar method, have converged towards the same thematic, whence we cannot, however, assume that there is a convergence of content in the produced interpretations. I would like to start by comparing two of the tendencies that have been awarded greatest notoriety among several of these critical works.

On the one hand, some researchers advocate that the contextual knowledge on *Macunaíma* allows for the enunciation of the intentions, desires and goals that the author had for this narrative. This applies for both the totality of the latter, as well as for the methods and techniques regarding its different aspects (style, language, syntactic structures, events, characters, etc.). More specifically, when the analysis is from the political viewpoint, such studies end up consigning the work to an assumed Mariodeandradian *nationalist intentionality*, through the elaboration of whichever formulation that may link such nationalism to the notions

of *totality* and/or *identity* of the Brazilian people. This is mainly the case with the anthropophagic readings, but not exclusively.<sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, other researchers advocate the inexistence of an external teleology towards which the work converges. Gilda de Mello e Souza, for instance, claims that *Macunaíma* «satiriza um estado de coisas mas não aponta uma solução» (in Andrade, 1996: 293) [«satirizes a state of affairs but does not offer a solution»], and further adds that the ambivalence and indetermination which mark the general tone of the narrative presumably disable any interpretative key for its alleged ultimate goal. I believe that the demonstration carried out in the previous sub-chapters, concerning the narrative's determined dimensions of protest and undetermined dimensions of non-conformity, allows for the supposition that I share a similar view. I must add, on a holistic note, that the impossibility to determine a teleology for *Macunaíma* puts into question, specifically, the optimism of the two traditional epic keys - the

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<sup>70</sup> Among the notable critics who advocate that *Macunaíma* reflects its author's nationalist-totalizer-identitarian intentionality, we should mention João Luiz Lafetá, in «Estética e ideologia: o Modernismo em 30» (1973), Robson Pereira Gonçalves, in his book *Macunaíma: carnaval e malandragem* (1982), or the responsible for the only critical edition of this narrative, Telê Porto Ancona Lopez, who, when commenting the narration of a series of tribal dances heterogeneous with each other, attended by the protagonist Macunaíma, states that: «Mário de Andrade compreendeu que, dentro do seu projeto estético e ideológico – o nacionalismo que que almeja captar o Brasil na fusão dos elementos singulares, desejando representar um todo como forma de expor criticamente nossa identidade – só conseguiria ser literariamente legítimo procurando o equilíbrio entre o discurso ficcional e os componentes da narrativa.» (in Andrade, 1996: 8) [«Mário de Andrade understood that, within his aesthetic and ideological project - the nationalism which intends to capture Brazil in the fusion of singular elements, desiring to represent a whole as a way of critically exposing our identity - could only be legitimately literary by searching for the balance between the fictional discourse and the narrative's components.»]

triumphal one, which in regard to *Macunaíma* was most often associated to anthropophagic readings; but also the appeasing one, stemming from potential Aristotelian readings, which unappealingly consign tragedy towards a cathartic effect.

The following considerations aim precisely to draw a metatextual discussion around *Macunaíma* based on the discussion carried out by Mário de Andrade himself concerning the determined and/or undetermined nature of the narrative and, in abstract terms, of the works of art. Such proceeding entails, therefore, the double usefulness of: 1. opening conceptual paths for the interpretation of *Macunaíma*, thus expanding the understanding of the work's singularity in a coherence line in regard to its author; 2. discussing problems which in more general terms articulate aesthetics and politics in the works of art.

Putting emphasis on the fact that Mário de Andrade was a prolific commentator of his own works, let us enunciate the essential of his considerations regarding *Macunaíma*: the two unpublished prefaces (one in 1926 when he ended the first draft of the work, and another in 1928, before he published the first edition); the correspondence with his intellectual friends, especially between 1926 and 1929 (a period when he utilized those critical discussions to carry out several modifications on the manuscript with the aim of publishing the first and second editions), but also on the first halves of the 1930s and 1940s; and also, with quite some frequency, commentaries found in fragmentary passages, articles, interviews, diary pages conferences, chronicles, notes and other prefaces.

Additionally, it should be mentioned that the aforementioned set of commentaries done by Mário de Andrade on *Macunaíma* is rather extensive, including critical perspectives whose gradation may extend from the smallest detail (the discussion of a word or a passage), going through the addressing of structural issues (the architecture of the plot, the conception of the

characters, the language work), to the articulation of the narrative with the remainder of his works and the positioning of such articulation in its Brazilian artistic context.

Therefore, it is not wrong to state that the author engaged *Macunaíma* into a theoretical-critical reflection interpenetrated by artistic practices and political issues which in it-self goes way beyond the commentaries to the narrative - and about which it thus becomes quite relevant to draw some contextual considerations. Let us underline, therefore, that the theoretical-critical discourse by Mário de Andrade is prolific and fragmentary, having been produced throughout his entire intellectual life, and in the most varied forms: in his vast correspondence, in articles, prefaces, conferences, seminars, books, etc. Similar to what happens with Jorge Luis Borges, these theorizations are not always easy to interpret, inasmuch as: they make a reference to contexts which are not provided to us sometimes or are only partially provided; Mário de Andrade's writing has areas which are conceptually dense and are of a difficult exegetical access; his fragmentation is anti-systematic, in other words, it is not easy for a combined reading of all these documents to reveal a system that presents an unequivocal coherence.

It is indisputable, therefore, that this entire set of critical writings expands the interpretation of *Macunaíma* to a vast and complex conceptual field, this becomes rather significant considering that the text per se does not contain much of a self-reflective speech. In the aforementioned conceptual field resides the Mariodeandradian confession that the narrative imposes critical limits on him. All his weighting regarding the publication of the prefaces, the perplexities, worries, doubts, regrets, the need to provide clarifications in his correspondence demonstrate how *Macunaíma*, up to a certain point, becomes autonomous and uncapturable, limiting and even disarraying the intentions and the critical authority *a priori* of its own author.

One of the documents that provides more substance to this argument is the letter addressed to Alceu Amoroso Lima on May 19, 1928, of which I quote a passage for further analysis:

*Macunaíma* já é uma tentativa tão audaciosa e tão única (não pretendo voltar ao gênero absolutamente), os problemas dele são tão complexos apesar dele ser um puro divertimento (foi escrito em férias e como férias) que complicá-lo ainda com a tal de antropofagia me prejudica bem o livro. (...) É aliás de todas as minhas obras a mais sarapantadora. Francamente até me assusta. Sou um sujeito no geral perfeitamente consciente dos atos que pratico. (...) Sei sempre publicando um livro o que se vai dar com ele e de fato dá certo. No geral alcanço o que quero. Só não alcancei com o *Amar, verbo intransitivo*. Pois diante de *Macunaíma* estou absolutamente incapaz de julgar qualquer coisa. Às vezes tenho a impressão de que é a única obra-de-arte, deveras artística, isto é, desinteressada que fiz na minha vida. No geral meus atos e trabalhos são muito conscientes por demais pra serem artísticos. *Macunaíma* não. (in Andrade, 1996: 497-8)

[*Macunaíma* is such an audacious and unique attempt (I absolutely do not intend to return to the genre), its problems are so complex even though it is pure fun (it was written during vacation and as a vacation) that to complicate it further with the so-called anthropophagy really hinders the book. (...) It is in fact, of all my works, the most astounding. Frankly it even scares me. I am usually an individual perfectly self-conscious of my actions. (...) I always know when publishing a book what is going to happen with it, and everything works out all right indeed. In general, I achieve what I want. I only did not with *To Love, Intransitive verb*. Well, in face of *Macunaíma*, I am absolutely incapable to judge anything.

Sometimes I am under the impression that it is the only properly artistic work of art - in other words, the most uninterested one - that I have done in my entire life. In general, my actions and works are too self-consciously made to be considered artistic. Not *Macunaíma*.]

This passage introduces justification for a reading of *Macunaíma* articulated with other Mário de Andrade's (con)texts in the mention to the concept of *anthropophagy* (even though in a rejecting tone). A quick look at the date and content of the letter grants us the immediate perception that it was written following the launch of the first issue of one of the most important collective publications in the Brazilian modernist movement, the *Revista de Antropofagia*<sup>71</sup> [*Anthropophagy Magazine*], in which Oswald de Andrade published his famous «Manifesto Antropófago» [«Anthropophage's Manifesto»]. Mário de Andrade confesses that he did not understand this manifest in its totality, and adds that he does not agree with what he did understand. Furthermore, he also laments the coincidence of the magazine's publication having

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<sup>71</sup> The *Revista de Antropofagia* [*Anthropophagy Magazine*] owes his birth to the painting from Tarsila do Amaral entitled *Abaporu*, which in tupi-guarani means “antropophage”. The painting, which represents a man with his superior and inferior limbs having amplified disproportional dimensions and who is standing next to a green cactus on a blue background featuring the Sun, was offered by Tarsila to Oswald de Andrade, with whom she was married, as a birthday present on 11th January, 1928. When he saw it, Raul Bopp made the suggestion to Oswald of creating a movement around the painting. Subsequently they founded the Anthropophagy Club, together with the *Revista de Antropofagia* [*Anthropophagy Magazine*], which would reach a total of 16 published issues, between May, 1928 and August, 1929.

been in the antechamber of the publication of *Macunaíma's* first edition, due to the fear that his narrative, even though it was written in 1926, could be “captured” by the Oswaldian concept<sup>72</sup>.

Mário de Andrade foresaw, however, a reality that extended way beyond his time, inasmuch as one of the most popular interpretative approaches within the scholarship on *Macunaíma* is its anthropophagic reading, in the Oswaldian sense - whichever that is<sup>73</sup> - of the

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<sup>72</sup> Mário de Andrade substantiates his fear with an analogous consequence derived from another “coincidence”, the publication of his work *Losango Cáqui* (1926) (which, like *Macunaíma*, was also carried out with a significant temporal hiatus in relation to the moment of its conception (1922)), with the appearance of the “Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil” (1924) [“Manifesto of Brazilwood Poetry”] by Oswald de Andrade: «O Osvaldo vem da Europa, se paubrasilisa, eu publicando só então o meu *Losango cáqui* porque antes os cobres faltavam, virei paubrasil pra todos os efeitos. Tanto assim que com certa amargura irônica botei aquele ‘possivelmente pau brasil’ que vem no prefacinho do livro.» (in Andrade, 1996: 497) [«Oswald comes from Europe, he turns himself into brazilwood, and only then did I publish my *Losango Cáqui* because I was lacking money, I turned into brazilwood for all effects and purposes. So much so that I used the expression “possibly brazilwood” in that little preface of the book with a certain ironical bitterness»]

<sup>73</sup> Without dismissing a complete or complex exegesis of the Oswaldian *anthropophagy*, his essential value, according to the critique, corresponds to a metaphor quite simple to enunciate: the anthropophagy is characterized by the critical assimilation (the “deglutition”) of European cultures (by recreating them under a decolonizing stare), in a process of “consumption” and “digestion” which implies the rediscovery of Brazil by finding its primitive authenticity, thus originating a new Brazilian culture. Despite the simplicity of the enunciation, this metaphor still contains intricate implications, because even if it is more or less intuitive to where it is leaning towards - the development and affirmation of a national culture -, it is necessary to ascertain that the fact that the new Brazilian culture has its origin on a process of hybridization with a culture from which it intends to emancipate from - the European one - gave and is still giving rise to multiple and disparate interpretations - which is somehow logic, taking into account the infinite nuances, gradations, perspectives and implications of the articulation of the concepts of *emancipation* and *hybridity* on this context.

term. According to Alfredo Cesar Melo<sup>74</sup>, this critical approach finds justification, besides the constant cannibalistic episodes found on the narrative, in an alleged *aesthetic* and *ideological* agreement between the compared texts:

a tensão inicial entre *Macunaíma* e antropofagia seria equacionada *a posteriori*, pelos mencionados estudiosos, como uma relação de convergência profunda, apesar da rivalidade entre os dois principais expoentes do modernismo brasileiro. A rusga poderia ser compreendida mais como disputa de poder simbólico e proeminência dentro do modernismo, do que como um substantivo desacordo ideológico e estético entre a obra de Mário e o ideário de Oswald. (Melo, 2010: 208)

[the initial tension between *Macunaíma* and anthropophagy would be envisaged *a posteriori*, by the aforementioned scholars<sup>75</sup>, as a relation of profound convergence, despite the rivalry between the two main exponents of Brazilian modernism. The conflict could be understood more as a dispute for symbolic power and prominence within modernism, than as a substantial ideological and aesthetic disagreement between Mário's work and Oswald's ideology.]

