

## The Staging of *Macunaíma* and the Search for National Theatre

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Brazilian artists have suffered countless setbacks in their attempts to establish a national theatre. They have searched for original forms of dramaturgy and stagecraft that would be more than a pale imitation of American or European drama, and they have struggled to maintain stable theatre companies. One of the principal roadblocks has been repression. The miracle is that so much has been accomplished in spite of myriad pressures by the military dictatorship. Theatre artists have also had to confront their own and the public's reverence for European and American cultural models, and to overcome the concomitant prejudice against Brazilian forms. Nevertheless, much progress has been made. Critics and scholars have focused on the work of Brazilian playwrights who have contributed to that progress, but they have written little about stagecraft. The most notable and original advance in recent Brazilian stagecraft is probably Grupo Pau-Brasil's 1979 production of *Macunaíma*.

### WHY MACUNAÍMA?<sup>1</sup>

Grupo Pau-Brasil evolved from a fortuitous circumstance. Director Antunes Filho was invited in early 1978 to work with theatre students at the University of São Paulo's Escola de Comunicações e Arte (ECA). He had considered for some time the adaptation of *Macunaíma* for the stage, but there were few stable companies in existence, professional or amateur, and certainly none that could undertake the long and arduous process of experimental and improvisational workshops that would be required to transform Mário de Andrade's narrative into spectacle. The director hoped that his tenure at ECA would provide such an opportunity. He worked with the students for a year, often as long as ten hours a day. From the collaboration emerged a collective ensemble: all of the actors contributed to the transposition of *Macunaíma* to the stage; an ensemble style of performing was established and a permanent company was created, the first production of which would be *Macunaíma*.<sup>2</sup>

When Grupo Pau-Brasil began its experiments, Antunes was painfully aware that neither commercial nor so-called experimental theatre was capable of breaking through the political and economic restrictions placed on that performing art in Brazil. It had become almost impossible to do what Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina had done a decade before, i.e., provide the continuity that would make theatre a relevant art form, responsible to the crises of national life.<sup>3</sup> It was necessary to clarify the notion that Brazil is a country stripped of its identity, “onde a presença dos mais distantes e mais próximos colonizadores abafa o que poderia ser a nossa essência cultural.”<sup>4</sup> Although fifty years had passed since the publication of *Macunaíma*, the ensemble members came to believe that the Modernist work was a fertile source for reflection and redefinition, in the same way that *O Rei da Vela* was for Teatro Oficina. As the group delved into the text, it became an inspiration for its approach to work and discovery. The company, director and actors alike, arrived at the realization that it was necessary to abandon Macunaíma’s laziness while rediscovering his sense of invention.<sup>5</sup> Staging the work would be an immersion into the humor and inventive capacity of the protagonist and therefore of the Brazilian people. The nature of the rehearsal and adaptation process would be a collective attack on a variety of problems and a commitment to the pleasure of creation. “O teatro acomodado nada tem a ver com o grito de *Macunaíma*.”<sup>6</sup> Mário de Andrade synthesized cultural information and techniques originating in Europe with Brazilian magic and ritual—Grupo Pau-Brasil would do the same.

Several aspects of Mário de Andrade’s rhapsody appealed to the members of Grupo Pau-Brasil. As a character, Macunaíma represented a kind of Brazilian Everyman who was a victim of frustration and poverty, but who also rebelled against them. He was not, however, a “typical Brazilian” nor a specific symbol, but a tragic fact: the essence of the suffering and mutilated identity of the Brazilian people. After Macunaíma’s disastrous encounter with the forces of “civilization” he is “reduzido a brilho inútil de uma estrela capenga,” but he would now be a “guia para os homens.”<sup>7</sup> The ensemble began with a conviction of the power of theatre to transform, and came to believe in the imagination of Macunaíma as an antidote to national indigence and paralysis of spirit. “*Macunaíma* nos faz refletir, portanto, sobre a arte, a vida e o Brasil, de uma nova maneira e se tornou um guia, um levantador de questões, um inquietante enigma.”<sup>8</sup> The production that followed did not stipulate specific solutions; it attempted to provoke thought and raise consciousness. In theatrical terms, the results were intriguing.

