

"The Abstract Brazilian": Antonio Candido's *Malandro* as National Persona

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The representation of the social world in Brazilian prose fiction continues a long-standing practice of chronicling and caricaturing national life, which has been recognized as one of the special features of Brazilian arts. The presence of a broad social world is an essential frame of reference in the novel, although its presence may not be readily apparent or emphasized by the author. The Rio de Janeiro of Machado de Assis, for example, is identifiable only by the names of some streets, districts, or edifices. Some of the most celebrated novels in Brazilian literature—*Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* [*Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*], by Machado de Assis, *Macunaíma*, by Mário de Andrade, and *Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar* [*Sentimental Memoirs of John Seaborne*], by Oswald de Andrade—are drawn against an unobtrusive yet expansive canvas of national personae. In prose fiction, the relationship between a chronicler narrator-hero and caricatures of the social world is a dialectical construct, established in the mid-nineteenth century, which lies at the heart of questions of national identity and social organization in Brazilian literature.

In an influential essay, "Dialectics of Malandroism" (1970), or "Dialectics of the Rogue," leading critic and scholar Antonio Candido called attention to the first novel of manners set in Rio de Janeiro, the *Memoirs of a Militia Sargent* (1854-55) by Manuel Antônio de Almeida—recently retranslated to English—which mirrored the social hierarchy of the Empire. The *Memoirs* chronicles a period of national life on the colonial model, taken from the merchant class. Its sketches are considered reminiscent of a series of well-known drawings depicting Brazilian daily life and culture in the first decades

of the nineteenth century by Jean Baptiste Debret, published in three volumes in 1834 as *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil*. Drawing on physical description and outward appearance, the novel creates a self-image, a “veritable self-portrait” of national personae. At the same time, in recording daily life from the streets, it dissolves individuals into the social categories of the Empire or frames them as caricatures of semi-folkloric figures.

(They are) designated only by profession or their position in a group that, on the one hand, dissolves them into typical social categories, but on the other approximates them to legendary paradigms and the indeterminacy of the fable... (Candido 84)

One explanation of the origin of these two currents speaks of “two very different European prose traditions: semi-picaresque, satirical English novels of the eighteenth century, like those of Fielding and Smollett, which Almeida and other Brazilians read in French translation; and the early romantic costumbrismo of Spain and Portugal—generally sympathetic, even nostalgic, descriptions of local customs and traditions imperiled by modernization” (Haberly 140-41). While recognizing picaresque features in Almeida’s *Memoirs*, Brazilian critics prefer to draw our attention, however, to comic and satiric antecedents in the Regency (1831-1840) and Second Empire (1840-1889).

The depiction of “lower middle class, Gypsies, mobsters, and grenadiers”—the phrase is from an introduction by Mário de Andrade—is foreshadowed by verbal and pictorial satire published by newspapers. The *crônica*—a short semi-fictional episode, a popular genre found in the Brazilian press since the 1830s—often functioned as a laboratory in which writers prepared themselves for the novel (Arrigucci 58). The chronicler-hero, pervasive in modern prose, gives voice to a perennial current of national self-consciousness in Brazilian thought (Daniel 157), often explored through characters or personae. The chronicle may be responsible for the mixing of historical figures and fictional characters created to reflect them. Such is the case in the *Memoirs* of Major Vidigal, the capricious head of Rio’s *Guarda Real de Polícia*, who as a fictional character acts as “an ogre, a devourer of happy people...” (Candido 84). Embodying the dual nature of authority, Vidigal may be considered a predecessor of the rapacious Italian industrialist Pietro Pietra in *Macunatma*, a figure who itself caricatures an actual historical

captain of São Paulo's industry, Matarazzo. Pietro Pietra appears in the guise of an urban cannibal, also associated with a mythical giant, Piaiman, "Eater of Men."

