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## ↳ Mário de Andrade: On Being São Paulo-wise in *Paulicéia desvairada*

**Abstract:** Published in 1922, Mário de Andrade's *Paulicéia desvairada* is considered his first truly personal, if uneven, book of poetry. One of the characteristics of this volume is the opening declaration to the effect that São Paulo is the tumult of his life, and critics have customarily remarked on the organizing presence of the city in the volume. This study insists that, rather than poeticizing the city, *Paulicéia desvairada* represents what can be called the urbanization of poetry, and proceeds to examine, in a way previous criticism has failed to do, the incorporation of the material reality of the city into this highly significant inaugural text of Brazilian modernism.

**Keywords:** Mário de Andrade; Poetry; Modernism; Brazil; 20th Century.

### 1. São Paulo and the Emergence of the Brazilian Megalopolis

When Mário de Andrade published his *Paulicéia desvairada* in 1922, São Paulo was only beginning to present the interesting urban landscape that a European *flâneur* like Claude Lévi-Strauss would find intriguing enough to photograph a decade later (Foster, "Saudades"). As part of a constellation of Latin American cities that profited immensely from the great expansion of capitalism on the continent from the latter part of the nineteenth century on, São Paulo also benefited from the particular burst of prosperity that would accompany the post-World War I years: along with Mexico City and Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires in particular), São Paulo became one of the seats of a fully affirmed project of modernity that was only made possible by an unusual influx of wealth and the prosperity and its derivatives such wealth provides, such as the material needs of cultural production: individuals with the wherewithal to produce culture and individuals with the leisure and sociopolitical horizons to consume it.

Culture unquestionably became a commodity in areas of Latin America that included São Paulo, and where a sociology of culture may be interested in examining the way in which culture begins to function as part of an overall structure of commodification, it

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becomes also of importance to examine how the materiality of culture also exists as a thematics of that very cultural production. Certainly, material aspects of culture are present in the works of Machado de Assis a generation before, and, indeed, Machado's literature is significantly understood to be possible as a consequence of the very nature of the society he describes, with its own high level of prosperity and the preoccupations that come with and are made possible by such a socio-economic level (Trigo 2001).

Certainly Brazilian prosperity is carried to a higher power by post-World War I developments, as the economic base shifts (it had actually begun to shift by the early part of the twentieth century) to São Paulo and a less feudal and more bourgeois society. It is the absolutely *primum mobile* axiom of Brazilian culture that modern Brazil has as its paradigmatic reflex the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in February 1922, an event of which Mário de Andrade was himself one of the prime movers<sup>1</sup>, and certainly one dimension of Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1928) concerns the other major shift in Brazilian society, from the rural outback (the *sertão*) to the metropolis. Although Andrade's oeuvre manifests ample interest in traditional aspects of Brazilian culture, such as his work on folklore and traditional music, one of the singular aspects of Andrade's production during the third decade of the twentieth century is his "discovery" of the city as a realm of human experience worthy of being interpreted via poetry.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Urbanization of Poetic Language

Indeed, it is significant that *Paulicéia desvairada* is Andrade's first book of poetry<sup>3</sup>, as though the discovery of the city and the investment in the most privileged form of literary production, poetry, were to have coincided. Poetry is, of course, the undisputed genre of Brazilian modernism (as it is of the Latin American equivalent, *vanguardismo*), and in this case what is of interest is the conjunction of the "unpoetic" texture of the modern metropolis with the privileged Orphean voice. What, then, becomes of interest is the way in which Andrade provides an interpretation of the texture of the dynamically evolving São Paulo of the 1920s: the very title of the collection connotes the nonplacid nature of its movement. What is not at issue is merely the way in which the city is thematized or "represented" (Perrone 2002), as though the individual poems (there are twenty-two in all) were pictures in an exhibition of landscapes, local-color settings, and typical occupations and pastimes. Rather, of concern are the material aspects of the city as they become the stuff of poetry: its semiotic processes, rather than its meaning effects; the urbanization of poetic language, rather than the poetization of the cityscape as Suárez and Tomlins assert (2000: 55).

<sup>1</sup> A facsimile of the first edition of *Paulicéia desvairada* is to be found in Jorge Schwartz's recent portfolio of materials relating to the *Semana* (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Perrone (2002) surveys Andrade's interest in São Paulo and critical estimations of it.