#### THE PLAYSRIPT<sup>9</sup>

A discussion of the stage adaptation of a major work of fiction must begin with the playscript itself in order to examine structural changes in the narrative that provide dramatic unity. The playscript of *Macunaíma* is faithful to the narrative structure of Mário de Andrade’s text and yet successfully reduces events for successful theatrical presentation. The chapters of the rhapsody, as the author defines the work, are presented in their original sequence and are converted into scenes. The play as a whole is divided into

two major sections called *épocas*, four acts, and fifteen scenes, the latter corresponding to the seventeen chapters and epilogue.<sup>10</sup> Various techniques are used to tie scenes together and synthesize events for brevity and dramatic unity.

The means most frequently used in the playscript to maintain the narrative cohesiveness of the text are slight alterations in the endings and beginnings of each scene/chapter. Several scenes end with the beginning of the following chapter; others begin with dialogue explaining the resolution of the previous chapter. For example, in Act III, scene four (chapter twelve), Macunaíma explains to his brothers how he was able to escape from Velha Ceiuci. In the original text, the escape actually takes place in chapter eleven. On a few occasions, two chapters are combined into one. There are few major sequential changes, but the ones made have a powerful dramatic effect. Near the end of *Macunaíma*, the narrator states that the protagonist recounts his tale to a parrot. Near the end of the play, the character Macunaíma begins his tale with the opening lines of the narrative text: "No fundo do mato-virgem nasceu Macunaíma, herói de nossa gente." The device returns the spectator to the beginning of what has been a long dramatic cycle (the play lasts nearly four hours).

Characters and figures from the text are occasionally reduced in number to provide dramatic unity. Mário de Andrade's rhapsody narrates the death of Macunaíma's mother, which results from the magic of Anhangá, a Tupi evil spirit. In the play, the evil magic is performed by the *currupira*, a bogey-man of the forest, who is further associated with Piaimã/Venceslau, the anthropophagic monster/foreign capitalist. The forces of evil are thus synthesized in a single essence.

Additions in the playscript are even more important. Dialogue, besides the narrative and synthesizing functions mentioned above, has other purposes. On the second page of the playscript appears a scene in which Macunaíma first speaks, a scene that is reported in the original text but contains little dialogue. Macunaíma's first words are "Ai, que preguiça." In the playscript Maanape teaches his brother a series of words that describe the tropical universe of the Indian. The first word, *tapanhumas*, provides tribal identification. Macunaíma himself then repeats words that refer to the abundant produce of the tropical forest: various fruits, fish, and game. Macunaíma takes over the dialogue and expresses in rapid accumulation words and phrases that lead from the Indian Golden Age to the world of contemporary Brazil. Macunaíma says the word *futebol*, in reference to the national pastime, and in a total departure from the book he states, "How do you do . . . more or less." This humorous addition of "fractured" English provides a wry commentary on the pervasive U.S. influence in all phases of contemporary Brazilian life.

Added dialogue parodies other aspects of national life such as *ufanismo*, or exalted nationalism. In a scene that does not appear in Mário de Andrade's text, the hero encounters a statue of opera composer Carlos Gomes. He reads the inscription which says, "Ao grande espírito brasileiro que conjugou seu gênio com itálica inspiração. . . ." A double paradigm of exalted dependent culture is parodied: Carlos Gomes wrote operas following the Italian model,

employing Indianist themes, which in themselves are based on the French Romantic vision of the Amerindian.<sup>11</sup> To the mulatto's speech on the origin of the Southern Cross, the playtext adds the following sentence: "Cintilando no céu escampado da noite, esse guia conduzia os nobres Argonautas do velho mundo ás terras generosas do Sul." The addition, by parodying the bombastic rhetoric of *ufanismo*, underscores the link between exalted nationalism and colonialism. When Macunaíma moves the crowd of onlookers by explaining the precolonial origin of the constellation, it is clear that the playtext conveys the notion that the Brazilian people share a collective sense of their primitive roots and intuit the inherent falsity of *ufanismo*.

