

**GENEALOGIES AND INQUIRIES INTO LAZINESS
FROM *MACUNAÍMA***

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“Let’s be lazy in all things, save in loving and drinking, save in being
lazy.”
(Lessing, quotation from Lafargue 11)

“I would prefer not to . . .”
Bartleby

Apart from the danger inherent in the quotations above, the opening of this essay demands a certain warning. I propose here not so much a specific hypothesis for reading *Macunaíma*. Rather, I will try to establish a dialogue between Mário de Andrade’s book and a constellation of texts in which laziness is central. These works are linked obliquely—and at times in a direct way—to the articulation of laziness in *Macunaíma*. Furthermore, the texts I will consider and compare pertain to such disparate perspectives as Marxism, anarchism, the philosophic essay and literature.

I recognize in part the risks this sort of approach can provoke. Doubtless the final product will appear somewhat chaotic to the reader. Nonetheless, it is a risk that I think I must take. In line with the subtitle of *Macunaíma*, my essay at the outset lacks a distinctive character. Yet there is a conceit that pierces the work, and it bears some explanation. While many of the readings of *Macunaíma* have posited a necessary analysis of identity in the text (Eneida Maria de Souza 2001; Gilda de Mello e Souza 1996), placing emphasis in the paradigmatic phrase “Ah!... such laziness!” as the epitome of Brazilianess, here I propose to universalize Mário de Andrade’s intention.² Thus, this dialogue with other practices and studies of laziness will not simply revisit

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the “Brazilian” character of laziness. Instead, I want to meditate on them in general terms, develop them and then try to universalize the laziness that *Macunaíma* offers.³ As one will see in the first section, my intention is to read the centrality of laziness in *Macunaíma* as an anti-system and radical practice. To that end, I will make some connections with political and economic essays relating to laziness, such as Paul Lafargue’s classic “The Right To Be Lazy.” In the second section, the discussion on a possible political reading of the text will arise from a particular anarchist facet of the hero. Finally, my last essay into laziness will be an inquiry into two utterances that are now classics in literature. In addition to the previously cited exclamation of the title character in *Macunaíma*, we find Bartleby’s incantation: “I would prefer not to...” Although different at first glance, I believe these two incomplete refusals constitute a similar mode of rejecting authority. After surveying some revealing readings of *Bartleby, The Scrivener*, I will return then to the work of Mário de Andrade.

I am mindful of the uncertain outcome of the present endeavor. Let me repeat the preliminary warning and make it clear that this is an investigation and genealogy of laziness for the purpose of then offering a reading of *Macunaíma*. My aim with this chaotic journey is to try to illuminate a productive zone in *Macunaíma*, hoping that so ambling a path might flush out new meanings and interlocutors for Mário de Andrade’s text.

Laziness against capitalism and the system

There is a genealogy of laziness and leisure in the historical record that dates back to ancient Greece. The necessity of leisure and idleness as a precondition for poetic creation and, beyond that, for philosophical inquiry, is one of the characteristics of the Greek classical tradition. Without a doubt, this understanding of laziness, at least in ancient Greece, was not necessarily opposed to the status quo. In fact, as is known, their civilization was based upon a system of slavery that permitted philosophers the exercise of leisure.

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The human need for idleness and leisure was taken up again, centuries later, by those inside the socialist tradition seeking to defend the rights of Man. The towering figure among the apologists for laziness was Paul Lafargue,⁴ a Frenchman from the tropics (he was born in Cuba) who was secretary of the First International and—no mean detail—the son-in-law of Karl Marx. His essay, “The Right To Be Lazy,” which appeared in the newspaper *Egalité* in 1880, is one of the foundational texts for reflecting on the subject. What interests me principally here is contextualizing laziness and reflecting on the possible political meanings it can have. Then I will return to *Macunaíma*.

