Identity, Language, Militancy: the question of origins in the poetry and prose of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade

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I, Maria Nefeli Zygorou, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

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This thesis offers a comparison between specific works by Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade in order to synthetize their contribution to oral language traditions and to the body of criticism on Modernism. The Romanian Jewish poet and writer Tristan Tzara, later a naturalized French citizen, became a central figure in the European avant-garde from 1916 when he took part in the Dada Movement. Mário de Andrade, the Brazilian poet, writer and musicologist of mixed origins was a contemporary of Tristan Tzara, and a similarly central figure in the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week that defined Brazilian Modernism. Although the authors never met and emerged from very distinct foundations, they followed a parallel creative path. Both researched oral language traditions and adapted ethnopoetics to their work, and in their prose both were inspired by folk elements. Concurrently, prompted by the historical and sociopolitical events of the late 1930s, they went on to develop militant poetics. By comparing chronologically compatible case studies of individual works, I show that their respective cultural backgrounds along with their respective cultural understanding led them to employ oral language narratives in their own work as well as to an active criticism of cultural imperialism.
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Introduction

The most attractive element of a comparison is not just similarity. The act of comparing is firstly creative. When on the one hand many categories already exist archived and established and, when on the other, categorisation is being challenged, the act of comparing can lead to new considerations.

At first glance a comparison of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade might appear geographically and culturally unorthodox, yet a deeper look reveals much that the two authors have in common. The comparison will reveal that Tristan Tzara has much more to offer to European poetry and prose than his title as the founder of Dadaism suggests, and what Mário de Andrade, apart from being named the “Pope of Modernism” in Brazil, can offer beyond his country’s borders. The two poets and writers were born at approximately the same time and their work, as we shall see, had a very similar development. The avant-garde literature and poetry of Mário de Andrade has been mainly researched in English and Portuguese publications in the context of other Latin American avant-gardes as well as various postcolonial writers and the postcolonial discourse at large. Most often, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, his work is seen as an impressive Brazilian example of work preoccupied with themes strictly of relevance to Brazil itself. Nonetheless, English research on an important portion of his works is non-existent.

On the other hand, Tristan Tzara’s works are not as widely explored and analysed, perhaps due to their hermetic nature. Arguably his best known text is the *Sept Manifestes Dada* (1918), which has been translated into various languages. His work has been approached in parts rather than as a whole, in fragmented chapters or articles about certain poems, sometimes complete poetry collections, along with Henri Béhar’s edition of Tzara’s complete works. Notable exceptions are Forcer’s book (2006) focusing on a large part of his poetry and Hentea’s recent biography (2014). Another example is Buot’s (2002) biography on Tzara, which is less thorough than Hentea’s since it is based more on events in art history and on what Tzara’s contemporaries wrote about him. Beitchman (1988) and Papachristos (1999) published insightful work on Tzara’s theatre. In addition to Hentea’s work, Sandqvist in *Dada East: The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire* (2006) associates Tzara’s and
Marcel Ianco’s shared Jewish and Romanian roots, emphasising the cultural activities of Yiddish speaking Eastern European Jewry, with the creation of Dadaism. Another important work that addresses Tzara’s Jewish background without referring to any particular work by him is Heyd’s *Tristan Tzara/Samuel Rosenstock, The Hidden/Overt Jewish Agenda* (2010).

My comparison between Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara focuses on the influence that oral language traditions, folk tales, their socio-political environment and their cultural roots had on each of them. Folk tales, lore and legends are used here to address oral traditions surviving over time, mainly through traces such as those seen in both writers’ works. Influences from anthropological and ethnological studies will be approached here to explore the ways in which Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade combined a variety of local expressions from their own cultures as well as others, presenting us ultimately with a collection of work with universal codes of narrative. By universal, I mean a complex web of narratives that traverses multiple cultures, rather than a single unified mode of narrative. The present research aims to shed light on the phenomenon by which where even people from different time periods or countries use a common language to explore shared existential questions through oral and written narratives. While Tristan Tzara’s origin is the ancient Judaic nation and Mário de Andrade’s the “New World” of the Americas, they both search for a place in which to be rooted. One is product of the Diaspora and the other of the opposite, the concentration of different peoples in a land, as a consequence of colonisation. Can we consider then Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara as two enlighteners of their time, searching for authentic narrative, resisting the estrangement created by the dichotomies between oral and written language, centre and periphery?

At first glance, the association of folklore, mythology and ethnology with what are considered to be Modernist works appears to be extraneous to the values of Modernism and its avant-gardes, and their attempt to break free from tradition. Nevertheless, the majority of the first Modernist artists, writers and philosophers looked for references elsewhere in order to create something new, and to cultures other than that of bourgeois Western Europe, for which reason they made use of folk culture and ancient myths, from within Europe as well as beyond itself. There are numerous instances of this search in all art forms such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) in narrative, in painting the multiple versions of André Masson’s *Pasiphaë*
(1937), and the stage settings for the Ballet russe by Sergei Diaghilev with compositions by Satie, Schoenberg and Stravinsky in the theatre. Hence, I consider the prose and poetry of both Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara to be part of Modernism, aesthetically as well as philosophically. The Modernism I have in mind here shares Habermas’ idea of the “modern” retaining a secret connection to the classical (Habermas, p.39) and at the same time Pegrum’s view that the Modernist avant-garde includes the “postmodern”. (Pegrum, 2000)

My intention in this thesis is to explore the work of Tristan Tzara, Mário de Andrade and their impact. The latter stands alone among his Brazilian colleagues’ dominant discourse of Antropofagia, progression, nationalism and Neo-Indianism. I want to examine the way in which Tzara’s work is illuminated in relation to Mário’s because he came from what is called the margins of Europe yet ended up playing a primary role in shaping the international avant-garde. By pairing Tristan Tzara with Mário de Andrade I will attempt to show that what is considered the periphery and the centre in Modernism is problematic and therefore open to criticism and change. Due to their rather complex identities, and the variety of interests and influences set aside when placing them in the canon, a whole range of elements of their work is being left aside.

On the one hand, the Brazilian writer, influenced also by European poets and writers, was one of the pioneers of Modernismo in Brazil, organising a large part of the “Semana de Arte Moderna” in the Municipal theatre of São Paulo in 1922, the event that marked the rise of Modernism in Brazil. (Mezzadri, p.48-49) Mário’s reading of his poetry Paulicéia Desvairada in the “Semana” marks his own first Modernist work. A celebrated element in Brazilian Modernism, the Manifesto Antropofágico, was composed by Oswald de Andrade in 1928 and published in the Revista da Antropofagia the same year. The magazine continued to be published until February 1929. However, by that time many writers, among them Mário de Andrade, had stopped publishing texts in it because of disagreements with Oswald. Thus, Mário soon distanced himself from the “Cannibalist Movement” to carve out his own creative path. Apart from his personal rupture with Oswald, Mário, like many critics after him, saw that the Manifesto was not the ultimate definition of Brazilian culture. It was playing dangerously with Romantic and nationalistic ideas. The Manifesto Antropofágico drew its inspiration from the first descriptions by Europeans of the
indigenous Tupi people of the land that became Brazil, and their ritualistic cannibalism. Oswald wrote it during his journey in Europe under the influence of avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism. He declares that Brazilians do not have to look far for “primitivist” inspiration since they have their own Tupi tradition. Haroldo de Campos argues that Oswald’s *antropofagia* is a theory formulated from the disabused point of view of the bad savage, devourer of the whites, the cannibal. This view does not involve submission (conversion) but, rather, transculturation (Campos de, p.159) However, the disabused bad savage is just another stereotypical image of a person with different cultural roots and does not provide a realistic portrayal of the indigenous population. It is still, like the good savage, the Other with a different label.

Schwarz sees that Brazilian Modernism’s “present-day success has to do with its integration into the discourse of conservative modernisation”. He refers to Oswald’s invention as “an easy formula for Brazil, the juxtaposition of elements characteristic of colonial Brazil with those of bourgeois Brazil, and the raising of the product of this juxtaposition-disjointed by definition-to the dignity of an allegory of the country as a whole.” (Schwarz, p.110) While he sees the fact that there is a “lack of intellectual continuity” in Brazil as problematic, Schwarz praises Machado de Assis, Mário de Andrade and Antonio Candido. “None of them lacked information or an openness to contemporary trends, but they all knew how to make broad and critical use of their predecessors’ work, which they regarded not as dead weight but as a dynamic and unfinished element underlying present-day contradictions.” (Schwarz, p.2) Interestingly, by 1924 when Oswald published *Poésia Pau-Brasil* (along the lines of his *Manifesto Pau-Brasil*), his and Mário’s friendship and collaboration, already under strain, underwent a major rupture. The original group of artists and poets that showcased Modernism in Brazil in the famous “Semana” of 1922 had fallen apart. Mário criticised Oswald for levity and for his generalisations. (Dos Reis, p.148) Mário’s novel *Macunaíma*, analysed here in Chapter Two, belongs broadly to Brazilian Modernism, but its writer did not follow the two famous Manifestos of Oswald de Andrade. Mário, wisely, had already recognised his own lack of knowledge regarding many aspects of his country. On the contrary, Oswald says “a floresta e a escola” despite the fact that his upbringing was in an urban environment and he did not share the same ethnographical interest with Mário. (Andrade de O.,
Mário had already distinguished the great differences that existed between himself, the middle class poet at his desk in the metropolis of São Paulo, and the forest rubber tapper in the northern state of Acre in his poem “Acalanto do Seringueiro”, as I will discuss in Chapter One.

Intriguingly, Oswald’s Manifestos borrowed much in presentation and style from Tzara and Marinetti. Tzara’s poetry was also quite well-known to Brazilian Modernists since he was at the heart of the European avant-garde. At the time Oswald wrote his Manifestos, in Europe Dada came to an end with the last Dada soirée in Théâtre Michel in 1923 (Hentea, p.194) and Surrealism took over the avant-garde circles. Coincidentally, the fallout between Oswald and Mário and the one between Tristan Tzara and André Breton happened at approximately the same time. Already in 1922 Breton became enraged when Tzara refused to join the organising committee of the “Congrès international pour la détermination des directives et la défense de l’esprit moderne”. He replied to Tzara while addressing the committee not only questioning the latter’s position within Dadaism but also emphasising his foreign origin. (Hentea, p.179-180) The rivalry of Tzara and Breton did not stop there, as Pegrum notes: “the large number of critics and art historians who consider the two, Dadaism and Surrealism, in conjunction. Surrealism represents, after the explosion of Dada, a retreat to more traditionally modern concerns: the (re-)establishment of order and meaning, and the construction of the utopia of the inner being”. (Pegrum, p.289-290) Tristan Tzara may not have signed the Manifeste du surréalisme of 1924 but he was influenced by and influenced his friends and rivals in the movement. Perhaps the most relevant sign of that influence on and by Tzara is illustrated in Personnage d’insomnie with reference to dreams as I will show in Chapter Two. However, even in that case, Tzara leads his own exploration on the subject. He says: “ce qui lie ce rêve à la valeur expérimentale que j’aimerais lui octroyer réside précisément dans sa nature de rêve éveillé, car l’opposition et la réunion de ces deux termes dont l’aboutissants paraissent contradictoires, exigent impérieusement la création d’une nouvelle notion, celle de la poésie.” (Tzara, OC t3, p.102) He writes this observation in 1933, the same year that he started working on Personnage d’insomnie, where he further develops the idea of insomnia, the state of being in between those who are awake and those who are asleep. Béhar speculates that the short story may not have been published at the time because Tzara was not close with the Surrealists or for personal reasons, but it
should hold, even posthumously, “une place exceptionnelle dans la bibliothèque du rêve”. (Béhar, p.562)

Back to Brazilian matters, one can immediately point out how problematic looking at a pre-colonial version of Brazil would be with regard to the fact that Oswald de Andrade is part of a society consisting mainly of descendants of Europeans, Africans and autochthonous populations. Schwarz argues that despite the fact that the idea of swallowing the “alien” results in some sort of copy of this alien element, it still had regenerative effects, which at first seemed fresh but soon proved to be susceptible to misinterpretation. He adds: “The programmatic innocence of the Antropofagos, which allows them to ignore the malaise, does not prevent it from emerging anew”. (Schwarz, p.8-9) In brief, the movement of Antropofagia is full of idyllic conventions related to the image of pre-colonial Brazil. The project of consuming foreign culture in order to produce culture that more closely resembles the values of pre-colonial Brazil or Tupi Brazil, disregards the realities of Brazilian society at the particular point in time when the Manifesto was written. The examples of Mário de Andrade’s work that I am going to explore reveal that he progressively realised this predicament of being trapped in an anachronistic, unrealistic presentation of Brazilian culture and society and tried to elucidate it. Similarly, Tristan Tzara did not insist on disavowing Western culture as his Dada persona indicated, and which was at times a response to the atrocities of the First World War.

The two writers being compared here kept an open mind about cultural influences. Tristan Tzara carried his Romanian Jewish heritage with him and combined these influences with others from European poetry. However, characterising either the Romanian poet or the Brazilian one in terms of the periphery-centre model is inappropriate since both read Walt Whitman, Rimbaud and Baudelaire, as well as readings from their own cultures, and both lived in a newly industrialised metropolis. Their common Western readings have often overshadowed the fact that they both read and valued works closer to their own individual environment as well as of remote places. I suggest that we should rather refer to a conversation between a type of convergent evolution in Modernism and a nomadic approach to thought: nomadic in the way that Deleuze and Guattari explain: “The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points […] A path is always between two points, but the in-
between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own.” (Deleuze, p.419) This idea is exemplified by the function of the “in-between” in language and culture in the works of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara that I shall be comparing in Chapter Two.

The present thesis refers specifically to case studies of Mário de Andrade’s poetry collection *Clã do Jabuti* (1927), the novel *Macunaima: o herói sem nenhum carater* (1928) and the opera *O Café* (1955). They are here in dialogue with Tristan Tzara’s poetry collection *Poèmes nègres* (1916-17), the novelette *Personage d’insomnie* (1935), and certain poems used from the collections *Terre sur terre* (1946) and *Le Signe de vie* (1946). I will be following the chronological order in which these texts were produced, and by starting with something from the poets’ early experiments with poetry, I will provide the dissertation with its driving focus: the parallel creative path of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara. The first Chapter embarks on a comparison that shows the desire of each writer to explore what appears to be the Other. Their own cultural roots and experiences are present but at the same time not prominent, and this is one of the points that will be further discussed. Chapter Two compares two prose texts that again engage oral narratives but focus more on language and identity, on questions of the role of nature in contrast with an industrialised urban environment, production and consumption, and last but not least on the role of tradition and adaptation to the new. Finally, in what starts as the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the self, Mário and Tzara’s self-conscious prose will be shown to result in a militant poetics that matures with their respective, active participation in the pursuit of justice, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Firstly, I discuss Tristan Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres* and Mário de Andrade’s *Clã do Jabuti*, and their common ethnopoetics. Tristan Tzara, at the time of his first steps in developing Dadaism, had already demonstrated an interest in Anthropology journals and texts from African and Austronesian cultures. He collected artefacts from these continents since he did not have the opportunity to visit most of these places. As Henri Béhar notes, Tzara was reading Leo Frobenius, Jean Paulhan and Carl Meinhof, up to date ethnological and linguistic accounts of African cultures, and translated poetry from Madagascar and works in Bantu languages (Béhar, p.715). Tzara’s article in *SIC, Note 6 sur l’art nègre* (1917), where he praises African art, shows his personal interest in this aesthetic. In contrast, for many artists of the time there was a delayed
conscious realisation that what they saw in the Trocadéro museum of ethnology might have had an impact on their work. Béhar confirms Tzara’s revolutionary opinion made public: “Tzara est, à cette date, l’un des premiers commentateurs avec Apollinaire à se tourner vers l’art nègre comme source de renouvellement”. (Béhar, p.705) Béhar’s comment supplements my argument about Tzara being one of the few intellectuals at that point in time who discerned the great variety and the renewal that the art and oral literature of the vast African continent offers.

The majority of the poems in these two collections are not integrally composed by Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade. The former poet states this by declaring that embedded in these poems lie adaptations/translations of works by others and that therefore he cannot put his signature to them. Gabriel Soro, in his comparative thesis Jean Paulhan, Tristan Tzara et le poème nègre: un aspect du dialogue littéraire entre l’avant-garde française (19e-20e s.) et les arts primitifs (Paris: Paris-3, 1983) offers a useful insight into the way Tzara and Paulhan approached the translation of oral Malagasy poetry. Soro points out that this poetry carries impressions of phatic and emotional language. However, we cannot speak of an absolute lyricism since lyricism entails first and foremost the “I” and the “you”: it speaks from man to man. (Soro, p.65) Tristan Tzara finds in oral poetry a revolutionary style. The repetition of words in the Poèmes nègres creates a verbal architecture that serves the conjunction of different axes of dialogue, a strategy that was also employed by other Dadaists. Some of the Poèmes nègres have been the object of a recent comparative translation case study in Migration and Cultural contact: Germany and Australia (A. Bandhauer, M. Veber, 2009). In the second chapter entitled “Dada among the Missionaries: Sources of Tristan Tzara’s Poèmes nègres”, Veit analyses the background of the German Lutheran missionary Carl Strehlow in the context of the Dada revolution. He concentrates on the meaning and purpose of adaptation by looking at Strehlow’s German translation, and then Tzara’s French adaptation of oral poems by Arrernte and Luritja aboriginals. (Veit, p.49) Tzara’s Poèmes nègres feature also in an English translation by Pierre Joris in Alcheringa: ethnopoetics published in 1976 but without any analysis or comparative notes. So, there are some analyses regarding the form, translation and unique adaptation of these poems by Tristan Tzara but only in comparison with an ethnologist and language teacher, Paulhan, and a missionary, Strehlow. However,
these comparative studies focus on the ethnographic rather than the lyrical value of such poems. A comparison of Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres* with the work of another poet who employs the same mode, adapting traditional verbal verse, in this case Mário de Andrade’s *Clã do Jabuti*, offers a different light in the understanding of this method.