The following added exchange between Macunaíma and Piaimã parodies a further aspect of bourgeois nationalism:

PIAIMÃ—Tenho uma modesta coleção de estátuas neo-clássicas, vasos etruscos e alguma cerâmica marajoara para dar um toque nacionalista na minha coleção.

MACUNAÍMA—E por falar em toque nacionalista . . . E verdade que o senhor tem uma pedra chamada muiraquitã?

The *muiraquitã*, Macunaíma's lost talisman, symbolizes the national wealth usurped by foreign exploiters. Piaimã's remarks suggest that the national bourgeoisie, while cooperating with a system of cultural and economic dependency, express pride in their national culture, especially of the folkloric and picturesque variety.

The playscript takes aim at many internal targets. The government is parodied for its inefficiency, and mock tribute is paid to the military. Direct attacks on the latter would of course bring down upon the production the hand of the censor, even in these days of liberalization.

Besides the additional dialogue, several songs appear in the playscript. Some are original and others are adaptations of poems from Mário de Andrade's text. Their general purpose is theatrical. They add musicality, color, and whimsy. Suzi, one of the hero's lovers, sings in praise of her lice: "Passo a minha vida/catando os meus piolhinhos/que da minha carne eu criei/todos eles irmãozinhos/que do meu sangue eu suei."

In addition, there are songs and chants in Indian languages (many of which are adapted from the book), the princess' song in French, and a macabre three-line ditty sung by Venceslau's daughters: "Lá em cima do piano/tem um copo de veneno,/quem bebeu morreu e não fui eu."

In general, the playtext demonstrates the continuing viability of Mário de Andrade's narrative. Pau-Brasil's playscript is a significant document in that it points the way to the potential for theatrical presentation of not only Mário de Andrade's story and ideas, but those of other Modernists as well. That potential must be assessed by examining the performance itself.

#### THE STAGING<sup>12</sup>

In the following discussion of Pau-Brasil's 1979 staging of *Macunaíma I* examine the company's utilization of American and European techniques of experimental ensemble theatre and their transformation through native

Brazilian modes in an attempt to link Brazilian theatre to the roots of national culture. The staging mocks the sophisticated technology of U.S. and European theatre while employing the simple materials of a Third-World country. It constitutes a celebration of magic and ritual, native dance and music, instinctual liberation, and in general the Brazilian collective imagination.

Pau-Brasil prepared for *Macunaíma* during a year-long rehearsal period. During that time, in addition to purely theatrical work, the group studied materials and attended lectures on the themes and motifs that would inform the production: Anthropophagy, the works of Mário de Andrade, and national folklore. The company especially studied and discussed Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma*, the starting and ending point for the staging. The result of Pau-Brasil's work is a circus-like visual and auditory spectacle that assaults the audiences' senses, as does the original text, with a stunning rhapsody and mosaic of national culture. The central focus of that mosaic is the establishment of a nonlinear, archetypal theatre founded in part on Indian music, Afro-Brazilian ritual, and folklore.

Throughout the production there is a thread of Indian chants and flute music, magic and ritual. Early in the first act, an actress is seen on stage molding a lump of clay, which gives rise to the birth of the hero. That visual image provides the spectacle with a legendary tone. The birth of Macunaíma is accompanied by Indian flutes, and chants and flute music underscore many subsequent scenes such as a festival held when Macunaíma brings food to his village. Indian flutes also play a lament upon the hero's sad return to the now deserted village near the end of the play.