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<sup>74</sup> I am referring to the article “*Macunaíma*: entre a crítica e o elogio à transculturação” (2010), where Alfredo Cesar Melo reads *Macunaíma* as a paradoxical work – simultaneously consonant and dissonant in its relation with Oswaldian *anthropophagy*.

<sup>75</sup> Alfredo Cesar Melo is specifically referring to the studies by Antonio Candido, «Digressão sentimental sobre Oswald de Andrade» (1995: 81), Walnice Galvão, «Modernismo: intertextos» (1998: 31), and Silviano Santiago, *Nas malhas da letra* (2000: 172).

There are certainly many and good motives which corroborate the conceptual intellectual affinities between Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade, whether such affinities are considered in a broad sense or anthropophagically. For starters, the Mariodeandradian collaboration with the poem «Manhã» [«Morning»], in that very same first issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia* [*Anthropophagy Magazine*], where his participation in the second issue was announced precisely with an entry about *Macunaíma*, which would become factual. Moreover, Mário de Andrade speaks, in the conference *O Movimento Modernista* [*The Modernist Movement*], in the first-person plural, that is, as an integral member of such movement – who follows the same guidelines –, where Oswald de Andrade was «a meu ver a figura mais característica e dinâmica do movimento» (Andrade, 1942: 31) [«in my opinion the most characteristic and dynamic figure in the movement» (Andrade, 2008: 100)].

It is thus undeniable that the interpretative variability of the concept of *anthropophagy* originated, in its articulation with *Macunaíma*, a very interesting kaleidoscopic view of the latter<sup>76</sup>, with such an approach showing itself to be, therefore, fully justified in its consequences. That does not stop me, however, from expressing dissatisfaction in face of the condescension with which the critique reads Mário de Andrade's words in the letter quoted above, whose effect is the annulment of his argumentation. Therefore, rather than considering as invalid or uninteresting the anthropophagic readings of this work, the path which I intend to follow

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<sup>76</sup> Where *Macunaíma* (1969) pontificates, a film written and directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, based upon Mário de Andrade's homonymous work. In his statement to Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (1978: 112-26) elaborates on his third-world recreation of the Oswaldian *anthropophagy* (which is characterized by a triumphant tone, a trait of the modernist manifestos at a global scale), denoting its structuring role in the conception of this masterpiece of the Brazilian *Cinema Novo* [*New Cinema*].

presents itself as an alternative one which up until now was insufficiently explored, whose access was blocked in part due to the presuppositions of such readings.<sup>77</sup>

Before going down that path, however, I want to put forward another argument, concerned with the historical evolution of the modernist movement, to further highlight the pertinence of my motivations. In the conference *O Movimento Modernista [The Modernist Movement]*, Mário de Andrade describes the São Paulo's modernist movement as having undergone several mutations and convulsions, through which its values and processes of intention were not always preserved. To the period between 1922 and 1930, which includes *Macunaíma's* conception and publication, Mário de Andrade calls «o período realmente destruidor» (Andrade, 1942: 30) [«the really destructive phase» (Andrade, 2008: 100)], arguing that it was in those years that the modernist movement acquired «o seu sentido verdadeiramente específico. Porque, embora lançando inúmeros processos e idéias novas, o movimento modernista foi essencialmente destruidor. Até destruidor de nós mesmos, porque o pragmatismo das pesquisas sempre enfraqueceu a liberdade da criação.» (Andrade, 1942: 39-40) [«its truly specific significance. Because the Modernist movement, although it launched countless initiatives and new ideas, was essentially destructive. Destructive to ourselves, even, because the pragmatism of its experimentation always weakened creative freedom.» (Andrade, 2008: 103)]

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<sup>77</sup> Very recently, André Corrêa de Sá published the book *Livros que respiram* (2021), whose third chapter, «Habitar o Brasil», launches a broad discussion on the limitations of Oswald de Andrade's concept of anthropophagy, by demonstrating how the use of the latter implies a significant anthropological reduction of Brazilian peoples. Conversely, in the eighth chapter of this very same book, «Aos ombros do *Macunaíma*», Corrêa de Sá embarks on a non-anthropophagic reading of *Macunaíma*, following Mário de Andrade's indications, and advocates that the work constitutes an openness to Brazil's ethnic and cultural diversity.

Let us adjourn, for now, the explicitness of the object of destruction underlying this passage, and observe that the direct correlation between the conscious pragmatism, which dominated the artistic activity of Mário de Andrade, and the insufficiency of creative freedom that was mentioned in the quoted excerpt from the letter to Alceu Amoroso Lima, covers the entire modernist movement (including Oswald de Andrade), notwithstanding the new ideas and processes which sprouted from it, such as *anthropophagy*. In the letter from 1928, Mário de Andrade reclaims for *Macunaíma*, in contrast with his actions and books (too self-conscious and pragmatic to be considered *properly artistic*), a singular space within his works – a specifically artistic space, remote, which he had never access until then, and only did through the unique and audacious path that he decided at a certain point to traverse, and to which he does not intend to return (and he did not return to it indeed). *Macunaíma* astonishes his author, and causes on him the enumerated panoply of hesitations, by leading him to confront the dark and obscure areas of his unconscious desire. As a consequence, his relation with *Macunaíma* is from a distinct nature of the relation that he had with his other works. What is programmed gives way to the unpredictable, the tool of interested action to uninterested art, the serious to playful, the product of labor to the product of leisure, and conscience's plenitude becomes extensively permeable to the unconscious.

In order to achieve a pondered and duly problematized enunciation of the questions postulated by this study it is also necessary to acknowledge however that some commentaries issued by Mário de Andrade after the publication of *Macunaíma*'s first edition complicate the possibility of reading it as a *pure work of art*. An example of what has just been stated can be found in another letter addressed to Prudente de Moraes Neto, from October 12 of that very same year of 1928:

na minha obra há duas partes nitidamente separáveis, a do ser afetivo e a do ser orgulhoso: a parte messiânica e a parte evasão. A primeira (prefácio e “Enfibraturas” da *Paulicéia, Escrava, Primeiro Andar* que é demonstração de experiência, *Clã* quase inteirinho, a parte ou sentido satírico de *Macunaíma, Ensaio, Compêndio*) é a parte mais fraca, mais transitória, mais inteligente. Pra justificá-la existe a minha teoria (‘minha’ por ser para mim) da arte-ação, pragmatismo bem definido, bem consciente, o clero traidor e satisfeito de sua traição. (...) A outra é o individualista que se evade num descanso, em férias, muito mais sofredor (o que parece contraditório), parte lírica, desinteligente. (...) Dessa, a que você atribui possibilidade maior de ficar, não me é possível absolutamente julgar nada, sei que como prazer artístico é a que mais gosto. Mas este gosto não tem o mínimo valor crítico. (in Andrade, 1996: 503-4)

[on my work there are two clearly separable parts, one from my affective self and the other from my proud self: the messianic part and the evasion part. The first one (preface and “Fibrature”<sup>78</sup> from *Paulicéia, Escrava, Primeiro Andar* which is a demonstration of experience, almost the entire *Clã*, the satirical part or meaning of *Macunaíma, Ensaio, Compêndio*) is the weakest, most transitory and most clever part. To justify it I have my theory (“my” because it is so for myself) of art-action, a well-defined pragmatism, quite conscious, the betraying clergy and satisfied with its betrayal. (...) The other is the individualist who escapes for a

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<sup>78</sup> Mário de Andrade is referring to the poem «As enfibraturas do Ipiranga (Oratório profano)» [«The Moral Fibrature of the Ipiranga (A Profane Oratorio)»]

rest, on vacation, and who suffers much more (which seems contradictory), the unintelligent, lyrical part. (...) Regarding that one, to which you have attributed a greater possibility of remaining, I absolutely cannot judge anything, I know that in terms of artistic pleasure it is the one I like the most. But such preference does not possess the minimum critical value.]

Both the parts of his work that Mário de Andrade claims to be «clearly separable» are, in practice, hard to separate. *Macunaíma*, as *Clã [do Jabuti]*, is only partially in each of the types of art we have been discussing, in other words, it contains elements which allow an interpretation which can either be of the quality of art-action as well as of art-artistic. A possible key for the understanding of these matters is on the use of the term individualist, which Mário de Andrade simultaneously opposes and articulates, in *O Movimento Modernista [The Modernist Movement]*, with a *collective* art:

Depois eu sistematizaria êste processo de separação nítida entre o estado de poesia e o estado de arte, mesmo na composição dos meus poemas mais “dirigidos”. (...) Escolhido um tema, por meio das excitações psíquicas e fisiológicas sabidas, preparar e esperar a chegada do estado de poesia. Si êste chega (quantas vezes nunca chegou...), escrever sem coação de espécie alguma tudo o que me chega até a mão – a “sinceridade” do indivíduo. E só em seguida, na calma, o trabalho penoso e lento da arte – a “sinceridade” da obra-de-arte, coletiva e funcional, mil vezes mais importante que o indivíduo. (Andrade, 1942: 22)

[Later I systematized this process of making a clear distinction between the poetic stage and the artistic stage, even when composing my most 'controlled' poems.

The national legends, for example, the polemical Brazilianization of language. Once I had chosen the theme I would prepare for and await the poetic state, using familiar psychological and physiological stimulants. If this came (and many times it never did), I would write without any type of screening everything that came to my pen - this was individual 'sincerity'. And only later, and calmly, came the slow, arduous artistic labour - the 'sincerity' of a work of art, collective and functional, a thousand times more important than the individual one. (Andrade, 2008: 97-8)]

By giving credence to Mário de Andrade's reports on the individuated state of poetry which resulted in the composition of *Macunaíma's* first draft - an obsessive, continuous, fluid process, materialized in a relative's farmstead in Araraquara, in the outskirts of São Paulo<sup>79</sup> -, no doubts remain that the aforementioned state was seconded by the collective state of art - the following elements prove it: the alterations that Mário de Andrade introduced in the manuscript following the debate with his intellectual friends in regard to some of the draft's passages, which his correspondence testifies to; and also, factually, the differences from the first to the second editions of the work. The sequencing of these two composition processes is also a skillful way of introducing the possibility of thinking them as mutually exclusive artistic manifestations.

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<sup>79</sup> In a letter to Anita Malfatti, dated 9th February, 1927, Mário de Andrade tells us: «(...) Fui na fazenda passar um mês. Pois me veio o saci de uma idéia pra um romance na cabeça, escrevi o tempo todo, teve dias em que escrevi até duas da manhã! Trouxe mais um livro na mala mas porém não descansei nem um bocadinho.» (in Andrade, 1996: 490) [«(...) I went to the farmstead for a month. Then it came to me the saci of an idea to write a novel, I wrote the entire time, there were days where I wrote up until two in the morning!»]

Therefore, both the state of poetry as well as of art, opposites in their respective associations to the concepts of individual and collective, either per se or combined, may result in a work of art.

The concepts which characterize a pragmatic and non-pragmatic artistic activity - in other words, an art whose finality is, respectively, in whichever purpose is external to it and in the fulfillment of the work of art itself - find a fruitful development in the text «O Artista e o Artesão»<sup>80</sup> (1938). In the latter, Mário de Andrade starts by discussing the concept of *technique* in art, dividing it into teachable technique, which in turn is subdivided into *craftsmanship* and *virtuosity*, and the unteachable technique, the *personal* one. Craftsmanship and virtuosity are respectively defined as «o aprendizado do material com que se faz a obra de arte» and «o conhecimento e prática das diversas técnicas históricas da arte – enfim, o conhecimento da técnica tradicional» (Andrade, 2016: 2) [«the learning of the material which one uses to create the work of art» and «the knowledge and practice of the several historical techniques of art - in short, knowledge of the traditional technique»]. Personal technique is the «objetivação, a concretização de uma verdade interior do artista. *Esta parte da técnica obedece a segredos, caprichos e imperativos do ser subjetivo, em tudo o que ele é, como indivíduo e como ser social.*» (Andrade, 2016: 2) [«objectivation, the fulfillment of the artist's internal truth. *This part of the technique obeys to secrets, whims and imperatives of the subjective self, in everything that he is, as an individual and a social being.*»]

Thereafter, Mário de Andrade enters into a long argumentative exercise which consists in the defense of the indispensability of craftsmanship and personal technique, unlike the

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<sup>80</sup> Inaugural class of the courses of Philosophy and History of Art, from the Institute of Arts of the Federal District University, in 1938, on which Mário de Andrade proposes an aesthetic theory.

dispensability of virtuosity, for the realization of the work of art. He begins by anticipating objections to his theory, through the use of two works of art which supposedly dispense the unteachable technique, the personal one. On the one hand, he points out that Egyptian art was essentially put at the service of (religious) utility for the community, and this had as a consequence nearly the full elimination of the artist's individual technique, manifested solely on small details of the work. The artist, besides being anonymous, produced an impersonal art, uniform in both its forms of expression as well as its themes. Shifting to an art which has a wide expression on his contemporaneity, Mário de Andrade brings up architecture to the discussion, where personal technique is also relegated to a secondary role, due to the easiness how innovating projects quickly became traditionalized, in a continuous repeat without subsequent artists being accused of plagiarism.