<sup>3</sup> Actually, Andrade had published *Há uma gota de sangue em cada poema* in 1917. However, this volume is considered a youthful exercise in imitation of the Parnassians and is not included, for example, in the edition of *Poesias completas* [sic] from which I am quoting. The latter, however, appears as vol. II of the *Obras completas de Mário de Andrade* provided in a list facing the half-title page; vol. I is identified as *Obra imatura*, one of whose three components is *Há uma gota*.

In order to elaborate what might be understood by the urbanization of poetic language, one can begin with the following postulates:

1) Such a semiotic process means the incorporation into poetry of the fullest parameters of the city. But whereas, were they to concern themselves with the city at all, Romantic poetry had engaged in pathetic fallacy and Parnassian poetry had idealized the cityscape in terms of Arcadian gardens and the landscapes of refined and privileged taste, Modernism finds its preferred anchor in the city and its evolving modernity. The very fact that Andrade organizes this collection of poems around the city of São Paulo is significant. The history of Brazil has been a southward displacement of urban centers, from the colonial Salvador de Bahia to, first, the imperial and, subsequently, the late nineteenth-century early republican Rio de Janeiro, to the São Paulo that emerges early in the twentieth century as the financial center of the country. It is significant to note that Brasília may now have been the official capital of the country for fifty years. Yet it has never become anything else for the country but a bureaucratic enclave, with none of the iconic, mythic, or symbolic associations attributed to the three historical centers of the country. Indeed, although one can speak of a filmic production specifically associated with Rio de Janeiro, one is hard-put to recall a major work of poetry like *Paulicéia desvairada* devoted to Rio or to Bahia.<sup>4</sup> Andrade's poetry is characterized by an emphasis on the ethos of the city, and on the engagement of the poetic voice with its material realities: "Tenho os pés chagados nos espinhos das calçadas..."<sup>5</sup>, the opening verse to "Colloque sentimental" (Andrade 1993: 99<sup>6</sup>).

2) It is inevitable that the language referring to the material reality of the city appears cited, if not used in a poetry on the city. As Andrade says in one of the affirmations to be found in the "Prefácio interessantíssimo", a sixty-six paragraph<sup>7</sup> meditation that fronts *Paulicéia desvairada*,

Escrever arte moderna não significa jamais para mim representar a vida atual no que tem de exterior: automóveis, cinema, asfalto. Si estas palavras freqüentam-me o livro não é porque pense com elas escrever moderno, mas porque sendo meu livro moderno, elas têm nele sua razão de ser (74, paragraph 52).

With such a statement, the difference between the mundane and the lyrical is undermined. Whereas the latter refers to an aesthetic realm removed from the "hallucinations" of everyday life, the focus on the texture of everyday life of the city – the "Paulicéia"<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The poetry of Gregório de Matos (1636-1696?), as gathered in *Crônica do viver baiano seiscentista*, is not about the city of Bahia, but rather about human society in the context of court life.

<sup>5</sup> All ellipses in this and subsequent quotes are part of the poetic texts; indeed, the use of ellipses is integral to the "polifonia poética" Andrade champions in his "Prefácio", paragraph 36 (Andrade 1993: 69).

<sup>6</sup> Further page references to poems and lines of poetry are to be understood to refer to this edition unless otherwise stated.

<sup>7</sup> The paragraphs are not numbered in the original edition nor in all critical editions, although they are in the one I am citing from.

<sup>8</sup> Paulicéia is an alternative, and evidently more poetic, name for the city of São Paulo; it may well be that Andrade uses it here in an ironic fashion, since he is doing something very different in his poems than evoking the poetic images associated with a name such as this.

desvairada” – brings with it inevitably the specific *stylus humilis* of the language of urban existence.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of Andrade’s poems would seem not to be to write directly about the machinery and devices of modern life: he specifically rejects the Futurism of Marinetti, so associated with “singing” the machinery and devices of modern life (60, paragraph 12), but if their appearance is inevitable in describing the cityscape, their physical presence and their visual and auditory features (their integral contribution to urban noise) is inescapable.

3) Andrade’s commitment to Brazilian Portuguese is legendary (Pinto 1990). To be sure, the term “Brazilian Portuguese” means many different things and refers to numerous concurrent developments of the language as a part of the natural evolution of any spoken language, especially a deterritorialized one in contact with many other languages (pre-Conquest indigenous languages, the languages of immigrants, and the prestige languages of alternative cultural models, none of which may be immediately evident to the imperial anchor, past or present); as a part of the pedagogical association with an academic norm (adherence to the imperial norm, but nevertheless conscious of irreversible local developments); and as part of the conscious creative projects of literati. Such developments may refer as much to the lexicon (which is often what is most understood as the stuff of regional variants), as it does to pronunciation (immediately evident, but often underrated as literarily significant) and morphosyntax (usually referred to unsystematically).