*Macumba* ritual constitutes another piece of the mosaic. The spectacle is enriched by the frequent use of Afro-Brazilian ritual: music, dance, costumes. After his initial encounter with Piaimã/Venceslau, in which he is dismembered by the monster, Macunaíma is brought back to life with a Yoruba chant. Act II, scene three, corresponds to the chapter entitled "Macumba." Through the ritual, Macunaíma gains his revenge on Piaimã when a young priestess is possessed by the giant's spirit. The scene is one of the most impressive in the performance, with elaborate *macumba* costumes, music, dance, and chants. It focuses on the semi-divine figure of Exu, often incorrectly identified with the devil. Exu declares that Macunaíma is his *filho*, or spiritual son, which reinforces Macunaíma's Africanness.

Grupo Pau-Brasil has also included in its production a vast array of folkloric modes. The folkloric variations are faithful to the rhapsodic structure of Mário de Andrade's text, and they are quite theatrical in that they allow the ensemble to fill the stage with the excitement of dance, rhythm, movement, music, and color. Brazil's ethnic diversity is well illustrated in the play. One scene utilizes Afro-Brazilian *capoeira*, which is at once a dance and a martial art. Other dances include the *bumba-meu-boi* of Northeastern Brazil, the origins of which are European, Indian, and African. Among the musical instruments in the realm of Brazilian folklore, the production includes the *viola caipira*, a stringed instrument similar to the guitar, which is used in the rural music of several regions of Brazil. Among the most suggestive scenes is the *bloco de carnaval*, which appears during Macunaíma's sojourn to Rio de Janeiro.

*Blocos de carnaval* are groups of costumed dancers that wind through the streets of Rio during the annual Mardi Gras festival. In the play, a *bloco* crosses slowly from stage left to stage right. The actors are dressed in traditional Carnival costumes, the movements are highly stylized, performed in slow-motion. The actors sing *sotto voce*. The exaggerated, oneiric effect produced highlights the kitsch dimension of Carnival and suggests an entire institution, a cultural perception. That is, the stylized movement of the *bloco* across the stage reveals the archetypal, ritual nature of such popular institutions as Carnival. The music and dance of Carnival are known as Samba, an African-based form; the Christian and European associations are merely a veneer. Samba, moreover, is used in several scenes during the performance, as well as other musical styles, including European forms (Offenbach, Strauss waltzes) and Brazilian/European fusions such as Villa Lobos' "Bachianas Brasileiras." Along with its folklore and music, an equally significant aspect of the staging is the unique Brazilianization of the ensemble acting method.

Since the 1930's, many experimental playwrights and theatre companies have utilized ensemble or collective methods in response to linear, conventional, and realistic theatre. Audiences in the 1960's and 1970's have witnessed the development of myriad forms of ensemble and collective theatre, primarily in the United States with such companies as the Living Theatre, the Open Theatre, and Mabou Mimes in New York; the San Francisco Mime Troupe; the Iowa Laboratory Theatre; and the Firehouse and Palace Theatres in Minneapolis. Among the European companies, Peter Brook's British groups and Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre have distinguished themselves. The most prominent Brazilian companies have been Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina. The ensemble method has been employed in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Essentially, it attempts to harness and focus the energy of the acting group as a single, collective entity. It is not merely a way of performing; it is a way of working. The aim of ensemble companies is not only to mount theatrical productions—the process is as important as the product. Ensemble groups seek total development of the actors, who undergo intensive training in the traditional dramatic arts (acting, singing, dancing), as well as in diverse disciplines such as karate, tai-chi, yoga, and circus techniques. Those developed skills are carefully integrated into the ensemble, so that individual skills become collective ones. The rehearsal process itself is collaborative, whether the role of the director is minor or major. Improvisation is used extensively, that is, the actors attempt to develop ideas spontaneously without the aid of a script. Indeed, a script may emerge from a series of ideas presented by the director and elaborated improvisationally by the actors. The improvisations also have a ritual quality in that they are based on repetition and communal sharing, even on magic. The ritual quality is frequently a dimension of the ensemble method of performing as well.