Mário de Andrade compiled the collection of poetry *Clã do jabuti* (Clan of the tortoise) by combining traditional songs and tales with his own poetic compositions. Many of the twenty-two poems are composed following particular musical forms. Beyond that, the dates of composition of these poems signal Mário’s awareness of the polyphony, the cultural diversity in his native Brazil. It starts with poems written in 1924, when he, following Blaise Cendrars’s suggestion, travelled along with other poets and artists from the metropolis of São Paulo into the interior of Brazil, the state of Minas Gerais, going along the same route as the “Bandeirantes”, the first Portuguese soldiers and scouts who explored the territory. In “Noturno de Belo Horizonte”, Mário de Andrade describes the night time in the city of Belo Horizonte, capital of Minas Gerais, he talks about the silence that makes the:

Vento florido roda pelos trilhos.

Vem de longe, das grotas pré-historicas…

Descendo as montanhas

Fugiu dos despenhadeiros assombrados do Rola-Moça…

(Andrade de, p.184)

The poet then stops his own recitation; the rest of the verses are not Mário’s own. He reuses a traditional *balada* song from the region of Minas Gerais. Suarez and Tomlins translate some poems from *Clã do Jabuti* into English, at the same time commenting on their content and form. They observe that in the poems, “Mário’s most pictoral and sensorial views of Brazil come to us on hot nights of sensuality. He identifies this sensuality as the contribution of Africa to the national psyche”. (Suarez, Tomlins, p.73) Mário uses folk tales from all regions of Brazil. The previous example from Minas Gerais includes elements of the history of the region. In Minas pre-historic paintings are to be found as well as narratives from colonial times. Brazil’s first capital, Vila Rica – now known as Ouro Preto – is one such example of a
metropolis that reflects these diverse narratives, drawn from a number of social classes. All kinds of people brought along their stories and created new ones, from Jesuits, to African and indigenous slaves and freed men, baroque artists to Portuguese immigrants turned Brazilian patriots and revolutionaries along with all those that simply passed by because of the area’s famous 17th-century gold rush. In between the verses of “Noturno de Belo Horizonte”, Mário adds:

Eu queria contar todas as histórias de Minas

Aos brasileiros do Brasil… (Andrade de, p.186)

There is an interesting case study, Clã do Jabuti: uma partitura de palavras (2006), which was created by Christiane Rodrigues de Souza after her thesis on Mário’s poetry collection. Souza’s research is significant because the reader is offered a categorisation of the poems according to their musical origins. Rodrigues de Souza analyses poems that fall under the category Coordenadas: Mário had used this same word “coordinated” to refer to how some of his compositions are coherently linked. Here we encounter an analysis of poems that deal with passions, personal relationships and desires among people, and perhaps the poet’s own such feelings, as well as incidents of everyday life in the streets of Brazil. What follows are poems inspired and adapted by indigenous traditions orally preserved. The third chapter of Rodrigues de Souza’s thesis is dedicated to an analysis of particular sound patterns of certain verses, and includes a note on how Mário de Andrade tries to create a dialogue between poetry and folk traditions in order to show that, despite the differences among Brazilians, there is nothing like storytelling to gather people under the same roof. (Andrade de, p.192) This analysis of sound and phonetic distribution within Mário’s poetry shares the style of analysis that Stephen Forcer undertakes in his study Modernist Song: the poetry of Tristan Tzara (2006). He analyses poems from the collections Vingt-cinq poèmes (1918), De nos oiseaux (1923), L’Homme approximatif (1931), Où boivent les loups (1932), Midis gagnés (1939), De mémoire d’homme (1950) and Miennes (1955). Forcer’s attempt to look at Tzara’s work beyond the legendary Dada movement and his prompting to research further examples of Tristan Tzara’s vast work has particularly encouraged my own thesis. I will cite some of Stephen Forcer’s findings in the chapters to come.
During the period of *Clã do Jabuti*’s composition, from 1924 until its publication in 1927, Mário de Andrade thoroughly studied the folk legends and songs of his country, Capistrano Abreu’s study of Amerindian linguistics, and Dürkheim’s and Theodor Koch-Grünberg’s studies of Amazonian myths. The Brazilian writer was fluent in French and German and was reading a variety of European ethnographic texts before they appeared in Portuguese translations. In 1928, just a year after *Clã do Jabuti*, he published the novel *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* that also maps Brazil’s folk traditions. These two works were produced around the time of Mário’s travel to the North and Northeast states of Brazil as well as the Amazonian side of Peru. His travel journal from that time was published posthumously under the title *O Turista Aprendiz*.

The embrace of the polyphony of the multicultural Romanian population, and an early introduction to multilingualism that gave access to the study of various European theatre, poetry and literature is a characteristic of Tristan Tzara that he shares with the Brazilian writer. Although he addressed his mother and father, both of whom lived in Romania, in French, Tzara wrote letters in Romanian while in France. From a very young age he was multilingual. Buot mentions that while Tzara was publishing in Romanian poetry journals such as *Noua Revista Romana* and *Chemanera* in 1913, he had long discussions with Janco about Walt Whitman. At the same time, Tzara was introduced to Apollinaire’s poetry and borrows the title for one of his poems from Rimbaud: “Les Sœurs de charité”. (Buot, p.27) His education in foreign languages is demonstrated when Tzara is in Zürich and he makes use of his fluency in French and Romanian as well as making use of his familiarity with German, English and Latin in his writing, employing simultaneously all these languages in Dada poems. (Hentea, p.27) A lot of the texts regarding ethnopoetics that he translates are from magazines such as *Anthropos*, which included articles in various European languages. The Romanian poet published articles in the magazine *Konstrevy* in Stockholm, translated to Swedish by his wife, Greta Knutson. These articles, originally unpublished in French, can now be found in the poet’s *Œuvres complètes*, volume IV, with titles slightly changed from the original Swedish publications. (Béhar, p.674) The article *Sur l’art primitif d’Afrique et des îles des mers du Sud*, published in Sweden in 1933, not only shows that Tzara continued his interest in African and Polynesian cultures, it also presents us with a remarkable comparative
study of the way storytelling is bound to indigenous sculptures and paintings. In particular, Tzara discusses the prehistoric wall paintings that Frobenius found in Rhodesia in association with more recently discovered statues in Congo and the narratives behind those. (Tzara, p.515)

In 1915, the young Tzara, still in Romania, had his first poems, influenced by French Symbolism, published in the journal Symbolul. By 1917 he was in Zürich and had already produced many Dada Soirées with Hugo Ball. That same year, Mário de Andrade published his first poetry collection Há uma gota de sangue em cada poema, a work that could be considered more Parnassian than Modernist. Mário de Andrade was a musician and piano teacher long before he started writing his avant-garde poetry, and continued to be one after he became a published poet. He was interested in the content of his native poems and myths but also their melodies. As for Tristan Tzara, he was not a musician. Despite this, his poems and especially his manuscripts contain variations and corrections of specific words that emphasize his preoccupation with sound and phonetic combinations.

Another element that I will discuss in Chapter One is that both poets did not adapt ethnopoetics by direct communication with indigenous people, but also through translations by ethnographers, their notes and other publications. The practice of recycling existing material (a practice shared by Dadaists and later by Brazilian modernists, who followed the example of Mário de Andrade as well as of Oswald de Andrade’s Manifesto Antropofagico, who in their turn took the Dadaist approach of Tzara) removes the element of authorship and originality on the part of a single creator. The same effect can be found in Tzara and Mário de Andrade’s insistence on the use of sound patterns in their poetry which I am addressing here. In addition, sounds, unlike image-based metaphors, offer a better understanding of the existence of rhythm within a poem. In contrast, there are examples of poets who were contemporary to Tristan Tzara and Mário who place more emphasis on imagery. For example, although the Modernist Brazilian poet Guilherme de Almeida speaks of dance in his poem “A dança das Horas” (1919), he describes the images of dance and the feelings it creates. Erickson points out that the Dadaists’ attraction to the speech of cultures other than the Western European one, in for example the Poèmes nègres, is indicative of the desire for a language that can summon the creative power present at man’s spiritual origins, through the power of what Hugo Ball calls “the innermost
alchemy of the word". (Erickson, p.283) In sound, Tzara found the opportunity for readers to feel something personal in poems, as opposed to a dictated way of reading and responding.

The most important consideration arising from this aspect of my comparative study of an early form of ethnopoetics by a Brazilian and a Romanian poet, is the question of which came first, song or speech. Poetry, even free verse, is characterised by a meter and musicality. The only thing we know for sure is that poetry was created to be sung, even in the first civilisations that used writing. That is perhaps the reason why Sumerian cuneiform alphabet was used for administrative cataloguing much earlier than when the epic of Gilgamesh was written, and Mycenaean Linear B was used centuries before the Iliad was finally written down as a whole epic. (Scarre, p.444) Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade’s own notes on these adapted or translated poems can offer an insight into what each understands by the phonetic value of poetry, of sound patterns and unique verse combinations, and about their understanding of ways in which the dimension of cosmogony is expressed among different cultures. The ethnographic turn emerges as a source of poetic dynamism and variation in linguistic expression, including primordial narratives, more than merely a tool for behavioural or cultural categorization and mapping.

From these first examples of adapted ethnopoetics we then move in Chapter Two to a type of narrative that I call “Modernist folktales”, comparing Mário’s best known novel, *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* and Tzara’s ironic memoir *Personnage d’insomnie*. Any attempt to summarise *Macunaíma* would be inane: since it appeals to the epic, a synopsis will always miss certain episodes. Mário de Andrade characterised the work as a rhapsody, not only because the novel includes the author’s own lyrical creations weaved together with various existing native and African myths and legends, but also because at the end of the book he mentions that he sings this story to us like an ancient Greek rhapsodist would do.

In one of the few critical readings of *Macunaíma* in English, Rosenberg comments that Mário de Andrade’s novel of 1928 stands out since he is not using *Antropofagia* “to conflate it with the novel”, rather his analysis “highlights different discursive strategies that the avant-garde made available in Latin America”, and he looks at their geopolitical implications. (Rosenberg, p.77) Rosenberg characterises the
novel as other critics had done before as a “true collage of the narrative archive of the nation”, and returns to the influence of Theodor Koch-Grünberg’s ethnographic work *From Roraima to Orinoco* (1917). The idea of the cannibal devouring cultures that developed in the avant-garde of Brazil in 1928 was not completely new in the context of the European avant-garde. Together with Picabia, Tzara had published the *Manifeste Cannibale Dada* (1920) and many Surrealists too later used the image of the cannibal, since it provided them with a festive image of the ‘primitive’ and a shocking challenge to bourgeois values. Despite the fact that Rosenberg notes that “*Macunaíma* and *antropofagia* share the *modernista* mistrust for an ontological search for originality and autonomy”, he goes on to argue that the novel criticises anthropophagy as being only one side of the coin. (Rosenberg, p.81) In addition, of course, there are the facts that Mário de Andrade wrote *Macunaíma* between 1927 and 1928 while Oswald de Andrade composed the *Manifesto Antropofágico* in 1928, the year that *Macunaíma* was published. Reemphasising what was presented earlier, I want to disassociate my reading of *Macunaíma* from the content of Oswald’s *Manifesto Antropofágico* since the latter touches only superficially on indigenous Brazilian identity and to that extent, it is not central to my thesis.

In a similar way, in comparing *Personnage d’insomnie* by Tristan Tzara with *Macunaíma* I am not choosing just another Surrealist-driven text. Metamorphosis, identity and language, as well as liberation from or imprisonment in the industrial world, and the significance of “raw” nature elevated to an almost religious reference to cultural roots are the main elements in this comparison. The act of metamorphosis is not only present in the prose narratives that the two writers create but is also part of their own identities, an element that they create in the space in-between narrator and storytelling. Firstly, there is the transformative quality of Tzara’s adaptation involved in producing the name Tristan Tzara itself. Like with the name “Dada”, there have been various attempts to decode his. The play of words in Romanian “trist în țară” translates as “sad in the country”. The phrase can be seen as a remark about the melancholy of the Jewish community that has suffered due to the discriminatory Romanian laws. Despite being part of Romanian culture and contributing to the country, there were always manifestations of anti-Semitic hostility. (Hentea, p.23) A notable fact is that the first organised migration settlements to Israel were organised by residents of Moinesti. (Sapira, 2007) Descriptions of Tzara by
fellow writers and artists such as Dadaist Richard Hulsenberg and Germaine Everling point out that his Romanian Jewish background, his accent and manners left them with an impression of him as “exotic”. (Hentea, p.129) As early as 1922, in his poetry collection *Paulicéia Desvairada*, Mário de Andrade refers to the character of the harlequin to characterise himself and other citizens of São Paulo. He saw in the harlequin not a hybridity of behaviour and colours, but rather a distinction of different rhombuses that co-exist next to each other. Haberly mentions: “Perhaps the most fundamental theme in Mário’s works is his own multiplicity… Mário rejected the commonplace idea that the three races were intermingled and fused, in Brazil or in his own being; he saw himself, rather, as multiple: simultaneously black, red and white”. (Haberly, p.137-8) As we are going to see, in his work Mário also addresses the fact that social inequality in Brazil had a large part of its basis in racial discrimination. His mixed origin is expressed with the image of the harlequin and many other poems that criticise the inequalities of the Brazilian society. Andrews asserts: “Survey research has shown racist attitudes and stereotypes concerning blacks and mulatfoes to be widely diffused throughout Brazilian society, and Afro-Brazilians report being the victims of subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, racism and discrimination.” (Andrews, p.483) In Brazil, there is a rich vocabulary for the description of particular racial categorisations, for example, mestizo, caboclo, or mulato. The fact that there was ‘black press’ that would only occasionally publish poems by someone like Mário de Andrade, whose poems and articles were also frequently to be read in popular newspapers such as *Folha de São Paulo*, shows how for him identity would have to be fluid. (Brookshaw, p.4)

The prologue of Tristan Tzara’s *Personnage d’insomnie* (1934) begins by calling upon not the muse, like the ancient rhapsodist, but the alcohol of lonesomeness, as a way to express, if possible, the simultaneous confusion and clarity of the state of insomnia. The story of *Personnage d’insomnie*’s protagonist, “le divin tailleur” and his metamorphosis reads like an attempt to combat a continuous and bothersome insomnia. The first chapter, entitled “Pour passer le temps”, is dedicated to the peculiarity of the state in between being awake and being asleep. One significant difference between this story and *Macunaima* is that while the latter has been the object of much analysis, there is no published interpretation of *Personnage d’insomnie* apart from its edition in Tzara’s *Œuvres complètes*, volume III, which
includes unedited drafts in the notes. The protagonist of the story is referred to as “le divin tailleur”, and as the narration begins, the reader sees him concentrated on his job in his workshop. The themes of *Personnage d’insomnie* can be seen as an illustration of man’s fears, his pleasures, of the fact that he is capable of creation and destruction, communication with or without language, of his relation to nature, his respect for it but also his arrogance; it is a journey of understanding and offers an alternative view of biological evolution. The tailor, when metamorphosed, evolves as a being, unlike Macunaíma who just wanders. So we speak of an approximate human being, perhaps mocking the idea of human superiority, both the blindly religious and the scientific man. There is the unusual incident of the buds appearing through the tailor’s body. More and more branches come out of his body until the narrator refers to him as “l’homme à branches”. In the first chapter it is spring and the protagonist does not realise the changes that are taking place in nature. In the third chapter, entitled “Faim de Souvenirs et Nourriture de la Mémoire”, Tzara introduces the changes that the tailor-tree has to make in his diet now that he is transformed. The writer finds an opportunity to speculate on the human and animal behaviour towards nourishment that often extends beyond need and is used to satisfy desire. His aim is to imagine a humanity “à branches”. The way his character is introduced when he was human, so alienated from his surroundings, changes when he becomes a tree-man. As a humanoid tree he becomes a true part of nature and explores it while also realising that he desires love, affection and communication. What is more, language remains an important part of Tzara’s work. While *Personnage d’insomnie* for its first part takes place in a state of hypocognition and semi-awake insomnia, the last part is “written down” in a packet and includes a story about an alternative humanity where all humans have branches and are tree-like.