The counterargument to this point of view is done through the enunciation of two arguments. The first one, based upon the empirical observation of these impersonal artistic manifestations, which, as mentioned, contain individual elements, at a detailed level, prone to identification. The second one, of historical order, consists into pointing out that only in the epoch of the Renaissance did *beauty* become an artistic conceptual finality, replacing the preceding (religious and/or functional) strict utilitarian finality, which used *beauty* as a means of enchantment: «Desde então [do Renascimento], e cada vez mais, ela se tornou o objeto principal de pesquisa para o artista, e, por uma conversão natural de conceito, a beleza, pesquisada por si mesma, se tornou essencialmente objetiva e experimental, materialista por excelência, pra não dizer por exclusividade.» (Andrade, 2016: 6) [«Since [the Renaissance] then, and increasingly afterwards, beauty became the main research subject of the artist, and, due to a natural conceptual conversion, beauty, researched for itself, became essentially objective and

experimental, materialist par excellence, not to say exclusively.»] As a consequence, individualism is accentuated on the search for an *ideal of beauty* which implies a concomitant conscience that an *ideal beauty* does not exist, thus making the relation between the spirit of the artist and the substance of art become a singular one. And since this experimental research on beauty and this individualism are, before anything else, a consequence of the spirit of its time, they reflect the artist's technical search in the resolution of his personal problem - unexplainable, interior, unconscious, contingent, and in any event indiscernibly mingling his qualities as an individual and a social being - in face of the work of art.

Such an exposition of ideas implies two inferences: the first argument shows that even a maximally pragmatic work of art, aimed solely at utilitarian purposes, contains an unerasable contingency grain, an uncapturable personal secret, always prone to be reinterpreted; the second argument shows that a maximally non-pragmatic art, guided towards its proper goal, always reflects, somehow, pragmatic problems, pertaining to the social condition of the individual.

By rhetorically questioning if this multitude and variability of artistic manifestations which had its beginning during the Renaissance does not lead to chaoticism and disorientation of his contemporaneous art, Mário de Andrade points out the lack of a philosophical attitude by the artists as the cause of this empirically verifiable phenomenon, thus initiating yet another discussion around this topic.

Stating that it is not his intention to instill a logical, organic and aesthetic system, with a rigid and suffocating fixation of concepts - an ideology -, Mário de Andrade proposes, as an alternative, a critical experimentalism with History of Art where the concepts are worked on in relation to their limits - which can always be either extended or shortened, trimmed, deformed, etc. -, in order for the learners to acquire an artistic conscience. The difference between the

fixation of concepts and the limitation of concepts is, thus, on working with unmovable definitions and questionable intuitions<sup>81</sup>, which turn the critical experimentalism into a dynamic process, prone to permanently fecundate the process of artistic creation: «É preferível ficar na entressombra fecunda, que é só onde podem nascer as assombrações. A fixação dos conceitos nos levaria fatalmente a uma organização sistemática do nosso pensamento artístico, nos levaria a uma Estética, nos levaria a filósofos, senão a filosofantes, e não aos artistas que devemos ser.» (Andrade, 2016: 11) [«It is preferable to remain in the fecund mid-shadow, which is the only place where hauntings may be born. The fixation of concepts would fatally lead us to a

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<sup>81</sup> «E por que, como disse, pretenderei dar aos meus discípulos muito mais uma limitação de conceitos que uma fixação deles? (...) Ousarei, primeiramente, afirmar que jamais pude me prender a conceitos perfeitamente nítidos do Belo, da Arte, da Criação, do Artista, do Espectador, da Técnica, do Sentimento ou da Expressão, da Matéria e da Forma?... Essa é a verdade, porém. Devo confessar preliminarmente que eu não sei o que é o Belo e nem sei o que é a Arte. Através de todos os filósofos que percorri, num primeiro e talvez fátuo anseio de saber, jamais um conceito deixou de se quebrar diante de novas experiências. Eu não sei o que é o Belo. Eu não sei o que é a Arte. E no entanto, incapaz de conceituá-los com firmeza, seria, não modesto, mas perfeitamente injusto com o meu espírito e traidor dos que me trouxeram a esta cadeira, si negasse sentir, direi mais, intuicionar o que são arte e beleza.» (Andrade, 2016: 11) [«And why, as I said, do I intend to give my students far more of a limitation on concepts rather than a fixation of them? (...) I shall dare, firstly, to state that never could I get restrained by perfectly clear concepts of Beauty, Art, Creation, Artist, Spectator, Technique, Feeling, Expression, Matter and Shape?... That is the truth, however. I must confess preliminarily that I do not know what Beauty is, or Art. Throughout all the philosophers I went through, in an initial and perhaps fatuous eagerness to know, never did a concept stop being broken in the face of new experiences. I do not know what Beauty is. I do not know what Art is. And nevertheless, to be incapable to firmly conceptualize them would be, not modest, but perfectly unfair with my spirit and a betrayal towards those who brought me to this class, if I denied to feel, I would say more, to intuit what beauty and art are.»]

systematic organization of our artistic thinking, it would lead us to Aesthetics, to become philosophers, if not makers of philosophies, rather than the artists we are supposed to be.»]

We would not do justice to Mário de Andrade's thought if we did not mention that the potentiating function of the creative freedom inherent to the *limitation of concepts* implies an imposition of restrictions, since that is an implication of the concept of *limit*. It is in this sense that the artistic production, rather than corresponding to a function of free will<sup>82</sup>, unfolds into what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari designate as the *conceptual immanence plan*<sup>83</sup>, whose structure is based upon concepts which vary its signification insofar as they expand themselves in the articulation with other concepts and in other contexts of application of these articulations.

It is in the scope of such restrictions that Mário de Andrade introduces the political and social elements, recognizing its indelible limiting forces, but also the insufficiency of these forces, per se, as artistic limit. The full social commitment of the artist, of which an extreme example were those who let themselves be limited by the dictatorial Russian and German regimes of those times, prevents the singularization of his relation with the substance of art, in other words, it eliminates on him the possibility to resort to the indispensable *crafting technique*

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<sup>82</sup> «Já uma limitação de conceitos não é apenas necessária aos artistas, mas imprescindível. Sem isso, creio não se poderá nunca ser artista verdadeiro. Principalmente em nosso tempo, em que campeia o individualismo mais desenfreado, e o artista se tornou um joguete de suas próprias liberdades.» (Andrade, 2016: 12) [«A limitation of concepts on the other hand is not only necessary for artists, but indispensable. Without it, I believe one can never be a true artist. Specially in our time, where the most rampant individualism abounds, and the artist became a pawn of his own freedoms»]

<sup>83</sup> See chapter 2 («Le plan d'immanence» [«The Plane of Immanence»]) from *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Deleuze / Guattari, 2013: 39-62) [*What Is Philosophy?* (Deleuze / Guattari, 1994: 35-60)]

for the completion of the work of art: «De forma que o artista (...) dentro dessas sociedades ditatoriais, não adquiriu aquela humildade, aquele retorno a mero artesão que teve no Egito e mesmo na Idade Média. Deixa de ser um artista livre e não retorna a anônimo artesão. Transformou-se essencialmente num orador de comício, mais ou menos pragmaticamente disfarçado sob a máscara da arte.» (Andrade, 2016: 12) [«In a way that the artist (...) within those dictatorial societies, did not acquire that humbleness, that return to the mere craftsman which he was in Egypt and even in the Middle Ages. He stops being a free artist and does not return to the state of anonymous craftsman. He was essentially transformed into a speaker at a rally, more or less pragmatically disguised under the mask of art.»]

From this quote it may be inferred that the excessively social artist is at the same time excessively individualist, incapable from depersonalization, of freeing himself from a cult of the *self* which withdraws from him the focus on the realization of the work of art. The conceptual limitation of the artist must rather stem from a lucidity free from mundane passions and interests, conjugated with a humble, thorough and always unfinished research, of a balance between the political and the aesthetic, between social and art, which grants him the same aesthetic attitude - instead of that sentimental, egotistical attitude, which amounts to an inflated *praxis* of uncritical experimentalism and psychologism - in the face of art (whose destiny as a materialized work thus results as «múltiplo e obscuro» (Andrade, 2016: 12) [«multiple and obscure»]) and in the face of life.

Taking this reasoning into account, I would like to analyze yet another passage from the letter from May 19, 1928, addressed to Alceu Amoroso Lima, where Mário de Andrade attempts not only to demarcate the Macunaímic narrative from Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagy, but also places himself into a context where his researches were already being developed, ever since

*Paulicéia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] (1922), through singular paths, in a centripetal research movement, towards the deep Brazil:

quando o Osvaldo andava na Europa e eu tinha resolvido forçar a nota do brasileiro meu, não só pra apalpar o problema mais de perto como pra chamar a atenção sobre ele (se lembre que na *Paulicéia* eu já afirmava falar brasileiro porém ninguém não pôs reparo nisso) e Osvaldo me escrevia de lá ‘venha pra cá saber o que é arte’, ‘aqui é que está o que devemos seguir’ etc... Eu, devido minha resolução, secundava daqui: ‘só o Brasil é que me interessa agora’, ‘Meti a cara na mata virgem’ etc... (in Andrade, 1996: 497)

[when Oswald was in Europe and I had decided to reinforce the tone of my Brazilianism, not only to probe the problem from a closer distance but also to draw attention to it (remember that in *Paulicéia* I was already claiming to speak Brazilian but no one did a remark on it) and Oswald was writing me from there saying 'come here to know what art is', 'here is what we should be pursuing' etc... I, due to my resolution, replied from here: 'only Brazil interests me now', 'I have placed my face into the virgin jungle' etc...]

I have brought up this passage precisely due to the trap that it may reveal itself to be if read in isolation and not integrated into the complexity of the Mariodeandradian thought. A trap in the sense that its content seems to imply that a profound research on Brazil corresponds to a *tout court* departure from the modernist values of European influence. Well, in Mário de Andrade's advocacy of the artist's return to the condition of anonymous craftsman, done in «O Artista e o Artesão», it is not implied in any way that he has abandoned a personal technique and an aesthetic attitude, which are also the result of the social and political spirit of his time. The

mention to *Paulicéia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*] in the quoted passage provides the perfect example for the defense of this compatibility: inasmuch as this work manifested, at that time (1920), the centripetal research movement of Mário de Andrade, it did not do it without resorting to the poetry from the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren, or the importation of the figure of the Harlequin from the *Commedia Dell'arte* [Italian Comedy]. Additionally, in the preamble to *Paulicéia Desvairada* [*Hallucinated City*], entitled «Prefácio Interessantíssimo» [«Extremely Interesting Preface»], Mário de Andrade openly assumes the influence of Italian futurism, refusing nevertheless a full-fledged affiliation to the avant-garde movement: «Não sou futurista (de Marinetti). Disse e repito-o. Tenho pontos de contacto com o futurismo.» (Andrade, 1987: 61) [«I am not a futurist (of Marinetti's). I have said so and I repeat it. I do however have points of connection with futurism.»] This leads to the assumption, despite the acknowledgment that «o espírito modernista e as suas modas foram diretamente importados da Europa.» (Andrade, 1942: 26) [«the fashions that adorned that [Modernist] spirit were, at first, directly imported from Europe» (Andrade, 2008: 98)], that, in the case of Mário de Andrade, such importation was far from being uncritically realized. Let us explore a bit further the way how he assimilated the futurist theories.

As I previously mentioned, during the period of its formation (1916-22), the Brazilian modernist movement provoked in Brazilian society's structures of power an exacerbated reactionism due to the former's aesthetic, linguistic, ethical, economical, social and political confrontational attitude, leveraged by humorous manifestations. The asymmetry of forces on this chessboard demanded the constitution of a collective heroic state of mind on the movement's members, a state of mind to which futurism offered a decisive contribute: «Mesmo cercados de repulsa quotidiana, a saude mental de quase todos nós, nos impedia qualquer cultivo da dor.

