

**Tinker grant report – Beyond Devouring: Antropofagia in Mário de Andrade’s
*Macunaíma***

In the 19th and early 20th century, Brazilian cultural production emulated dominant European models. However, beginning with the São Paulo Modern Art Week of 1922, modernists decried what they perceived as pandering to European standards wholly inadequate to artistic creativity in Brazilian society, reshaping both literature and visual arts in Brazil. A sub-school of Brazilian modernism, the Anthropophagite movement reappropriated the cannibal as its symbol, “devouring” European, national and indigenous influences alike in the creation of a new Brazilian literature. As one of the foremost Brazilian writers and critics of the 20th century, Mário de Andrade (1893-1945) was at the heart of São Paulo’s avant-garde for two decades. Involved in every discipline associated with Brazilian modernism, he was co-architect of the Modern Art Week, and his influence as an author, poet and scholar continues to be felt today. Mário notably distanced himself from the Anthropophagite sub-movement of Brazilian modernism, following the culmination of years of antagonism by Antropofagia’s leading figure and friend of Mario, Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954).

Notwithstanding the author’s own abnegation of Anthropophagy¹, the classification of Mário’s opus *Macunaíma* (1928) as anthropophagistic has been revindicated by critics as notable as Antônio Candido² and Telê Porto Ancona Lopes in her chapter ‘*Macunaíma e Antropofagia*’ (1974). My study aims to build upon and develop Lopez’s and Candido’s work, by providing novel evidence for the anthropophagistic interpretation that has been overlooked so far. The main focuses of this phase of the research were: the author’s notes and manuscripts, particularly notes concerning sources incorporated into the narrative, and the manuscripts for both the first and second versions of the preface to his novel; Mário’s correspondence with contemporary modernist artists and friends such as Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973) and Manuel Bandeira (1886-1968), in which he discusses the novel’s elaboration and sources; and his collection of artworks, indigenous artefacts, and his own photography of the Amazon region from a journey in 1927, housed at the Institute of Brazilian Studies at the University of São Paulo, the main site of my archival research. Through close reading and examination of the aforementioned materials, I was able to collect evidence supporting an anthropophagistic interpretation of *Macunaíma*.

For example, in the manuscript of an unedited preface to the novel, written by Mário immediately upon his completion of *Macunaíma*, appearing underneath the subtitle “Sintonia de Cultura” (“cultural harmony”) Mário describes his novel as “Uma colaboração pontual do nacional e o internacional onde a fatalidade daquele se condimenta com uma escolha discricionária e bem a proposito deste”³ (“an occasional collaboration between the national

¹ Lopez, Telê Porto Ancona. *Macunaíma: A Margem e o Texto*. 1st ed., Editora de Humanismo, Ciência e Tecnologia, 1974, São Paulo.

² Melo, Alfredo Cesar. “Macunaíma: entre a crítica e o elogio à transculturação.” *Hispanic Review*, vol. 78, no. 2, 2010, pp. 205-227.

³ Andrade, Mário de. Unedited preface written immediately after the completion of the first version. Mário de Andrade Archive, Institute of Brazilian Studies, University of São Paulo, MA-MMA-061-014.

and the international, where the fatality of the former is combined with the discretionary and well-timed choice of the latter”). Moreover, in the second version of the preface, Mário writes of the novel that “Lenda, história, tradição, psicologia, ciência, objetividade nacional, cooperação acomodada de elementos estrangeiros passam aí”⁴ (“Legend, history, tradition, psychology, science, national objectivity, the accommodating co-operation of foreign elements all have their place there”), demonstrating the same disposition towards incorporating not only national but also European tradition that Oswald de Andrade showed when referencing Sigmund Freud and Keyserling’s “technicised barbarian” in his *Manifesto Antropófago*⁵.

Also in the second version of the preface, Mário writes of his novel: “Possui aceitação sem timidez nem vangloria da entidade nacional [...] na lenda, na tradição histórica [...] Além disso possui colaboração estrangeira e aproveitamento dos outros [...] O próprio herói do livro que tirei do alemão Koch-Grünberg”⁶ (“It has the acceptance without shyness or boasting of the national entity [...] in legend, in historical tradition [...] It also has foreign collaboration and the harnessing of others [...] The very hero of the book I took from the German Koch-Grünberg”). Since Anthropophagy is to be understood as the “devouring” – that is to say, the appropriation – of international, national, and indigenous influences (the latter of which the Brazilian modernists considered to be the paragon representation of national culture) alike, then the author’s own evaluation of his novel clearly supports an anthropophagistic interpretation thereof. In particular, his choice of the word “aproveitamento” – harnessing, taking advantage of – is indicative of anthropophagistic attitudes: the use of the foreign to strengthen the national culture.