For example, Andrade refers to “A língua brasileira é das mais ricas e sonoras. E possui o admirabilíssimo ‘ão’” (67, paragraph 34). Since the diphthong “ão” is not exclusive to the phonology of Brazilian Portuguese, one wonders whether Andrade is referring to a certain Brazilian phoneticization, in which, rather than a nasalized [a], what is articulated is a nasalized [i]<sup>10</sup>. Of course, Andrade could simply be referring to this phonologic combination in all dialects of Portuguese, but the nationalism of the qualifier is noteworthy. There is, throughout the “Prefácio”, a string of allusions to language. A particularly alluring one implies a rejection of academic standards and a commitment to the spontaneity of the spoken language, an implied spurning of the Portuguese academic norm and, in the fashion of the Modernistas, the bootlegged nature of national varieties:

A gramática apareceu depois de organizadas as línguas. Acontece que meu inconsciente não sabe da existência de gramáticas, nem de línguas organizadas. E como Dom Lirismo é contrabandista... (73, paragraph 49).

<sup>9</sup> See Schelling (1988: 77-79) on Andrade’s conceptions of primitivism and language.

<sup>10</sup> An articulation that often results in the charming overgeneralization that “Portuguese is just like Romanian”, since the latter is the only other Romance language to have developed that phone, as is represented by the circumflexed vowel (an unrounded high back vowel; unrounded [u]) in the very name of the language: rumâno. However, where [i] is a phoneme in Romanian, it is strictly an allophone – stressed /ã/ in contact with following unstressed /o/ – in Portuguese, a process of regressive dissimilation: the unrounding of /ã/ in contact with the following rounded /o/, pronounced, in any case as [u], since progressive assimilation nasalizes the post-/ã/ vowel, which, since it is unstressed is raised from [o] to [u] (thus, this does not involve progressive assimilation to the high [i], since it would be raised irrespective of whatever vowel or consonant preceded it). In short, Andrade is correct in saying that this is a very distinctive and, indeed, complex detail of Brazilian Portuguese phonology.

Certainly, there is a snide remark about Portuguese academicism contained in the following affirmation: “Pronomes? Escrevo brasileiro. Si uso ortografia portuguesa é porque, não alterando o resultado, dá-me uma ortografia (74, paragraph 51).

While Andrade does not specifically refer in these prefatory notes to the quality of a gelect typical of modern São Paulo, existing criticism on *Paulicéia desvairada* has repeatedly observed how its linguistic cadences constitute an important index of the urban manifestations of Brazilian Portuguese<sup>11</sup>, a phenomenon that could be borne out by the examination of other important literary works of the period anchored in São Paulo, such as Patrícia Galvão’s *Parque industrial* (Jackson 1993; Foster, “The Feminization”) or Andrade’s *Macunaíma*.<sup>12</sup>

4) One of the overarching features of *Paulicéia desvairada* is its divided attitude with regard to the city. On the one hand, Andrade is unquestionably enthralled by the dynamic modernity of the metropolis, while at the same time he is appalled by the bourgeois vulgarity that modernity enables, as much in regard to conventional manners and morality as the ostentatious theater that is an integral part of the consumerist imperative of modernity. Thus he is able to enunciate, as the very first verse of the inaugural poem (“Inspiração”) of his collection, “São Paulo! comoção de minha vida...” (83). Yet, two verses later, in one of the recurring motifs of *Paulicéia desvairada*, he refers to “Arlequinal!... Trajes de losangos... Cinza e ouro...” (83). Although other phrases are used with exclamation marks, “Arlequinal!” is placed as though it were an epiphoneme of “São Paulo!”, which is repeated as the penultimate line of the poem: São Paulo = Arlequinal! = São Paulo! References to *arlequinal*, either as an adjective or nominalized adjective, abound in the collection, appearing more than a dozen times.<sup>13</sup> Portuguese, like English, allows for this word to refer to the harlequin both with the specific sense of type of comedic performer, but also in an extended sense as anything that is characterized by the clownish, the buffoonish, the farcical, with the comedic shading off into the grotesque.