Caricature began to take hold in this period in variety supplements, influencing the process of character construction with its comic resources. Journalism also seems to have given rise to a practice of self-satire, noticeable in the characterization of main personages by physical descriptions and outward appearance:

[C]onsidering the heterogeneous material itself and the need to review the issues of the week, as well as the need to be brief and to record daily life and particular forces in the fictional sense, it is not surprising that chroniclers and novelists working alongside each other might find themselves forced to create a self-image, that they might experiment with self-satire in the midst of their obligatory changes. (Süssekind 177)

Cartoons in the press helped to set the satirical tone of this writing, while the reproduction of popular speech set the colloquial tone of Brazilian language. Eschewing both slaves and elite, the social portrait restricted its field of vision to "the free lower classes, existing on the margins of the power hierarchy and occupying interstices of the social structure..." (Holloway xii). The author imitated the caricaturist, whose candid depictions of personages in the press ranged from "not exactly flattering" to "devastating" (Süssekind 178). Use of satire in chronicles and pictorial caricatures helped to transform mere depiction of a social world into the complexity of a novel, employing a narrow and superficial cast of characters to construct incisive social critiques.

Leonardo, the adventurous and picaresque hero of the *Memoirs*, sets a pattern for the satirical hero and articulates a particular form of social criticism that remains characteristic of a line of satirical fiction:

The narrative voice is perhaps Almeida's most significant contribution to prose fiction, ... the narrative voice serves as the sole guarantor of the authenticity and truthfulness of the text [and] controls his readers reactions ... (Haberly 140-41)

Candido's essay traces some of the enduring characteristics of this kind of hero and his function in the social world. Leonardo does not represent the viewpoints or values of the elite, being but one character among many; neither is he a symbol of class or popular interests, per se. His point of view,

rather, cuts across a flexible, moveable social fabric and is motivated by an instinct of survival often evident in a picaresque hero, “a kind of irreverent common sense, which is pre-critical, but which... becomes in the end more demystifying” (100). His special position floating between social levels also produces a certain type of objectivity, marked by cynical reflections but absent of moral judgments. It seems that, as Candido writes, the hero purposefully “concludes nothing and learns nothing” (81), for at heart he remains optimistic and cheerfully accepts the given state of society. This is his special formula as a modern hero, “cynicism plus good nature” (91). Deviating from picaresque norms, Leonardo plays more the “clever adventurer,” while he doubtless embodies the very Portuguese category of *“menino da sua mãe”* (“his mother’s son”) in its patriarchal form.

In the essay, Candido suggests forms of symbolic interpretation of social functions in the novel, without claiming that his reading amounts to a general theory of the function of Brazilian social reality. His literary analysis nevertheless contains observations that have proved to be central to the contemporary debate on the nature and function of Brazil as a national entity. First, in Brazilian society of that time he sees a dialectics between order and disorder, which are capriciously balanced in the system of human relationships. There is a relative equivalence between the worlds symbolizing order and those of disorder, resulting in a morally neutral world, inhabited by a society without guilt, sin, remorse, repression, or sanction, where actions are evaluated only on the basis of their practical result:

[T]he dialectic game of order and disorder [functioned] as a correlative of what existed in Brazilian society at that time. Order imposed and maintained with difficulty, surrounded on every side by a lively disorder, which opposed twenty situations of concubinage to every marriage and a thousand chance unions to every situation of concubinage. (Candido 95)

If disorder is the unruly expression of a vigorous young society, order stands for its attempt to refine itself in the molds of the old colonial cultures that were its models.

The second observation of importance here is that the narrator-hero mediates between the dialectical categories, which are porous positions in the social world. The hybrid composition of the social hierarchy allowed for such a space in-between:

In its more intimate structure and its latent vision of things, this book expresses the vast general accommodation that dissolves the extremes, confuses the meaning of law and order, manifests the reciprocal penetration of groups, of ideas, of the most disparate attitudes, creating a kind of moral no-man's-land, where transgression is only a nuance in the spectrum that runs from norm to crime. (Candido 100)

Candido perceives a rhythm in the social construct created by the passage between institutions or types, on one side, and the demystifying, irreverent satire of realist popular expression on the other:

[T]he tension of the two lines that constitute the author's vision, and those lines are translated in two narrative directions, dynamically interrelated. On the one hand, the stamp of the popular introduces archetypal elements, which bring with them the presence of what is most universal in cultures, pulling it toward the legendary and the unreal, without recognizing the particular historical situation. On the other hand, the perception of the social rhythm pulls it toward the representations of a concrete, historically delimited society... (Candido 96)