Here is one of the postulates that make up the core of “The Right To Be Lazy”:

. . . it is necessary that [man] recover his natural instincts and proclaim the Rights of Laziness (a thousand times more noble and sacred than the consumptive Rights of Man proclaimed by the metaphysical attorneys of the bourgeois revolution); it is necessary that one control oneself and not work more than three hours daily and content oneself with doing nothing and making merry during the rest of the day (Lafargue 27).

These words of Lafargue were radical even inside the Left. His ideas attack sacred postulates of the capitalist ethic, and even political practices of the Left. The quoted fragment synthesizes the arguments of his essay on laziness. First, the Rights of Man, so often brandished, were for Lafargue nothing more than an excuse to continue the yoke of slavery, transformed in modern times (it was written at the end of the nineteenth century) into workdays of more than 12 hours, with children and women filling the factories. Before defending the efforts of labor unionists, Lafargue insisted that the right to be lazy was necessary to the class struggle. In principle this does not imply, as can be clearly seen in *Macunaíma*, a total rejection of work.

The pertinence of connecting Lafargue’s text with that of Mário de Andrade resides in contextualizing and recognizing the blow against the system that laziness can provide. In his essay, Lafargue does battle not only for a reduction in the hours of work, but also in order to modify the bourgeois

ethic, which weaves the morality of capitalism together with religion. This attack is a defense of laziness as a liberating force of man and, above all, as a clear argument for social justice. As Lafargue points out, laziness is the objective toward which one works and, likewise, the classes that own the means of production are those who can give themselves the luxury of being lazy.⁵ The proletariat must not simply struggle for dignified work but for the right to work less, to be lazy.

In spite of being at times yoked to a certain positivist rigidity that socialists share with capitalists, Lafargue endeavors constantly to delineate himself from an enlightenment position. In this sense, the right to be lazy is not simply a question of redistributing the privileges that are only possessed by the privileged classes. Rather, it is more a right that must be defended for its own ends. Thus, Lafargue rehabilitates the idleness of ancient Greek tradition as a necessary condition not only for a better understanding of the world,⁶ but also as a way toward greater happiness.

Finally, and in connection with the t(r)opics of our hero, the good romantic Lafargue refers also to the theory of the noble savage. It is another way he confronts capitalist ideology and modernist morality:

When in our civilized Europe one wants to encounter some trace of the native beauty of mankind, he has to go search for it in the nations where economic prejudice has not yet extirpated the aversion to work (Larfargue 13).

The argument for laziness contains in itself the germ of an opposition to the capitalist ethic with its exploitation of labor and so establishes itself as an option for combating the negative consequences of modernity.⁷ It is with this last quotation that we find, it seems to me, an interesting entry into *Macunaíma*.

Certainly before heading to the tropics, I want to make a brief reference to two more essays that contextualize my proposed anti-authoritarian reading of laziness. Taking up again the socialist ideal as the goal, Kasimir Malévich wrote

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an essay entitled “Laziness: The Real Truth of Mankind” which expands the horizon of our reflection.

In it, Malévich recognizes that the dogmatic version of socialism condemns laziness as much as capitalism, since in both systems there is a fierce work ethic. Even so, he maintains that the socialist ideal holds the promise of laziness for everyone precisely because communism in particular seeks the elimination of inequality of the classes. Therefore, and with a fervent confidence in progress, Malévich posits that with the advance of technology workers will see their hours of work necessarily reduced, and consequently they will have time to be lazy. Indeed, there are many paradoxical aspects in this still valid definition of laziness: a temporal space wherein one does not work. But the importance of laziness for Malévich does not simply reside in an equitable distribution of goods and rights. Rather, it involves an improvement for mankind in general. For him, as the title of his essay demonstrates, laziness is the actual goal of humanity because it is the condition that enables man to contemplate his existence, which has to be his main priority. Laziness is the condition necessary for man to encounter his truth in the world.