Noteworthy points in Mário’s novel are its title, *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*, and that its main influence is considered to be the German ethnographer’s Theodor Koch-Grünberg’s 1911 work *From Roraima to Orinoco* which attempts, like Lévi-Strauss did with various American myths in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), to compare all the variations of tales regarding a character named Macunaíma. Macunaíma is born to an indigenous black mother in the forest, undergoes various metamorphoses and later moves to São Paulo. Just before arriving in São Paulo, Macunaíma jumps to the island of Maratapâ to leave his conscience.
there so that the city will not corrupt it. But how one can separate one’s conscience from oneself? At the same time is that not something that humans often desire? I will discuss Macunaíma’s promiscuous self-transformation and lack of consciousness in Chapter Two.

Haberly writes about the novel: “I believe, first, that Macunaíma was far more personal than Mário was ever publicly willing to admit, and that this is one reason for the evasiveness of his accounts of its composition and meaning”. (Haberly, p.145) In my chapter I follow the idea that Macunaíma was the result of a continuous personal research. However, while Haberly praises Macunaíma, he avoids naming any factors that make the novel personal for Mário de Andrade, and insists that its inspiration is drawn mainly from indigenous Amazonian myths. After he analyses what he calls the novel’s different codes, including the petrological, celestial, and ornithological code, he notes: “[...] reintegrating these separate codes, it becomes clear that Mário managed to combine within it the two traditional functions of Indianism: etiology, explaining the present; and elegy, mourning the loss of the past while finding lessons in it for the present”. (Haberly, p.158) I disagree with this interpretation as it takes little account of the fact that Brazil received a vast amount of cultural influence from the Africans who were brought there and who continue to contribute to the Brazilian identity.

Dadié Kacou Christian’s published thesis Um Africano Lê Macunaíma: uma interpretação da rapsódia de Mário de Andrade com base em elementos literários e culturais negro-africanos (2008) offers an opposing point of view. Kacou Christian presents the difficulty of placing certain works of literature in the canon, and tries to define what he calls “cultura negro-africana” (it translates as black-African, meaning sub-saharan cultures). His reading of Macunaíma in comparison with African storytelling produced a pioneering insight on the influence that African absurdist and magical elements in narrative have on Latin American narrative. At the same time, these elements are part of oral narrative. The attribution of sacred elements to oral language traditions is going to be an important point in my comparison of Macunaíma with Personnage d’insomnie. Kacou Christian looks at the rules of African storytelling, particularly by citing the work of Senegalese critic Mohamadou Kane, and points out that the magical and supernatural element of oral African stories is an everyday element in their lack of dichotomy between the visible and the
invisible. (Kacou Christian, p.26) This element is not simply present in *Macunaíma*, as I am going to suggest in Chapter Two. The fact that the magical is found in the quotidian is what brings the narrative closer to African ones. However, my interpretation of *Macunaíma*’s West African and Afro-Brazilian influences differs significantly in the following ways. Kacou Christian offers many examples from the African continent’s storytelling traditions as a whole, but the case studies he uses for comparison with *Macunaíma* are both from Mali, and despite their relevant content, they raise a lot of questions about the French interpretations of Bambara oral recitations. He looks at Macunaíma, the character, and compares him with the protagonist Sundjata of the *Epic of Sundjata*, which is a story preserved orally. The characters share some strange disabilities as the children that they later overcome, and each is destined for greatness. Jung’s analysis of the role of the primordial child in mythology, and by extension its role as an archetype in human life, applies in both cases. (Gray, p.85) However, Sundjata grows up to be a hero and not an anti-hero like Macunaíma. The other character that Kacou Christian compares with Macunaíma is Wangrin from *L’Étrange destin de Wangrin* by Hampaté Bâ, written around 1910. It is a semi-autobiographical narration of a Malian who served as an interpreter for a French commander. (Hampaté Bâ, 1999) Again, Wangrin knows how to trick and handle the French authorities, similar to Macunaíma’s experience in São Paulo, but he acquires his fortune in order to help others. Unlike Macunaíma, he is the Malian version of Robin Hood.

On one hand, Jewish and Romanian heritage, travel journals, metamorphosis and botany, and on the other hand, African storytelling, hybridity, identity and religious songs come together in my comparison, allowing parallel experiences to emerge between the two narratives that include elements of both the Jewish and African enforced diasporas.

The last chapter of this thesis merges the personal, social, political and to some extent artistic concerns of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade. Chapter One will explore the transition from folk elements, avant-garde experimentalism, and ethnopoetics in order to move to Chapter Two, which focuses on the incorporation of the writers’ cultural roots and their understanding of oral language in prose in their creation of a “modernist folk or lore” such in *Macunaíma* and *Personnage d’insomnie*. Having mulled over the nature of the pharmakon by considering the attempt to write
down oral language, in Chapter Three we see Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara feeling the need to act upon the fascist regimes that spread around them and the Second World War. It is important to emphasise that neither writer abruptly became militant. Still, the themes of the autochthonous songs they adapt into poems, the concerns of the myths and legends they create and the justification of that creation in their essays, articles and other works all confirm their involvement in one way or another with these public matters.

Mário de Andrade started writing his “concepção melodramatica” or the opera *O Café* in 1933 and completed it in 1942. In 1930, Getulio Vargas became dictator of Brazil after the “Revolution of 1930”. The historian Ianni explains: “up to 1930 the economic life of the country was organised after the export model. Coffee growing was the predominant productive activity, defining the character of the economic structure as a function of exports”. (Ianni, p.18) There followed the Coffee Crisis, from 1929 to 1933, which as the dates indicate also took place because of the Crash in the United States of America. Mário composed “an opera of collective interest” as he calls it. The first act takes place in a Brazilian port from which coffee is being exported and then in a coffee plantation. Mário employs different language for the scene where the underprivileged and the rich plantation owners argue in the chamber of the deputies. The privileged use a rich vocabulary empty of meaning. The narrative concludes with the victory of the revolutionaries. The happy ending is fictional in every sense because by the time Mário writes the opera, Vargas’ populist coup d’état would once again privilege the ruling classes in the long term.

The most detailed study of the opera is Flavia Camargo Toni’s habilitation thesis *Café, uma opera de Mário de Andrade* (2004). As a professor of music her emphasis is on Brazilian and European folkloric music, as well as classical music and the “danças dramaticas” that make *O Café* unique. Camargo Toni shows how Mário’s opera is an extensive study and exploration of all types of Brazilian folk music. Therefore she notes: “Quando do estudo da gênese do libreto, ao me deter na *Embolada da Ferrugem*, compreendi que Mário de Andrade, aliando seu saber literário ao musical, pensara esse trecho como uma canção, ou seja, valera-se de um esquema rítmico-melódico para selecionar as melhores palavras e combiná-las a versos como se fosse um compositor popular.” (Camargo Toni, p.2) Despite the value of her precious study in matching every song with its folk origin, it does not address
the narrative content in detail. I use the same version of the publication of the libretto as Camargo Toni. It can be found in Mário de Andrade’s *Poesias Completas* (1987) edited by Diléa Zanotto Manfio. The first substantial essay on the opera was Marta Morais da Costa’s, *Um Poeta verdadeiro conta seu sonho: Teatro e Revolução em Café de Mário de Andrade* (1988), which includes many references to Mário’s epistolography regarding his process and thoughts while writing the poem and the libretto. It touches upon the social aspect of the revolution but at a rather superficial level, mentioning the coffee crisis in the country and the impact on the economy. Furthermore, her thesis concentrates on the potential staging of the play/opera with a detailed analysis on the stage instructions, mise-en-scène etc.

Similarly, the only published notes on Tristan Tzara’s poetry collection *Terre sur terre* and *Le Signe de vie* (1946) are those extracted from Tzara’s own manuscripts by Henri Béhar, in the latter’s notes at the end of Tzara’s *Œuvres complètes*, volume III (1979), as well as fragments of these poems mentioned by Hentea in Tzara’s biography. Henri Béhar explains that since some of the poems included in *Le Signe de vie* are not dated by the poet, it can be calculated only approximately that they were written between 1939 and 1945, while Tzara was on the run from the Gestapo and staying in various southern French cities. (Béhar, p.607-608) The same applies to the collection *Terre sur terre* that was also published in 1946 with a lithograph by André Masson on the cover. The poems in both collections refer to incidents of the war, lost friends, lost people, fleeing, hope and despair as well as accounts criticism of what anyone’s behaviour might be when faced with war atrocities. For instance, the poem “Venir à venir” gives the impression of war as it is experienced in rural areas and ends in a hopeful tone. On the contrary, the poem “Contre le courant” begins by addressing in the second person someone that marches along with the rest and then ends with a sad note by which he marches as a prey resembling buoyancy aid, implying that they are all victims, unprotected from the bullets that will bring death. In *Terre sur terre* we encounter a variety of poetic idioms, from prose poetry to more lyrical pieces, and even a poem that reminds us of the Dada mode of expression. Nonetheless, Tzara refers to historical incidents of the period such as the entrance of Nazis in France in the poem “Terre invisible”, or the Liberation, with a personal undertone and in alluding to hymns to the nation in “Salut”. In other words, we see a form of progress in these two small collections:
from staying silent, isolated and observing the traumatic events of the war, to the point of acquiring the self-knowledge and strength necessary to react, to be part of an active resistance.

In this last comparison a similarity emerges between the situations of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade. On the one hand, Tzara has to hide during the Second World War, forced to remain as inactive as possible, his poems being his only “signe de vie”. On the other, Mário de Andrade was not officially active in politics as Tzara had been through the French Communist Party, and his petitions and articles about Franco’s fascism. But during a military coup with consequences for every Brazilian, Mário produces his most openly militant work disguised with music and dance, staged posthumously in 1955, only to be banned again by the next authoritarian regime in Brazil in the sixties. Tzara’s Le Signe de vie reveals the poet’s reflections during his experience as a fugitive, and Terre sur terre expresses the sense that one war might just have concluded but there are other outbreaks of evil waiting to happen. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, despite the pained tone of these later works of the two poets’, inventiveness is still active.
Chapter One

Rethinking the role of Ethnopoetics. A comparison of Tristan Tzara, *Poèmes nègres* (1916-17) and Mário de Andrade, *Clã do Jabuti* (1924-26)

The term ethnopoetics refers to a poetics that belongs to or is inspired by oral, non-Western poetry. It also refers to the method that was used by those who first recorded these oral poems in written form. It became popular subsequent to the publication of Tristan Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres* (1916-17) and Mário de Andrade’s *Clã do Jabuti* (1924-26).\(^1\) In this chapter, I will focus on the impact of the oral versus the written word. Here, we will encounter the first steps of the two poets in the world of non-literary linguistic expression, inspired by ritual utterance, song, shamanism and storytelling; an inspiration that will remain visible in their work throughout their lives. Specifically, this influence in their prose will be discussed in Chapter Two, while I will cover their poetry during the Second World War, their essays, articles and personal development in Chapter Three.

A primary concern in this chapter is also the inclusion and elevation of the audience (later to become the reader) in autochthonous African, Austronesian and Brazilian poems. This audience, for the sake of the present argument, is active either by reciting poetry, participating in a ritual or by surrounding the singer, rhapsodist, shaman or storyteller, and even by reading aloud the published version. I am going to show, using *Clã do Jabuti* and *Poèmes nègres* as a case study, that Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade challenge the notion of the author and their own authority through such poetry. Furthermore, analysing the two poets’ ethnopoetics is going to show that their interest in localised cultural manifestations, autochthonous groups from Brazil, African and Austronesian nations and populations, is accompanied by personal research and represents an effort to understand the common human activities of ritual, song, poetry and storytelling.

\(^1\) Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred: A range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia and Oceania* (University of California Press, 1992)
1. The poets’ background in Ethnopoetics

Mário de Andrade was a pioneer in the study of oral traditions and organised the programme Mission of Folkloric Research (Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas), a study of a vast variety of Brazilian folk culture. This study included music, songs, poems and rituals influenced by European and African traditions as well as native. Although the Department of Culture of São Paulo funded the programme in 1938, the Brazilian polymath began his research long before that, when he made his first trips outside the state of São Paulo. From 1924 to 1928 his travels to the interior state of Minas Gerais, as well as to Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and the Northeastern states of Natal, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Pará, Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte and Amazônia sparked his creativity. A great distinction between Mário and Tzara is that Mário experienced most of the oral traditions first-hand while travelling around various Brazilian states. However, some of his sources, as I will show later in this Chapter are secondary. Tzara’s engagement with oral tradition on the other hand, was through mostly secondary sources. In Mário’s case, travelling for research came after the publication of his first poetry collections, the more Parnassian Hà uma gota de sangue em cada poema (1917), the avant-garde, slightly Futurism-inspired Paulicéia Desvairada (1922), and Losango cáqui (1922-24).

I am going to analyse the poetry collection Clã do Jabuti that for most of its part is composed of existing ethnopoetics. A significant number of the oral traditions alluded to in Clã do Jabuti can still be encountered in Brazil as part of folk music and a cultural phenomenon that Mário de Andrade called “danças dramáticas” (dramatic dances). These dances include choreography, song, musical instruments and short theatrical sequences that re-enact certain stories. They are usually performed in a parade by groups of dancers and musicians comprised of people in many different age groups from a particular community. At the time, in the 1920s, “danças dramáticas” were part of life in urban communities in Salvador, Recife, Maceió, other cities of the Northeastern states, and even in São Paulo. However,
they were considered beyond the scope of the research of ethnologists and anthropologists, who focused mostly on indigenous tribal culture.

In the collection *Clã do Jabuti* we do not encounter Maracatu or Bumba Meu Boi, examples of “danças dramáticas”. This is perhaps because of their complexity and multiplicity of characters - such as the kings and queens of Congo - and their dialogue and performance aspects. However, they will be addressed in Chapter Two of this thesis, when referring to the novel *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* as well as in Chapter Three in regards to the opera *Café*. It is important to mention them now in order to understand the linearity of Mário de Andrade’s folk research and how it influenced his later prose, poetry and further research. Maracatu derives from a fusion of West African music and dance. A group parades playing drums and other instruments, and is separated into two subgroups so that the lyrics form a pattern of question and answer. (Andrade de, *DD* p.479) Bumba Meu Boi is also a group performance with music. It is a re-enactment of the killing of a bull and its magical resurrection, as a result of which the slave who killed it avoids punishment. (Andrade de, *DD* p.17)

However, Mário does include other allusions to African culture in *Clã do Jabuti*, for example, the cocos. He highlights narratives from different Brazilian communities. The vastness of Brazil meant that despite many similarities amongst its people there were also great differences. The gauchos of the South had very different rituals than those of the Kayapo natives in Pará. What interested Mário were oral poetry, verbal expression, its melody, rhythm, narrative and performativity. In addition, he looks at the effect that storytelling and rhythm has upon himself and other people. As he emphasizes in verses 293 and 294 of “Noturno de Belo Horizonte”, one of the poems found in *Clã do Jabuti*:

Eu queria contar todas as histórias de Minas

Aos brasileiros do Brasil… (Andrade de, p.186)

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2 A study of the dramatic dances where the writer intended to record in detail the dances that he witnessed in order to present their African, indigenous and Lusitanian Origins, can be found in Mário de Andrade, *Danças Dramáticas do Brasil* (Itatiaia Editora, 2002).
For his part, Tristan Tzara researches the performativity and content of oral poetry, but not for the sake of national cultural manifestations as Mário does. Contrary to the Brazilian poet, in Tzara’s view, local/autochthonous culture is not synonymous with the national, or, at least, not his own national identity. From the start, Tzara’s interest in oral poetry concentrates on the human capacity for melodious narrative, what Futurists called the “inner rhythm” (Sinker, p.184), including that of the audience of such oral poetry. Not only does he utilise his own perspectives in order to serve his purpose at the time, the Dada soirées in which he took part in Zürich between 1916 and 1923, but he also begins a personal long-term study of ritual songs and poems from various cultures. David Gascoigne characterizes Tzara’s approach to the simultaneous readings in different languages for the Cabaret Voltaire in the following way: “rhythm is being liberated in a textual and sonic space beyond anything that the earlier exponents of ‘vers libre’ might have imagined, generating unforeseen effects in a semi-improvised medium of language and sound”. (Gascoigne, p.212) At the beginning, Tzara may not have been as interested in the preservation of the exact gestures in rituals and folk traditions at large as Mário was. Nonetheless, his purpose coincides with Mário’s use of folk songs to unite people in forming an audience, and thus a community. Collecting and translating various autochthonous poems contributed to the expansion of Tzara’s interest and studies in African and Austronesian cultures. He became so involved, particularly in their art, that later in his life he was considered a scholar in the field, often sharing his knowledge by curating catalogues, contributing to periodicals and delivering talks.

In Tzara’s case, community, solidarity and a close circle of personal relationships are a substitute for the national. There may be many reasons for this: perhaps it began as a personality trait but it also has its roots in the complex status of Tzara’s official national identity. Although born in Romania, he was not an official Romanian citizen because Jewish residents were not permitted citizenship until after the First World War. The vast majority of Jewish families were “under no foreign protection”. (Hentea, p.7) Morius Francis mentions about Tzara’s status when he moved to France that only “upon the end of the war and the restoration of French independence, Tzara was naturalised a French citizen”. (Morius Francis, p.116)
will discuss Tzara’s fluid national identity and his faith in the power of the community as it relates to his work in the later Chapters.