The rogue or *malandro* comes to represent the spontaneous forms of social life in the novel. A third essential observation in the essay concerns the hero's act of renunciation. In the social dialectic of the *malandro*, Candido detects a particular form of "corrosive tolerance" (101) at the root of culture, desiring legitimacy while attacking the rigidity of any norm or law. By attempting to participate in the discipline and order of conventional or legitimate culture, the hero was required to repress or renounce his street personality in favor of what Candido termed an alienated or mutilated, automatic self. The rogue or *malandro*, however, possesses an almost "magical liberty" (99) because he identifies with the spontaneous forms of the free lower classes, serving as a mediator in the social dialectic. Finally, Candido observes that an amoral world of picaresque irreverence governed only by free agency and impunity evokes archetypes of legendary chivalric heroes. Their lives and memoirs constitute a chain of fabulous events germane for the Brazilian satirical novel to follow, in which events proceed from a hero's birth to economic failure, and to the absurdity of social relations. The dialectical drama ends in a form of *opera buffa* (93, 95) wherein the exchangeability of social order and disorder is accepted and celebrated in a positive comic spirit.

By displaying the primacy of imagination and improvisation over portraiture or historical reconstitution in the *Memoirs*, Candido's essay founds a Brazilian comic tradition that expresses the humorous irreverence and amorality of oral and folk narratives. This line of satirical fiction, according to Candido, reaches its apex in the experimental fiction of modernism, Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* and Oswald de Andrade's *Miramar* and its sequel, *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*. The "Dialectics of Malandroism" presents the *Memoirs of a Militia Sargent* as "a representative novel," whose irreverent humor only comes to be recognized fully in those great modernist novels that raise the *malandro* to a national symbol. The essay neither claims a line of originality or authenticity in its interpretation of national society nor does it analyze any succeeding work in the lineage of the modern satirical novel, which remains a tantalizing suggestion. The present study carries the dialectic of the *malandro* into the modern novel, where the pertinence of Candido's major observations can be assessed. At the same time, by placing the "Dialectic of Malandroism" in the light of recent symbolic and structural interpretations of Brazilian society, the full authenticity and originality of the satirical tradition in Brazilian fiction becomes clearer.

Brazil as a System

In *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes* (1978), anthropologist Roberto DaMatta attempts to interpret Brazil as a system, proposing conceptual categories almost identical to Candido's observations in the "Dialectic of Malandroism." As does the literary analyst, the anthropologist also searches for the origins of Brazilian specificity or individuality in universal human forces or systems. DaMatta discusses the ritualization of Brazilian social organization as a dichotomy or dialectic, dominated by a similar opposition between order and disorder and led by its principal character types, the rogues and heroes:

It is obvious that we have a continuum ranging from order to disorder, from tightly closed routine to total liminal openness, with each marked point corresponding to stereotyped social positions that are familiar to all sectors of Brazilian society. (DaMatta 208)

Spheres of order and disorder are the recognized stereotypes of daily life, in which the drama of Brazilian society is enacted. DaMatta's study

juxtaposes carnival and the national holiday; costumes and uniforms; people and the authorities; the house and the street; the free individual and the juridical person. In each case, the first element of the equation represents the rights, conscience, and rules of equal individuals, while the second is governed by the juridical definition of the social totality.

DaMatta's second observation, recapitulating Candido's analysis, is that the categories are changeable, eliding one another as a result of their own instability. Transit from one category to another, for example, allows for an exchange of identity between *malandro* and hero: "We know, for example, that the heroes of Carnival, the figures who reveal that moment as 'carnavalesque,' are representations (or *fantasias*) of marginal people..." (208). The world of the *malandro* is usually one of misplaced or out of place figures:

Either because they are situated at the boundaries or limits of historical time, like the Greeks... or because they may be situated at the extremes of our geographical frontiers, like the Hawaiians, the Chinese, and the legionnaires; or because they may be hidden by our prisons or the police [or by our ingenuousness]... we know that they are all to be classified as *malandros*. (208-9)

The role of mediator played by the *malandro*, who is allergic to work and insinuates himself into the individual spaces of the social hierarchy, such as those of carnival, is considered to be "much more creative and free" than that of his opposite, a figure in military uniform who marches in processions symbolizing order.