Nisso talvez as teorias futuristas tivessem uma influência única e benéfica sobre nós. Ninguém pensava em sacrifício, ninguém bancava o incompreendido, nenhum se imaginava precursor nem martir: éramos uma arrancada de heróis convencidos. E muito saudáveis.» (Andrade, 1942: 32-3) [«Even though surrounded by daily rejection, the mental good health of nearly all of us warded off any culture of suffering. In this context perhaps the Futurist theories had a unique and beneficial effect on us. No one thought in terms of sacrifice, no one played the poor misunderstood victim, no one imagined himself either a precursor or a martyr: we were a bunch of determined heroes, and very healthy at that.» (Andrade, 2008: 101)] This salutary, supportive, combative and enthusiastic - in a single word, epic - state of mind which reigned amidst the group was fundamental for the success of their intentions, but also to provide a sense of protection for Mário de Andrade's fragile and acute sensibility, prone to melancholy.<sup>84</sup>

A benefit from the futurist theories is, therefore, in the critique, shared with Nietzschean philosophy, of the values associated to a culture of bad conscience - a culture which produces altruistic, resentful, and conservative human beings, full of self-pity, without any individual sovereignty, who attain self-affirmation through what they possess of identical with them-selves

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<sup>84</sup> «O meu mérito de participante é mérito alheio: fui encorajado, fui enceguedo pelo entusiasmo dos outros. Apesar da confiança absolutamente firme que eu tinha na estética renovadora, mais que confiança, fé verdadeira, eu não teria forças nem físicas nem morais para arrostar aquela tempestade de achincalhes. E si' aguentei o tranco, foi porque estava delirando. O entusiasmo dos outros me embebedava, não o meu. Por mim, teria cedido.» (Andrade, 1942: 15-6) [«My merit as a participant comes from elsewhere: I was encouraged, and blinded, by the enthusiasm of others. Despite the utterly steadfast confidence that I had in an aesthetic of renewal - and more than confidence, true faith - I would have had neither the physical nor the moral courage to face that storm of mockery. If I bore the shock it was because I was delirious. It was others' enthusiasm that intoxicated me, not my own. For my part, I would have given in.» (Andrade, 2008: 96)]

and with the other. Conversely, the Nietzschean *Übermensch* cultivates self-esteem (and awards it the status of necessary condition for feeling love towards the Other - a love based upon a notion of distances, on friendship), proposes the release of reeducated instincts (not a return to animality), cultivates health, vitality, and declares as fundamental values the joy of becoming, of discovery and of creation.

Let us not conceal the fact, however, that futurism contained rather reactionary aspects, which resulted, in Italy, on its close connection with fascism. We ought therefore to reiterate that Mário de Andrade's connection points with Italian futurism are not translated by the uncritical use of the concepts of systems, but rather by the adoption of practices which put into motion a permanent anti-systematic creative attitude: «Marinetti foi grande quando redescobriu o poder sugestivo, associativo, simbólico, universal, musical da palavra em liberdade. Aliás: velha como Adão. Marinetti errou: fez dela sistema.» (Andrade, 1987: 67-8) [«Marinetti was great when he rediscovered the musical, universal, symbolic, associative, suggestive power of the freed word. In fact: as old as Adam. Marinetti did a mistake though: he made a system out of it»]

Due to the anti-systematic satirical-critical attitude which he associated with epic nationalism, Mário de Andrade outlined for himself a dissociative path from the patriotic-allegorical discourse issued by extreme right-wing groups within the same Brazilian modernist movement he was a part of, with such discourse being mimetic of the fascistic political orientations which were being developed in Italian futurism. Miguel Gomes, in «A doutrina esquecida: uma releitura de *Macunaíma*», emphasizes that separating «a imagem do Brasil e da América que achamos em *Macunaíma* das imagens comuns no Verdeamarelismo ou “Anta” (...) é uma predilecção lúdica jamais confrangida pela ânsia de “pregar” (...) nem endoidecida pela força do bandeirante que pretende “desbravar” a alma brasileira (Johnson 35) até acabar por

redundar no “fascismo indígena”, como o chama Haroldo de Campos (1978, 49).» (Gomes, 2001: 282) [«the image of Brazil and America which we see in *Macunaíma* from the the images from the Green-Yellow or “Anta” movement (...) is a playful predilection which was never beleaguered by the eagerness to "preach" (...) nor maddened by the strength of the bandeirante which intends to "explore" the Brazilian soul (Johnson 35) until he winds up on the “indigenous fascism”, as Haroldo de Campos calls it (1978, 49)».]

The argument developed on this sub-chapter leads to the inference that Mário de Andrade’s rejection of the colonial values and the pursuance of the nineteenth-century mission to create a Brazilian literature do not imply a full-fledged rejection of foreign influences, let alone an uncritical acceptance of such influences. Immediately on the starting paragraph of the conference *O Movimento Modernista* [*The Modernist Movement*], the merit of creation of a national spirit, achieved at the cost of a form of violence mostly manifested through art, but which was also felt on the social and political traditions, is attributed to the Brazilian modernist movement. Let us observe Mário de Andrade’s understanding of what are the causes of the appearance of the movement:

A transformação do mundo com o enfraquecimento gradativo dos grandes impérios, com a prática européia de novos ideais políticos, a rapidez dos transportes e mil e uma outras causas internacionais, bem como o desenvolvimento da consciência americana e brasileira, os progressos internos da técnica e da educação, impunham a criação de um espírito novo e exigiam a reverificação e mesmo a remodelação da Inteligência nacional. Isto foi o movimento modernista, de que a Semana de Arte Moderna ficou sendo o brado coletivo principal. Há um mérito inegável nisto, embora aqueles primeiros

modernistas (...) tenhamos como que apenas servido de altifalantes de uma força universal e nacional muito mais complexa que nós. Força fatal, que viria mesmo. (Andrade, 1942: 13-4)

[The transformation of the world through the gradual weakening of the great empires, the emergence of new political ideals in Europe, the swiftness of transport, and a thousand and one other international factors, as well as the development of an American and Brazilian awareness and progress at home in technology and education, all required the creation of a new spirit and demanded a re-examination and even a reshaping of the national intelligentsia. This was the Modernist movement, of which the Modern Art Week came to be the main collective pronouncement. There was an undeniable merit in all this, even though it was as if we, the first Modernists (...) had served only as a sounding board for a universal and national energy that was much more complex than we were - a force of destiny, on its way regardless. (Andrade, 2008: 95)]

In the genesis of the Brazilian modernist movement were causes which were both endogenous as well as exogenous to the Brazilian reality, all of them associated with the world's becoming – a world where several dimensions of several realities are implied: national, continental, western and worldwide. Subject to becoming, these dimensions do not fit any form, not as russian dolls nor mosaics. They are dimensions which are comparable to geological stratum, inter-penetrable, miscible, permanently involved in complex processes of fragmentation and rearrangement. Another interesting characteristic of the inherent multiplicity to this conception of the world resides in the variability of its rhythms: for instance, while the weakening of the empires is gradual, providing us with a slow perception of the rhythm of

events, in contrast there is a certain apprehension of the world which is swifter due to the influence of transport.

It is thus quite clear here how much the national spirit created by the Brazilian modernist movement is born from a life experience simultaneously national and cosmopolitan, which incorporates the dynamic forces (national and universal, in Mário de Andrade's terminology) of the world, which exhibit its *becoming*, its *fragmentariness* and the *variability of its rhythms*. Since they have an operative value in Mário de Andrade's philosophical attitude, these three concepts also constitute *Macunaíma*'s conceptual immanence plan.

Even though Mário de Andrade considers the birth of the Brazilian modernist movement a fatality stemming from the causes enunciated in the quoted opening paragraph of the conference above, it should be underlined that their artistic manifestations have an undeniable merit in what concerns the formation of a national spirit. In other words, *Macunaíma* and the other works of art produced within this movement were not merely playing an adaptive role to those worldly forces, but turned the movement itself into a transformative, creative and guiding agent. With this said, we may conclude the undertaken metatextual discussion, since only a close reading of the lines of *Macunaíma* may reveal, in the enunciated field, its merits and functionalities.

#### 4.2. Mário de Andrade's Becoming-Child in *Macunaíma*: an Intensive Cartography of Brazil

For the sake of coherence with what has been exposed in the previous sub-chapter, the concepts which constitute the immanence plan of Mário de Andrade's work shall be the subject

of a critical experimentalism which shall be embodied in the artistic creation's procedures which provide structure, singularize and undefine *Macunaíma*. These include the permanently interrupted succession of events, the mixture of Brazilian peoples' languages and idioms, Brazil's displaced geography, the extensive enumerations, as well as the psychology and actions of its hero and remaining characters. In a passage from «O Artista e o Artesão» (1938) utilized in the context of that work for the purpose of defending the unyieldingness of artistic freedom in relation to normalizing abstractions and scientific dogmatisms, Mário de Andrade argues that such critical experimentalism implies the artist's depersonalization into a becoming-child:

Shulze-Soelde lembra, em boa metáfora, que para o esteta a beleza é uma criada que o serve, ao passo que para o artista é uma criança de que ele se utiliza. Si esta não será a verdade inteira, a imagem serve bem pra caracterizar o lado de obediência do artista diante de elementos que têm pra com ele a complexidade, a variabilidade, a inconstância e a independência da própria infância. (...) Jamais os artistas verdadeiros ficaram, em suas obras, nos limites doutrinários que se prefixaram. (Andrade, 2016: 10)

[Shulze-Soelde reminds us, with the use of a good metaphor, that for the aesthete beauty is a maid who serves him, while for the artist it is a child who he utilizes. While this may not be the whole truth, this invoked image is quite apt to characterize the artist's obedient side in the face of elements which for him contain the complexity, variability, inconstancy and the independence of childhood itself. (...) Never did true artists remain, on their works, inside the doctrinal limits they had prefixed for themselves.]

Let us compare this passage with the first image of *Macunaíma* given by Mário de Andrade, in the preface written immediately after finishing the first draft of the work in 1926, where he characterizes it as «um brinquedo. Entre alusões sem malvadeza ou sequência desfatiquei o espírito nesse capoeirão da fantasia onde a gente não escuta as proibições os temores, os sustos da ciência ou da realidade – apitos dos polícias, breques por engraxar. Porém imagino que como todos os outros o meu brinquedo foi útil. Me diverti mostrando talvez tesouros em que ninguém não pensa mais.» (in Andrade, 2017: 190) [«a toy. Between allusions without wickedness or sequence I have unburdened the spirit on that old corner of fantasy where we do not listen to prohibitions, fears, the scares either from science or reality - police whistles, worn out brake pads. Nonetheless I suppose that my toy was useful, as all the others had been. I had fun perhaps showing treasures about which no one thinks anymore.»]

The first of the notable affinities between these passages is the fact that the artist's becoming-child does not nullify the pragmatic aspect of the works of art - which, despite being toys, are worked around in a strict connection with *conceptual limits*, thus being *useful*, among other utilities, for thinking about the relations between knowing and not-knowing - the hidden treasures that a playful writing exercise reveals. The second affinity is found precisely in the transgressive character regarding the conceptual prohibitions (given by the realistic and scientific views) with which the artist endows himself when he grants the status of *toy* to his work of art, thus rejecting from the start the pretensions to Truth which are typically implied by the aforementioned world views. *Macunaíma* is far, therefore, from being describable as a mere amusement, born out of an uncritical playful writing exercise, without any pragmatic pretensions, refusing, on the other hand, the exclusivity and determinism of these pretensions.

From these considerations we arrive at the impossibility of reading Mário de Andrade's becoming-child as an attempt at reverting to a specific past, which could reflect any nostalgia of what has been lived. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the becoming-child «c'est extraire de son âge les particules, les vitesses et lenteurs, les flux qui constituent la jeunesse de cet âge» (Deleuze / Guattari, 1980: 340) [«means extracting from one's age the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows that constitute the youth *of that* age.» (Deleuze / Guattari, 1987: 277)] It is therefore an obscure method of rejuvenation, a jump out of the abstract course of time where everything is lost, to try out an elixir of eternal youth, a faked one however - inasmuch as such eternity, which constitutes Macunaíma's own lifetime, is lived in the historical time of its author rather than in a post-living theological time.

By declaring that Mário de Andrade's becoming-child constitutes Macunaíma's own lifetime I should also allude to a coincidence found on a letter he sent to Manuel Bandeira dated November, 1927, where he underlines the lack of character of the Brazilian reflected on the protagonist's stage of childishness, yet without a consolidated collective psychic entity: «a criança está caracterizada *justamente* porque *inda* não é homem brasileiro. Fiz questão de mostrar e acentuar que Macunaíma como brasileiro que *é não tem caráter*. (...) Ponha reparo: Macunaíma ora é corajoso, ora covarde. Nada sistematizado em psicologia individual ou étnica.» (Andrade, 1996: 493) [«the child is thus characterized *precisely* because he is not a Brazilian man *yet*. I made the point of showing and underlining that Macunaíma, Brazilian as he is, *lacks character*. (...) Notice this: Macunaíma is brave sometimes, but cowardly on other instances. He is not systematized at all, whether it is in his individual or ethnic psychology.»]