The other essay I will introduce is another defense of laziness, this time from the liberal (and not Marxist) point of view of Bertrand Russell. In his *In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays*, Russell principally condemns the unequal distribution of laziness as an aftertaste of slavery because, in essence, only aristocrats can afford to enjoy it, thanks to the exploitation of the workers.⁸ Russell’s thesis does not operate, as did his predecessors’, on a socialist plane. His view is totally destabilizing to the status quo and equalizing. Russell argues that technical progress already permits the reduction of hours of labor and, therefore, that we should all have at our disposal greater time for leisure.

Heading down to the tropics, there are two readings worthy of consideration. Before making a brief mention of *Macunaíma*, I intend to introduce one more text published after *Macunaíma* that again champions laziness. In “A Crise da filosofia messiânica,” Oswald de Andrade proposes an

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anthropophagic reading of Bertrand Russell's position,⁹ endorsing not only laziness but also matriarchal society in which laziness would be a desired outcome:

No mundo supertecnizado que se anuncia, quando caírem as barreiras finais do Patriarcado, o homem poderá cevar a sua preguiça inata, mãe da fantasia, da invenção e do amor. E restituir a si mesmo, no fim do seu longo estado de negatividade, na síntese, enfim, da técnica que é civilização e da vida natural que é cultura, o seu instinto lúdico (Oswald de Andrade 106, my emphasis).

Oswald de Andrade's quote represents not only the continuing debate surrounding laziness, but also the development of these discussions in Brazil. It is worth pointing out that unlike the literary work of Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade's text is a philosophic essay and type of manifesto for leisure and laziness. As Benedito Nunes and Eneida Maria de Souza have pointed out, for Oswald as for Mário (in his early stages), laziness is one of the defining characteristics of the Brazilian identity. The above quote is pertinent because Mário de Andrade later changed his position and condemned his "lazy stage."¹⁰ By contrast, in 1950, Oswald returned to embrace laziness as a component of his anthropophagic utopia.¹¹

However, if the incidence of laziness in *Macunaíma* suffices to connect the text with the genealogy of laziness, it remains to be seen how this can be read in the text as an anti-authoritarian practice.

So we should keep in mind what Eneida Maria de Souza has said in "A preguiça mal de origem": that the very choice of a lazy hero, one who starts a struggle against modernizing ideals present in the city of São Paulo, disarms that tradition. This we can see, explicitly, in the *Macunaíma*'s mode of consumption as much as in his inability to make a profit. His anti-capitalist logic can be summed up in the following quote:

Macunaíma estava muito contrariado. Venceslau Pietro Pietra era um colecionador célebre e ele não. Suava de inveja e afinal resolveu imitar o gigante. Porém não achava graça em colecionar pedra não porque já tinha uma imundície delas na terra dele

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pelos espigões, nos manadeiros nas corredeiras nas seladas e gupiaras altas. E todas essas pedras já tinham sido vespas formigas mosquitos carrapatos animais passarinhos gentes e cunhãs e cunhatãs e até as graças das cunhãs e das cunhatãs... Pra que mais pedra que é tão pesado de carregar!...Estendeu os braços com moleza e murmurou:

—Ai! Que preguiça!... (Mário de Andrade 1978, 52).

Here, there are clearly two issues. One of the motors of capitalism is the will for profit, the other being for savings. Moreover, collecting is only possible when some group holds greater resources. Considered thus, it is a practice attached to the capitalist bourgeoisie, an evident form of fetishism for merchandise. If there is any side to collecting that could be connected to laziness (one can only review a collection if one has free time to do so), it is not reflected in the subversive practice of laziness that Macunaíma conveys. The irreducibility of macunaimic laziness is unsupported by either the desire for wealth or the pursuit of utility. Rather it is engendered more by a strictly pleasant imperative. Since there are already stones in the woods, collecting them—a modern trait—makes no sense to Macunaíma. Thus his exclamation.