There are two additional points of comparison with Candido's essay. In the neutral, hesitant space opened between order and disorder in DaMatta's analysis, the hero becomes a renouncer. His rejection of society is of a higher degree than the *malandro's*, making him comparable to messianic or revolutionary figures. The renouncing hero is an archetype in Brazilian social history, and DaMatta identifies the figure in history and literature, whether he be "Augusto Matraga" of João Guimarães Rosa, Antônio Conselheiro of *Os Sertões [Rebellion in the Backlands]* by Euclides da Cunha, or the folk heroes Lampião or Padre Cícero in the Northeastern oral tradition. Likewise, the *malandros* are amply represented by the archetypes of traditional popular tales, such as folk hero Pedro Malasartes, to whom DaMatta dedicates an extended analysis. Once again, the flexibility of the dialectical social order

leads to the exchangeability of roles. Just as the *malandro* runs the risk of taking on a completely marginal existence, DaMatta reminds us, the renouncer may cross the line into banditry and revenge. Thus, the rituals of the Brazilian drama constitute a social theatre comparable to Candido's *opera buffa*, a "dialectical drama governed by indecision...and paradoxes" (DaMatta 1). It expresses an essentially comic spirit, in which "a bandit can enter a carnival salon or a futurist-cannibal become a revolutionary on the beach" (1).

The Narrator-Chroniclers

In the seventy years after Leonardo and his *Memoirs of a Militia Sargent*, two major narrator-chroniclers continued development of the satirical novel, Machado de Assis' Brás Cubas, who writes posthumous memoirs, and Oswald de Andrade's João Miramar, who composes sentimental memoirs. Both are examples of unreliable narration by a character at a distance from society. An examination of the dynamic of the *malandro* and society in these two satirical novels using Candido's categories should illuminate the persistence and pertinence of the genre in the modern novel. In a recent essay, Samira Mesquita indeed mixes the two novels in the clever title, "Posthumous Memoirs of João Miramar/Sentimental Memoirs of Brás Cubas."

Brás Cubas embodies the voice of disorder since he is a deceased narrator, recounting his life from beyond the grave, and aware of the freedom that this privileged position allows. He has, apparently, nothing to gain from anything but a frank appraisal; yet the question remains whether the narrator is fully aware that he has lived or, indeed, has sought a life of disorder outside of the social body. His ancestors, we learn, have fabricated a genealogy for the Cubas family with false claims to nobility. Congruently, the main themes of his life occur on the margins of society and in spaces of prohibition, symbolizing his failures, the estranged intrusions of a deceased narrator. His affair with the society wife Virgília, a central theme of the memoirs, represents his potential marriage that failed to occur when Brás hesitated, remaining too long in his exile or mourning and alienation in Petrópolis, upon which Virgília chose a rising political figure. Their revived passion is an undercurrent, a social antithesis enacted in a vice world of the suburbs, and Brás' political relationship with the husband, Lobo Neves, is based on the deception of a kind of false kinship. When Brás does become a deputy, at the height of his own political fortunes, he can only dedicate his inaugural speech

to a critique of the style of hat worn by the militia, in what is perhaps a comic homage to Leonardo's *Memoirs*. The depths of his dedication to "disorder" is manifested in the style of the novel, with its short chapters that truncate description, full of allusion and suggestion, and at times consisting only of punctuation marks or semiotic symbols.

Brás' mediation between levels of the social universe is a central yet veiled clue to his social function. He creates for Virgília a prohibited world, while using the servant D. Plácida, who owes him her rescue from economic destitution, to lend respectability to their rendezvous. He inverts the serious, exterior social roles represented by the husband, Lobo Neves. Finally, by becoming the disciple of the mad philosopher, Quincas Borba, Brás demonstrates that intellectually he has "concluded nothing and learned nothing" from his own memoirs, being unable to distinguish between the coherent and the mad or deviant in society.