### 3. The Bourgeois Megalopolis

Andrade’s third poem, “Os cortejos”, states as its fourth verse “Horrríveis as cidades!” (84), while Andrade’s acerbic “Ode ao burguês” is one of the most famous poems of the collection. It begins with the verse “Eu insulto o burguês!” (88) and ends

<sup>11</sup> Gomes (1979: 27-33), for example, refers to the linguistic originality of *Paulicéia desvairada*, but like most critics he devotes his attention to the analysis of *Macunaíma* as presenting the best corpus for understanding Andrade’s commitment to the “gramatiquinha da fala brasileira”; see also Proença (1969). Both are examples of microlinguistic analysis – Gomes more grammatical and syntactical features, Proença more lexical ones; neither, regrettably, gets into issues of linguistic ideology, as does Pinto in her critical edition of Andrade’s *A gramatiquinha*. Interestingly enough, she dates the writer’s interest in the elaboration of the *Gramatiquinha* from 1922, the same year in which *Paulicéia desvairada* was published (Pinto 1990: 33). The most extensive treatment, however, of the language of *Paulicéia desvairada* is Roig’s (1995) very detailed stylistic analysis. Again, this is more in the vein of a micro-analysis of a specific poetic corpus than an essay on linguistic ideology.

<sup>12</sup> It is notable that Jack Tomlins’ translation of *Paulicéia desvairada* into English (Andrade 1968) states that it is “translated from the Brazilian”.

<sup>13</sup> See Kossovitch (1990: 94-111) on the importance of this motif in Andrade’s writing.

with the triple imperative “Fora! Fu! Fora o bom burguês!...” (89). To be sure, one associates with the city, modern or otherwise, ambivalent attitudes, and the metaphor of the fall from divine grace instituted by St. Augustine’s trope of the City of Man is an abiding figure of Western culture. Jorge Luis Borges, Andrade’s contemporary<sup>14</sup>, with the publication of *Fervor de Buenos Aires* in 1923, may have been unstintingly elegiac in his poems to the city of Buenos Aires, but the simple fact is that one associates it with the evocation of the alternating pattern of seduction and repulsion that *Paulicéia desvairada* evinces, much in the same fashion as other contemporary works like the Mexico City of Salvador Novo or the New York of Federico García Lorca. Not until the Mexican Carlos Monsiváis’s 1995 *Los rituales del caos* is the Latin American city (now more postmodern or extra-modern than modern) given its due with the full extent of its maelstrom-like nature endorsed. Much more customary was the sort of urban interpretation promoted by the Peruvian Sebastián Salazar Bondy’s 1964 essay *Lima la horrible* or the Argentine Ezequiel Martínez Estrada’s 1940 essay *La cabeza de Goliath*.

Richard Morse, in his marvelous “biography of São Paulo”, a subtitle that serves to grammatically animate the city in much the same way that Andrade does in *Paulicéia*, writes that

in São Paulo, as in the whole Western World, the early years of this century were marked by childlike exuberance, by naive conceptions of “happiness” and cultural refinement, and by the naive belief that these commodities were inevitable rewards for pecuniary success in a world of increasingly numerous and remunerative opportunities. The most vital foreign influences were not those in which the city passively acquiesced but those which answered its new rhythms of life (1974: 202-03).

It would now be appropriate to examine how these primes regarding the urbanization of a Brazilian poetic voice are carried out in representative texts of the two dozen compositions that make up *Paulicéia desvairada*.

To a certain extent, Elizabeth Lowe is correct in identifying Andrade’s “Romantic pose in relation to the city that he embraced and rejected with equal passion” (1982: 94) – that is, insofar as regards a measure of pathetic fallacy. Lowe does not explain what she means by a “Romantic pose”, although one suspects that it has to do with the emotional engagement of the poet with the cityscape, although I would insist that this is not so much a measure of reading into the city the turbulence of the poet’s own soul, but rather, in a more Whitmanesque way, the manner in which the poetic voice engages with the awesome array of spectacle the city presents (I believe this is the case with DiAntonio’s (1985) concept of Andradian “prativism”, a stance often associated with the romantic). If the recurring synthetic motif of this spectacle is the *Arlequinal*, the dazzle of the harlequin’s outfit and comportment provides the best cipher of that spectacle. Thus, in the following text, “Paisagem No. 1” (there are four), the poetic voice recounts a personalized engagement with the city:

<sup>14</sup> See the comparative study by Rodríguez Monegal (1978).

Minha Londres das neblinas finas...  
 Pleno verão. Os dez mil milhões de rosas paulistanas.  
 Há neves de perfumes no ar.  
 Faz frio, muito frio...  
 E a ironia das pernas das costureirinhas  
 Parecidas com bailarinas...  
 O vento é como uma navalha  
 Nas mãos dum espanhol. Arlequinal...  
 Há duas horas queimou Sol.  
 Daqui a duas horas queima Sol.