Obviously, I am not the first to note the clash of macunaimic logic with that of modern urban life. In her classic work, *O Tupi e o Alaúde*, Gilda de Mello e Souza points out the ambiguous and indecisive nature of the main character. Following Marcuse's lead, she states that "Macunaíma é também uma personagem ambivalente, dúbia, indecisa entre duas ordens de valores...poderíamos dizer que ele oscila indefinidamente entre o pólo de Prometeu e o de Narciso, como fica bastante claro na sua relação com o dinheiro" (Souza 1996, 270).

Certainly this primitive (recall how Gilda de Mello e Souza says Macunaíma's Achilles tendon is his head), scandalous and sexual character—who will come later to be associated with the Carioca *malandro*—can be interpreted merely as a free spirit, and not as anti-system or subversive. Despite this, it is precisely in the irreducibility of his character, and his total and impossible appropriation, as much by one "pole" as by the other, that his political

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radicalism resides. Thus, *Macunaíma* works as a counterpoint to the theme of modernity not only by being unmoved by wealth but also by his “misuse” of the products of modernity (think of his use of the Smith-Wesson or the watch) or by his brutal appropriation of the machines.

There is then—and this is central to the choice of the phrase “Ah, such laziness!”—an irreducible radicalism in laziness. As Patrick McGuinness rightfully asks in his article on laziness, how can a genealogy of laziness be made if that implies, precisely, the absence of facts, and inaction?¹² Laziness has an intrinsically paradoxical nature that at the same time implies a negation of the must-be, and that can carry certain omissions—meaning that it lacks a constructive character. The effort to elevate to hero a lazybones, someone who does not adapt himself to the modern predicament, has in itself the seeds of rupture. It is in its irreducibility and the impossibility of its appropriation that the radicalism of laziness resides.

A rapprochement with Brazilian anarchism

“Diabo leve quem trabalha!”

Macunaíma

An anarchist reading of *Macunaíma* is possible. I will not do this but I mention it for its relevancy. In an admirable study of anarchism in Brazil, *Nem Pátria, Nem Patrão*, Francisco Foot Hardman points out the importance of popular festivals and the sovereign exercise of the right to be lazy in the anarchist celebrations at the beginning of the twentieth century. While discussing Lafargue’s text and its importance to the Brazilian anarchist movement, he mentions “Brazilian laziness.”¹³

Foot Hardman does not work with *Macunaíma* to make the case for anarchism and its appearance in literature. Rather, he chooses to use a later text by Mário de Andrade, “Primero de Maio,” which precisely problematizes the proletarian festivals of Workers’ Day. If the intent is to obtain representations and articulations of anarchism from this post-macunaimic work of Mário, such a reading is doomed to

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encounter a disenchanted version of laziness. It would be more profitable to use *Macunaíma* as an anarchist text. If in *Macunaíma* laziness is celebrated, in “Primero de Maio” Mário de Andrade seems to be portraying the impossibility of leisure. In fact, we see the protagonist wander about the city always uncomfortable, never knowing how to enjoy himself. Certainly, this can be read as an example of how work begets alienation (following the argument of Lafargue). Even the narrator holds himself back when compared to the radical and rambunctious narrator of *Macunaíma*.¹⁴ Clearly, the circumstances in which the writer produced the two works were distinct. Recall the conditions that prevailed during the composition of *Macunaíma*: six uninterrupted days of “hammock and cigarettes.”¹⁵ For this reason, I mention “Primero de Maio” only tangentially.

In keeping with those pleasant and idle conditions during the writing of *Macunaíma*, there is another point that one could develop—namely, the one that Eneida Maria de Souza highlights in her article “A Preguiça Mal de Origem.” There, she identifies the artistic creation of *Macunaíma* as an “orgasm.” In her view, Mário de Andrade proposes a religion of laziness and, with it, an understanding of the artistic process. This proposal can be made more profound with a more extensive study on the genealogy of laziness.