Always the *malandro*, Brás opens the novel with the dedication to "the worm that first gnawed the cold flesh of my corpse," and intensifies his satire stylistically when he bids adieu to the reader in the preface with a "snap of the finger." The numbered chapters of his impossible "posthumous autobiography" carry ironic titles of self-portraiture and satire. As a mere youth at a society soirée, Brás unwittingly denounces a kiss exchanged in the garden between Dr. Vilaça and D. Eusébia, surprising and delighting the gossipy society. This moment subtly returns to his autobiography in the character of their beautiful but lame daughter Eugênia, whose sincere love Brás rejects because of her physical defect, and which foreshadows his own path of illicit fortunes and insincerity. His picaresque youth in Brazil comes to an abrupt end when his father packs him off to Europe, in order to tear him away from the avaricious Marcela, who extorts lavish presents that are depleting his fortune and exercising his powers of deception. As a student in Coimbra, he continues his festive life while waiting to receive a worthless degree.

"How I Didn't Become a Minister of State," the clever title of an almost empty chapter, indicates his path of renunciation of self and society in the memoirs. Brás has renounced Eugênia, avoided marriage with Virgília, delayed entrance into political life; it is no surprise that his political ambitions are truncated, since his objectives are fraudulent, being those of a parasite or a copy on the margins of actual institutions. The question is suggested whether Brás, consciously or not, is carefully constructing the

universally marginal, negative life of a *malandro*, for whom satire also becomes a form of renunciation. The narrator, after all, is aware of “defects in composition” of the memoirs, an idea to which he dedicates a chapter:

But the book is tedious, it has the smell of the grave about it; it has a certain cadaveric contraction about it, a serious fault, insignificant to boot because the main defect of this book is you, reader. You're in a hurry to grow old and the book moves slowly. (111)

The apparent lack of meaningful sequence, chronology, and conclusion—whether in life or memoirs—is the clue to the inverse, negative function of Brás’ satire. In the final chapter, he utters a frequently quoted line, understood to express his philosophical pessimism: “I had a small balance, which is the final negative in this chapter of negatives—I had no children, I haven’t transmitted the legacy of our misery to any creature.” Yet even here a double purpose and occult message is hidden. Brás is alluding to the chapter “The Secret Cause,” in which Virgília mysteriously reveals her pregnancy to him, which for a moment gives Brás the hope of a place in the outer world of order. Virgília’s miscarriage, revealed in the following chapter by her husband, is the devastating condemnation to marginality and subliminality that he has constantly desired and sought, but that now can be justified and even lamented as a blow of fate. The declaration of his “small gain” in having had no children, rather than bitter pessimism, can be read as a disguised confirmation of the total coherence of his life as a *malandro*, which has successfully achieved and avoided what life both could and could not give him.

In the sentimental memoirs, João Miramar (“John Seaborne”), who is both a narrator and character, takes advantage of retrospective narration to reconstruct a satirical view of the Brazilian world. The novel is written not by a deceased narrator but by one aged thirty-five, the symbolic halfway point of life, taken from Dante. The novel constructs a second exterior point of view based on the narrator’s voyage to Europe as a youth and his return to Brazil with different perspectives. The chapters, which are small fragments written in Cubist style with clever ironic titles, are written in a deceptive present time, resembling snapshots of formative moments in Miramar’s life, but colored by ironic overlays both by the mature narrator-chronicler and by the returned traveler. Much like Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Miramar’s memoirs begin with infantile language and the ingenuous self-

portrait of an innocent youth's apprenticeship in the national social world, hackneyed and superficial.

Miramar speaks from the perspective of disorder on several counts: his alienation from family and society, his childhood discovery of the forbidden fruits of Eros and carnival—a teacher's Pantheism, a circus performance—and his confusion of ritual with sexuality in his religious education:

Lord with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, women don't have any legs,
they're just mama's manikin even down there. Why should women have legs,
amen. (114)

Upon his return to Brazil from Europe, after witnessing the vast "slope of the world," the exiled Miramar finds that he is also an orphan, thus doubly alienated from the social and family worlds. His attempted reintegration into the Brazilian world leads to satire of social types, including João Miramar, the good-natured, cynical hero. In *Miramar*, satire begins with the family circle and friends, whom he has always found "abominable": the hero's loquacious and vacuous cousins Nair and Cotita, the ingenuous aunt Gabriela, the picaresque, scheming "Count" José Chelinini, and his future trivial wife "Célia." In the professional world, each name satirizes a type: the acid critic Dr. Wilde Lemmon, the slippery Dr. Joe Rubber, the great moral guide Dr. Pontius Pilate. The semi-folkloric dimensions of a national family of personages is illustrated by the danseuse Catherine Drip-Fire, the femme fatal Madame Rollingboule, and several rustic letters from unlettered relatives on the *fazenda* "New Lombardy."