Passa um São Bobo, cantando, sob os plátanos,  
 Um tralalá... A guarda-cívica! Prisão!  
 Necessidade a prisão  
 Para que haja civilização?  
 Meu coração sente-se muito triste...  
 Enquanto o cinzento das ruas arrepiadas  
 Dialoga um lamento como o vento...

Meu coração sente-se muito alegre!  
 Este friozinho arrebicado  
 Dá uma vontade de sorrir!

E sigo. E vou sentindo,  
 À inquieta alacridade da invernia,  
 Como um gosto de lágrimas na boca... (87-88)

There is an internal contradiction between the first and the second verses: while it is certainly understandable for the poet to see São Paulo as a version of foggy London, and a London that is anchored in the tight personal relationship implied by the possessive adjective, the second verse refers to the fact that what he is contemplating is characteristic of the middle of summer. I would suggest that what is going on here is that the middle of the summer in São Paulo (January and February) is the middle of winter in England, the period, of course, of the deep fogs of London (at least before current air pollution controls). So that what the poet perceives is that the São Paulo summer, with its combination of temperatures averaging in the mid-90s and its equally high index of humidity, produces a shimmering atmosphere as though it were the equivalent of the fabled London fog. Thus, the air perfumed by the semitropical vegetation that is one of the city's hallmarks (particularly evident in downtown green spaces such as the Praça da República and the Parque Trianon [officially, Parque Siqueira Campos]), not to mention the many other impressive parks and green spaces the city has to offer) is as though replete with flocks of snow, and, as a consequence, that air is cold, very cold.

This long introductory stanza pursues the image of, to indulge directly in an oxymoron, a tropical cold with the conceit of that cold cutting like a straight razor in the hands of a Spaniard. The moment of contemplation is a period between the sun of two hours ago and the sun of two hours hence, as though this were a customary interlude in the heat of the day in which the temperature somehow dropped, which would produce an inverse climatological bell curve (since a natural one would be cool mornings, followed

by the heat of the day, followed by cool evenings). The image of the legs of the dress shop girls (marked by poverty, malnourished, and rachitic) seeming ironically to be those of *bailarinas* reinforces the transformative gaze here – a gaze in which the texture of the city during the summer imposes a transformation as though one were seeing winter – because the mundane transit of the shop workers were like the graceful transit across the landscape of the highly trained dancer. Overall, there is a transformative perception here in favor of a highly erratic poetization of the cityscape.

#### 4. Urban Life Made Poetic

Yet I have insisted that the tenor of *Paulicéia desvairada* is not the poetization of the urban setting, but rather the incorporation into a poetic discourse of the texture of urban life. Thus, in the following three stanzas, the material reality of the city intrudes on this poetic vision<sup>15</sup>, driven by the metamorphosis of the poet's São Paulo in the summertime into the topos of foggy London in the winter, to specify some of its less “poetic” circumstances. These include the “São Bobo”, an example of the roaming urban crazies, singing to himself under the ever-present canopy of the banana trees, an integral part of the city's landscaping and a form of natural shade for a street person who has no hope of any other sort of protection from the sun; and the presence of the city police, whose presence is a reminder of the specter of imprisonment for the disorderly, an imprisonment necessary in order to preserve the civilization of which the city is a paradigm.<sup>16</sup> Such images reaffirm the perception of wintry cold, but it is clearly more of an emotional chill than a meteorological one, as a dialogue between the grimness of the cityscape (the perfumed flocks have been forgotten) and the wind of social reality engage in a dialogue of lament. Andrade's stanza is not itself a lament, since it evokes a mood rather than articulating a response to that mood, but it is metapoetic in the sense of juxtaposing the discourse of the poem to that articulated by the streets themselves: the literary poem cites, so to speak, the material poem of the now decidedly unpoetic streets. That is, the lyricism of the opening stanza now must engage implicitly in an antiphony with the details of social reality, which cannot be evoked jejunely by poetic tropes. Whereas the social reality of the proletarian shop girls poetized them as *bailarinas*, nothing remains here to poetize: not urban crazies, not the city police with their reminder of the consequences civilization imposes on disorderliness, not the (presumably) ragged banana trees (hardly the spreading chestnut/elm/oak trees that provide shade in a topical Arcadian landscape), and certainly not the shivering grayness of the wind-swept streets.