The importance of group coordination during the preparatory phase is reflected on the stage. The ensemble method, following the lead of Brechtian epic theatre, interrupts empathy. There is role exchange; each actor may play several roles; individual actors may play no clearly defined roles. In stagings

that break with realism, an actor may represent a person, an animal, a machine, or an abstract figure. A great deal of emphasis is placed on movement, often to the point of blurring the line between theatre and dance. An attempt is made to move away from realism through the use of masks and costumes. During the 1960's, frequent use was made of dancing tights, jumpsuits, and nudity. Although the former two became a cliché for any staging purporting to be "experimental," nudity has remained a useful tool. Among its functions, nudity on stage has symbolized a return to the archaic and ritual sources of theatre.

Ensemble theatre, and contemporary experimental theatre in general, can be characterized as a return to sources, to roots. Examples of the latter that have inspired ensemble companies are classical Greek theatre, with its emphasis on spectacle and the archetypal and its association with the Dionysian ritual; commedia dell'arte, with its use of stock characters, parody, masks, and stylized movements; Medieval allegorical theatre; and classical Chinese and Japanese theatre. The ritual aspects of those ancient forms of theatre especially appeal to practitioners of ensemble. Ritual refers to a fixed pattern, character, or movement that is repeated in a single performance or throughout several. Such repetition is similar to religious ritual, and ensemble performances often contain rituals that are religious in essence, such as breaking bread with the audience and ritual chanting and dancing. The use of ritual on the modern stage attempts to break with linear conceptions—it seeks, rather, a communal sharing with the audience in the form of direct participation or invocation of ancient sources of spirituality and magic.

*Macunaíma* is a ritual performance according to the definitions given above. Whereas American and European ensemble groups must recreate ancient rituals or create new ones, the Brazilian company is able to draw on sources that are present in contemporary society. *Macumba*, for example, is widely practiced in all areas of Brazil, and is in fact growing in numbers of adherents.

The collective dimensions of ensemble theatre also characterize Pau-Brasil's work. Company members have committed themselves totally to the collective experience. In the context of Brazil, their adaptation of the ensemble method has taken on a special meaning, for that method obviates the necessity of utilizing sophisticated and expensive theatrical technology in the form of sets, lighting, and sound equipment. The ensemble method is clearly labor-intensive, and it may be, therefore, more appropriate than other methods to the reality of a Third-World nation. One may postulate that sophisticated technology introduced by highly industrialized nations causes economic harm because it destroys national labor-intensive industry. By analogy, the establishment of labor-intensive theatre responds to the needs of Brazil, a developing country. As a labor-intensive and inexpensive way of doing theatre, the ensemble method has the potential of making the craft of theatre more widely available in Brazil. On the aesthetic level, moreover, Pau-Brasil's utilization of the ensemble method has led to a unique form of staging.

Grupo Pau-Brasil has Brazilianized the ensemble method by subjecting it to a native cultural model. The performance of *Macunaíma* is best described by

the term *blocos*, described earlier. The company has expanded the concept of the *bloco* and has transformed it into a Brazilian ensemble style. The actors appear on stage as units corresponding to diverse aspects of Brazilian reality. Besides the *bloco de carnaval*, there are *blocos de bichos*, *piolhos*, *jornais*, *mendigos*, *séquito de araras*, *bumba-meu-boi*, *urubus*, *povo*, *estátuas*, *estrelas*, and *operários*. A Brazilian folkloric mode has thus been transformed into a collective style of acting and performance. Moreover, the various *blocos* have distinct functions and meanings.

The performance begins with the *bloco de operários*. The members of the ensemble are dressed in the coveralls of factory workers. They are situated in diagonal rows across the stage with their backs to the audience. As the stage lights go up, they are “frozen” (immobile). With the freeze, they alternate a synchronized movement from upstage left to downstage right. During the movement, they pantomime work using jack-hammers. The freeze/movement alternation indicates a transformation from human to machine and from machine to human. The scene functions as a prologue to the story of Macunaíma and associates the story with the conditions of contemporary industrial workers, particularly those of São Paulo. Finally, the scene sets the stage for the performing style that characterizes the production.