Another common element being analysed in this Chapter is how, at the same point in time, the two poets shared the pioneering view that culture is not simply separated into “them” and “us”, and that the receiver, or the audience of the storyteller, plays a prominent role as well. It is also important to underline that despite previously using the word pioneering, the act of narration and its reception, the importance of a community or its individual members representing, participating and imitating a narrative, is not an original phenomenon, but rather an inherent element of humanity. Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara lift oral traditions to the surface of twentieth-century thought on poetry and the poetic. In addition, one cannot ignore the fact that it is not just written but oral language too that denotes emotional involvement for both Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara. The former grew up in a bourgeois “paulistano” environment, characterized by the Portuguese accent and French expressions that were popular at the time. Let us not forget that the vocabulary of piano playing in Mário’s work place, the Conservatory of São Paulo, consists mostly of Latin, Italian and French words. Although on a different continent, Mário uses the occasional French expression in his vocabulary from an early age. In Romania, French was also popular in the bourgeois environment. For his part, Tzara grew up with the sounds of Hebrew chants in the streets and synagogues of Moinesti, as well as with Romanian, Hebrew, Yiddish and French. Tzara was fluent in French but he retained a distinct trilling “r”, which can be heard in his recorded interviews and talks. The two poets despite certain differences have in common a basis of knowledge.

2. Autochtonous and folk poetry: choices and methods

The motivation for the comparison to which this chapter is devoted comes firstly from the fact that none of the poems in the collections Clã do Jabuti and Poèmes nègres is completely original. Both Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara make this clear either by declaring that the poems are adaptations, or by not signing them. It is also remarkable that neither poet adapts the poems in direct communication with indigenous people but instead translates from primary sources, such as
missionaries’ and ethnographers’ notes, and other publications. Mário de Andrade witnessed poems and songs from various multicultural Brazilian communities but he did not visit Amerindians in the Amazonian forest in person until much later in his life. Moreover, he was a musician and piano teacher before writing his avant-garde poetry. While interested in the content of his country’s poems and myths, he was also attracted to its melodies.

Mário travelled to the North and Northeast of Brazil for the first time in 1927. However, the motivation and some of the material for what would become the collection Clã do Jabuti, apart from the secondary reading mentioned before, came from his journey to the interior of Brazil in 1924. (Rodriques de Souza, p.46) On the other hand, Tristan Tzara was not a musician but his poems, and his manuscripts particularly, contain variations and corrections of specific words, revealing his preoccupation with sound over and above image and metaphor. (TZR 147, 1947) Just before commencing the translation of poems that were to become part of the Poèmes nègres, he became involved in organizing events at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, before the term Dada appeared. He was the first in that group of artists to introduce the idea of a performance that includes poems, and particularly the simultaneous poems mentioned before and which included different languages from the ones widely spoken in Zürich. (Hentea, p.69)

There is a difference between an ethnographic presentation of these poem-songs and their avant-garde adaptations by Tzara. While an ethnographer translates and transcribes each poem/song word for word for preservation, interpretation and comparison in order to study the culture that produced it, Tzara explores the potential in the poems for a new type of expression, and for an original rhythm. Most importantly, he finds a source from which he can supply his Dada soirées with the impression and importance of oral language, its rhythm and sound, as opposed to written language. In Poèmes nègres the quality of translation is not important, the point is “Dada”, to create a fresh look, in opposition to established European art. However, “DADA reste dans le cadre européen des faiblesses, c’est tout de même de la merde, mais nous voulons dorénavant chier en couleurs diverses pour orner le jardin zoologique de l’art de tous les drapeaux des consulats”. (Tzara, OC t1, p.81-82) Tzara recognises from the beginning of Dada’s creation that it is not a truly authentic concept. It still operates within European values in which he inserts other cultural
models. Joris mentions that Tzara’s personal notebooks of the period of the *Poèmes nègres* “show the excellent grasp and deep knowledge the poet had of the anthropological work of his time”. (Joris, p.76) One such poem from *Poèmes nègres*, “Nauri” with its repeated lines and short verses has a memorable acoustic effect:

Qui veut jeter le Zigendimento?

Zigendment

Que je vais jeter dans le ciel

Ciel

Qu’il laisse tomber un peu d’eau sur moi

d'eau

Que l’herbe brûlée croise un peu

herbe

Que ma vieille vache mange.

Vache

Je vais la tuer pour les vautours là

Les vautours là

Qu’ils me donnent leurs plumes

plumes

Ceux-là je veux les attacher à ma flèche

Flèche

Je veux chasser les bœufs de l’ennemi

Bœufs

Pour recevoir ma femme

Femme

Qu’elle me donne un enfant
Enfant
Qu’il cherche mes poux
Poux
Pour que je puisse aller vieil homme et mourir avec eux.

(Tzara, *OC t1* p.461)

My aim here is not so much to provide a detailed ethnographic analysis, but to show the beginnings of a new chapter in European and Brazilian avant-garde poetry at a time when Eurocentrism was being questioned, and when Western culture was enriched by the introduction of an extraordinary variety of art, poetry and literature. For instance, “Nauri” above could belong to the Nauruan language, and it reached Tzara through the publications of German missionaries.

I have chosen to present this poem first because it is extremely difficult to categorise it alongside the rest of the *Poèmes nègres*. It is not just the vast range of languages from which these poems were collected that creates difficulties in attempting to evaluate their translation. Often we encounter uncertainty among scholars with regard to their status and origin. For instance, brief research regarding the status of the use of language in Nauru confirms that the word “Zigendung” is highly likely to be an adoption of a German word into the everyday Nauruan vocabulary. Xavier Barker mentions that the German anthropologist “Hambroch (1914), reported that - unique among the German Pacific Territories - German was the language of instruction in Nauruan schools.” (Barker, p.27) In addition, Darrel Tryon notes: “the colonial history of the Micronesian peoples is as varied and complex as any in the Pacific.” He continues by presenting the various colonisers of Nauru in chronological order and concentrates on the German, Australian-English and Japanese language influences on the island. (Tryon, p.881) In an English translation of the poem, Pierre Joris (p.89), the translator next to the title “Nauri” has placed in brackets the word “Africa” with a question mark. The translator says: “Tzara left a number of these poems in German, and the editor of the complete works had those translated into French. This means that some of the English versions are up to four times removed from the originals (or from the ethnographic translations at hand)” (Joris, p.76)
However, references such as “bœuf” (beef or bull) contribute to doubting if in reality the poem’s origin is Nauru, because there are no large mammals on the island.

3. Exploring poetry as “the missing link” between language and song

For my purposes, what is important to take from the poem “Nauri” is the way it is presented. Even detached from the original translation, it is clear that the poem produces a form of alliteration. However, it is unlikely that alliteration, a poetic device Tzara cherished in Modernists such as Walt Whitman, is the only reason he would have noted down and translated this poem. “Nauri” expresses in a simple, but not simplistic, way the desire of a man for a harmonious life. It uses quotidian activities that evoke necessary human needs to represent the path from birth to death. Tzara writes in his *Note sur la poésie nègre* (1917):

Fixer au point où les forces se sont accumulées, d’où jaillit le sens formulé, le rayonnement invisible de la substance, la relation naturelle, mais cachée et juste, naïvement, sans explication…

Le crocodile couve la vie future, la pluie tombe pour le silence végétal, on n’est pas créateur par analogie. La beauté des satellites-enseignement de lumière nous contentera, car nous ne sommes Dieu que pour le pays de notre connaissance, dans les lois où nous vivons l’expérience sur cette terre, des deux côtés de notre équateur, dans nos frontières. Exemple parfait de l’infini que nous pouvons contrôler: la sphère.

Arrondir et régler dans des formes, des constructions, les images d’après leur poids, leur couleur, leur matière, ou mettre en rang par plans les valeurs, les densités matérielles et durables par la personnelle décision et la fermeté inébranlable de la sensibilité, compréhension adéquate à la matière transformée, tout près des veines et s’y frottant en souffrance pour la joie présente, définitive. On crée un organisme quand les éléments sont prêts à la vie. La
poésie vit d’abord pour les fonctions de danse, de religion, de musique, de travail. (Tzara, *OC t1*, p.401)

In the first paragraph, Tzara describes particular points in time that lead to the moment of birth of creative language. The ideas that I discuss in what follows suggest notions of mythical anthropogeny, anticipating René Girard and Eric Gans, which address the origins of language and culture that illuminate the reasons for which Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara are preoccupied with autochthonous poetry/ethnopoetics. My suggestion is that Tzara and Mário touched upon ideas of anthropology that would only be fully appreciated and canonised later. We see that Tzara, in his *Note sur la poésie nègre*, already speaks of the action of forming something into shapes, the beginnings of formulations of some sort. The rather romanticised and/or metaphorical language is reminiscent of Mário de Andrade’s preoccupation with lyricism. Tzara in particular emphasises that poetry serves dance, religion, music and work. Gans notes: “the freedom of signing as an act of representation distinguishes it from imitation as a new, human variety of mimesis. When I imitate you, I imitate your action, make movements analogous to yours; but when I represent an object, I designate it, not a particular action of it. My intention of the object is an intention to recall it into being, to double it using only my own resources”. (Gans, p.12) Tzara is writing about poetry and Gans about the origin of language, but they are inclined to agree upon the nature of representation and its relation to consciousness. In summary, representation is a fundamental characteristic of humanity and so is poetry, which includes and is included in the act of representation. Tzara emphasises that “we create an organism when the items, elements are ready for life”. Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara are both attracted to autochthonous poetry, since they each see it as a witness to primordial narrative creation at large as a medium of communication.

In addition to considering the poems, it is important to compare the writers’ views on poetry. Tzara habitually wrote articles such as the above, and informative and critical notes that were published in prestigious art and literature magazines of his time. At the same time, Mário de Andrade would also publish critical articles on cultural affairs, mainly music, language and poetry. In his *Ensaio sobre a Música Brasileira* (1928), he writes “a nossa ignorância nos regionaliza ao bairro em quem
The poet might appear to offer a pessimistic view of the ignorance of his fellow Brazilians with regard to cultural manifestations in regions other than their own, but he includes himself among them. The richness of the songs, music, poems and dance of his country prompted him to begin researching and recording Brazilian popular song and music. In this essay, he criticised the fact that other Brazilians saw folk and popular music as inferior.

Notes sur la poésie nègre was first published in SIC, November 1918. Henri Béhar mentions that the article was reprinted in Variétés exactly ten years later with a quotation from Descartes as an epigraph: “Je ne veux même pas savoir qu’il y a eu des hommes avant moi”. The article continues with Tzara’s addition to Descartes’ quotation: “Mais quelques lois essentielles et simples, fermentation pathétique et sourde d’une terre solide”. (Tzara, OC t1, p.400) Descartes’s sentence is appropriate to the modernist ambition of Dada to forget the established art and start anew. But at the same time, what Tzara adds to the philosopher’s phrase cannot be ignored. Despite the free spirit of Dadaism, as a human being, Tzara recognises that he needs some laws; human beings function in social groups that create some rules. Even if we create something new, it will require some laws. His comment is ambiguous and the fact that he refers to “lois essentielles et simples” as “fermentation pathétique” is directly related to firstly, the necessary evil of laws. Secondly, he projects his opinion about the coevalness of more organic societies that also operate under law systems unlike popular views that they are “primitive” and illogical, something that will be discussed in more detail later in this Chapter. He raises these ideas again in L’Art et l’Océanie where he not only praises poetry as one of the most powerful forces in humanity but also sees it as “habillé d’expériences millénaires”. (Tzara, OC t4, p.311)
Something similar happens in Mário’s “A escrava que não é Isaura” (1924). Mário de Andrade begins by writing that he likes to speak in parables, and then makes some alterations to the story of Genesis. He avoids being sacrilegious by noting that Christ spoke the truth while he himself only expresses his own opinions. The writer continues: “Vamos à história! [...] e Adão viu Iavé tirar-lhe da costela um ser que os homens se obtinham em proclamar a coisa mais perfeita da criação; Eva. Invejoso e macaco o primeiro homem resolveu criar também. E como não soubesse ainda cirurgia para uma operação tão interna quanto extraordinária tirou da língua um outro ser. Era também-primeiro plágio!-uma mulher.” [...] “Adão colocou essa mulher nua e eternal no cume do Ararat.”[...] “Colocou-lhe uma primeira coberta: a folha de parra.”[...] “E cada nova geração e as raças novas sem tirar as vestes já existentes sobre a escrava do Ararat sobre ela depunham os novos refinamentos do trajar. Os gregos enfim deram-lhe o coturno. Qual lhe dava um collar, qual uma axorca. Os indianos, pérolas; os persas, rosas”[...] “Um vagabundo genial nascido a 20 de outubro 1854 passou uma vez junto do monte. Mas o vagabundo quis ver o monte e deu um chute de 20 anos naquela rouparia. E o menino descobriu a mulher nua, angustiada, ignara, falando por sons musicais, desconhecendo as novas línguas, selvage, áspera, livre, ingênua, sincera. A escrava do Ararat chamava-se Poesia. O vagabundo genial era Artur Rimbaud.” (Andrade de, p.9-10)

The writer creates his own parable about the birth of poetry as a biblical woman. After different cultures dressed her in various garments-symbols, Rimbaud stripped her naked, free, speaking in musical sounds, sincere. Mário considers modernist poetry to be liberated and liberating. Later he will come to the conclusion that the modernist ideals of poetry that he attributes to Rimbaud can also be found in autochthonous poetry.

It is unknown whether language or song came first, however, I share Steven Brown’s view and his understanding of his own term “musilanguage”. He suggests that music and language evolved from the same ancestral stage and that they are part

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3 Guimarães B., 2004, A escrava Isaura, Moderna Paradidático, the title of this mediation on poetry is symbolic and inspired by Bernardo Guimarães’ romance novel A escrava Isaura (1875). This is a romantic novel whose central character is the slave Isaura, daughter of a Portuguese descendant and a black slave. Although it was written at a time when the abolition of slavery was being demanded, Isaura is described as a white slave.
of a spectrum rather than two different but overlapping domains. Brown notes: “At one end of this we find the function of “sound reference” where arbitrary sound patterns are used to convey symbolic meaning and on the other the “sound emotion” where rather particular sound patterns are used to convey emotional meaning.” (Brown, p.278) And it might be impossible to have paleontological evidence of language and music, but we do have bone flutes dating 36,000 years back to our Paleolithic roots. Without becoming entangled in theories of the origin of music, let us concentrate on the fact that for Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara, ethnopoetics is inseparable from rituals and song. Girard’s notion of a mimetic crisis is helpful here, of a crisis within a community being resolved with the discovery of a scapegoat and the repetition of that discovery in the form of rituals (Stevens, p.311-312). However, my concern is not the origin of ritual but the ritual’s dissemination; namely how it is distributed in poetry, music and performance.

Instead of separating language, poetry, melody, dance etc., we can look at the concept of ritual poetry. The concept of ritual offers a cohesive understanding of the significance of Clã do Jabuti and Poèmes nègres. Firstly, the title Clã do Jabuti that can be translated as The Clan of the Tortoise refers to one of the major totemic animals of the indigenous inhabitants of Brazil. “The clan, of which Mário talks, is the unity of voices that forms Brazil.” (Rodrigues de Souza, p.21) Mário continues by mentioning that often indigenous stories about the jabuti (tortoise) focus on the appearance of the turtle shell, which resembles a mosaic, reminiscent of Mário’s metaphor of the harlequin’s clothes to evoke the combined European, African and indigenous roots of Brazil. (Rodrigues de Souza, p.22) The attribution of such a symbolic title to a collection that is composed of a variety of melodies and folk stories from the entire country - “modas”, “acalantos” (lullabies), “rondós”, “sambinhas” - and from the entire cultural and ethnic spectrum of Brazilian history and reality, reveals an intention to pursue national unity. It expresses the belief that community relies on shared cultural manifestations.

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4 A flute-like, perforated thighbone of a young cave bear was found in 1995 in solid breccia of layer 8 at Divje babe I cave site in Slovenia. The find originates from a reliably dated middle Paleolithic level, and could thus be the oldest musical instrument so far known. Its age is assessed approximately 10,000 years older than the first intentionally produced musical instrument, a bone flute from the Upper Paleolithic that was found in the cave of Geissenklösterle in Germany assessed by radiocarbon method at c.36,000 years old. (Kunej and Turk, p.235, 2001)
Similarly, although the poems Tzara chooses do not all come from the same land, they explore a variety of rituals such as food gathering, the initiation of the youngsters, marriage etc. Ritual oral poetry and performance do not need to be violent in character in order to fulfil their purpose of uniting a community and avoiding internal conflict. Girard notes that, “the development of ritual constitutes a normal evolution, because rituals consist in the paradox of transforming the conflictual disintegration of the community into social collaboration” (Girard, p.20). Tzara and Mário see that social problems in their urban environments arise because of the community’s internal alienation. They come to this view by studying autochthonous poetry and they continue to explore this throughout their life’s work. Fundamental to ritual is mimetic praxis from which follows dialogue, stichomythia. The poem “Nauri” is based on a question-response pattern, much like stichomythia, and as we are going to see, so do many of poems in the two collections that are being discussed here. These poems call for participation of the community, in enhancing communication. They are not sterile recitations.