The second stanza implies a mood swing (verse fifteen, “Meu coração sente-se muito triste...”, becomes verse eighteen, “Meu coração sente-se muito alegre!”): the ellipses of

<sup>15</sup> Lima insists that Andrade's poetry is characterized by the “anonimato da subjectividade” (1968: 43). It is undeniable that the poet's vision of São Paulo in *Paulicéia desvairada* is markedly subjective, but this does not attenuate the often very specific material presence of the city in the collection.

<sup>16</sup> São Paulo in the 1920s was undoubtedly more beset by problems of disorderliness, including specifically those that accompanied rapid growth based in large measure on the influx from both abroad and from the interior, than São Paulo of recent decades in which violent crime is a permanent part of the city's fabric; on violence in São Paulo in the twentieth century, see Caldera (2000).

verse fifteen are something like the orthographic antonym of the exclamation point of verse eighteen, which, in addition to the explicit movement from “triste” to “alegre”, is sustained by the pairing of the partially phonetically similar “arrepiaças” (verse sixteen) and “arrebicado” (verse nineteen). Such a mood swing is indicative of Andrade’s profoundly mixed feelings about the city of São Paulo, the interplay of embrace and rejection Lowe (1982) refers to.<sup>17</sup> Of course, if I may be subjective, a certain amount of cold does lift the spirits in the face of the oppressive realities of the city. But no further elaboration is given, and the poem concludes with the stanza inaugurated by the pithy declarative “E sigo”, because this is the poet’s relation to the city: a continuing to traverse it, a continuing to perceive it, a continuing to feel the emotions of attraction and repulsion it produces. What is notable is that whatever it is that he has synthesized about the city as a wintry gloom, it leaves a taste of sadness in his mouth, and that is the closing image of the poem: urban reality is always more wont to produce a sensation of sadness than happiness. Neither an idealized landscape nor one of disillusionment, neither utopian nor dystopian, Andrade’s São Paulo is always the mixed image of the harlequin: panache signalling grotesque farce.

The opening line of “Colloque sentimental” might serve as a hypogram for the totality of *Paulicéia desvairada*:

Tenho os pés chagados nos espinhos das calçadas...  
 Higienópolis!... As Babilônias dos meus desejos baixos...  
 Casas nobres de estilo... Enriqueceres em tragédias...  
 Mas a noite é toda um véu-de-noiva ao luar!

A preamar dos brilhos das mansões...  
 O jazz-band da cor... O arco-íris dos perfumes...  
 O clamor dos cofres abarrotados de vidas...  
 Ombros nus, ombros nus, lábios pesados de adultério...  
 E o *rouge* – cogumelo das podridões...  
 Exércitos de casacas eruditamente bem talhadas...

Sem crimes, sem roubos o carnaval dos títulos...  
 Si não fosse o talco adeus sacos de farinha!  
 Impiedosamente...

–Cavalheiro... –Sou conde! –Perdão.  
 Sabe que existe um Brás, um Bom Retiro?

–Apre! respiro... Pensei que era pedido.  
 Só conheço Paris!

–Venha comigo então.  
 Esqueça um pouco os braços da vizinha...

–Percebeu, hein! Dou-lhe gorgeta e cale-se.  
 O sultão tem dez mil... Mas eu sou conde!

<sup>17</sup> There is much that is schematic in Andrade’s poems; see Foster (1965).

–Vê? Estas paragens trevas de silêncio...  
Nada de asas, nada de alegria... A Lua...

A rua toda nua... As casas sem luzes...  
E a mirra dos martírios inconscientes...

–Deixe-me por o lenço no nariz.  
Tenho todos os perfumes de Paris!

–Mas olhe, em baixo das portas, a escorrer...  
–Para os esgotos! Para os esgotos!

–...a escorrer,  
Um fio de lágrimas seu nome! (99-100).

## 5. The Poetic I and the City

A “hypogram”, as developed by Riffaterre, is often understood to be the title of a poem, an abstract of what perception of meaning or sentiment it will develop. “Colloque sentimental” certainly functions appropriately in this regard, announcing that the poem is constructed around a conversation that brings out a range of feelings – in this case, contrary ones about the city, in line with the general stance taken by the poetic I in *Paulicéia desvairada*. However, the hypogram of a poem may be one of its key verses, typically its open one, which serve as sort of a “thesis statement” (in the case of untitled poems, of course, it is common to give as their title, if solely for purposes of indexing, the first line). In this case, however, the opening line of “Colloque sentimental” is not so much a hypogram of this one poem, as it is of the entire body of two dozen compositions. This is so for the following reasons.