The principal manifestation of the *bloco* technique is Macunaíma’s *séquito de araras*, or entourage of parrots. The hero, as befits the Emperor of the Virgin Forest, is accompanied wherever he goes by the *séquito*, represented at times by multicolored pieces of cloth (see below) and at other times by a *bloco*. The entourage symbolizes not only Macunaíma’s Tropicalist royalty, but fulfills specific theatrical functions not found in the original text. For example, on stage the parrots dress the hero in crown, cloak, and scepter. The *bloco de piolhos* serves the purpose of parody. Suzi’s lice variously sing an aria from Carlos Gomes’ Indianist opera *O Guarani*, take her to the sky (by pulling her offstage on her bed) where she is transformed into a shooting star, and accompany her wanderings singing and dancing like a Carnival street band, literally a *bloco de carnaval*. The ensemble method, one might say, is nationalized by means of the *bloco* technique. The entire cast of eighteen actors and actresses appears on stage for most of the four hours of performance. Entrances and exits, stage crosses, and group movements are coordinated with mathematical precision. The actors appear in endlessly shifting guises. To change the setting, actors’ bodies are used in place of scenery. For example, to indicate the entrance of the hero and his brothers into São Paulo, a *bloco* of actors crosses the stage with movements and costumes representing the many classes of people of that city. The *bloco de carnaval* represents Rio de Janeiro. Such crosses, used throughout the performance, correspond to the mosaic of Brazilian reality.

Within the tradition of the non-representational style of the ensemble, the actors in Macunaíma play roles other than human: trees, stars, Vei the sun and her daughters of light, monsters of the tropical forest. Movement is also frequently non-naturalistic. An actress does a freeze to represent a waterfall, a group of actors plays a magic tree with arms undulating like branches, and pantomime is used extensively. When Macunaíma and his brothers take a canoe trip, the actors’ movements are reminiscent of classical Chinese



pantomime. To complement the ensemble style, props are utilized in an ingenious fashion.

The use of props Brazilianizes a technique developed by Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre and utilized widely by other experimental companies, particularly in the industrialized world. In Grotowski's so-called "poor theatre," a single object or material becomes multi-functional; it is carried on and off the stage by the actors to serve as prop and movable scenery. A piece of canvas, for example, can be utilized for a tent in one scene and unfolded to represent the floor in another. The purpose of the technique is economic; it allows companies to mount productions cheaply. It is also aesthetic; it obviates the necessity for realistic sets and frees the imagination from their spatial constraints.

Pau-Brasil's use of simple materials in its staging of *Macunaíma* is in part a consciousness-raising device, similar in function to its labor-intensive method of performance. By observing the use of simple materials of underdevelopment, the essentially middle-class audience is reminded continually of a reality characterized by poverty, by minimal resources available to the majority of people. In its imaginative use of simple materials, moreover, the company points the way for theatrical richness in Third-World circumstances. Among the materials and props utilized in *Macunaíma* are strips of cloth, newspapers, a pail, a brick, and a bed.

A single strip of white cotton cloth, about fifteen feet long and four feet wide, is used throughout the performance. It serves as a multi-functional prop and scenery. Its referent depends on the position in which it is held by the actors and on the narrative context. Stretched out it represents a river. Wrapped around an actress it is the shroud of *Macunaíma's* dead mother. As a three-sided backdrop it becomes the São Paulo prostitutes' apartment. It is used most extensively in the first and fourth acts as the Virgin Forest, when the cloth is stretched out full and a cluster of leaves is held by an actor placed behind the cloth. On occasion, pieces of brightly colored cloth are attached to the "forest" in reference to the hero's entourage of parrots. The image is enhanced at times by actors behind the cloth making sounds of birds and beasts. When the three brothers hide from monsters or sneak through the forest, they situate themselves behind or under the cloth.