My approach is to divide the different types of poems in the collections Clã do Jabuti and Poèmes nègres into groups. The particularity of the different groups explains why they cannot be analysed as a unity. In some cases, like the word “Zigendung”, as we have seen, it is difficult to locate the source. Some others, like “O poeta come Amendoim” mention ethnographic elements but purely from the perspective of Mário de Andrade. Even the title, “o poeta”, is a clear reference to Mário. Other poems in both collections can be traced back to their origin, which is the case in almost all of the poems of the Poèmes nègres. Nonetheless, Mário includes poems such as “A toada do pai do mato” that in its entirety is a borrowing from the Parecis people. And last but not least, there are some that appear only in Clã do Jabuti, that are rhapsodic in nature, and which mix Mário’s own verse with parts of folk songs. To summarise the approach, the poems are divided into comparative blocks based upon the parallels drawn either between the verse, content and background story or, at times, the poets’ comments within the poem. The latter can be found only in Mário’s collection.
4. Indirect connections: the mutual friendship with Blaise Cendrars

In 1924, before publishing *A Escrava que não é Isaura*, Mário de Andrade travelled to the interior state of Minas Gerais and began researching folk poetry. In *Isaura*, when he talks of the necessity and reality of polyphony, we can assume that he refers to any kind of poetry outside of the established Romantic and Parnassian schools that were the only ones that the Brazilian bourgeoisie considered acceptable. Among others, in the essay Mário de Andrade quotes Tristan Tzara: “ou ainda Tristão Tzara ‘arp l’arc et la barque à barbe d’arbre’ O poeta brinca. Brincadeira sem importância mas que entre outros benefícios traz de irritar até a explosão os passadistas”. (Andrade de, p.44) Mário’s comments, although written earlier than Tzara’s notes on Pre-Columbian art, show once again the two poets’ similar approaches.

O que fez imaginar que éramos, os modernizantes, uns degenerados, amadores da fealdade foi simplesmente um erro tolo de unilateralização da beleza. Até os princípios deste século principalmente entre os espectadores acreditou-se que o Belo da arte era o mesmo Belo da natureza. Creio que não é. O Belo artístico é uma criação humana, independente do Belo natural; e somente agora é que se liberta da geminação obrigatória a que sujeitou a humana estultice. Por isso Tristão Tzara no Cinéma Calendrier dirige uma carta à:

francis picabia

qui saute

avec de grandes et de petites idées

pour l’anéantissement de l’ancienne beauté & comp. (Andrade de, p.16)

He goes on later to quote verses of Picabia’s *Pensées sans langage* (1919) and Tzara’s *Cinéma calendrier du cœur abstrait* (1920) in order to demonstrate what he considers as excellent examples of modern poetry that derive from the unconscious. (Andrade de, p.71) Interestingly, as Buot shows, when Tzara arrives in Paris rue Émile-Augier, at Germaine Everling’s appartment, Picabia and his partner invite
Aragon, Breton, Éluard and Soupault to meet him. The poet is described in this way: “we imagined him tall, he is small, we expected tribunal disobedience, his French is approximate and marked by a strong Romanian accent”. (Buot, p.89) Mário de Andrade mentions that he is being accused of being unpatriotic and even a traitor “traidor da patria”, “Antibrasileiro” because he studied in a French college, was taught Italian music and liked German and American poetry. Reading Gago Coutinho’s novel he felt Portuguese and at the Congress of Peace in Geneva he felt Russian. He then quotes Bildad from the book of Job to justify language’s simultaneity and poetic polyphony. (Andrade de, p.84) Ironically, posthumously Mário de Andrade started to be considered a patriotic poet.

In the spirit of cosmopolitanism, while Tzara, a Romanian Jewish poet brought Dada to Paris, his Swiss friend, Blaise Cendrars, inspired Mário’s journey to the interior of Minas Gerais in 1924, which the poet considered invaluable. Blaise Cendrars became a friend of Mário de Andrade too. Amaral describes that the “discovery of Brasil” by the Brazilian modernists can be partially attributed to the enthusiasm of Blaise Cendrars. “É claro que já estava implícito entre os modernistas, no ambiente nacionalista das comemorações do Centenário da independência em 1922, aquilo que Mário de Andrade já descreveria em 1923 a Tarsila como ‘matavirgismo’ rogando-lhe para que voltasse ao Brasil e se preocupasse menos com as novidades francesas.” During Holy Week in 1924, Cendrars, the painter Tarsila do Amaral, her partner, poet Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade visited the historic cities of Minas Gerais to admire their baroque monuments (Amaral, p.44) The historical places of Minas Gerais include the famous towns Tiradentes, Diamantina and Ouro Preto (former Vila Rica), which was the old capital of the state and in the Eighteenth Century was the most populous city in Brazil. Being rich in gold, the city flourished culturally as well as economically. However, Mário seems to be inspired by the new capital of Minas, Belo Horizonte. At the time, only approximately thirty-five years had passed since the construction of the city. The poem “O Noturno de Belo Horizonte” takes us on a journey from the night in Belo Horizonte to the towns mentioned before, but without the same detailed descriptions that he devotes to the new capital. Rather, he refers briefly to important historical events that took place there. That is why the poet says:

Que luta pavorosa entre floresta e casas...
Todas as idades humanas

Macaqueadas por arquiteturas históricas (Andrade de, p.178)

Although the poem includes the traditional ballad “A Serra do Rola Moça”, as mentioned in the Introduction, the emphasis here is given to the rest of the poem. The ballad acts as an inserted traditional oral song about a girl (moça) that accidentally falls from the hills near Belo Horizonte. Mário uses the story as a reminiscence of the unknown composer’s inspiration in combining the landscape with events that took place there. The reason that I focus on the rest of the poem is because it embodies Tristan Tzara’s ideas about the infancy of our civilisation as well as Mário de Andrade’s views about the newness and hybridity that constitute Brazil. Mário talks about the dreadful struggle between the forest and the houses, and Belo Horizonte’s environment is a mixture of architecture from all the ages. He creates the word “maçaqueadas” that comes from “macaco” (monkey) to emphasise that the city is disguised by buildings that mimic historical architecture. The poet then, in the verses that follow, refers to some of these architectural styles after saying that Minas wants to have the most modern capital. The ironic repetition of “também” does not seek to condemn the fact that there is a struggle for modernity, rather that this struggle is enforced. An important point to have in mind is that our Modernists went to Minas Gerais in order to admire the Baroque masterpieces of the sculptor Aleijadinho and show them to Blaise Cendrars. Aleijadinho’s real name was Antônio Fransisco Lisboa and his religious art is significant for its synthesis of colonial Baroque, Gothic and personal elements. In addition, since he was a mixed race artist, the Modernists saw in him a combination of what could constitute an authentic Brazilian art. The figure of Aleijadinho was exploited in pursuit of the Brazilian “racial democracy” in the late 1930s. (Maddox, p.184)

Também quer ter também capital moderníssima também…

12 Pórticos gregos do Instituto da Rádio

Onde jamais Empédocles entrará…

O Conselho Deliberativo é manuelino,

Salão sapiente de Manuéis-da-hora
The poem for the most part is an eloquent, description of the essence of night-time in the city of Belo Horizonte. However, I have chosen to focus on certain verses that show Mário de Andrade criticising his fellow Brazilians for not celebrating “Brazilidade”, not trying to understand their identity and instead, imitating anything foreign. In line 187 he writes:

Os pratos nativos são indices de nacionalidade.

Mas no Grande Hotel de Belo Horizonte servem à francesa.

Et bien! Je vous demande un toutou!

190 Venha a batata-doce e o torresmo fondant! (Andrade de, p.183)

While the food order at the Grande Hotel is in French, the dishes that arrive on the table, bean stew and a kind of crackling, are typical recipes from the area. In a humorous way, the poet says that the cracklings-torresmo are “fondant”, another reference to French cuisine, while in the first line it is stated that the dishes from Minas are signs of the national identity. Despite the fact that most of the poem consists of Mário de Andrade’s own verse, it is included in Clã do Jabuti not only for its general inserted ethnopoetics but also its plentiful Brazilian colloquialisms:

E os pileques

195 quase pileques

salamaleques

da caninha da manga!...

(Andrade de, p.183)

“Pileques” signifies being tipsy from alcohol, “salamaleques” derives from the Arabic greeting “As-Salaam Alaikum” but indicates an exaggerated courteous behaviour, here of the drunken people, while “caninha” refers to cachaça, the Brazilian spirit made from sugar cane.
Rodrigues de Souza comments on the poem’s multiple references not only to different accents, but different stories and dances of the region of Minas: “Em Noturno, a voz lírica convoca brasileiros de diferentes regiões para ouvirem os casos mineiros. A união de sotaques, ritmos, cores e danças sintetiza a diversidade cultural, traduzindo ‘este assombro de misérias e grandezas’ que o Brasil revisitado pelo poeta” (Rodrigues de Souza, p.155) This is also what Blaise Cendrars found fascinating about Brazil, according to his own accounts. His interest in folklore, the source of which he attributed to Gérard de Nerval, was nurtured by his exposure to storytelling during his journeys to the country. He emphasizes that Brazilians rely on transmitting their folklore orally, due in large part to the fact that the population was illiterate, and that the Africans who were brought as slaves were forbidden to write. “The first printing press was not installed at Rio de Janeiro until 1808, under the Portuguese Empire.” (Cendrars, p.567) Mário de Andrade writes in “Noturno de Belo Horizonte”, after inserting his own verses into a prose poem drawn from the dark comic story of coronel Antônio de Oliveira Leitão:

Mas não há nada como histórias pra reunir na mesma casa…

A Espanha estilhaçou-se numa poeira de nações americanas

Mas sobre o tronco sonoro da língua do ão

Portugal reuniu 22 orquídeas desiguais.

Nós somos na Terra o grande milagre do amor.

Que vergonha si representássemos apenas contingência de defesa

(Andrade de, p.187)

The poet has included the verses of the colonel’s story separately from his own, a tribute to the anonymous storyteller that passed it on to him. The poet also writes that there is nothing better than storytelling as a way of reuniting people under the same roof. The “language of ão” refers to Portuguese with its characteristic nasal-sounding suffix. The fact that he presents the making of Brazil as “Portugal reuniu 22 orquídeas desiguais” and that “Nós somos na Terra o grande milagre do amor” can be seen as a positive view of Brazilian multiculturalism. That view stays with Mário de Andrade throughout his prose and his poetry, as well as his work as a researcher and
director of the Department of Culture in 1935, and founder of the Department of the Historical and Artistic Heritage in 1933.

Blaise Cendrars was also fascinated not only by storytelling in Brazil but also its hybridity. He said: “On me pose la question pourquoi histoires vraies? En répondant il faut mettre l’accent sur la vérité vraie de ces histoires, qui sont vraies, non seulement parce qu'elles sont en partie vécues, mais parce qu'elles sont arrivées comme ça et que c'est ainsi que je les avais enregistrées bien avant de les écrire — et avec une autre mémoire que la seule mémoire du cerveau.” (Cendrars, p.97) This claim parallels Mário’s line from “Noturno”, when he says that he wants all Brazilians to listen to the stories from Minas, as quoted at the start of this Chapter. It also reminds us of Mário’s statement that he cannot forget the poems and stories he heard when he visited Minas as a young man in 1917. (Andrade de, p.66) In Brazil, Cendrars discovered a cultural multiplicity that was a balsam for his curiosity, although at the time this multiplicity was particularly attractive to other Europeans. “Et, sans qu’il l’ait voulu, son "Cycle brésilien" raconte la découverte du Brésil par les Portugais, arrivant par mer (et la mer joue encore son rôle dans le peuplement ou l’économie, sans parler du tourisme moderne), se heurtant à la formidable Serra do Mar si souvent perdue dans les nuages et toujours recouverte d’un ‘niagara’ de végétation tropicale, qui la peint toute en vert, mais en camafeu; il les suit sur le plateau intérieur, de São Paulo à Minas, comme les Bandeirantes et les chasseurs d’émeraudes, il décrit les plantations, les travaux. Il adore les villes immenses et verticales ou les bourgades écrasées de soleil; il fait revivre ses rencontres avec les nègres, les assassins en prison, les ‘colonels’ (grands propriétaires) riches sans limite et tout puissants.” (Roche, p.218) He had already travelled to various African countries and the Orient, so seeing something unknown to him, derived from African cultural elements, mixed with the various indigenous ones, including Portuguese and French, was a revelation.

Blaise Cendrars was interested in collecting and cataloguing things, just like Mário and Tzara. His *Anthologie nègre* (1921) is a collection of stories from various African ethnicities and countries. The Swiss born poet shared Tzara’s dislike for labelling, categorisation and strict participation in certain art groups, schools of thought and movements. He briefly played with Dada, like Tzara, and followed Breton in his Surrealist group. One of the differences between his anthology and
Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres* which precedes it, is that Tzara focuses solely on chants, poems and ritual songs - which he treats as poems - rather than narration. While much research has been undertaken on Cendrars’s work, *Poèmes nègres* has only been partially studied. Cendrars and Tzara also shared an interest in Austronesian cultures. The difference once again is that Cendrars visited New Zealand while Tzara did not. However, the poem “Noël en Nouvelle-Zélande” from Cendrars’ poetry collection *Trop c’est trop* (1957) has been criticised for not acknowledging colonial discrimination and environmental damage while focusing on the pastoral. (Jackson, p.99) On the other hand, regarding New Zealand, Tzara concentrates only on the autochthonous Maori culture just as he did with Australian, Polynesian and Melanesian poems and ritual songs. The poem “Chant pour haler les troncs d’arbre, Puhwa (Hari)” might be short but it conveys important Maori traditions.

Tirez o Tainui tirez la Arawa

lancez-la à la mer

la foudre est tombée droit sur le but

est tombée sur mon jour sacré. (Tzara, *OC t1*, p.487)

The title that Tzara gives is self-explanatory; a chant used to keep the rhythm of cutting tree trunks. The poet has described what the poem is rather than inventing a title for it. The word trunk cannot be found in the poem, instead the first line refers to towing the “Tainui” and the “Arawa”, the mythical or ancestral canoe vessels that brought the Maoris to New Zealand from Hawaiki. The exact location of Hawaiki is debatable and according to Charles Royal, the name refers to more than one place. (Royal, p.4) The fact that the poem says “the lightning hit its target on a sacred day” can be explained due to the sacred significance of lightning for the various Maori tribes. Margaret Orbell points out that “in every district there is a hill or mountain where lightning used to warn the local people of a coming event.” There are different interpretations of lightning depending on the way it strikes and there are also feminine and masculine versions of it. (Orbell, p.94) In addition to the many narrative variations of the journeys and crew of the Arawa waka (canoe, vessel) and Tainui waka, there is the myth of the burning of the Arawa and the construction of a new one from trunks of the new land, New Zealand. “The company of chiefs went to work at
the canoe, to hew it into shape, accompanying their work with incantations to hasten the completion”. (Tarakawa, Smith, p.238) Moreover, there is Agathe Thornton’s reference to a tree-felling ritual of the Tainui canoe. (Thornton, p.25) Tzara has transcribed another Maori chant that he notes as *Tukiwaka* (obviously the name of another canoe) and it seems that it was used while rowing: “souque, souque…coup rapide…un coup de rame, pousse, si dur que ce soit…” (Tzara, p.486) The combination of the two previous chants again provides information about how Tzara developed his speculation upon the indigenous and folk poetry that he adapted and shows that it was not chosen randomly.

*Poèmes nègres* includes two teamwork chants from Bantu languages as well. Firstly, there is a translation of a builders’ song from the Sotho language noted as “Sotho nègre, chant pour construire” whose first three lines mimic phonetically a rhythmical sound. The first line is: “a ee ea eeeea ee ee, ea ee, ea ee, a ee”. It continues by saying how they are building a courtyard for the chief, repeating the description of their labour. (Tzara, *OC t1*, p.484) The second is also from a Bantu group, the “Wanyamwesi” and it is a “chant pour hacher”:

**II**

Viens la pluie est là- je suis fatigué je suis fatigué de travailler

allons en hâte à la besogne nous asseoir et manger.

**III**

Pourrais-tu me mesurer une toute petite mesure de bracelets

Roi, pourrais-tu me forger certaines espèces européennes
de bracelets, le tambour de la danse t'appelle.