Before concluding this section, allow me to open one last dialogue between the work of Foot Hardman and my reading of *Macunaíma*. In his book *História da Indústria e do Trabalho no Brasil: Das Origens aos Anos 20*, Foot Hardman gives a wide but useful definition of anarchism: “Os anarquistas rejeitam tudo que se pareça, ainda que vagamente, com um partido organizado com vistas a conquista e manutenção do poder” (262). It is illuminating to contrast this definition with one of the final pages of *Macunaíma*: “Tudo o que fora a existência dele apesar de tantos casos tanta brincadeira tanta ilusão tanto sofrimento tanto heroísmo, afinal não fora senão um se deixar viver; e pra parar na cidade do Delmiro ou na ilha de Marajó que são desta terra carecia de ter um sentido. *E ele não tinha coragem pra uma organização...NÃO VIM NO MUNDO*

PARA SER PEDRA” (Mário de Andrade 1978, 144, my emphasis).

Partial refusals of modernity: Macunaíma and Bartleby together

Macunaíma, the character as much as the “novel” of Mário de Andrade, can be placed in dialogue with other foundational works of universal literature. One of my main points—the anti-system and radical nature of laziness—demonstrates itself as a form of negation of the status quo. So let me put *Macunaíma* in dialogue with a work that is distinct but similar, *Bartleby, the Scrivener* by Herman Melville. There is a phrase that Bartleby repeats until death that has an effect as radical as macunaimic laziness: “I would prefer not to...”

Before contrasting these two characters and their central utterances, I will review briefly the plot of *Bartleby*. In Melville’s novella, Bartleby is a scribe hired by the narrator, a prominent lawyer, to copy documents. Unlike Macunaíma, Bartleby is a completely gray individual about whom we know absolutely nothing. In fact, if Macunaíma is a “man without any character,” Bartleby is yet more extreme in his lack of particularity. In all the narrative, we never learn more than his name and his actions. As Deleuze claims in his essay “Bartleby or the formula,” the only thing that defines him is his phrase “I would prefer not to...” This formulation, one of the few things the character proffers, begins to appear as a response to the demands of his employer. When given the order to copy some document or do anything at all, Bartleby starts saying to the point of exasperation that he would prefer not to do it. This partial refusal comes to be almost his entire mode of behaving and expressing himself. After literally moving into the office even as his frustrated boss attempts to fire him, Bartleby goes on repeating the same: “I would prefer not to.” The refusals pile up until his employer finds himself compelled to evict the man. Yet even when Bartleby is put in jail, his partial rejections continue to the point of death, because he prefers not to eat.

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Without a doubt, in terms of plot or of style Melville's work is a long way from that of Mário de Andrade. Nevertheless, returning to our hypothesis, what matters is mainly the use of the two partial refusals that become as effective as they are radical: "I would prefer not to" together with "Ah, such laziness." With respect to Melville's work, *Bartleby* has been an object of the study of philosophers who focus their attention on his incantation. Both Deleuze and Agamben have worked with the text due to the radical nature of its eponymous character's denial. I will insert here some of their arguments that shed light on Macunaíma's refusal.

In his essay about *Bartleby*, Deleuze shows that Bartleby neither affirms nor negates, that the construction of his phrase, "I would prefer not to" creates a vacuum in communication, an indeterminacy with radical results. As Deleuze affirms: "If Bartleby were to actually refuse something, he could then be seen as a rebel or troublemaker and receive what social rules provide for that condition" (Deleuze 67). In a similar vein in his essay on "Bartleby," Agamben argues that nothing is more alien to Bartleby than the heroic pathos of negation. I believe that, in some way, the radicalism of *Macunaíma*, and going beyond it the radicalism of laziness itself, coincides with Deleuze and Agamben's insight: laziness neither negates nor affirms. Thus, the laziness of Macunaíma works not so much to negate categorically—thereby making him a defined rebel—as it moves toward an uncomfortable indeterminacy. The nature of the phrase "Ah, such laziness," does not simply refer to Brazilian identity, as many critics have emphasized. Rather, it must be expanded and considered a radical formula for the destabilization of the status quo. Here resides one of the novel possibilities for connecting this work of Mário de Andrade with the rest of modern literature.