Mário goes on to give a concrete example of this. In *Macunaíma*, the protagonist’s sexual promiscuity becomes one of his defining characteristics, having frequent encounters with different women in which the author describes the act of intercourse using the verb “brincar” – to play. In the second draft of the preface, Mário writes about this verb that “Nas cantigas de casamento (sec. XVI) em Portugal, parece que a “brincar” davam o sentido que dei a ele neste livro”⁷ (“In wedding songs (16th century) in Portugal, it seems that they gave “to play” the meaning I’ve given it in this book”). Though his choice of words implies that this similarity is coincidental rather than designed, this is highly dubious to say the least. As a prominent musicologist trained in the national conservatory, as well as a voracious reader and poet with a flair for linguistic creativity, it is only logical to suggest that Mário would have been acquainted with the source of this amusing and suggestive allegory beforehand, and thus incorporated it into his novel’s lexicon. Not only the devouring of the foreign, but its incorporation into the personality of his very national “hero without character”, Mário’s curation of “brincar” for his novel’s lexicon is undisputably anthropophagistic.

⁴ Andrade, Mário de. Second preface. Mário de Andrade Archive, Institute of Brazilian Studies, University of São Paulo, MA-MMA-061-023.

⁵ Andrade, Oswald de. “Manifesto antropofago.” *Periferia (Duque de Caxias)*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2011.

⁶ Andrade, Mário de. Second preface. Mário de Andrade Archive, Institute of Brazilian Studies, University of São Paulo, MA-MMA-061-012.

⁷ Andrade, Mário de. Second preface. Mário de Andrade Archive, Institute of Brazilian Studies, University of São Paulo, MA-MMA-061-051.

Whether Mário's suggestion that this is a coincidence is dissemblance or genuine is difficult to prove, and I will not try to in this brief report (although it is worth mentioning that the progressive antagonism of Mário by chief Anthropophagite Oswald de Andrade and their consequent falling out, as detailed in the correspondence between Mário and Tarsila do Amaral⁸, may provide interesting and fertile ground into future investigation of possible motivations for Mário to distance himself from Antropofagia, after initially praising Oswald's *Manifesto*). I can only say that this is not the only instance in which Mário protests the coincidence of anthropophagistic methods and ideologies in his novel. During this research, I also examined Mário de Andrade's personal correspondence with his contemporaries. In particular, his early discussions of the novel with friend and fellow modernist poet Manuel Bandeira proved fruitful for my argument. In a letter to Bandeira dated October 31st, 1927, in the midst of a debate about the now famous chapter of *Macunaíma* entitled "Carta pras Icamiabas", Mário writes "Está aí. Essas sao as intencoes da "Carta". Agora ela me desgosta [...]: parece imitação do Osvaldo e de certo os preceitos usados por ele atuaram subconscientemente na criação da carta"⁹ (169-172) ("There it is. Those are the intentions of the 'Letter'. Now I don't like it [...]: it seems to be an imitation of Osvaldo and I'm sure the precepts he used subconsciously influenced the creation of the letter"). Osvaldo is of course Mário's brazilianized spelling of Oswald de Andrade's name, the leading figure of the Anthropophagite movement, and the precepts he refers to are those set out in Oswald's *Manifesto Antropófago*. Thus, in Mário's own words, the "Carta pras icamiabas" is subconsciously influenced by Anthropophagy's precepts, and I will be able to use this, in conjunction with the wealth of examples of anthropophagistic features in the novel which I have already begun to collect, to argue that Mário's admission can be extended beyond this one chapter to the novel as a whole.

To briefly conclude, my research into Mário de Andrade's notes and manuscripts, as well as into his personal correspondence, provided me with strong evidence in support of my argument for an anthropophagistic interpretation of *Macunaíma*. I will be able to combine this supplemental evidence from *Macunaíma*'s metatexts with the examples of anthropophagistic ideologies and writing processes in the novel that I have already begun to collate, strengthening my argument. My findings presented me with the possibility that the text's anthropophagistic characteristics are coincidental rather than intentional, and whilst I find this claim dubious, due not only to the wealth of examples of anthropophagy that I myself have identified in the novel but also the personal dramas between Mário and Oswald de Andrade, this remains uncertain, and may ultimately be unknowable. Nevertheless, in my future enquiries I will seek to establish whether this coincidence is dissembled or genuine by examining the published correspondence between Mário and Oswald themselves, to ascertain whether it has any further pearls of information to yield.

⁸ Andrade, Mário de, et al. *Correspondência Mário de Andrade & Tarsila do Amaral / organização, introdução e notas, Aracy Amaral*. 1st ed., Edusp, 1999, São Paulo.

⁹ Andrade, Mário de, et al. *Correspondência Mário de Andrade & Manuel Bandeira / organização, introdução e notas, Marcos Antonio de Moraes*. 1st ed., Edusp, 2000, São Paulo.