First of all, it echoes for the poem the overall anchoring of *Paulicéia desvairada* in the role of the poetic I as a poetic eye (I mean to make nothing of the fact that in English these are homonyms). Throughout, the poet is an observer engaged in scrutinizing, often at considerable emotional cost (and, here, physical cost) the burgeoning city at a time when São Paulo is undergoing the transformation from the center for the plantation economy of the state of São Paulo into a modern industrial center, which in turn will serve as the springboard for the city’s emergence as the financial capital of the entire continent. The poetic I as inquisitive eye will scrutinize the contrast between the older seignorial city and a metropolis teeming with proletarian workers, including immigrant masses; between the rawness of the texture of this evolving urban scene and the paradigmatic image of Paris (which was as much a model to the old plantation aristocracy as it was to the new vanguard generation); between the modern exemplars of Paulistana life and the motif of Babylonian excess and decadence.

Second, the poet is an incarnation of the *homo viator*, the individual who roams the world and reports on what is to be perceived. Certainly, the topos of the *homo viator* is customarily linked with the motif of the journey of life, and it is often embedded in a Bildungsroman as the major device for generating the experiences that lead to the protagonist’s character formation (as such, Andrade’s *Macunaíma* is very much a parody of the

modern Bildungsroman). However, the *homo viator* is a potent poetic trope that captures one process for contemplating the world and thereby producing a perception that validates the poetic effort. It is the experience, as the opening line of a traditional English-language Christmas carol has it, of the individual who can say “I wonder as I wander out under the sky”. In this case, there is not an explicit reference to seeing, but there is to wandering, as the Belle Époque *flâneur* has been replaced by the individual who breaks free of the former’s limited prestige circuit – to continue the conjunction with the image of Paris, the Walter Benjamin upper-bourgeois realm of the arcade, often transformed in a balmier Latin America into the pedestrian mall of which the aristocratic Buenos Aires Calle Florida of yore is the paradigm (Cócaro/Cócaro 1984) – to, literally, stumble through the streets.

The way in which the poet stumbles through the material reality of the streets, literally wounding his feet on their rough edges (this is one of the finest images in all of Latin American poetry as it refers to an interaction with the physical city), is carried out in the paired elements that make the poem a colloquy, in the basic sense of the word, as, for example, in the contrast between the hustle and bustle of popular São Paulo neighborhoods (Brás, Bom Retiro) and Paris, by which one understands not all of Paris (which, on this level, would certainly present no fewer examples of the rough edges of urban life than would São Paulo, and indeed, because of its age, even more), but the Paris of the patrician image of privilege, elegance, and orderliness (as in Higonnet 2002). By contrast, if the term “Paris” refers to the realm of the *flâneur* and congeners and descendants, “São Paulo” is synonymous with popular areas such as Brás, the paradigm of the industrial districts to the east of the central core (the Praça da Sé), and Bom Retiro, the Jewish quarter to the north anchored by the Parque da Luz and its train station, which is, to use an American metaphor of teaming throngs, the Grand Central Station of the city (Diaféria *et al.* 2001).

Another contrasting element functions along the same lines: the drains (presumably fetid) of the city and the handkerchief sweetened with French perfumes the “count” holds to his nose against the urban fragrances. Indeed, it is reasonable to believe that the “count” here, who is given a tour through some areas of the city (“Venha comigo então”), is not a French visitor, but rather an example of the (often pseudo-) upper-class individual, still clinging to what remains of the pre-Republic aristocracy (whose sway was not that long ago, as the Republic dates from 1889, and Andrade’s book from 1922), whose point of reference is elegant Higienópolis, but who has descended to the urban Babylon to enjoy the company of a prostitute (“Esqueça um pouco os braços da vizinha...”). The poetic I here presumably equates himself with that of the prostitute, since “vizinha” must belong to the deictic sphere of the speaker and not that of the client (note that Higienópolis is, in reality, a major avenue and not a district, although the name is often used as such, to evoke part of the prosperous neighborhood of Consolação, to the west of the central core – that is, on the other side from the industrial area evoked by the reference to Brás; the very name Higienópolis, of course, points to how this part of the city is reputedly healthier than the fetid realms to the east, and elsewhere Andrade will refer to the Jardins, a large and very prosperous area to the South-Southeast of Consolação and south of the central core).