Deleuze also affirms that Bartleby's utterance acquires two more meanings from two peculiar things about the protagonist. The first is his lack of characteristics or particularities. Bartleby himself says on several occasions that "I am not particular." Bartleby is in the view of Deleuze too straightforward for one to encounter in him any particularity. Macu-

naíma, the hero without any character, is somewhat similar, although he acquires many more particularities from the narrator. Indeed, his excess of characteristics actually gives him a personality without particular characteristics. Deleuze's second point, continuing the dialogue with *Bartleby*, is that for him the character incarnates the gray modern man, alienated by the world of work and pestered by rationality. The ambivalences of the Macunaíma-Bartleby relation allow me to posit, as has often been said, that Macunaíma represents a prototype of Brazilian modernity (and not only in terms of literature).

However, it has been noted by, among others, Eneida Maria de Souza and Gilda de Mello e Souza, that there is an oscillation in Macunaíma between two cultures, between two systems of logic. In *A Pedra Mágica do Discurso*, de Souza delves into this ambiguity. To end this genealogy, I will quote a small part of her position, in order to open up rather than conclude my discussion:

Na composição desse raciocínio, o debate travado entre Macunaíma, herói solar e mestre da preguiça, com a cultura do trabalho, culmina com o sentimento de fracasso experimentado pela personagem, que, incapaz de realizações exigidas pela civilização cristã, encarna, de maneira indireta, esta culpa, assim como uma saída utópica, transformando-se em constelação. No entanto, a ambigüidade criada por este impasse final constitui uma abertura a mais na interpretação desse rico personagem da literatura brasileira de todos os tempos (Eneida Maria de Souza 2001, 83).

In this article, I have illuminated possible readings of *Macunaíma* that affirm the importance of Mário de Andrade's work not only in Brazilian literature but also in connection with works that exceed either the national or the literary spheres. There is something about it often ignored that needs to be fundamentally acknowledged. Let me venture to suggest that *Macunaíma* is a text that achieves a political dimension through the radicalism of its use of laziness as much as through its formal density. It is a work that uses literature as a means to interpret political structures that, in a manner previously unconsidered, can generate even more critical thought.

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Notes:

1. I want to acknowledge the keen reading and counsel of Pedro Meira-Monteiro and Florencia Garramuño, without whose help this essay would not have been possible.

2. See Telê Porto Ancona Lopez, “Rapsódia e resistência,” which suggests this sort of reading in a manner very attentive to the text, but without establishing the genealogy and dialogue between the texts that I propose here.

3. One of the works that has been fundamental to this essay is an article by Eneida Maria de Souza entitled “A Preguiça Mal de Origem.” There she develops a “Brazilian” genealogy of laziness, starting with the work of Mário de Andrade, passing through certain texts of Oswald de Andrade, and arriving finally at the current state of laziness in the work of João Gilberto Noll. Her essay finds laziness throughout the poetic work of Mário de Andrade, not only in *Macunaíma* but also in his early journalistic texts where it is central (“A divina preguiça”). The other Eneida Maria de Souza text that is essential for an analysis of laziness in Mário de Andrade’s work is “Preguiça e Saber,” a chapter from her book *A Pedra Mágica do Discurso*. In my essay, I propose to speak neither to the idea of Mário de Andrade as an artist nor to his personal definition of laziness. My interest lies more in connecting *Macunaíma* to other analytical perspectives and literary works outside of the Brazilian sphere.

4. It is necessary to point out another detail in Lafargue’s career that is relevant: in his capacity as secretary of the First International in Spain, he fiercely opposed the activities of the anarchists. For more information about Lafargue, I recommend the following web resource:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/index.htm>.