The utilization of newsprint signifies the reduction of an object of the literate world to the raw material of *Macunaíma's* preliterate world. Grupo Pau-Brasil puts newspapers to even greater use than cloth. Some uses are representational and others are literal. For example, when newsprint is crumpled it serves as food gathered in the forest. More numerous are the direct uses to which the raw material is put. Newspapers serve to make parts of costumes such as hats and masks. An actor dressed only in newspapers becomes a monster of the forest. The material is burned on stage for cooking fires. At one point, *Macunaíma* uses a single page to fashion an object pertaining to the world of Brazilian folklore, a *balão*. It can be made of any light, flammable material, including, of course, newsprint. *Macunaíma* puts a match to the paper balloon, which catches fire and floats to the top of the theatre.

Other examples of everyday objects that undergo continual transformations are a pail, which serves as Macunaíma's throne and from which water is poured to represent a river; and a bed in which Suzi is carried to the sky and which serves as an automobile.

Closely related to the technique of transformation of objects and materials is the creation of costumes. Several costumes incorporate newsprint and other simple materials. Others are realistic; they correspond to the mosaic of Brazilian life presented on the stage. A few costumes are opulent; Vei and his daughters are dressed in gold, reminiscent of *Candomblé* costumes.<sup>13</sup> Extensive use is made of Indian and *Macumba* masks. There is also a great deal of nudity within a ritual or ceremonial context—there is also a group of painted nude actresses who represent statues in the home of Venceslau Pietro Pietra.

A final technique of the ensemble method utilized in Pau-Brasil's staging of *Macunaíma* is the non-representational use of space. Theatrical realism defines space in a limited fashion. The space in which a play takes place is generally a function of the stage area; the boundaries of that space rarely exceed the conventional performing area. Space is defined by the set: a room in a castle, a house, an office, a shop. The movement of the actors is confined within the physical limitations of the set/space. In many forms of experimental theatre, there is no limitation of the definition of space. Rather than actors moving within a fixed set, space may in fact be defined by actors' movements, which is the case in *Macunaíma*. Instead of fixed, naturalistic scenery, the production suggests the setting with stylized movement by the actors, among other devices. The home of Venceslau is designated by statues played by several actresses. To change the set, the statues simply walk on or off the stage. In Mário de Andrade's story, *Macunaíma* travels to distant corners of Brazil. In the play, the hero moves in a wide circle on the stage and the actors announce the steps on his journey.

Ensemble theatre frequently utilizes the full extension of the physical space available: stage, balcony, ceiling, seating area. Pau-Brasil does the same. Since scenes in the play cover a vast geographical area, the totality of the theatrical space suggests the great dimensions of national territory. Unrestricted use of space in the production also involves the question of audience participation.

Audience participation is a commonly used technique in experimental theatre. Since it may destroy the illusion of reality, it is rarely employed in theatrical realism. Indeed, Brecht and other pioneers have utilized the technique to destroy the illusion of reality. When participation has crossed the line into aggression and aroused audience hostility, ensemble companies have been forced to abandon the technique.

Pau-Brasil has overcome the problem by incorporating audience members into the theatrical space and into the action. Rather than arousing hostility, the incorporation of the audience gives rise to a sense of identification. Searches and chases take place in the audience. Flower vendors ply their trade among the spectators in an amusing fashion. In the most important of such scenes, *Macunaíma* hides from the police among the audience members. In the political context of Brazil, hiding in the audience symbolizes the notion of the people's support and protection of those who have opposed repression and

have as a consequence suffered at the hands of the police-state apparatus. Audience members thus have become co-conspirators with the ensemble. In a more general sense, the audience is involved in a multi-dimensional spectacle of national culture. Rather than communicating aggression, the production includes the audience in a communal experience, in a collective immersion into the roots of Brazilian life.