Finally, the synecdoche of the material reality on which the poetic I wounds his feet are the paved streets of the city. One could certainly wound oneself and endanger one’s

health on the mud tracks of a forgotten village, but here specific mention is made of one of the singular characteristics of the built environment of the urban landscape, the paved street, although such an improvement for transportation is not without its problematical aspects, and such installations are rarely kept up, in the sprawling environment of the Latin American megalopolis, in optimum conditions. There are often potholes and open trenches that have been there for so long that they veritably deserve a bronze plaque as national monuments to the problems of maintaining the infrastructure of the city. Another detail of the problematical infrastructure of the city is that of standing or trickling fetid water, an example of the imperfectly or incompletely channeled waste that is as much that of the occupants of the city as it is of the installations of their built environment (that is, as much a problem of leaking “used” or “black” water as it is of leaking incoming “white” water that often becomes contaminated by the construction substances of buildings). Andrade here uses that water as a metaphor for the nameless tears of the occupants of neighborhoods of the unfortunate into which the “count” has ventured: “Estas paragens trevas de silêncio...”

The sentimentality to which “Colloque sentimental” refers is hardly of the sublime order of Romantic poetry – if I may once again restrict the characterization Lowe (1982) makes of *Pauliceia desvairada* – but rather the impressionistic reactions of the poetic I to the features of the city that wound him both emotionally and physically. Once again, the material reality of the cityscape, the “cogumelo das podridões”, is imported into the discourse of poetry as part of the urbanization of its semiotic dynamics. *Paulicéia desvairada* is hardly a hymn or an ode to the city. If modern São Paulo/São Paulo of an emerging high modernity is the realm of the bourgeois triumphant – “A digestão bem feita de São Paulo!” (“Ode ao burguês”, 88) –, the poet can neither simply sing its accomplishments, as Walt Whitman did in the case of New York, or denounce its depredations, as – to continue the example of New York – Federico García Lorca was to do less than a decade later with *Poeta en Nueva York*. Andrade is manifestly interested in the city of São Paulo as a complex human space, and not merely a forum for projecting one or another social interpretation. That this is manifest may be understood with the many ways in which he focuses on fundamental aspects of the city that occasion as much the joy of their vitality as the despair of their ugliness, “Esse espetáculo encantado da Avenida” (“O domador”, 92 [the reference is to the Avenida Paulista, the main financial corridor of the city]) vs. “Formigueiro onde todos se mordem e devoram” (“A caçada”, 94). The final verse of the closing poem of *Paulicéia desvairada* serves as a summary statement to Andrade’s ambiguous poetic interaction with the city: “Oh! este orgulho máximo de ser paulistamente!!!” (“Paisagem No. 4”, 102).<sup>18</sup>

Aside from the triple exclamation point, a rhetorical insistence not found elsewhere in the collection, what is notable about this verse is the grammatical solecism it involves,

<sup>18</sup> Actually, “Paisagem No. 4” is not the last text in *Paulicéia desvairada*, although it is the last free-standing poem, at least in the conventional sense of poetry. The volume closes with 254 verses of short poems representing diverse Paulista voices, framed by prose statements, all constituting “As enfiaturas do Ipiranga (oratorio profano)”. The setting for this oratory is the esplanade of the Teatro Municipal, which is where the Semana de Arte Moderna took place in February 1922. Avenida Ipiranga is a major avenue that passes along the south side of the Praça da República, a few blocks away from the Teatro Municipal. See Nunes (1984) on this composition as emblematic of the Semana de Arte Moderna.

a solecism that bears the poet's final statement. The point is that this verse does not close with a nominal or adjectival predicate, the grammatical accompaniments of the verb "ser", but rather with an adverbial complement. Adverbial complements may grammatically be used with the other essive verb in Portuguese, "estar" (which may also take an adverbial complement, but not grammatically a nominal one), and such a construction expresses the status of, in terms of manner or mode, the subject at a particular moment. However, by using an adverb with "ser", the poetic I affirms, as grammar books usually explain it, the "permanent and on-going quality" of the subject of the predicate. Jack Tomlins, in his translation of *Paulicéia desvairada*, in the face of how to render such a solecism into English, opts for "Oh! this supreme pride in existing São Paulo-wise!!!" (Andrade 1968: 75), although the adverbial marker of the complement is lost (*-ish* functioning in English to mark adjectives). I will not venture to try to improve on Tomlins' translation, since capturing solecisms in translation is a particular stylistic challenge. Suffice it to say that Andrade's closing trope is fully characteristic of the way in which he has written about São Paulo, transmitting both his ambiguous feelings and succeeding admirably in converting a complex modern urban landscape into the linguistic event of poetry.

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