In accordance with such coincidence, let us take as an example of the time inherent to the becoming-child, which is, in relation to the author, outside of any specific time of his childhood

and also outside of the specific time of his strictly adult humanity, an episode which happens quite early in chapter I, «Macunaíma»: After the advent of the birth of Macunaíma, which marks the beginning of the narrative, the hero spends the first six years of his life without speaking, except for one phrase which he repeats: «– Ai! que preguiça!...» (Andrade, 1996: 5) [«– Oh! Such laziness!...»] A full adult phrase, orthographically and syntactically structured, but which is only uttered when he is incited to speak, with a concession without reservations being shown to such incitement, which paradoxically leads to its deferment, by displacing it in time, and generates a stalemate that intensifies the desire (to finally listen to Macunaíma speaking). This intensification becomes more evident as the phrase deterritorializes itself from its lusophone semantic context, sustaining itself, at once, on a becoming-Indian and becoming-animal<sup>85</sup>, thus

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<sup>85</sup> The basis of these considerations is the analysis of the phrase carried out by Maria Augusta Fonseca: «AI! QUE PREGUIÇA... Desabafo-chave do herói Macunaíma, a expressão parece, à primeira vista, encerrar-se em si mesma, como assinalam diversos autores. Entretanto, há razões para conjecturar que, ao cunhá-la, Mário de Andrade teve motivações mais complexas (...)

Entre os volumes da biblioteca de Mário de Andrade encontram-se pelo menos duas edições (1900 e 1933) de cartas e informações de Anchieta à corte portuguesa sobre o Brasil. Na edição de 1933, depois de um longo trecho assinalado por Mário, está a seguinte explicação de Anchieta: “Há outro animal (que os índios chamam Aig e nós Preguiça por causa da sua excessiva morosidade realmente vagarosa (...).” A sonoridade chama a atenção: Aig Preguiça. Dicionários etimológicos, de zoologia e não especializados relacionam diversas grafias transliteradas do tupi para o substantivo “preguiça”: ai, aí, ahú, aíg, aigue. Como observa Antenor Nascentes, o vocábulo tem origem onomatopaica, pois “o animal articula um a fechado, muito prolongado, seguido de i curto e aspirado.”» Fonseca (in Andrade, 1996: 6) [«Oh! SUCH LAZINESS...Key-vent from the hero Macunaíma, the expression seems, at first sight, to be closed in itself, as several authors underline. Nevertheless, there are reasons to conjecture that, when he coined that expression, Mário de Andrade had more complex motivations (...) Among the volumes of Mário de Andrade's library there are at least two editions (1900 and 1933) of letters and information about Brazil from

drawing a powerful escape line from signification<sup>86</sup>. After those six years had pass, the protagonist suddenly starts speaking as all adults do due to a magical event (drinking water from a rattle). The acquisition of speech by the protagonist is thus arrhythmic, odd to the natural evolutionary process, it unmakes the conceptual bases of diachronic time in favor of a synchronic time where the characteristics of pre-linguistic childhood are combined with others from a full adult age, which work as a perceptive threshold surpassed by linguistic heterogeneity and magical creativity inherent to Mário de Andrade's becoming-child.

The coalescence of childish and adult characteristics on Macunaíma is maintained throughout the narrative. In the aforementioned passage of Macunaíma to the status of adult,

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Anchieta to the Portuguese court. In the 1933 edition, after an extensive segment underlined by Mário, we find the following explanation from Anchieta: "There is another animal (whom the Indians call Aig and we call Preguiça [Sloth] due to its truly excessive tardy slowness (...)." The sonority draws attention: Aig Preguiça. Etymological Dictionaries, either of zoology or non-specialized ones related several transliterated spellings from tupi to the noun "preguiça": ai, aí, ahú, aíg, aígue. As Antenor Nascentes has observed, the word has an onomatopoeic origin, since the "animal articulates a very prolonged, closed a, followed by a short and aspirated i."»]

<sup>86</sup> In *Kafka – our une littérature mineure* [*Kafka – Toward a Minor Literature*], Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari explain the effect of linguistic deterritorialization towards which the becoming-animal of man tends to: «Devenir animal, c'est précisément faire le mouvement, tracer la ligne de fuite dans toute sa positivité, franchir un seuil, atteindre à un continuum d'intensités qui ne valent plus que pour elles-mêmes, trouver un monde d'intensités pures, où toutes les formes se défont, toutes les significations aussi, signifiants et signifiés, au profit d'une matière non formée, de flux déterritorialisés, de signes asignifiants.» (Deleuze / Guattari, 1975: 24) [«To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.» (Deleuze / Guattari, 1986: 13)]

which occurs (in chapter II) also due to a spell – cast by a old woman (named Cotia) –, the hero preserves, *forever*, the childish appearance of his head (Andrade, 1996: 19).

Despite conceding that this concept of becoming-child redirects us almost immediately towards an idea of *time*, there is no way of conceiving it in *Macunaíma* without recourse to the idea of *space*, since what is under analysis is not a lyrical novel where, on its synchronic time, we watch a parade of sensations which constitutes the inner-self of the artist, but in there is where we find the exhibition of a new external world. In a note to the 1926 preface which I have been quoting, Mário de Andrade also unbinds Brazil's spatial representation in *Macunaíma* from the conceptual limits imposed by the realistic and/or scientific views of the world: «Evidentemente não tenho a pretensão de que meu livro sirva pra estudos científicos de folclore. Fantasiei quando queria e sobretudo quando carecia pra que a invenção permanecesse arte e não documentação seca de estudo. Basta ver a macumba carioca desgeograficada com cuidado, com elementos dos candomblés baianos e das pajelanças paraenses.» (Andrade, 2017: 193) [«Evidently I do not have the pretension of wanting my book to be used for the scientific study of folklore. I fantasized when I wanted and mostly when I needed for invention to remain being art and not boring research documentation. We need but to see the example of the carioca Macumba carefully displaced from its geography, with elements from the Bahian Candomblé and the Paraense Pajelanças.»]

In fact, the geographical displacement of Brazil is pervasive, as Manoel Cavalcanti Proença<sup>87</sup> has underlined, to the entire Macunaímic narrative, and coexists with synchronic time. To be more exact, both these aspects are interlinked. The becoming-child operates as a device

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<sup>87</sup> See footnote number 43 of the present dissertation.

susceptible to spatialize time, making it repeatable, circular. The narrative's sequence of events is constantly converted into eventual ubiquity at any moment in time (historical or legendary), of which the famous Macunaíma's getaways throughout the four corners of Brazil provide examples. By experiencing in these getaways events or meetings with figures pertaining to disparate historic moments or immemorial folkloric legends, the ubiquitous Brazil throughout which Macunaíma travels across also presupposes an available simultaneity.

In sum, Mário de Andrade's becoming-child allows him to draw not only one, but several maps of Brazil with different routes, which overlap each other in accordance with a dynamic and a logic which are characteristic of psychic activity. Through the protagonist's adventures, the surroundings found on those routes are explored. The study of the Brazilian's lack of character is indissociable from the study of the surroundings explored by Macunaíma, since the subjectivity of these surroundings is reflected on the subjectivity of the protagonist. Mário de Andrade's maps pinpoint routes where Macunaíma's path gets confused with, is identical with, the traversed Brazil.

Let us illustrate what has been declared by comparing chapters VII and VIII, «Macumba» and «Vei, a Sol», respectively, with both having in common the setting of Rio de Janeiro. The subjectivity of the world of Macumba, a heteroclite religious rite which incorporates a mix of catholic, indigenous and Afro-Brazilian traditions deriving from the Paraense Pajelanças and the Bahian Candomblés, is reflected on Macunaíma inasmuch as the latter becomes a believer and a superstitious person, thus going through a psychic route which traverses a Brazil quite distinct from the one being traversed in the subsequent chapter. In «Vei, a Sol», it is the subjectivity of an imperialist Rio de Janeiro which is reflected on Macunaíma, who symbolically abandons the profound traditional spirit and the Brazilian multicultural diversity (by not fulfilling the promise

to be faithful to the daughters of Vei, the Sun, a goddess from Amerindian mythology) in order to indulge in lascivious acts with a Portuguese woman - a representative act of the internationalist attraction, of colonial nature, which at that time prevailed in the «espírito conservador e conformista» (Andrade, 1942: 30) [«conservative and conformist spirit» (Andrade, 2008: 100)] of the bourgeois which held power in the Republic's capital.

Despite the setting of both maps being Rio de Janeiro, the map drawn in «Vei, a Sol» does not have an origin, it is not a continuation of the map drawn in «Macumba», but corresponds to an overlap, to a new fragmentary arrangement with a new complexity. Thereby any new Macunaímic route implies a variable rhythm of the hero's movement, done from advances, retreats and stalemates - that is, of rushed escapes and immobilities and unproductive deferments – which occur in accordance with a redistribution of entrances and blockades through which he enters and exits Brazil, but where it is also possible to become trapped, as it happens in chapter XI, when Macunaíma puts himself in the hole of a fig tree's root, during the long escape from the Oibê monster.

In an attempt to increase our understanding of these psychic maps, let us add that, when it was stated above that the subjectivity of the traveled surroundings was reflected in the subjectivity of the protagonist, it implied an idea of map which was not solely restricted to the concept of space (constituted by routes), but which includes the intensities (events, emotions, misunderstandings, the relation with objects, etc) which fill the space and sustain the route itself. An intense cartography provides, therefore, an image of the body on the move. Since the nebulous affective multiplicity which determines the body's action is liable to alterity, such image is always transformable and recomposable.

In *Macunaíma*, the alterity of the characters' affections (and of Macunaíma in particular) is constant due to the relentless series of events. Whence it is inferred that the intensive maps are also dynamic, inasmuch as the realization of the bodily functions is bound to the duration's unrepeatable, irreversible, cumulative and continuous fluid, without being determined by results already acquired in another totality taken as identical, in relation to which certain states were observed, in other words: static and instantaneous images retrieved at regular time intervals. By rejecting for itself the theoretical-scientific image of a purely mechanic isolated system whose functioning is warranted, Mário de Andrade's body restarts systematically to redraw and reconnect the fragments of the routes to be traveled by Macunaíma in accordance with the constant becoming-nomad into which the latter plunges along with his reality. The routes and the affections, the travels and the becoming, the driving forces and the imaginary, in sum, the extensive maps and the intensive maps constantly refer to each other and mutually sustain one another.

Using an illustrative example of what has already been thoroughly discussed in this study, the distribution of Macunaíma's affections to his family leads the latter to fulfill the function of a surrounding in another surrounding, thus establishing a profound connection between Macunaíma and the Brazilian land, because it arises out of a revelation of the intimate relationship between life and death: an example is how the death of Macunaíma's mother causes him to mourn, which in turn leads to the swelling of the belly (the image of fecundity) of the dead woman until it metamorphoses into a soft hill, a surrounding which the entire remaining family uses to escape the harsh context of the Uraricoera. We should also observe the episode of Macunaíma's visit to the grave of his recently dead son (in the middle of the virgin jungle, at the end of chapter III), where he comes across a little plant born out of the body of the deceased. As

a consequence, «Trataram dela [da plantinha] com muito cuidado e foi o guaraná. Com as frutinhas piladas dessa planta é que a gente cura muita doença e se refresca durante os calorões de Vei, a Sol.» (Andrade, 1996: 27) [«They took care of it [of the little plant] very cautiously and it grew into a guaraná. It is with the mashed fruits from that plant that we heal many diseases and we freshen up during the heat waves of Vei, the Sun»] The revitalizing role of the guaraná born from the dead son reverts (in chapter V, whose setting is São Paulo) in favor of Macunaíma himself, when the latter dies at the hands of, and his body is fragmented to be used as repast for, the Piaimã Giant. Maanape recovers the half-cooked pieces of Macunaíma's body and after the resurrection, initiated at Venceslau Pietro Pietra's house with the Cambique ant's help and consummated in the pension where Macunaíma lives with his brothers with the smoke of witchcraft, gives guaraná «pró mano e ele ficou taludo outra vez.» (Andrade, 1996: 45) [«to his brother and he got bulky once again»]

If Mário de Andrade's becoming-child gives us a portrait of Brazil formed with concepts which function in accordance with a non-rational logic, the complexity of that portrait is amplified through the observation of a few more details of the narrative's process of creation. I am specifically referring to the fact that the idea to write *Macunaíma* was born from the correspondence that Mário de Andrade found between the lack of character he saw in the Brazilian man and the Amerindian heroic figure Makunaima, drawn from Theodor Koch-Grünberg's studies. However, most of the elements from the Taulipang e Arekuná indigenous groups, who were the German ethnographer's research subjects, inhabited the Venezuelan savanna, and, with less incidence, the Brazilian north and the English Guyana. In the unedited preface from 1928, Mário de Andrade states that *Macunaíma*:

possui colaboração estrangeira e aproveitamento dos outros, complacente, sem temor, e sobretudo sem o exclusivismo de todo ser bem-nascido pras ideias comunistas. O próprio herói do livro que tirei do alemão de Koch-Grünberg, nem se pode falar que é do Brasil. É tão ou mais venezuelano como da gente e desconhece a estupidez dos limites pra parar na “terra dos ingleses” como ele chama a Guiana Inglesa. Essa circunstância do herói do livro não ser absolutamente brasileiro me agrada como o quê. (Andrade, 2017: 195)

[benefits from foreign collaboration and exploits others, is complacent, fearless, and most importantly does not have the exclusivism of everyone who is receptive towards the communist ideas. The real hero himself which I have retrieved from Koch-Grünberg's German, cannot even be said to be from Brazil. He is as much or even more Venezuelan than he is of our people and does not know the stupidity of the limits to stop in the "land of the English" as he calls the English Guyana. The circumstance of the book's hero not being absolutely Brazilian has something which pleases me.]