**IV**

Yamalila oh, lui c’est un chasseur d’éléphants, nous allons manger

avec vous, gens édentés, nous ne sommes plus en état de vanner le grain

pour les autres, nous n’en sommes plus capables. (Tzara, p.484-485)
Tzara carefully chooses his sources and studies societies other than just his own. His observation is that they lead a more humane way of life and that the individual’s wellbeing is only achieved as part of active participation in the community. He also observes that figurative as well as narrative art is embedded into the community’s rituals. In reference to Tzara’s first Dada manifesto and his early notes on *l’art nègre*, Sascha Bru notes that: “the African primitive was for early Tzara not only one of his main models of rupture but also of affiliation situated on the margins of Western culture”. He adds that the same applies to the Oceanic cultures that appear frequently in Tzara’s writings of that period. (Bru, p.401) Tzara may not have made an enormous Maori canoe, but he knew one or two things about tree felling since his father Filip Rosenstock, worked “like his father before him, in forest exploitation”. (Hentea, p.10) Additionally, while Tzara was growing up, he had the personal experience of being discriminated against by Romanian law, and at times by its people, just because he was Jewish. He considered the faraway people of Oceania and Africa more sincere than the native bourgeoisie of Bucharest, Zürich or Paris. He notes:

“Une gêne inexplicable se produit chaque fois qu’il est question de cannibalisme chez les peuplades océaniennes. Je suis enclin à croire que les survivances de ce cannibalisme dans notre propre société en sont cause, car l’hypocrisie en matière sexuelle est depuis longtemps devenue un dogme qui dénature les fonctions vitales primaires de l’existence. Pourquoi s’obstine-t-on à ne voir dans ce phénomène que des actes d’aberration et de maladive perversion au lieu du fait rituel qui ne manque ni de grandeur ni d’imagination?” (Tzara, *OC t4*, p.311)

This thought is a footnote that Tzara makes while suggesting about poetry that “elle ne s’écrit pas”, but rather “elle vit au fond du creuset où se prépare toute cristallisation humaine, toute considération sociale, aussi simple soit-elle”. In this article he originally speaks about art in Oceania and the fact that it is characterised by a logical approach. However, the application of his thoughts in *L’art et l’Océanie* to certain other societies emphasizes his argument about the Western conventions and hypocrisy.
Let us return to the “Wanyamwezi” work chant in order to look at its content. From a first reading Tzara would have noticed that it is not exactly like the rest of the teamwork chants. In these verses the dominant idea is that of oppression and misery rather than camaraderie. The conditions of labour are harsh and there is reference to European riches that are out of reach. Finally, the song calls upon a hunter who is presented as a free man unlike the labourers who cannot physically and mentally keep working, winnowing grain for others. The Wanyamwezi were mostly cultivators and gatherers living in the forested areas in the territory of Tanzania. In the early nineteenth century they also flourished as caravan traders and porters. In fact, travelling and trading by caravans became so deeply embedded in their culture that it made them famous across East Africa and the Persian Gulf, influencing coastal Muslims. (Rockel, p.178-180) However, their economy was dominated by colonial powers and most of them were forced to work under conditions of near slavery or were enslaved under German occupation. (Rockel, p.185) In 1916, Tristan Tzara had already started to investigate social and racial inequalities and colonial exploitation. Later on things would change but, to his disappointment, not necessarily improve. When he visited Rhodesia after being invited for the first International Congress of African Culture in August 1962, he also travelled to Mozambique and South Africa. (Tzara, OC t4, p.568) Although “struck by the constant circulation of people and ideas”, “he deplored the ‘Nazi police’ enforcing an extremely rigorous system of racial separation. Tzara took some comfort in seeing that the black majority was culturally vibrant, indicating that it had not been defeated”. (Hentea, p.286)

Another poem from Poèmes nègres that refers to invaders and colonisation is noted as “Yao”, from the eponymous ethnic group that is mostly known for inhabiting Mozambique, although, because of its nomadic status, the group can also be found in the surrounding areas:

Tenons bon, nous les vieux.

Qu’est-ce qu’une guerre, qu’est-ce? Ils disaient:

Monsieur Sulia n’est pas encore né?

Alors arrive le Massiliu. Les Gamehoré

sont abattus (énormement).
Ensuite ils se sont enfuis. Mais les
Allemands sont venus, et voilà
le danger. Tout le bois est brûlé,
les fourmis furent brûlées, les chèvres
furent brûlées; tous les gens furent tués.
Ce fut la levée des impôts; ils durent apporter
des roupies par centaines. Ce n'était pas encore
assez. Le cœur fut serré d’angoisse. Nous
préférons rester à l'autre côté
du Lunga. Monsieur Sulia
télégraphia à Monsieur le sous-préfet: il vint
pour me tendre la laine sur le dos
et en faire un sac pour ses pesos.
Maintenant je suis las.
-Les crânes ne jouent pas, seul joue celui qui a des cheveux.

(Tzara, *OC t1*, p.472)

It has to be noted that this poem was left in German and was translated by Louis Huguet in French. (Béhar, p.717) The language is significant because it is from the same period as the poem “Chant pour hâcher” from the Wanyamwezi, and both are from German East Africa. The Yao themselves were involved in many conflicts with neighbouring ethnic groups and also took advantage of the slave trade and sold people to the Portuguese. (Northrup, p.64) However, the poem here expresses the grief of the Yao about the struggles they have been through during their occupation by the Germans. The poem talks of famine, environmental destruction and unfair taxation that lead to exhaustion. While finding the origin of the name Sulia was not fruitful, the reference to telegraphing and the Deputy Prefect indicate the enforcement
of Western methods of administration. Tzara includes several poems of the Yao in his
collection that show the variety of cultural influences that they had. For instance, the
majority were early converters to Islam. One poem seems to be recited by an elder to
a boy, and concerns the significance of his circumcision. In it the boy is taught to
reply in Arabic, *Marhaba*, despite using East African first names. (Tzara, *OC tI*,
p.474-475) Besides the bad experiences of invasion, enslavement and colonisation,
there are some elements that also reveal peaceful cultural exchanges and influences.

Tzara collected most of the Malagasy poems from Jean Paulhan’s
publications after the ethnographer’s research on the island from 1908 to 1910. The
title “Hain-teny” signifies, as Devèze explains: “dans son acceptation la plus générale
signifierait le savoir-du-parler”. (Devèze, p.358) Paulhan adds that “le hain-teny dans
son sens strict est donc une variation sur un proverbe. Mais il y a plus car ce petit
poème ne se dit pas isolément; il y a besoin d’être encadré dans une joute oratoire où
les deux rivaux font assaut d’esprit en débitant chacun un hain-teny jusqu’à ce que
l’un d’eux, ne trouvant plus rien à répondre, se déclare vaincu…” (Paulhan, p.358) In
an attempt to summarise what hain-teny is, Levy explains it as: “elaborately
structured ritual debate poems that dealt with every aspect of human relationships and
were organised around the repetition of proverbs that seemed to punctuate the
discourse at key intervals”. (Levy, p.181) This kind of poetry-ritual is significant
firstly because it is a non-western, non-ancient Greek example of ancient
stichomythia that includes poetry and performance. Secondly, its origin, in
Madagascar, where Melanesian culture meets African culture, points to Tzara’s
targeted study of autochthonous poetry rather than making random choices, an
approach which may have dismissively been attributed to *Poèmes nègres*. Thirdly, as
I am going to discuss further later in this Chapter, the qualities of the hain-teny
coincide with Mário’s discoveries about the African origins of poetry-performance in
most Brazilian musical forms, as sampled in *Clã*.

“Hain-teny”

Dites-moi seul

Dites-moi porte

Rasoavangaina était-elle ici?
-Elle était ici avant hier

-Et quelles furent ses paroles?

-Vous et elle, a-t-elle dit, êtes les gouttes d’eau sur la feuille d’arum joyeuses elles se font toutes face

Irritées elles roulent ensemble à terre.

Où laverons-nous pour jouer

des citrons des limons

Quand viendra le moment de laver

Nous serons tous deux perfumés (Tzara, OC, t1, p. 448)

In his account of French literary history, Denis Hollier talks of the introduction of “negrophilia” by Cendrars and Tzara into avant-garde circles. He mentions the inclusion of “Negro” music in the Dada Soirées, with Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara banging drums and inventing African chants. These “presyntactic forms of expression presumed to be typical of black culture” were short-lived. “But the influence of black culture on Tzara’s Poèmes nègres was more enduring. He was a more critical collector than Cendrars, drawing on the best-documented sources of his time, especially the Swiss anthropological journal Anthropos. Transcribing African or Aboriginal myths and chants, Tzara used scholarly word-for-word translations rather than smoothed-over, literary versions.” His literalism resulted in obscure, syntactically disjointed poems that were like the language experiments of Italian and Russian futurists, estranged and reassembled basic linguistic components. (Hollier, p.903) However, this is only one of the reasons that Tristan Tzara was attracted to indigenous oral poetry. As we are going to see, his endorsement of autochthonous poetry and cultures will accompany Tzara throughout his life and work.

In his Jewish-Romanian background he had not been acquainted with the interchange of human, animal and inanimate beings all in protagonistic roles. The Judeo-Christian tradition does not blend humans and animals. However, the
storytelling form of indigenous and folk poetry, including the hain-teny, is a fundamental element in the Jewish tradition, particularly Hasidism, and was deeply embedded in Tzara’s native town, Moinesti. The Hasidim emerged from Eastern Europe and spread their word to international Jewry. Shapiro says that “storytelling, far more than sacrifice and law is at the heart of Judaism”. (Shapiro, p.xxii) This connects with Tzara’s fascination with stories from Africa and Oceania because Hasidic storytelling connects the intellect to the everyday experience of the people: it is an understanding of the divine through stories that become our own after we listen to them. For instance, the hain-teny does not just offer debate; it also discusses ancestral, sacred worldviews. (Haring, p.193) In the same way Aboriginal stories, that are called Dreamings, do not just refer to, but are part of, the oral sacred canon of ancestral cosmogony, as I am going on to analyse in this Chapter. Oral Aboriginal tradition about cosmogony and ancestral spirits is known as Dreamtime. These Dreamtime stories or Dreamings are a living mythology. (Röder, p.6)

We saw that Hollier and Joris distinguish Tzara among other avant-gardes practitioners for deepening his research into autochthonous poetry and for being a critical collector. Tzara did not just study and collect, he produced analysis and criticism. He criticises Lévy-Bruhl’s idea that “primitive societies” think in “prelogical” ways, inferior to the western European ones. (Schmaus, p.425) Lévy-Bruhl also claims that monotheistic religions are a western European tradition, which Tzara contests. (Schmaus, p.427) As Hentea mentions: “if one fact is central to Tzara’s childhood, it is being born Jewish” and that this had “a host of legal and cultural implications”. (Hentea, p.7) He was often seen as an outsider because of his Jewish roots and Milly Heyd believes that this is a reason for which Tzara looks for universal principles. (Heyd, p.211) Hentea also sees Tzara’s exposure to discrimination as one of the reasons why the poet was sensitive to issues of cultural imperialism. (Hentea, p. 278) Tzara dedicates much thought not only to oral poetry in African, Polynesian and other cultures but also to their art and artefacts, and he

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5 Hasidim followed the teachings of Yisra’el ben Eli’ezer (1698/1700–1760). Known as the Ba’al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name; abbreviated Besht) Hasidism provided young Torah scholars with a path to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. As it penetrated all corners of Eastern Europe and split into numerous subdivisions, it grew into a popular movement that appealed to the masses and not only to the elite. (Shapiro, 2013)
discovers plenty of paradigms that oppose positivist ideas such as those of Lévy-Bruhl. Tzara extends his range to include thoughts on reorganising museums of ethnography: “Le classement actuel par série, ce mythe dangereux sous plus d'un aspect, procédant de l'idée préconçue, chère aux positivistes, du développement formel des objets du simple au compliqué, quand l'observation quotidienne apporte un démenti à cette idée enfantine de progression.” (Tzara, OC t4 p. 330) We see then that the hain-teny signifies for Tzara much more than just a translation. The poetic value of the hain-teny, which remains relatively neglected by researchers, became known to Western literary circles precisely because of the extensive research of Jean Paulhan and Tzara himself among others. The repetition of phrases and the stichomythia in the Poèmes nègres create a verbal architecture creating a correspondence between different axes of dialogue, a strategy that was also employed by other Dadaists. An example is the 1916 anti-war poem “Totentanz” by Hugo Ball:

Wir danken Dir, wir danken Dir,

Herr Kaiser für die Gnade,

Dass Du uns zum Sterben erkoren hast.

Schlaf Du, schlaf sanft und still, (...) (Ball, p.62)

In Malagasy the active person is different than what we are used to in our European languages. Culbert notes that Paulhan, upon his return to France, used the passivity of the Malagasy language and the hain-teny to challenge his students’ way of thinking. “The first lesson in language is passivity”. In Malagasy instead of saying “I see the house”, the speaker says “the house is seen by me”. (Culbert, p.183) In the hain-teny Malagasy poem quoted earlier, we see not only a quasi-stichomythic dialogue, but also a ritual that goes beyond the actual poem (variation on a proverb), and which relies on participation and not just recitation. For instance, as Culbert says, the expression of love in the hain-teny is unique because it is intellectual and argumentative, tries more to convince than to move. (Culbert, p.184) Tzara never witnessed a ritual recitation of hain-teny in the streets of Madagascar. However, its distinct expression of love and its style were fitting to his call for abandonment of the established literature and art and its replacement with fresh forms. In addition, the
improvisation that the hain-teny relies upon is similar to that of the Brazilian coco, as I shall argue later in this Chapter.

5. Mapping the poems of Clã do Jabuti

Continuing the comparison between Poèmes nègres and Clã do Jabuti, I want now to discuss the types of poems that Mário de Andrade’s Clã do Jabuti includes, and how they can be categorized.

In Clã, we encounter a similar approach to publication as in Poèmes nègres. For instance, like in the Poèmes nègres there are notes above every poem indicating the country of origin of each one, and there are also some notes indicating the State of origin in Brazil or the origin in a particular tribe. For example there are poems entitled “Acreanos” (from the state Acre which is situated in North West Brazil, bordering with Peru and Bolivia). There is the example of a reference to a prison of Porto Alegre in south Brazil, a poem that Mário entitles “Moda da Cadeia de Porto Alegre” and is inspired by popular romances. There is also “Notaurno de Belo Horizonte”, a retrospective account of the city of Belo Horizonte, capital of Minas Gerais, as I mentioned earlier. “Lenda do Céu” (The Legend of Heaven) meanwhile, is a retelling of a popular legend amongst different people that live in the vast state of Amazônia. Mário attempts to present this indigenous legend in his own verse. Capistrano de Abreu describes this legend about a little bird captured by a boy in his book about the Caxinauás people’s vocabulary. The bird promises the boy that if he does not harm it, it will carry him to heaven, and so it happens. The boy meets his ancestors who live there surrounded by nature, and is happy. (Capistrano de Abreu, p.480)

Birds serving as messengers or carriers are common in the folklore of various countries. The way Mário composes a poem from the legend, his use of many indigenous words, diminutives and omission of the article are characteristic of many indigenous languages in the North of Brazil. (Parkinson, p.231) In addition, the poem’s structure, “a short piece of verses in two movements without repetition of the first is common in rodas for children (lullabies)”, adds musicality. (Rodrigues de Souza, p.131) Mário composes the poem as a poem for children, and its didactic tone
encouraging them not to mistreat others. A similar setting where different birds take a person to the sky/heaven exists in the “Chanson du cacadou”, an Aboriginal poem collected by Tzara, which I shall analyse in greater detail later in this Chapter.

Elsewhere, Mário gives titles to the poems of Clã do Jabuti according to the type of melody involved. Such an example is the cocos, songs that are sometimes accompanied by dances and are mainly encountered in the North-Eastern Brazilian states. Like the hain-teny, cocos are composed originally by improvisation. The cocos’ oral tradition and dance also derive from the African tradition. According to Mário de Andrade’s Dicionário Musical Brasileiro, coco is a vague name because sometimes cocos can be created in the form of a toada and sometimes embolada, for instance. He also adds that “acredita-se que o coco já vem dos negros de Palmares que o criaram como um canto de trabalho para acompanhar a quebra de cocos para alimentação”.

(Andrade de, E, p.146)

In 1928, after Clã do Jabuti, the poet travelled around the North-Eastern states of Brazil for a few months, where he became fascinated with the cocos and tried to take as many notes as possible by certain “tiradores de coco”, the most notable being Chico Antônio. (Novais Ayala, 1999) Cocos are often used for satire, like the “Coco do Major” included in Clã with the indication that it is from the state Rio Grande do Norte:

O Major Venâncio da Silva

Guarda as filhas com olho ferrolho,

Que vidinha mais caningada

-seu mano-

Elas levam no engenho do velho!

…

Vai um mocetão paroara

Destorcido porém sem cabeça

Apostou num coco da praia
-seu mano-

Que daria uma espiada nas moças.

...

Dois negrões agarram o afoito,

O major assobia pra dentro.

Vêm três moças lindas chorando

-seu mano-

Com quartinhas de barro cinzento. (Andrade de, p.197)

The poem is a story told in rhyming verse, eloquently put together in four-syllable verses, with an interruption of “seu mano” between the third and the fourth in which the singer/storyteller addresses the listener or audience with a colloquialism meaning “my friend”. The song is most probably inspired by real events as is usual in many Brazilian oral traditions, since the full name of the Major is given: Venâncio da Silva. Although this man’s daughters are famed for their beauty, not many people have seen them since even the men that work on his sugarcane farm have to be on the guard against any intruder that might want to have a glance at them. Apart from the musical value of the cocos, their content is important because the majority of them comment on the everyday work environment (cocos de usina), or focus on particular historical figures and current affairs. As Mário studied cocos in more detail, he became more sensitive to social problems in Brazil. As I shall show in the third Chapter, he revisited these studies in later life when he was working on his opera O Café (1955).

Another poem that takes its title from a type of melody is “Toada do Pai-do-mato”. Toada is the word for a popular Brazilian musical form and for this particular toada there is a note saying that it derives from the Parecis Indians. These people inhabited the plateau of the state of Mato Grosso in the Western part of Brazil that borders with Bolivia. The poem refers to Pai do mato, a mythological figure common in that area of West-Central Brazil. He is a man-like creature, covered with
fur but similar to an ape. He rides a wild boar and lives in the woods, protecting and favouring animals over humans.