As Brás Cubas, João Miramar is a renouncer. In terms of style, the ironic distance between the titles of his fragmentary chapters and their content represents his digressive, antithetical, and non-logical relationship toward the language of a culture with which he now feels out of step. In "The Great Divorced" and "Last Movie," João's failures at marriage and business symbolize his failure at reintegration into the Brazilian world. He compares his life to an irregular verb—"crackar"—in "The Verb to Bust," an anglicism that will later be applied to Wall Street. In the final chapter, "Interview/Interviewed," João suspends his memoirs, faced with pressure to conform to the conservative literary standards of the day. His final "meditative pause" marks the depth of his alienation and ends the memoirs with an open form.

Finally, João Miramar—a pseudonym standing for the young Brazilian writer as a modernist—is classified in the novel as an archetype by the conservative pillars of critical opinion who counsel him about his work. Machado Penumbra (“Nathaniel Webster Darkling”), who in his preface accepts syntactical simultaneity but draws the line at errors of punctuation, asks “Can this be the Brazilian of the twenty-first century?” And Pontius Pilate, who reads João’s memoirs before a voyage to Europe, pronounces them “reminiscent of Virgil, just a bit more nervous in style.” Thus with the consecration of conservative nationalism, Miramar reenacts the voyage of Ulysses in the ironic mode, sailing out of Brazil in order to form the modern social conscience of his race.

Modernist Self-Portraits

In their portrayal of society, major works of modernist fiction do not break new ground, as they do in matters of structure and style by following innovations of the European avant-garde movements. Following the modern art movement of 1922, some novels identified themselves as chronicles of the city of São Paulo in their subtitles. On this point, they may be considered extensions of nineteenth-century novels of manners, in which the chronicle and the caricature continue to dominate social portraits. The reason for this apparent anachronism lies in the difference between the modernists’ view of art and social progress and the actual urban reality of São Paulo, as outlined in an essay by Jorge de Sena:

[T]he demolition of everything that was considered sacred and respectable would be directed, in Brazil, not only against the established intellectual, but also against the abyss that existed between real life and contemporary times, in which there was only the external appearance of progress. (Sena 100)

Daily life was the sphere in which the modernist writers sought authenticity, since it corresponded with their own experience of a Brazil tied to its own past:

[T]hey encountered authenticity... in daily life that, like their own past, was profoundly inlaid with extremely patriarchal social structures and patterns, tremendously conservative, and dramatically bringing to mind everything that kept Brazil in a state of semi-colonial and semi-feudal slavery. (Sena 100)

Monica Schpun confirmed the state of social relationships in São Paulo of the 1920s in *Les Années Folles a S. Paulo* (1997), in which she classifies as chronicles ["Chroniques"] contemporary essays by Ercília N. Cobra and Maria Lacerda de Moura denouncing the repression of women. Nicolau Sevckenko chronicles the interrelationship of modernist society and culture and the urbanization of São Paulo in *Orfeu Extático na Metrópole* (1992).

Oswald de Andrade in 1918 appears in the satirical press in a series of caricatures, featuring his rotund profile. In the scandalous "O Parafuso," his photo in a white suit is captioned "Mr. Oswald de Andrade, seducer of minors," while in the aestheticist *fin de siècle* fashion journal *Papel e Tinta* he is identified as "Marquis d'Olz." The name alludes to "D'Olzani," maiden name of the spirited young woman he met in the *garçonnière*, whom he married on her deathbed in 1919. Early in his youth, Oswald had taken the name "João Miramar" to represent his poetic persona, a signature and identity he assumes, which reaches its culmination in Miramar's sentimental memoirs of 1924.