In its dual re-creation of *Macunaíma* as playscript and spectacle, the company has successfully conveyed the notion that the major themes of Mário de Andrade's rhapsody provide a vital means of assessing contemporary Brazilian culture. The production suggests that the often conflicting paradigms of national and imported culture may be resolved by subjecting the former to the latter. Finally, the production presents a variety of theatrical techniques with the potential of making a significant contribution to Brazilian stagecraft.

The production of *Macunaíma* has had one of the longest and most successful runs in modern history of the Brazilian stage; it is still being performed three years after its opening. It has toured Brazil and other Latin American countries, the United States, and Europe. It has participated to wide acclaim in several international festivals. Antunes Filho directed a subsequent production with what is now called Grupo Macunaíma. Based on the plays of Nelson Rodrigues, the new production is called *O Eterno Retorno*. Considered by many to be even more brilliant and original than *Macunaíma*, the new production is completing a successful European tour at the time of this writing. Antunes is preparing a third production, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

It appears that Grupo Macunaíma is carrying on the tradition of Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina. Many hope that it will pave the way for a resurgence of Brazilian Theatrical ensembles.<sup>14</sup>

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## Notes

1. The ideas in the following three paragraphs are based on my interview with Antunes Filho (São Paulo, 20 July, 1982), the program notes for the stage production of *Macunaíma*, and my own observations.

2. The company would later be rebaptized Grupo Macunaíma as a result of the success of the staging of the work.

3. Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina were São Paulo theatre companies that revolutionized the Brazilian stage during their heyday in the 1960's. Arena's most significant contribution was to make viable the mounting of Brazilian playscripts; its most notable production was *Arena Conta Zumbi* (1965). Teatro Oficina created unique Brazilian performance styles; its 1967 production of Oswald de Andrade's *O Rei da Vela* was a milestone in national stagecraft.

4. From the 1979 program notes by Isa Kopelman.

5. *Preguiça*, one of Macunaíma's essential traits, thus served as a counter-inspiration. The company members perceived it as a manifestation of the impotence resulting from colonialism.

6. Kopelman.

7. Kopelman.

8. From the 1979 program notes by Guilherme Marback.

9. Mário de Andrade. *Macunaíma*. Stage adaptation by Jacques Thierot and Grupo de Arte Pau-Brasil, 1979. TS.

10. The chapters of Mário de Andrade's text were structured in the following manner in the play:

		<i>PRIMEIRA EPOCA</i>
ATO 1	Capítulo I	Macunaíma
	Capítulo II	Maioridade
	Capítulo III	Ci, Mãe do Mato
	Capítulo IV	Boiúna Luna
ATO 2	Capítulo V	Piaimã
	Capítulo VI	A Francêsa e o Gigante
	Capítulo VII	Macumba
	Capítulo VIII	Vei, a Sol
		<i>SEGUNDA EPOCA</i>
ATO 3	Capítulo IX	Carta pras Icamíabas
	Capítulo X	Pauí-Pódole
	Capítulo XI	A Velha Ceiuci
	Capítulo XII	Tequeteque, Chupinzão e a Injustiça dos Homens
ATO 4	Capítulo XIII	A Piolhenta do Jiguê
	Capítulo XIV	Muiraquitã
	Capítulo XV	A Paquera de Oibê
	Capítulo XVI	Uraricoera
	Capítulo XVII	Ursa Maior
		Epílogo

11. Carlos Gomes' best known opera is entitled *O Guarani*.

12. My discussion of the staging is based on my own viewing (Rio de Janeiro, January, 1980) and on the interview with Antunes Filho.

13. *Candomblé* is a form of *Macumba* practiced most widely in Salvador. It is considered the purest of Afro-Brazilian religions in the sense that it approximates African models.

14. This article has been in part an adaptation and updating of material contained in my Ph.D. dissertation, "Anthropophagy and the New Brazilian Theatre" (University of Minnesota, 1981). Many of the ideas in this article were also tested in my address, "The Art of Stagecraft in Contemporary Brazil," Contexts and Perspectives: Latin American Theatre Today, University of Kansas, April 17, 1982.