5. It is difficult to give a precise definition of laziness. According to the philosopher Theiry Paquot and historian Alain Corbin, its western history could be traced to the ancient Greek conception of leisure, which was refashioned by the Romans and then vilified by the Catholic Church (it became a mortal sin). Later with the advent of modernity, laziness was condemned for its useless and hostile character with respect to the modern telos. I would direct the reader to an interesting dialogue between these two authors in a special edition of the journal *Magazine littéraire* (Corbin and Paquot 2004) devoted to laziness.

6. “The ancient philosophers taught contempt for work, that degradation of a free man, while the poets lauded laziness, the gift of the gods. . .” (Lafargue 13).

7. Lafargue exhorts in his last line, “Oh laziness, have pity on our vast misery! Oh laziness, mother of the arts and noble virtues, be the balm for human anguish!” (Lafargue 49).

8. “Modern technique has made it possible for leisure, within limits, to be not the prerogative of small privileged classes, but a right evenly distributed throughout the community. The morality of work is the

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morality of slaves, and the modern world has no need of slavery” (Russell 17).

9. In his introductory piece (“A Antropofagia ao Alcance de Todos”) to *A Utopia Antropofágica*, Benedito Nunes posited not only the connection between Oswald de Andrade and Bertrand Russell, but also Oswald’s break with classical Marxism. Oswald broke with Marxism partly due to his disagreement with one of the postulates of the orthodoxy: that production and the analysis of the means of production were more important than consumption. Oswald believed that consumption was more important than production. As we all know, Macunaíma was not particularly productive. But he was a grand and somewhat extravagant consumer.

10. I concur with Eneida Maria de Souza, who identifies two periods in Mário de Andrade’s writing. The first, which coincides with the composition of *O Turista Aprendiz* and *Macunaíma*, could be characterized by its “lazy” quality, both in the writer’s understanding of literature and his artistic production. The second period is the more “official” one, wherein the attraction of pleasure is rejected.

11. Let us recall what Alfredo Bosi noted in his history of Brazilian literature. I agree with Bosi that Oswald de Andrade’s hero would be profoundly anarchistic, whereas Macunaíma was not that radical. The reason is that, when creating the character, Mário de Andrade still made a distinction between the prehistorical primitive and a philosophy of life, which Oswald proposed to integrate in a continuum from prehistory to modernity. As will be seen, I perceive a greater radicalism in “Macunaíma” in its interpretative irreducibility. So I will leave aside later changes in Mário de Andrade’s political positions.

12. As Patrick McGuinness affirms: “...laziness has a paradoxical nature—at once revolutionary, radical, rough, it can also arise from reaction, from apathy and from the complicity of inaction... Does laziness have a history? Can it be assessed? How does one analyze that which produces no events?” (McGuinness 40).

13. “Os textos de Lafargue são incômodos não só para a consciência burguesa, mas também para as ideologias conciliatórias dos sindicatos e partidos reformistas, todas elas afinadas com a imposição de um estranho consenso e apoiadas numa ética absolutizante do trabalho. Talvez a colonial ‘preguiça brasileira’ encontre aqui alguma inspiração heróica”. (Foot Hardman 2002, 250).

14. One could argue that the narrator of *Macunaíma* is more radical, both poetically and politically. The cutting-edge character of Macunaíma bears this out. The narrator of “Primero de Maio,” on the other hand, seems to restrain himself moment by moment from using popular speech and, more generally, insults and “bad words.” This demonstrates a certain level of repression in the narrator—something absent in *Macunaíma*.

15. Unlike *Macunaíma*, “Primero de Maio,” published in *Contos Novos*, was written in a succession of years (1934-1942), which could indicate a shift in the conception of the creative process on the part of Mário de Andrade. I would recommend the reader consult the work of Eneida Maria

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de Souza, who has developed at greater length the relation of laziness to artistic creation in Mário de Andrade's work.

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