Oswald kept a collective diary-scrapbook in the São Paulo *garçonnière* in 1918-19, in which the artist's studio is invaded by the rhythms of downtown streets:

This collective diary written in Oswald's *garçonnière* in 1918 is not that of a writer in his *fin de siècle* studio, but rather a text that is composed consonant with the rhythms of the street... The relation between writing the diary and the city is presumed: references to the city are not as important as the shape of the text (its rhythm, its structure) in which the *urbe* is a tacit presence... Outside is not a familiar place to the comfortable members of the *garçonnière* (many belong to traditional families of São Paulo), but a strange place dominated by the multitude and fortuitous encounters. The experience of a city that becomes distant finds consolation in the close community of signatures and annotations contained in the diary, once one crosses the door of the *garçonnière*, located in the center of the city. (Aguilar 185)

Oswald de Andrade collects satirical sketches of the members of the city's modernist circles in the style of the lightning portraits, amounting to caricatures of social personae. These impressions are drawn with incisive wit, playing on the identity of the person in question, as in the sketch of Mário de Andrade, "Macunaíma de Conservatório" ("Macunaíma in the Conservatory

of Music”). This satiric collection of caricatures was kept in a notebook and selectively published in 1990 as *Dicionário de Bolso* (*Pocket Dictionary*). Mário de Andrade caricatured Law School graduates in a satirical sketch in *Macunaíma*, when in his flight through the jungle the hero ran upon a *bacharel*:

Running like mad, they came to a house a league and a half farther on where the bachelor of Cananéia lived. This old coot was sitting in the doorway reading some obscure manuscript. Macunaíma said to him, “How do you do, bachelor?”

—Not too bad, unknown traveler.

—Taking a little fresh air, are you?

—*C'est vrai*, as they say in French.

—Well, so long, bachelor. I'm super in a hurry. (26)

Given the reference to Cananéia, the probable object of Mário's satire was the diplomat Graça Aranha, author of *Canaã* [*Canaan*], whom Oswald also privately called an “old beast.”

In *Macunaíma*, Mário de Andrade brought his modernist circle into a scene of macumba festivities:

Macunaíma and his fellow celebrants of the macumba, including Jaime Ovalle, Dodô, Manu Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raul Bopp and Antônio Bento, all went out into the dawn. (59)

He also named several regional artisans of handicrafts, blending the national and actual with mythical lore:

They sent to São Paulo for the famous woolen booties knitted by Dona Ana Francisca de Almeida Leite Moraes; to Pernambuco for lace in traditional designs such as ‘Alpine Rose,’ ‘Myrtle Flower,’ and ‘I long for thee’ woven by the hands of Joaquina Leitão, better known as Quinquina Cacunda. From the best tamarind cordial made by the Sisters Loura Vieira of Óbidos they prepared a refreshing drink... (20)

His satires of the social world of São Paulo invoke types and categories, such as the city's ladies, as described by Macunaíma in his famous letter to the Amazon women. The jungle emperor parodies urban elite women:

[E]nchanted monsters who amuse themselves only with 'showers of filthy lucre, ostentatious fountains of champagne... They are greatly preoccupied with themselves, [obtaining] from all parts of the globe everything that is most refined and elegant...[that] they think adds to their attractions—for example, tiny feet from Japan, rubies from India, insolence from North America, and many other international treasures and delights.' (69-72)

The letter can be compared with an assessment of socially acceptable roles normally open to Brazilian women, described by Michelle Perrot:

Aux femmes, la maison, la direction d'une nombreuse domesticité, une maternité revalorisée, les rencontres de l'intérieur, des apparitions publiques ritualisées, de plus en plus obsédées par le devoir de cette beauté que les femmes se doivent d'offrir en spectacle aux hommes. (Schpun ii)

In urban fiction of this period, many of the characters were recognizable portraits or caricatures of the city's modernists. Not only was the city life and landscape considered a source of the modernist aesthetic, rather they were all the readers of their mutual works. With the passage of time, few are left who can identify specific allusions to personalities in São Paulo in the modernist novels, except by extrapolating from references or from an author's biography.