A moça Camalalô

Foi no mato colher fruta.

Era quase noturna…

-Ah

- Era quase noturna…

Num galho de trauma

Estava um homem cantando.

A moça sai do caminho

Pra escutar o canto.

- Ah…

Ela escuta o canto...

Enganada pelo escuro

Camalalô fala pro homem:

Ariti, me da uma fruta,

Que eu estou com fome.

- Ah…

Estava com fome…

O homem rindo secundou:
- Zuimaalúti se engana,
Pensa que sou ariti?

Eu sou Pai-do-Mato.

Era o Pai-do-Mato. (Andrade de, p.191)

The Brazilian anthropologist, Roquette-Pinto, recorded this poem in its original language and then interpreted it in his personal notes. (Camargo Toni, 2006) Mário relied heavily on these notes, found in Roquette-Pinto’s manuscript; his version of the poem is almost identical to Roquette-Pinto’s own. Rodrigues de Souza underlines: “by comparing the original legend as collected by Roquette-Pinto with Mário de Andrade’s poem, we can understand the construction process of “Toada do Pai do Mato”, pointing the differences and similarities with the legend that inspired it. The two first stanzas, for example, translate a single phrase from the legend “Indo passear à floresta viu um homem trepado num pé de tarumã”. (Rodrigues de Souza, p.112) The poet introduces words that are still commonly used in everyday Brazilian Portuguese, something that had not been attempted before. He uses the colloquial “pra” and “pro” instead of the grammatically correct forms of the prepositions “para” and “para o”. In addition, the Pareci word “Zuimaalúti” (girl) is introduced, perhaps in order to emphasise the innocence of the girl, who is not fully a woman but rather a girl in puberty, and therefore more easily defiled by Pai do Mato. (Rodriguez de Souza, p.114) Despite the official written language in Brazil at the time being European Portuguese, many Brazilians would express themselves verbally in a different way, and their pronunciation of the oral language had many nasal sounds from Tupi and Guarani. Their vocabulary, too, comprised words from many African and indigenous Brazilian languages. Ariti is a bird and the girl addresses it, mistakenly thinking that it is producing the sound, and unaware of the pai-do-mato.

The practice of recycling existing material, a practice common to both the Dadaists and Mário de Andrade, contributes to the removal of defining notions of authority, originality, and a single creator. The same applies to Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s persistent use of sound patterns. The sounds, unlike image metaphors, open the way to multiple interpretations on the part of the reader, and invite the
reader’s participation in the creation of the poem. Furthermore, the appeal of oral literature for Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara is the opposite of what the anthropologist Melville Jacobs describes. A specialist in the American and Pacific Northwest native cultures, in 1909 Jacobs wrote that the first reason that oral literature is only enjoyed by a few is the fact that “its content is not often intelligible to persons of other sociocultural heritages. A second reason lies in the structuring and style of an oral literature: its narrators usually delivered relatively bare bones of their stories, while the native audience immediately filled in with many associations and feelings which a non-member of the group could not possibly have. An outline, no matter how excellently translated, is not likely to maintain a reader’s curiosity because too much of the original, whether spoken or sensed, is missing.” (Jacobs, p.1) On the contrary, Tzara and Mário believe that oral literature and poetry is appealing because sound, melody and performance make feelings more intelligible to the audience/receiver and in addition, it encourages learning about the culture of origin. Only a decade after Jacobs considered oral narrative unappealing to a world audience, the opposite happened and Tristan Tzara, Mário de Andrade, Blaise Cendrars and other avant-garde poets recognised its value.

6. Aboriginal folktales or “Dreamings” and their impact on Tzara’s thought

Tzara’s manuscripts confirm that he did not translate the oral poetry and literature of various cultures simply for the effect it would have in a Dada soirée. The poet wrote extensive lists of notes taken from the magazine Anthropos, as well as library entries regarding the texts of various anthropologists and missionaries. (Tzara, TZR 563 TO 570) For instance, in the manuscript of a poem entitled “Tribu Loritja”, which speaks of cloud movements and the weather, the poet crossed out the word “immobile” but in the actual publication we see the verse “pleurant immobile”. He also crossed out the phrase “adaptation de Tristan Tzara”. What follows is another entry from the Australian Luritja tribe entitled “Chanson du serpent”. Tzara also listed a number of articles from Anthropos t.III, no 4, 1908. This detail is significant because in the same volume of the magazine, there is the article Sur quelques sociétés secrètes aux îles Fiji (Marzan de, P.J.). The article contains the two ritualistic songs
that Tzara has placed under the heading “Fiji”. The first one begins by calling upon a serpent:

Serpent qui rampes, daigne descendre bien vite
Les chants des femmes (que voici) est pour t’inviter
Envoie la vague du vent du sud… (Tzara, *OC t1*, p.444)

This lengthy article describes the initiation rituals of Fijians to a spiritual and religious society, known as the Society of the Kalou Vatu de kalou, meaning the Stone God. Like other South Pacific cultures, their beliefs have a basis in animism. What is unique however, is the society’s hierarchy, which attributes power to a relatively large number of individuals instead of the usual monocracy that is seen in nearby cultures. (Marzan de, p.722) De Marzan explains that the initiates who chant the song of the Serpent believe that after their spirits are possessed, their bodies become “like a rock” and can endure anything. (Marzan de, p.718) Their ceremonies share major elements, such as the transformation of humans into animals and inanimate natural objects⁶, with the Candomblé ones and with the Macumba ritual that Mário de Andrade uses in *Macunaíma*. (see Chapter Two).

The “Chanson du serpent” from the Luritja tribe is entirely dedicated to the serpent, describing how the animal is ascending to the sky. Brumbaugh contributed an article to *Anthropos* about the significance of the image of the Rainbow Serpent. He underlines the durability of the religious image of the serpent in Australian and Melanesian ethnography. The imagery is based on the totemic, spiritual attribution to the snake being identified with the presence of the rainbow. Thus, its presence signifies changes in the water tide and precautions are taken accordingly. (Brumbaugh, p.25)

Despite similarities with cultures from across the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, Australian aboriginals have a unique characteristic: “Cosmological beliefs found in the Dreamings of Aboriginal groups in Central Australia, primarily that of the Arrente and Luritja, have an unusually strong focus on meteorical phenomena, including meteors, meteorites, and impact craters, that are uncommon to most cultures

⁶ The theme of metamorphoses in the work of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade and references to resurrection are discussed extensively in Chapter II where I will discuss examples of their prose.
in the world.” (Hamacher, p.1) This differs from the mythological maps of constellations that are encountered in many other cultures around the world. One such example is the aboriginal myth “Dreaming of the first Death”, which I will cover in the following paragraphs. Johnson says that it is impossible to avoid comparison with the Ancient Greek Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione. (Johnson, p.74) That is because the seven daughters ascend to the sky to form the Pleiades and so do the cockatoos in Aboriginal mythology in order to form the same constellation. There are echoes of this myth also in Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*. In Mário’s novel, the protagonist’s last lover, Iriqui, forms the Pleiades with six macaws. In the Yoruba ethnoastronomy, the Pleiades are known as “kaza Maiyaya” (the Hen with the Chickens). (Urama, p.233) The folktales from other cultures than the Australian Aboriginals concentrate on particular star clusters such as the Pleiades, the moon and the sun. Aboriginal stories however refer also to meteorites and impact craters that other cultures have not experienced.

It is possible to see further themes that are shared across particular cultures and that Tzara chooses for his *Poèmes nègres*. For instance, there are the poems “le Kangourou” and “Chanson du cacadou” belonging to the Loritja and the Aranda respectively. Both are dedicated to ancestral spirit animals; the kangaroo and the cockatoo. In “Chanson du cacadou”, as Scott Alexander King points out, the aboriginals attribute different coloured cockatoos with different qualities. The black cockatoo symbolises the beginning of time, a perpetual darkness, “legend has it that when Sulphur-crested Cockatoos eat the seeds of a particular tree, its golden crest appears magically after dark, illuminating its surrounds”, while the white cockatoo accompanies the dead and is always present in life’s celebrations and struggles. (Alexander King, p.136)

As mentioned earlier, Dreaming is the name widely accepted by anthropologists to describe the mythology and kinship of Aboriginals. Certain Aboriginal art such as cave paintings and rock assemblages are also called art of Dreamings. “The Dreaming [...] provides a moral authority lying outside the individual will and outside human creation [...] although the Dreaming as an ordering of the cosmos is presumably a product of historical events, such an origin is denied.” (Ramsey, p.116) The reason I discuss aspects of Aboriginal mythology is to show the variety of storytelling to which Tzara became exposed. In addition, it shows once
again that *Poèmes nègres* is a result of extensive background reading and not randomly collected poems.

There is the well-known “Dreaming of the first Death”, a myth that is part of the aboriginal cosmology, shared in various forms among different Australian territories that link the white cockatoo with the first human death. According to one Aboriginal legend, the star tree or Southern Cross came into being when Baiamai (some kind of supreme being), after creating the land, decided to make two men and a woman from dust because he was lonely. The supreme being instructed the humans to eat specific plants, but they starved during a drought. One of the males and the woman killed and ate a kangaroo but the other man refused to eat meat and died by a gum tree. A mysterious dark figure placed the body in the hollow of the tree and started lifting it to the sky. The man and woman, stunned, watched two white cockatoos flying after the tree to reach it until they all disappeared in the sky transforming to the Southern Cross, which Aboriginals believe to be the path to where the spirits live. (Fairbairn, p.184)

Ici pointent de branches certainement

Ici des grains mêlés à la balle certainement

Sur la place creusée les poser

Des amas des amas y poser

Beaucoup d’amas poser

Des amas des amas poser

Des amas des amas poser

De grands amas poser

Profonds amas poser

Grands amas poser

Sur an amas verser

Des noyaux germés des noyaux germés
The poem “Chanson du cacadou”, addresses germination of the seeds and the fertility of earth that provides for the aboriginals. When the food is plentiful, and all the new plants have grown, the people call the white cockatoo to eat it too. In a way, the bird contributes to the birth, the death and the rebirth of the plants. The identification of the Pleiades/Southern Cross with the white cockatoo can provide a better understanding and contextualization of the poem’s content on two levels. Firstly, the mythical status of the birds as the Southern Cross, which indicates the appropriate time of the year for germination, and secondly, the actual aid that the birds provide in spreading seeds and fertilizing the earth with their droppings. In addition, the way the cockatoo is mentioned in the poem can be linked with the “Dreaming of the first death” described earlier, because the Southern Cross appears lower in the sky during the summer period, the wet season, when fertile ground is guaranteed. However, there is another element of the Arunta, or Arrente tribes, and the rest of the aboriginals’ way of life that can be identified in the poem “Chanson du cacadou”. Besides the symbolism in the seeds and the cockatoos, there are also references in the poem to the ecological and economical aspects of aboriginal life.
To the first colonizers, aboriginal life appeared to be nomadic, and they were eager to characterize it as primitive on the assumption that it was based solely on hunting and gathering. Howell Edwards notes, “this assumption has been questioned by researchers who suggest that the dependence on hunting and gathering may be determined by cultural as well as environmental factors. For example, yam species found in the north are similar to those cultivated in Papua New Guinea. A cultural value which opposed accumulation worked against any motivation to develop agriculture.” (Howell Edwards, p.34). In a more literal explanation of the poem, one can see that it talks of a time when there is an abundance of fully grown plants and therefore, they invite the sacred white cockatoo to come and feed as well. The seeds may have been gathered and placed to mature in one particular location, but instead of thinking of the bird as an invader, it is welcomed to the feast. Howell Edwards explains that only men would carry spears and other weapons for hunting mammals and birds, while women would gather roots for flour, fruits etc. Both had to be careful to leave plants to regrow and animals to reproduce. (Howell Edwards, p.37) Although the environment appears to be hostile, it is to great extent anthropogenic.

Despite the fact that Northern Australian autochthonous life may seem very different to Tzara’s reality, one cannot ignore that some of their values must have been compared, in Tzara’s mind, with his childhood memories of the teachings of his rabbi in Moinesti: “Most of all, though, you will take care to do all your labour and all your deeds in the midst of Nature…Nature is beautiful at its surface but it is seven times more beautiful in the spirit of its life, in its labour”. (Ocean Waskow, p.12-13) Nature seen as sacred is a recurring theme in Tzara’s poetry and prose, as I will show in the following Chapters. Tzara’s comparative thought regarding the chants of various cultures can be seen in his essay Art primitif et art populaire (1933)7:

J’entends par là cet indispensable effort où doivent converger toutes les manifestations intellectuelles humaines, dont le but suprême est la connaissance, recherches qui placeront l’homme au centre de toutes leurs investigations et qui, à travers la philosophie, la science

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7 *Art primitif et art populaire* is published in French only posthumously as part of Tristan Tzara, *Œuvres complètes*, tome IV, 1947-1963. On p. 674, Béhar notes that it was published originally as a translation in Swedish by Greta Knutson Tzara for the magazine *Konstrevy*, Stockholm, 1933, n. 4, p.174-180.
et l'art, démontreront que la chaîne ininterrompue du développement de l'esprit, de sa plus simple expression jusqu'à la plus élevée, est fonction de l'idée d'universalité qui, de tous les temps, a été le plus pur objectif de l'artiste. Cette continuité des formes de l'art, depuis les époques les plus confuses de l’enfance de l’humanité jusqu’aux préoccupations les plus récentes, reproduit, sur un plan qui lui est propre, la courbe de l’évolution humaine et donne à cette dernière un contenu que la pensée abstraite seule ne serait pas capable de lui assurer. (Tzara, *OC t4* p.518)

This text follows after Tzara’s use of a quotation from Sir James Frazer to criticise the latter’s work: “Frazer, dans un magistral rassemblement de matériel, ramène les manifestations de la vie primitive à quelques mythes, dans lesquels il décèle un peu trop schématiquement le côté formel de ceux-ci, en passant sous silence les particularités qui sont peut-être déterminantes dans ce domaine. Les méthodes d'analogie qu’il emploie donnent souvent des résultats séduisants par l'imprévu des juxtapositions, et certaines de ses conclusions sont capitales (comme par exemple celles concernant l’exogamie) et d’autres très ingénieuses, mais elles ne nous apprennent rien du fonctionnement réel de la pensée.” (Tzara, *OC t4* p.518) He sees a continuity in human thought and art. Tzara develops that idea further by recognizing the interdependence of art with all other branches of human activity. The “primitive” humans, unconsciously, had already posed some of the questions that Tzara’s contemporaries ask about form. That is why he concludes that our present culture can be enriched by the study of other cultures.

In this context, Tzara recognizes that Frazer’s and Lévy-Brulh’s work are some of the most significant of the time. Yet at the same time he cannot ignore the fact that neither writer can talk of “primitive mentality” without considering the people, mostly missionaries, who provided them with their information about various indigenous populations. In addition, he quotes Leroy to say that the positivist conclusions of Lévy-Brulh do not meet contemporary scientific standards. (Tzara, *OC t4* p.519) Tzara is always sensitive about his sources. He avoids drawing totalizing conclusions about his subject, and because of his personal experience, he dislikes racial categorizations. His article here demonstrates two significant arguments for this Chapter and my thesis as a whole. Firstly, his preoccupation with contemporary
anthropological thought shows, as I have presented at the beginning of this Chapter, that he does not choose indigenous poems just for an abstract aesthetic value; he researches and looks at their content. It is not by chance that many poems can be traced back to certain rituals. Tzara values these poems for their coevalness within their cultural context. Secondly, his selection has comparative elements that show the extensive research that Tzara undertook. Poèmes nègres is only a selection of the poems he researched.

In the poetry collection discussed here, there are poems with similar themes such as the rituals of marriage, like “Naura (mariage)” and “Ba Ronga (Mariage du chef)”, or love songs like “Wapare (Chanson de jeunes filles)” from Tanzania and “Yao (Chanson pour une femme)” from East Africa. In addition, Tzara published many articles commenting on art and poetry, particularly that of other cultures, in various reputable periodicals of his time. These articles reveal his consideration of cultural phenomena and most of all show that, like Mário de Andrade, he is thinking about certain ideas regarding the nature of his society, other societies and human behavior at large. He is posing questions regarding the denial of many ethnologists to see their subjects as their contemporaries that would emerge in the work of the next generation of anthropologists.

7. The value of oral poetry in shaping identities

In the articles L’Art et l’Océanie (1929) and Sur l’art des peuples africains, Tzara expands on the value of non-Western art and poetry, emphasizing oral poetry and the entanglement of art and the sacred. (Tzara, OC t4 p.303-310) Mário de Andrade also touches upon cultural differences and similarities, and the unfair categorization of oral cultures as inferior. However, the difference is that Mário de Andrade addresses these issues within his own poems while Tristan Tzara writes about them in articles since Poèmes nègres does not include any of his own verse. In Clã do Jabuti, contrary to the Poèmes nègres, the Brazilian poet presents ideas about perceptions of high and low culture and post-colonial social segregation in three poems, two of which are the lengthiest poems of the collection. These are, “O poeta

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8 For instance, the previously mentioned extract from Konstrevy, “the longest surviving Swedish modernist magazine, founded in 1925” (Kollnitz, p.278)
come amendoim” (1924), and the lengthy ones, “Carnaval Carioca” (1923) and “Noturno de Belo Horizonte” (1924). These poems, unlike the others in the collection, are not borrowed from the various Brazilian communities (whether indigenous, urban and rural mixed communities, etc.). For the most part, these poems are Mário’s own composition although at times he inserts existing oral poems.