This passage contains several aspects which cast the bases for a discussion on the topics of nationality and cosmopolitanism in *Macunaíma*. I shall start with the racial matter. By stating that the book's hero is not even a full-fledged Brazilian, Mário de Andrade distances himself from the idealized national role attributed to the indigenous peoples by the romantic<sup>88</sup> program,

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<sup>88</sup> A demarcation that did not have a repercussion on many readers, who still read the work with the lenses of romantic principles. In the introduction of *Macunaíma*'s e-book version, «A irrupção das formas selvagens», Eduardo Sterzi emphasizes the reductionist consequences of these misreadings: «Muitas vezes – por exemplo, nas leituras simplistas dos currículos escolares – se viu *Macunaíma* como uma representação do “povo brasileiro” ou,

synthesized by Antônio Cândido in *Formação da literatura brasileira*, on the following terms: «os índios são os brasileiros mais lídimos, devendo-se investigar as suas características poéticas e tomá-los como tema» (Cândido, 2000: 2: 294) [«the Indians are the most legitimate Brazilians, and their poetical characteristics should be researched and used as a theme»]. In the light of the text *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira*, such idealization may lead to the distortion of an effectively national view of Brazil, tainting it with two stunting concepts: *unilaterality* and *exclusivism*.

Unilaterality consists in defending that the national art stems from the traditions of a single ethnic trace among the three that constitute the mixed plurality of the Brazilian people(s), whether such ethnic trace is Amerindian, African or Portuguese<sup>89</sup>. When the defense of this

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ainda, disso que chamamos, com esperança ou ilusionismo, de “nação”. Nessas leituras, o romance e seu protagonista são colocados em descendência mais ou menos direta do indianismo romântico e de suas idealizações da figura do indígena como componente inicial – e, por isso mesmo, logo suprimível: etapa étnica e histórica a ser inevitavelmente superada e enterrada – de uma construção teleológica, “a nação” que quer ser também, sem resíduos e dissonâncias, “o povo”, sempre no singular.» (in Andrade, 2017: 198) [«Often – for instance, in the simplistic readings of the school curricula – *Macunaíma* has been considered a representation of the “Brazilian people” or, moreover, of what we call, with hope or due to illusion, "nation". In such readings, the romance and its protagonist are put into what could roughly be considered a direct descent from romantic Indianism and idealizations of the figure of the Indian as initial component – and thereby, immediately suppressible: a historical and ethnic stage to be inevitably overcome and buried – of a teleological construction, “the nation” which also aims at being, without residues and dissonances, “the people”, always in singular.»]

<sup>89</sup> «Já escutei de artista nacional que a nossa música *tem de ser tirada dos índios*. Outros embirrando com guaraní afirmam que a verdadeira música nacional é... a africana. O mais engraçado é que o maior número manifesta antipatia por Portugal. (...)

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Mas por ignorância ou não, qualquer reação contra Portugal me parece perfeitamente boba. Nós não temos que reagir contra Portugal, temos é de não nos importarmos com êle. Não tem o mínimo desrespeito nesta frase minha. É uma verificação de ordem estética. Si a manifestação brasileira diverge da portuguesa muito que bem, si coincide, si é influência, a gente deve aceitar a coincidência e reconhecer a influência. A qual é e não podia deixar de ser enorme. E reagir contra isso endeusando bororó ou bantú é cair num unilateralismo tão antibrasileiro como a lírica de Glauco Velasquez. (...)

O que a gente deve mas é aproveitar todos os elementos que concorrem prá formação permanente da nossa musicalidade etnica. Os elementos ameríndios servem sim porque existe no brasileiro uma porcentagem forte de sangue guarani. E o documento ameríndio propriedade nossa mancha agradavelmente de estranheza e de encanto soturno a música da gente. Os elementos africanos servem francamente se colhidos no Brasil porquê já estão afeiçoados à entidade nacional. Os elementos onde a gente percebe uma tal ou qual influência portuguesa servem da mesma forma.» (Andrade, 1972: 28-9) [«I have heard national musicians saying that our music *should be drawn from the Indians*. Others, annoyed with the guarani, claim that the real national music is the...African. What's funnier is that a great number of them manifests antipathy towards Portugal. (...) Regardless of being due to ignorance or not, any reaction against Portugal seems to me to be quite silly. We do not have to react against Portugal, we just do not have to care about it. There is not the slightest suggestion of disrespect in my phrase. It is a verification of aesthetic order. If the Brazilian manifestation diverges from the Portuguese, very well then, if it coincides, if there is an influence, we should accept the coincidence and recognize the influence. Which is and obviously had to be enormous. And to react against that by deifying bororó or bantú is to fall into an unilateralism which is as anti-Brazilian as Glauco Velasquez's lyric. (...) What we should do is to take advantage of all the elements which compete for the permanent formation of our ethnic musicality. The Amerindian elements are indeed suitable because there is a strong percentage of guarani blood in the Brazilian. And the Amerindian element which is our property pleasantly stains our music with oddness and gloomy enchantment. The African elements are also honestly appropriate if they have been retrieved already in Brazil, because they have become attached to the national entity. The elements where we can understand some Portuguese influence are appropriate in the same manner»]

argument has a colonial or foreign origin, it tends to produce an exoticized view of national<sup>90</sup> culture. With this said, Mário de Andrade's criteria to resort to ethnic elements, whichever they

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<sup>90</sup> «Um dos conselhos europeus que tenho escutado bem é que a gente si quiser fazer música nacional tem que campear elementos entre os aborígenes pois que só mesmo êstes é que são legitimamente brasileiros. Isso é uma puerilidade que inclui ignorância dos problemas sociologicos, etnicos psicologicos e esteticos. Uma arte nacional não se faz com escôlha discricionaria e diletante de elementos: uma arte nacional já esta feita na inconsciencia do povo. O artista tem só que dar pros elementos já existentes uma transposição erudita que faça da música popular, música artistica, isto é: imediatamente desinteressada. O homem da nação Brasil hoje, está mais afastado do ameríndio que do japonês e do hungaro. O elemento amerindio no populario brasileiro está psicologicamente assimilado e praticamente já é quasi nulo. Brasil é uma nação com normas sociais, elementos raciais e limites geograficos. O amerindio não participa dessas coisas e mesmo parando em nossa terra continua amerindio e não brasileiro. O que evidentemente não destroi nenhum dos nossos deveres para com êle. Só mesmo depois de termos praticado os deveres globais que temos pra com êle é que podemos exigir dele a prática do dever brasileiro.

Si fosse nacional só o que é amerindio, também os italianos não podiam empregar o órgão que é egípcio, o violino que é árabe, o cantochão que é grecoebraico, a polifonia que é nórdica, anglo-saxônica flamenga e o diabo. Os franceses não podiam usar a ópera que é italiana e muito menos a forma-de-sonata que é alemã. E como todos os povos da Europa são produto de migrações préistoricas se conclui que não existe arte europeia...

Com aplausos inventarios e conselhos desses a gente não tem que se amolar. São fruto de ignorância ou de gôsto pelo exotico.» (Andrade, 1972: 15-6) [«One of the European advices I have been hearing is that if we wish to create national music we should search for elements among the aboriginals since only they are legitimately Brazilian. That is a puerility which includes ignorance towards sociological, ethnic, psychological and aesthetic problems. A national art is not made through a discretionary and diletante choice of elements: a national art is already made in the people's unconscious. The artist only has to give to the elements which already exist an erudite transposition which may turn popular music into artistic music, in other words: immediately disinterested. The man of the Brazilian nation today, is farther away from the Amerindian than from the Japanese and the Hungarian. The Amerindian element in Brazilian popular culture is psychologically assimilated and in practice is nearly null. Brazil

are (indigenous, African or white), is the coincidence and the potential for coalescence of these elements with the heteroclitic and multiple national culture of a Brazil whose ethnic and group plurality is in permanent metamorphosis. In sum, the myths, structures and values retrieved by Mário de Andrade from Theodor Koch-Grünberg's work around the heroic Amerindian figure Makunaima, who shared with the Brazilian an essential lack of character, underwent a miscegenation process with the characteristics which had already been naturalized as Brazilian (mixed therefore) as a result of the cultural confluence of the several groups and ethnicities which formed the Brazilian people.<sup>91</sup>

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is a nation with social norms, racial elements and geographical limits. The Amerindian does not participate in those things and even though he inhabits our land he is still an Amerindian and not a Brazilian. Evidently, this does not destroy any of our duties towards him. Only after we have practiced the global duties we have towards him may we demand from him the practice of the Brazilian duty. If only what is Amerindian could be national, then the Italians could not employ the pipe organ, which is Egyptian, the violin, which is Arabian, the plainsong, which is Greek-Hebrew, the polyphony, which is Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, Flemish or what the hell it is. The French could not use Opera, which is Italian, and even less so the sonata form, which is German. And since all European peoples are the product of prehistorical migrations we would have to conclude that there is no European art... We do not have to put up with invented applause and advices of that kind. They result from ignorance or of a taste for the exotic.»]

<sup>91</sup> An argument shared by Daniel Silva, who dissociates the perspectives of Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade from other modernists which were their contemporaries: «namely those who offered multiculturalist narratives of Brazil while marginalizing Afro-Brazilians. Some of the artists, writers, and poets who participated in Antropofagia produced their own modernist epics and blueprints for a 'Brazilian-Brazil.' Many of these works, including Raul Bopp's *Cobra Norato*, Cassiano Ricardo's *Martim Cererê*, and numerous works by members of the Verde-Amarelismo [Green-and-Yellowism] nationalist movement (that broke away from Antropofagia) such as Plínio Salgado and César Menotti del Picchia, construct national identity through a mythical Tupi figure. This idealization of the Tupi, however, seeks a national origin through a precolonial fantasy. This is where Mário and

Associated with communism in the quote highlighted above, exclusivism is the other concept related to the idea of nationality which Mário de Andrade repudiates. It consists of an artistic creation formed with the exclusively national ethnic elements, which refuses the foreign influences. This does not imply, however, that the acceptance of these influences should be done without criteria. In order to avoid that the openness to cosmopolitanism unleashes processes of cultural colonialism, Mário de Andrade adverts the artist, on the one hand, for the need to proceed to a selection of the documentation which he is going to use as a basis, and admits, on the other hand, that there always has to be some degree of reaction against what is foreign. A reaction which, nevertheless, «deve ser feita espertalhonamente pela deformação e adaptação dele [do que é estrangeiro]. Não pela repulsa.» (Andrade, 1972: 26) [«should be smartly done through its [of what is foreign] deformation and adaptation. Not through repulse.»]