The social world in *Miramar*, the experimental cubist novel of Oswald de Andrade, confirms the kinship of this modern novel with a superficial and caricatured social world. Social organization can be described in terms similar to the two universalizing strata established by Candido for the 1855 *Memoirs of a Militia Sargent*, one illustrating a "wide circle of culture" involving archetypal situations and characters, and the other Brazilian. Representing the first stratum, and illustrating the author's general cultural and education, is a cast of characters, both historical and fictional, that dots each modernist novel, drawn from the universal world of political culture, humanities, and arts. In *Miramar*, the gallery of names includes the classical world (Alexander the Great, Aspasia, Cleopatra, Cupid, Icarus, Petronius, Plutarch, Telemachus), political culture (Lloyd George, the Kaiser, Lenin, Catarina de Médici, Mussolini, Napoleon, Kemal Pacha, Poincaré, Woodrow Wilson), writers (Lord Byron, Cocteau, Musset, Rimbaud, Virgil), film stars (Sarah Bernhardt, Baby Daniels, Mae Murray), music and dance (Chopin, Isadora Duncan, Mozart, Puccini, Salomé, Satie, Schubert, Tosca), and painting (the

Gioconda, Picasso, Rafael). Brazilian names figure on the universal list in the cases of widely known or representative figures: the statesman Rui Barbosa; writers Olavo Bilac and Basílio da Gama; political figures José Bonifácio, Dom Pedro I and II, Tiradentes; and aviator Santos Dumont. If these novels convince us, it is not through the pastiche and caricature of social types, but through a satirical vision of the whole or universal social construct. The narrator-chronicler-heroes themselves act as the rogues and heroes of their own satirical histories, following DaMatta's analysis of the Brazilian social dilemma.

The Abstract Brazilians: The *Malandros*

In the essay "Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination," critic Roberto Schwarz considers the problem of imitative literature and culture in Brazil, plagued historically by copying of models imported from other metropolitan sources. The suggestion, originating in the colonial background, is that Brazil has been the subject of "cultural expropriation" and is still in search of genuine national roots. The troublesome paradigm of source and copy gives rise to an historical divide that Schwarz observes in the Brazilian social world and that is inevitably reminiscent of *Candido's* dialectic, order and disorder. Noting that colonial institutions such as slavery, *latifundia*, and clientelism constituted a set of relations with their own rules and impervious to outside influences (disorder), these conflicted with provisions for equality under the Law, set down in the nineteenth century (order). Schwarz concludes that this dialectical background of the personal and the legal gives rise to a society that displays elements both of originality (disorder) and lack of originality (order), yet without entirely solving its dilemma.

Referring to the modernist attempt to define an authentic national character, Schwarz coins the term "abstract Brazilian" to refer to a modernist hero who is a synthesis of national characteristics, represented by the polymorphous Macunaíma, for example. For Schwarz this is a negative category, since it is not class specific. If the synthetic hero is viewed as a mediator among the levels of a dialectical social system, however, and moreover if he writes from an exterior point of view such as the posthumous Cubas or voyaging Miramar, then the abstract Brazilian fits *Candido's* positive description of a cathartic, satirical hero. Our reading of the satirical novel in the Brazilian tradition proposes that the synthetic or abstract Brazilian is also a national *malandro*, whether he be Malasartes, Macunaíma, or Miramar, a figure who makes possible an outside, miscegenated reading of

Brazil's absurd cultural configuration through his role as narrator-chronicler, mediator, and renouncer. The chronicling of popular society plus the caricature of comic social institutions is a novel, authentic expression of the Brazilian system of carnivals, rogues, and heroes. Embodying popular irreverence and mocking hierarchy and institutions, the malandro—as the writer of retrospective, satirical and unreliable memoirs—develops a special quality that Schwarz finds in the novels of Machado de Assis: the ability to perceive a “particular mode of ideological functioning” (13) in a society of copy and exception. The set of satirical memoirs whose heroes—Leonardo, Brás, and João—are at odds with the social system argues that carnivalization and ritualization of the social world, as described by Candido and DaMatta, defuse the stigma of imitation and copy of European cultural models. The abstract Brazilian, capable of crossing social barriers and mocking rigid hierarchies, evokes the fabulous events of his national autobiography and self-portrait and finds a current of originality and authenticity in Brazilian arts, uniting humor and popular culture in the chronicling of Brazil's flexible, hybrid social world.

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