When, however, the useless preconception of exclusivism is in force, the produced works of art *excessively* amount to characteristics of the nation, falling into an exoticism which becomes exotic even to the Brazilian individual himself. Since «Todo o caracter excessivo e que por ser excessivo é objetivo e exterior em vez de psicológico, é perigoso. Fatiga e se torna

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Oswald de Andrade offer a more nuanced decolonial project. Rather than conceiving a central signifier that purports to convey a precolonial origin, Mário's and Oswald's respective work suggests that such an origin is untenable, and that any articulation of one is inevitably constructed through imperial knowledge and writing about the Tupi. The decolonial path, therefore, begins with a reading or decolonial consumption of the field of meaning produced by Empire. In the case of *Macunaíma*, the journey begins with an experience of the imperial categories of race, not prior to such categories.» (Silva, 2017: 71) As an aside, I should point out that this interpretation is far from being consensual in what concerns Oswald de Andrade's work (see the reference to André Corrêa de Sá's study mentioned in footnote 77 of the present study).

facilmente banal. É uma pobreza.» (Andrade, 1972: 27) [«All the excessive character and that due to being excessive is objective and external rather than psychological, is dangerous. It is tiresome and easily becomes banal. It is poor.»] Let us compare this exclusivist danger with the considerations drawn by Mário de Andrade in the letter addressed to Manuel Bandeira on December 12, 1930, due to a proposal that he had received for translating *Macunaíma* to English:

Não creio que ela [a tradutora] consiga reproduzir a essência poema-herói-cômico, do livro. (...) Mas sempre me parece que certo lado excessivamente exteriormente brasileiro do livro se perde em favor do próprio livro. (...) Isso talvez o *Macunaíma* ganhe em inglês porque muito secretamente o que me parece é que a sátira além de dirigível ao brasileiro em geral, de que mostra alguns aspectos característicos, escondendo os aspectos bons sistematicamente, o certo é que sempre me pareceu também uma sátira mais universal ao homem contemporâneo, principalmente sob o ponto-de-vista desta sem-vontade itinerante, destas noções morais criadas no momento de as realizar, que sinto e vejo tanto no homem de agora. (in Andrade, 1996: 509-10)

[I do not believe that she [the translator] can reproduce the book's poem-hero-comical essence. (...) But it always seems to me that a certain excessively externally Brazilian side of the book is lost in favor of the book itself. (...) Perhaps *Macunaíma* has something to gain in English because secretly what it seems to me is that the satire, besides being able to be directed at the Brazilian in general, of whom it shows some characteristic aspects, while systematically hiding the good aspects, also always seemed to me to be more of an universal

satire to the contemporaneous man, mainly under the point of view of this itinerant lack of will, of these moral notions created at the moment they are to be realized, which I feel and often see in the man of nowadays.]

Despite *Macunaíma*'s objectivity, provided by the excessively external representation of the nation's elements, Mário de Andrade advocates that this characteristic is moved to a secondary role, it *is lost*, in favor of its cosmopolitan dimension, which is manifested precisely through the universality of the contemporaneous man's *psychic* characteristics embedded there. According to Andrade, this excessively national characteristic «é defeituoso apenas quando virado em norma unica de criação ou critica» (Andrade, 1972: 27) [«is defective solely when turned into an unique standard of creation or critique»] (in other words, when it becomes exclusivist). Thus, when such characteristic sprawls and undoes its limits, it paradoxically becomes stronger in the uncapturable nature of its substance: «O que faz a riqueza das principais escolas europeas é justamente um caracter nacional incontestável mas na maioria dos casos indefinível porém.» (Andrade, 1972: 27) [«What provides the richness of the main European schools is precisely an unquestionable national character but in most cases undefinable nonetheless.»]

Thereby, the destabilizing force of those cosmopolitan forces proves that the centripetal research movement, towards the deep Brazil, which is reflected on the writing of *Macunaíma*, does not converge into any spiritual center that may be confined to the Brazilian geopolitical frontiers, but rather to a singular idea of a rhizome-country whose *psychic* cartography mixes extensions and intensities, routes and becomings, leading its frontiers to become misty, indiscernible and porous. Let us present some examples related to this statement. In chapter XVI, «Uraricoera», when the narrative is on the phase of the hero's return to the virgin jungle, after the

dispute with the Piaimã Giant, Macunaíma does yet another one of his many detours, and returns to the Marapatá Island (located on the river mouth of Rio Negro) to recover the conscience he had left there before he went to São Paulo (in the beginning of chapter V, «Piamã»). Not finding what he was looking for, «o herói pegou na consciência dum hispano-americano, botou na cabeça e se deu bem da mesma forma.» (Andrade, 1996: 148) [«the hero took the conscience of a Spanish-American, placed it in his own head and was all right anyway»] If there is no incompatibility between the Brazilian and Spanish-American consciences and characters is because the psychic cartography drawn by desire, pulled and steered by a libidinous force, less conscious than unconscious, does not let itself be limited by the impositions of taxonomies and mappings resultant of the historical-political processes which shape nations. A libidinous force which is intimately connected to Macunaíma's becoming-child, since the sexual act is always referred to in the narrative as *playing* or predicated by the verb *to play*. In «O corpo da língua: notas sobre a erótica literária brasileira», Eliane Robert Moraes denotes the subversive potential of that connection and associates it with Brazilian folklore: «Supondo uma dimensão infantil, as “brincadeiras” em questão remetem por certo à sexualidade perversa e polimorfa das crianças, ainda livre de todo agenciamento repressivo do mundo adulto. Não surpreende que essa dimensão encontre um forte paralelo no sentido corrente que o folclore brasileiro atribui com frequência ao mesmo verbo.» (Moraes, 2021: 238) [«Assuming that they have a childish dimension, the "playful" moments at stake consign us to the perverse and polymorphous sexuality of children, still free from all the repressive assemblage of the adult world. It is not surprising that such dimension finds a strong parallel in the current meaning that Brazilian folklore frequently attributes to the same verb.»]

In the essay «Ce que les enfants disent» [«What Children Say»], included in *Critique et Clinique* [*Critical and Clinical*], Gilles Deleuze attributes to libido two functions: 1. to reconfigure, continuously and limitlessly, history and geography, whether they are national, continental, global or universal: «C'est le propre de la libido de hanter l'histoire et la géographie, d'organiser des formations de mondes et des constellations d'univers, de dériver les continents, de les peupler de races, de tribus et de nations. Quel être aimé n'enveloppe pas des paysages, des continents et des populations plus ou moins connus, plus ou moins imaginaires?» (Deleuze, 1993: 82) [«It is the libido's business to haunt history and geography, to organize formations of worlds and constellations of universes, to make continents drift and to populate them with races, tribes, and nations. What beloved being does not envelope landscapes, continents, and populations that are more or less known, more or less imaginary?» (Deleuze: 1997: 62)]; 2. and to produce becomings whose singularity consign us to an undefined impersonal (which opposes generalization):

Ce qui concerne la libido, ce que la libido investit se présente avec un article indéfini, ou plutôt est présenté par l'article indéfini: *un* animal comme qualification d'un devenir ou spécification d'un trajet (*un* cheval, *une* poule...); un corps ou un organe comme pouvoir d'affecter et d'être affecté (...). Les enfants s'expriment ainsi, un père, un corps, un cheval. Ces indéfinis semblent souvent résulter d'un manque de détermination dû aux défenses de la conscience. (...) Pourtant l'indéfini ne manque de rien, et surtout pas de détermination. Il est la détermination du devenir, sa puissance propre, la puissance d'un impersonnel qui n'est pas une généralité, mais une singularité au plus haut point: par exemple, on ne fait pas *le* cheval, pas plus qu'on n'imité *tel* cheval, mais on devient *un*

cheval, en atteignant à une zone de voisinage où l'on ne peut plus se distinguer de ce qu'on devient. (Deleuze, 1993: 86)

[What concerns the libido, what the libido invests, presents itself with an indefinite article, or rather is presented by the indefinite article: *an* animal as the qualification of a becoming or the specification of a trajectory (*a* horse, *a* chicken); a body or an organ as the power to affect and to be affected (...). Children express themselves in this manner *a* father, *a* body, *a* horse. These indefinites often seem to result from a lack of determination due to the defenses of consciousness. (...) Yet the indefinite lacks nothing; above all, it does not lack determination. It is the determination of a becoming, its characteristic power, the power of an impersonal that is not a generality but a singularity at its highest point. For example, I do not play *the* horse, any more than I imitate *this* or *that* horse, but I become *a* horse, by reaching a zone of proximity where I can no longer be distinguished from what I am becoming. (Deleuze, 1997: 65)]

In an undefinable country due to the psychic cosmopolitanism of its people and its hero, Mário de Andrade's refusal to confer to Macunaíma the status of *symbol of the Brazilian* is therefore justified. In the letter to Augusto Meyer from July 16, 1928, such a refusal is followed by a phrase where the simple nuance of replacing the definite by the indefinite article is introduced: «não tive intenção de Macunaíma um símbolo do brasileiro. Mas se ele não é *o* Brasileiro ninguém não poderá negar que ele é *um* brasileiro e bem brasileiro por sinal.» (in Andrade, 1996: 501) [«I had no intention of turning Macunaíma into a symbol of the Brazilian. But if he is not *the* Brazilian no one can deny that he is *a* Brazilian and a typical one at that.»] Adapting Gilles Deleuze's quote to the aforementioned episode where the conscience of the hero

is recovered, Macunaíma does not become the Spanish-American, nor does he imitate such Spanish-American, but he becomes a Spanish-American, by reaching a close vicinity where it is not possible to distinguish his profound Brazilian psyche from the Spanish-American's psyche.

In what concerns the connection between libido and the historical-geographical displacement and reconfiguration, there is a prodigality of examples in *Macunaíma*, first and foremost because the protagonist displays, throughout the entire narrative, an exuberant libido, manifested from an early age, even before he had completed six years of age<sup>92</sup>. In chapter III, when he overcomes Ci's resistance and is able to marry her by force, Macunaíma becomes the Emperor of the Virgin-Jungle (and not Brazil's), and is hailed by several birds (who, in their condition as birds, do not know the border delimitations stipulated by men), and rules his empire from the «cerros da Venezuela» (Andrade, 1996: 23) [«Venezuela's hills»]. It is also romantic desire what motivates Macunaíma to go on a quest to recover the muiraquitã (which had been offered to him by his loving and deceased wife, Ci), leading him to enter into a dispute with the Piaimã Giant (an antagonist also based upon the Amerindian counterpart, although presented in *Macunaíma* as a Peruvian haggler, disguised as a rich Italian-Paulista). In the episode of the

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<sup>92</sup> «[Macunaíma] esportava quando a família ia tomar banho no rio, todos juntos e nus. Passava o tempo do banho dando mergulho, e as mulheres soltavam gritos gozados por causa dos guaiamuns diz-que habitando a água doce por lá. No mocambo si alguma cunhatã se aproximava dele pra fazer festinha, Macunaíma punha a mão nas graças dela, cunhatã se afastava.» (Andrade, 1996: 6) [«[Macunaíma] used to wake up when his family was going to take a bath at the river, with everyone being naked together. He would spend the entire time of the bath taking a dive, and the women would shout out pleasurable screams said to be due to the blue crabs than inhabited those fresh waters. In the mocambo if any young girl went near him to cuddle, Macunaíma would put his hand on her graças, and the young girl would walk away.»]

Macumba carioca (chapter VII), such dispute is consummated in a torture inflicted on the Piaimã Giant by the hero which includes the order for the giant to «fosse pisando vidro através dum mato de urtiga e agarra-compadre até as grunhas da serra dos Andes.» (Andrade, 1996: 62-3) [«continuously step on broken glass through a brushwood of nettles and spider weeds until he arrived at the hollows of the Andes mountains.»]

Notwithstanding the presented cases, it must be pointed out that Macunaíma's erotic force, as with many human beings, has its own tendencies for possession and dominion, its *diktats*, totalitarianisms, perversions, habits and colonial attractions. Eroticism also has a drifting effect on the protagonist, leading him to incur into multiple detours from the leading purpose of his tour, in a similar way to Ulysses. In one of those detours, Macunaíma lets himself be symbolically seduced by colonialism when he does not resist the temptation to have a sexual adventure with a Portuguese woman (chapter VIII), thus breaking a promise made to the goddess Vei, the Sun-goddess, to marry (and not betray) one of her three daughters. In fact, this episode ends up initiating a second syntagmatic axis which interlaces and conjoins with the main axis, concerned with the quest for the muiraquitã. In chapter XIII, «A piolhenta do Jiguê», it is once again quite evident how hard it is for Macunaíma to get rid of the colonial temptation (when he falls for the trap laid by the Mother of Waters, who, metamorphosed into a steamer with seductive<sup>93</sup> crew members, who reveal themselves to be sick with Erysipelas immediately after

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<sup>93</sup> «Todos os tripulantes na frente da música acenavam chamando Macunaíma e eram marujos forçados, eram argentinos finíssimos e eram tantas donas lindíssimas pra gente brincar até enjoar com os balangos das ondas.» (Andrade, 1996: 121) [«All the crewmen in charge of the music were waving to Macunaíma to call him and they were strong sailors, of the finest Argentine stock, and there were so many beautiful ladies for the men to play until they got sick with the lapping of the waves.»]

Macunaíma embarks, only intends to tease the hero), going so far as to even repudiate Brazil: «— Gente! adeus, gente! Vou pra Europa que é melhor!» (Andrade, 1996: 120) [«- Everyone! Goodbye everyone! I am going to Europe because it is better!»<sup>94</sup>] The narrative ends with the punishment inflicted on Macunaíma by the combined action of Vei, the Sun and the Mother of Waters, who once more attract him with the promise of pleasure in order to exert vengeance upon him for his inability to resist the colonial charm, by tearing his body into pieces and causing the definitive loss of the *muiraquitã*.

Considering everything that has been discussed on this chapter, I would like to terminate it by proposing a clarification of the differences between the colonial issues and the notion of cosmopolitanism which I see implied in *Macunaíma* (and in Mário de Andrade's remaining works). This clarification arises from the attempt to separate something common to both concepts: the relation between nation and what is foreign to it. While colonialism is characterized by a relationship of totalitarian oppression and violence exerted by the (foreign) colonizer on the (autochthonous) colonized, the notion of cosmopolitanism which I glimpse in

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<sup>94</sup> This passage emphasizes the steely irony with which Mário de Andrade represents the lack of character of Macunaíma, who, on the precedent chapter «Tequeteque, chupinzão e a injustiça dos homens», had circumstantially advocated for the advantage of remaining in Brazil, instead of going away to Europe, after he had lost all his money in a willful business with a fellow countryman and after finding out that the Government would not have the funds to finance his journey to Europe with the aim of being able to go after Venceslau Pietro Pietra: «— Paciência, manos! não! não vou na Europa não. Sou americano e meu lugar é na América. A civilização europeia na certa esculhamba a inteireza do nosso caráter.» (Andrade, 1996: 114-5) [«- Patience, brothers! no! I am not going to Europe. I am American and my place is in America. The European civilization certainly scolds the integrity of our character.»]

Mário de Andrade is close to Jacques Derrida's<sup>95</sup> notion, being characterized by an experience of City or State (the two forms which the word «*polis*» has acquired) founded upon hospitality towards the diversity of the social forces and the cultures of the world («*cosmos*») - to be more precise, a *polis* which, as the University institution, fosters diversity concerning life and thought, opening up itself, therefore, to controversy and dissent. An open place, a coexistence of parts which do not cease to expand and to metamorphose, systematically reconfiguring the whole. On this sense, the interpersonal relations are established analogously to the psychic process inherent to the deglutition of the Other in Amerindian culture - a process, according to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, stained with fear and laughter, which, «longe de exigir a exclusão ou a desaparecimento do outro para que se recobre a paz da autoidentidade, implica necessariamente a inclusão ou a incorporação, *do* outro ou *pelo* outro (*pelo* também no sentido de “por intermédio do”), como forma de perpetuação do devir-outro que é o processo do desejo nas socialidades amazônicas.» (Castro, 2011: 889) [«far from demanding the exclusion or disappearance of the other in order for the peace of self-identity to be recuperated, necessarily implies the inclusion or incorporation of the other or by the other (*by* also in the sense of “through”), as a form of perpetuation of the becoming-other that is the process of desire in Amazonian socialities.» (Castro, 2012: 29)]

It is thereby consolidated the violent, eminently destructive action, whose protagonist, within the Brazilian modernist movement, is Mário de Andrade, in the affirmation of a cosmopolitanism which contains the rejection of the con-formative univocity stimulated by the reproduction of the identical (inherent to the colonial structures). However, let us not consider this action, despite being violent and destructive, as irrational or oppressive, since it integrates

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<sup>95</sup> I am referring to the short text *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort!* (Derrida, 1997)

alternative proposals for ways of life and rationalities, liable to put forth guiding, creative and transforming functionalities associated with the conceived cosmopolitanism.

## 5. FUTURE RESEARCH

The lines of thought which are intersected on this dissertation advance towards heterogeneous directions with each other. It is certain that I proposed the discussion of a topic, elaborated a problematization, suggested a hypothesis for inquiry, and delineated a literary corpus for analysis. Nonetheless, the research work resulted into a reticulum rather than a thread which, by linearly unrolling itself through a central axis of problematization, could integrate on that movement, without major obstacles, all the remaining problematics. I do not believe that I have led to a major progress, in the sense of obliterating preceding reading lines to my own with “better” substitute interpretations – truest, more rigorous, etc. –, regarding Mário de Andrade’s and Jorge Luis Borges’ works, or even of the general discussion concerning the epic discourse. I also attempted to avoid some academic vices, namely of leading my readings to converge into a reiterated confirmation of pre-enunciated central hypotheses, applying theoretical matrices to the selected texts, or of articulating a clear rationality, without interruptions or contradictions, which would sustain a closed system. I tried instead to achieve something perhaps more modest: to interrogate and clarify some of the possibilities offered by these authors’ texts concerning the selected topic, thus embarking on the pathway of learning, to wherever it would lead. The simplicity of the enunciation hides, eventually, the difficulties of the method. I followed the authors without following them, in other words, I refused as much as I could to use the repetitive paraphrase. I did a zigzag between what was clear and what was obscure, I advanced and I retreated, I struggled (mostly, I struggled) with what I did not understand, thus creating a study, a text, in the form of a multi-directional experience which uses concepts, theories, and other inventions susceptible to the composition of a productive plot. I do not consider my time to have

been wasted, inasmuch as the reading-writing process was in many ways useful to navigate and to explore, joyfully, a small part of the labyrinth of the most ancient literary written tradition: the epic.

Thus, due to the theoretical and exploratory nature of this research, any conclusion would be hasty and meaningless. In order to be an honest one, such conclusion would lead to the assertion that nothing could be concluded. Notwithstanding, I believe that a brief reflection on the title I attributed to this work may lead us to envisage some points of articulation between the authors and the texts which were the topics of research. For that purpose, let us analyze the terms utilized in the first part of the expression *Postcolonial (Mock-)Epic Narratives: Reading of Mário de Andrade with Jorge Luis Borges*.

The term *Postcolonial* contributes, on the one hand, to define the historical and spatial frame of the literary corpus elected as research subject, with such frame being further specified in the mention to the authors on the subtitle. On the other hand, the term also indicates the idea of a narrative which is being constructed, whether formally or in what its contents are concerned, towards a decolonial direction. In other words, a direction which questions and leads to the emancipation from the oppression structures inherent to the colonial models and values, and also from the conditions of possibility (chronological, spatial, rational, ontological, etc.) of such structures.

In regard to the term *Mock-Epic*, I concede that for an informed reader it may evoke an immediate association to the English epic-comical tradition from the late eighteenth century, which had precisely this designation. I decided to use this term on the title due to having understood that the Borgesian idea of baroque (founded upon the concept of repetition) was

closely linked to this tradition<sup>96</sup>. I should point out, however, that I did it strictly in association with Jorge Luis Borges' interpretation of, and not in search of a full-fledged affiliation to, the aforementioned tradition. Additionally, since for Borges the possibilities of repetition of the Epic are not limited to the baroque aesthetics, I decided to place the term Mock- between brackets, thus admitting the openness to other possibilities. In what concerns *Macunaíma*, the use of the term Mock-Epic is justified by its unequivocal parodic (in relation to a grinding epic tradition, by subverting its values and mixing it with a panoply of other discourses of non-epic nature) and self-parodic (the constant redo, through the forces of desire, of Brazil's maps and routes, in all their subjectivity) dimensions. These dimensions are at the center of the Borgesian idea of

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<sup>96</sup> The passage that better underlines this connection, denoting (anachronistically) the baroque aesthetics on a translation (one of the possibilities for repetition) of Mock-Epic tradition's most representative author (Alexander Pope), is contained in the paragraph which opens the Preface to the 1954 Edition of the *Historia universal de la infamia* [A Universal History of Infamy]: «Yo diría que barroco es aquel estilo que deliberadamente agota (o quiere agotar) sus posibilidades y que linda con su propia caricatura. En vano quiso remedar Andrew Lang, hacia mil ochocientos ochenta y tantos, la *Odisea de Pope*; la obra ya era su parodia y el parodista no pudo exagerar su tensión. (...) yo diría que es barroca la etapa final de todo arte, cuando éste exhibe y dilapida sus medios. El barroquismo es intelectual y Bernard Shaw ha declarado que toda labor intelectual es humorística.» (Borges, 2007a: 343) [Emphasis in original] [I should define as baroque that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities and which borders on its own caricature. It was in vain that Andrew Lang, back in the eighteen-eighties, attempted a burlesque of Pope's *Odyssey*; that work was already its own parody, and the would-be parodist was unable to go beyond the original text. (...) I would say that the final stage of all styles is baroque when that style only too obviously exhibits and overdoes its own tricks. The baroque is intellectual, and Bernard Shaw has stated that all intellectual labour is essentially humorous. (Borges, 1975: 12)]

baroque, even though I should be honest in admitting that I did not undertake a comprehensive study of these aesthetics' potential and their usefulness for discussing *Macunaíma*.

Concerning the last word, *Narratives*, I should acknowledge that I solely did a thoroughly analysis of one narrative: Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma*. However, Jorge Luis Borges' perspective on Epic discourse somewhat legitimates the use of the plural regarding this term. His theory is useful to understand, at least, both his own works – and Borges has several tales which recreate (parts of) epic works – and *Macunaíma*. Whereas if I had used the term “Narrative” on this dissertation's title, I could have been expressing the idea that Borges theoretical perspective alongside *Macunaíma* would somehow be read as archetypes, of which the remaining post-colonial mock-epic narratives would be mere particularities, and this is not my intention, at all.

In order to finish this last and brief chapter, I shall limit myself to an attempt at casting possible future lines of inquiry which may expand the problematization around the contemporaneous epic discourse carried out on this PhD dissertation.

Firstly, I believe that *Macunaíma* still has many aspects left to be analyzed under the light of neo-baroque aesthetics. The studies on Jorge Luis Borges included in this work already place into motion this approximation, starting forthwith with the essential contribute of associating the aforementioned aesthetics to epic discourse. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of theoretical material to explore, in the Borgesian works themselves before anything else, but not solely. The Cuban school, leaded by José Lezama Lima and Severo Sarduy, possesses texts which seem to me to be of the utmost relevance not only to expand the understanding of *Macunaíma*'s exuberant artificiality, but also to elaborate a (minor) school of thought around an Ibero-Latin-American transatlantic (mock-)epic tradition. Lima, for instance, advocates a demonic specificity of the Ibero-Latin-American baroque and neo-baroque aesthetics which is opposed to the

baroque conceptualized throughout Europe (with the exception of the Iberian Peninsula), which has scholastic, strict and dogmatic origins. Sarduy, in turn, studies with diligence and detail the artifices of the neo-baroque aesthetics, and associates them with the work of Latin-American artists, such as Pablo Neruda or Haroldo de Campos (poetry), Glauber Rocha (cinema), René Portocarrero or Mario Abreu (painting), José Lezama Lima, João Guimarães Rosa ou Alejo Carpentier (romance), Ricardo Porro (architecture), exposing the epistemic cuts that such aesthetics operate in the logic rationality which sustains the ideology of domination.

A second line of inquiry which has a great potential for development is the substantiation, on Jorge Luis Borges' work, of several of the problems addressed on this dissertation regarding *Macunaíma*. For instance, Borges has many remarks, both on his essays and fictional work on the substance of the heroic character. If I decided not to include a reflection on this aspect was because I initiated it and realized, after writing more than thirty pages, that the unfolding and the complexities of the figure of the hero were so many and implied such an extensive analysis, from ethical, aesthetic, linguistic, political, and even ontological perspectives, that they would justify a dissertation only by themselves. Among some of the most relevant aspects to explore, I may mention: the potential for repetition of the hero, in other words, his representativeness (and on this point I would have to go through a deep inquiry of Borges' readings of the studies on heroism by Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson); the connection of the hero to the nation's destinies (Borges strongly repudiates, up until his late years, a political system founded upon the figure of the State and sees in individualism a kind of (semi-)anonymous heroism capable of undermining such system); another heroic figure to explore in the Borgesian works is the intellectual, due to his emotional-intellective ability to re-produce art and disseminate ethical, aesthetic, and political values. On this point, the ideas which Borges associates to translation and

to cinema are very interesting, and even very useful to think about *Macunaíma*'s recreations: the translations, starting forthwith with the Hemispheric context; or the recreation to cinema, carried out by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, in 1969, and that contrarily to Mário de Andrade's literary work, had quite an extensive mass effect even during the context of Brazil's dictatorial period.

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