It is important to consider Tzara’s articles about Oceania and Africa in order to better understand why he chose to translate their native poems, and it is just as important to read in Mário de Andrade’s verse for the same purpose. The poem “O poeta come Amendoim” is written for the most part in first person and it is obvious that Mário de Andrade contemplates openly about what makes Brazil a nation of the “New World”. Though he may not have necessarily been eating peanuts while composing it, as the title of the poem indicates, peanuts are used in a symbolic way as a recognizable product of Brazil that is both consumed locally and exported.

(...)  

Estou pensando nos tempos de antes de eu nascer

5 A noite era para descansar. As gargalhadas brancas dos

[mulatos…

Silêncio! O Imperador medita os seus versinhos.

Os Caramurus conspiram na sombra das mangueiras ovais.

(Andrade de,, p.161)

The poet reflects on Brazil’s past, when nighttime was spent resting from the day’s labours. The reference to the white giggling of the biracial people only heard at night is an indication of the times of slavery in the country. The silence is followed by the ironic, diminutive “versinhos” instead of “versos”. Yet even the use of the word “versos” would have been ironic since it implies that the emperor has memorized his speech. And then there are the Caramurus conspiring in the shade of the mango trees. The poet here refers to the Guerra dos Farrapos (1835-45) and in a few verses he criticizes the fact that the attempts in 1835 to turn Brazil into a Republic and overthrow the Empire, that was already independent from Portugal
since September 1822, were not purely democratic. Firstly, there were the Caramurus, the people that wanted Portuguese rule to return to power and secondly, there were various other groups dominated by personal ambition and regional power struggles. So, while the efforts to make Brazil a Republic were fruitful, as Chasteen puts it: “Liberalism went into eclipse in post-independence Brazil, just as occurred in Spanish America”. (Chasteen, p.37) And that is exactly the view Mário de Andrade expresses in the verses that follow:

Só o murmurejo dos cre’m-deus-padre irmanava os homens
[de meu pais

Duma feita os canhamboras perceberam que não tinha
[mais escravos.

10 Por causa disso muita virgem-do-rosário se perdeu…

Porém o desastre verdadeiro foi embonecar esta República
[temporã.

A gente inda não sabia se governar…

Progredir, progredimos um tiquinho

Que o progresso também é uma fatalidade…

Será o que Nosso Senhor quiser!...

[...] (Andrade de, p.161)

The poet refers to the past in order to understand and explain his country in the present. He says that literally only the murmuring of prayer, “cre’m-deus-padre”, united his people in these times of turmoil. The establishment of Brazil as a Republic (República Velha, 1889) almost coincided with the abolition of slavery in the country (1888) and as the poet says, suddenly, the canhamboras, the name in Tupi for the runaway slaves, no longer had to hide. However, the abolition came after great suffering and many deaths of indigenous and especially African people. That is stated in an extraordinary way when the poet says “por causa disso muita virgem-do-rosário
se perdeu”, referring to the consoling association of the Virgin Mary of the rosary by African slaves with their homelands’ deities. Kiddy mentions how later on Mário de Andrade dedicates much research to the commonly named “blacks of the rosary” in his Danças dramáticas do Brasil (1934-1944). (Kiddy, p.127)

The “blacks of the rosary”, the dança dramática of the King and Queen of Congo continues to be an important element of Brazilian culture, especially in the northeastern states of the country where the celebration of the coronation of the Congo King takes place. During the ceremony the enslaved Africans and Afro-Brazilians could play their music and commemorate the ancient Kings of the once broad region of Congo (nowadays territories of Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Angola). In addition, they would re-enact the coronation by appointing a woman and a man as Queen and King of Congo. (Mello e Souza de, p.146) This is the time in Brazilian history when the national motto “Ordem e Progresso” was canonized, and the poet does not leave that unremarked upon. The poet mocks progress once more with the fatalistic “será o que nosso Senhor quiser!” Despite the poet’s frustration with Brazil’s situation, he finds hope in his love for it, his love for life, and, by embracing the multicultural, the hybrid Brazilian identity.

Brasil…

Mastigado na gostura quente de amendoim…

Falado numa língua curumim

De palavras incertas num remelido melado melancólico…

25 Saem lentas frescas tituradas pelos meus dentes bons…

[…]

Brasil amado não porque seja minha patria,

Pátria é acaso de migrações e do pão-nosso onde Deus

[der…

30 Brasil que eu amo porque é o ritmo do meu braço

[aventuroso.]
O gosto dos meus descansos,

O balance das minhas cantigas amores e danças

[... ] (Andrade de, p.162)

The poem “O poeta come Amendoim” provides Clã do Jabuti, already a metaphor for Brazilians, with a lyrical synopsis of what constitutes Brazil, both positively and negatively. In this poem Mário de Andrade declares his passion for language, and specifically his own language: “Falado numa lingua curumim”. Curumim is a Tupi word for infant, and shows the infancy of Brazilian Portuguese. The language, of course, still has the prospect of growing, evolving through inserted words that come from “de palavras incertas num remeleixo melado melancólico”. These words are also melancholic because of the dark moments of Brazil, slavery, war, dictatorship, yet the poet still celebrates the uniqueness that has been produced by the polyphony of these struggles.

Mário de Andrade more recently has been associated with national sentiment, given that the core of his work is set in Brazil and refers to Brazilian matters. However, his modernist, post-colonial values transcend the national and provide a most interesting basis for comparison with the complex situation of Tristan Tzara, the foreigner, the marginal figure who came to form part of the center. In the opening poem of the collection Clã do Jabuti, Mário de Andrade makes, in my opinion, one of the most moving and ingenious confessions of love for his country: “Brasil amado não porque seja minha patria, Pátria é acaso de migrações e do pão-nosso onde Deus der [...] Brasil que eu amo porque é o ritmo do meu braço aventuroso. O gosto dos meus descansos, o balance das minhas cantigas amores e danças. ” Even if the latter verses are understood as an explanation of the poet’s sense of nationality, the very recognition of his situation has something painfully real that goes beyond the national and into the universal. After all, do we not all identify with a certain nationality as a result of some previous unknown migratory movement?

What Mário de Andrade sees in Brazil in regards to the union of the people through its narratives is what Tzara addresses in turning to Oceania and Africa and trying to apply what he finds there to the Western canon. Despite the large cultural and geographical distances separating Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade, and the
absence of communication between them, they had friends and ideas in common, such as Blaise Cendrars in particular, and their ideological paths crossed in many ways. Interestingly, Tzara wrote an article entitled *A propos de l’art précolombien* (1928) that was published twice, first in *Cahiers d’art* and then significantly, it was requested by Rivet as an introduction to the Pre-Columbian art exhibition in Pavillon de Marsan the same year. (Béhar, p.651) Tzara did not translate any native North or Latin American poems but it appears that he had researched the art of Mesoamerica. According to the records the exhibition focused on Mesoamerican Pre-Columbian art, most of which was from Mexico. (Gorgus, p.32-34)

Je veux uniquement souligner le parallélisme qui existe entre les arts des peuples d'Amérique qui, quoique peu intimes et encore moins destinés à flatter les complaisances humaines, touchent de près aujourd'hui ceux qui, pour satisfaire à leur légitime recherche d'un absolument moral, ont été amenés à saper les fondements des valeurs consacrées. Nous nous éloignons de plus en plus de l'attendrissement devant la beauté, des frivoles expériences et du bavard romantisme des temps privilégiés. Nous tendons vers une nouvelle époque d'héritage à base de grandeur humaine... Toutes les grandes époques ont été cruelles, je veux dire sans égards pour le conformisme du moment, et la cruauté même de leur expression artistique s'affirme par l'élevation d'esprit qui les a marquées. Une longue tourmente qui s'est traduite en formes perceptibles. Et si notre civilisation n'est qu'une substitution de formules d'oubli, dérivées de la grande inquiétude, à cette inquiétude qui est au faîte de toute la création, l'idée de la mort, il faudra bien qu'un jour, enjambant le bric-à-brac de la civilisation matérielle, sans retourner en arrière, nous englobions tout ce qui s'y trouve, là où devant tant de grandeur collective les problèmes de la beauté et de la laideur ne pourront plus se poser qu'en termes d'héroïsme et de ferveur. (Tzara, *OC t4* p.308-309)

Tzara here, like Mário’s characterization of his language as “curumim”, denounces the dominance of one civilization over another and the way in which white people tend to place man at the center and have thus become alienated from their
natural environment. All humans keep learning and “curumim” indicates exactly the stage of infancy and acquiring knowledge. Tzara’s intention is not to create division, but rather, on the one hand to promote moderation and on the other, a harmonious coexistence and mutual learning, rather than the imposition of one culture over another. The poet remains faithful to these ideas throughout his life and work, as I will show in the following Chapters. It is not by chance that Tzara reminds us often that men should not be arrogant about their achievements, especially considering that humanity was still in its infancy not that long ago. In the third Chapter, we will see that Tzara did not just express these ideas in essays and talks, he also became an activist for the independence of many African countries and addressed pre-Columbian cultures in an article about the ancient Mexican civilization. Mário, in his extended essay *A escrava que não é Isaura*, also presents poetry following a timeline from the start of humanity to the present, as we have seen earlier. Although Mário’s essay tends to promote Modernist poetry, certain ideas coincide with Tzara’s plea for attention to all peoples’ poetic expression. Mário baptizes his essay by playing with the title of the novel *A escrava Isaura*, as a means to show that there are other forms of expression than Romantic poetry and literature. He started writing the essay in 1922, shortly after the reactions of the public about “Semana de Arte Moderna”\(^9\) because he felt the need to justify his poetry and that of other “modernistas” but published it in 1925.

Although there are moments of mockery and denunciation of certain newly adopted foreign elements in Mário de Andrade’s *Clã do Jabuti*, as I have shown earlier, the religions and ethnic groups of Brazil are also celebrated, united under their totem, the jabuti. An example is “Carnaval Carioca” (1923) where amongst the Dionysian frenzy we encounter “ruínas de linhas puras, um negro dois brancos três mulatos, despudores”. (Andrade de, p.163) However, it would be unfair to claim that Mário just embellishes Brazilian reality. In between the poems and songs that he transcribes, his personal verse serves as an affirmation of the nation’s struggle to recognise, accept and understand its origins. In “Dois Poemas Acreanos” the first section is entitled “Descobrimento” and the second, “Acalanto de Seringueiro”

\(^9\) Semana de Arte Moderna, 11-18 OF February 1922, Municipal Theatre of São Paulo which consisted of talks, exhibitions, poetry recitation and concerts about Modernism (Bosi, p.337)
(lullaby of the rubber tapper). They are both the poet’s creative verse but the second is composed in the rhythm of “redondilha maior”, seven syllable verses, popularised by Portuguese poets in the sixteenth century. (Rodrigues de Souza, p.206) In “Descobrimento”, Mário talks in the first person about being in his little desk in his house, at rua Lopes Chaves in São Paulo when he suddenly feels cold inside. He remembers the North, “meu Deus! Muito longe de mim”, and thinks, as the night falls, of a skinny man who immediately falls asleep after he goes to rest. “Esse homem é brasileiro que nem eu…” (Andrade de, p.203) The poet already recognises the great physical distance as well as the difference of the day-to-day experiences between a Brazilian rubber tapper of the state of Acre, far deep in the Amazon forest, and himself, down in the metropolis of São Paulo. Nevertheless, he says that this man is Brazilian like himself:

[...]

Como será a escuraleza

Desse mato-virgem do Acre?

Como serão os aromas

A macieza e a aspereza

Desse chão que é também meu?

Que miséria! Eu não escuto

A nota do uirapuru!...

Você, seringueiro do Acre,

Brasileiro que nem eu

Na escuraleza da floresta

Seringueiro dorme

[...]
Não sabemos nada um do outro,

Não nos veremos jamais!

[...]

Seringueiro, eu não sei nada!

E no entanto estou rodeado

Dum despotismo de livros,

[...] (Andrade de, p.204)

The impression from these verses is that even if the poet and the seringueiro cross paths they will never meet. At the beginning, Mário de Andrade wonders if he can imagine how night-time is in the forest and he is saddened that he cannot listen to the uirapuru song. Because it is written as a lullaby, the acoustic rhyming of the words “seringueiro” and “brasileiro” create a melodious effect. Then he declares in the Socratic way that he does not know anything and yet he is surrounded by the despotism of books. Later on, he says that he is the seringueiro’s friend although probably the seringueiro is indifferent to that. However, the poet implies that he recognises that soon the seringueiro’s case will be indifferent also to him because their realities are so different. After all, he may have started to think of the seringueiro with love and understanding, but he is a seringueiro and not any specific seringueiro in particular.

As we can see, curiosity and an interest for diverse poetic and cultural expressions led the two young poets to pursue folk culture, popular songs, chants and poems. But this was not just an enthusiastic phase of their youth. For Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara, autochthonous poetry/ethnopoetics shaped not only their later work and the way they saw the world, but also played an important role in the way their contemporaries perceived the different cultures that produced poetry and art.

In this Chapter I have shown that although the motivations of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara to research autochthonous poetry are different, through their extensive study, they both cultivated a strong position against cultural
imperialism. Their work on ethnopoetics opened the way for further research and canonisation of the field. Mário, apart from the Pesquisas Folclóricas, contributed to Brazilian oral studies with personal publications such as *Ensaio sobre a Musica Brasileira* (1928), *Música de Feitiçaria no Brasil* (1963) and many more. He campaigned for the creation of a library for Brazilian music with sound archives, which was successfully inaugurated in 1935 as the Discoteca Públíca Municipal de São Paulo. He also created the “Sociedade de Etnografia e Folclore” in 1936, in combination with a fund for courses on ethnography taught by Dina Lévi-Strauss. His wish for the appreciation and organised study of Brazilian folk was realised.

Tristan Tzara for his part also became a recognized scholar, invited to curate catalogues and periodicals. His essays on the art and oral poetry of Oceania have been used by the Association populaire des amis des musées (A.P.A.M.) in the magazine *Le Musée Vivant*. He also published articles about African and Austronesian oral poetry in many important magazines and was invited to participate in the First International Congress of African Culture in Salisbury, Rhodesia in 1962, as discussed earlier in the Chapter. Most importantly though is the fact that ethnopoetics did not just prompt him in studying further oral poetry. Tzara was fascinated with language, and, as with autochthonous poetry, he went on deciphering poetic language until his last days, such as his last work analysing Villon’s anagrams using Kaballistic discourse (Tzara, OC t6 1991). Thus, the connection between his work and folk and mystic Judaic discourse has come to the surface of literary criticism more recently in the works of Tom Sandqvist, Voyen Koreis, Sorrel Kerbel and the poet Jerome Rothenberg. In addition, for Tzara, the involvement with African and Austronesian oral poetry and art meant that he became actively involved in campaigning for the independence of many countries from these continents as well as conceptualising post-colonial aesthetics in France.

Research for the authors was difficult at times, as there were insufficient resources available to Tzara, as the poem “Nauri” evidenced. I have also shown the significance that poetry has played for Mário, who believed it to be the third entity of Genesis in *A escrava que não é Isaura*. Tzara’s more abstract, but still similar idea of poetry in *Notes sur la poésie nègre* and *L’art et l’Océanie*, showed it to be an exclusive earthly, human phenomenon, that exists to serve life. We saw that the cocos, one of the many types of Brazilian popular music, which derived from a fusion
of West African dances, music and spontaneous composition, that were overlooked and considered inferior until they were studied and catalogued by Mário de Andrade, can be paired with the equally unrehearsed Malagasy hain-teny that fascinated Tzara and are both poems and dialogue at the same time. The myths that were made into songs from the Parecis people of Brazil have been juxtaposed with ritual songs, including myths from Fijian warriors. Oral traditions travelled around the globe long before Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara showed an interest in them. However, while comparing the work of the two poets, new elements about these journeys come to the surface. For instance, the unlikely name of a dança dramática called “Moçambique”, for which all sources pointed to Portugal, actually finds its origins interweaved with the Arabic world, such as the Yao, or possibly other Muslims, responsible for bringing it from Mozambique to Portugal. (Andrade de, DD, p.43)

In addition, all the poems discussed in the present Chapter, either the ones that refer to everyday events or the ceremonial ones, contain references to the religious beliefs of the peoples involved. The Aboriginals attribute divine elements to celestial phenomena, ancestral spirits and animals, the Maori do so to stones, trees and ancestors, the Malagasy people had a supreme god. The West African pantheon has the Orishas. In Clã do Jabuti, though it only refers to Brazil, there are references to Afro-Brazilian religions, Catholicism, indigenous deities and demons and syncretic religions. Poetry and rituals give birth to myths and tales. These elements will remain with Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade and become part of their later work. We will encounter these thoughts in their prose in Personnage d’insonnie and Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter respectively as well as in their verse produced during WWII. And of course they have also shaped Mário de Andrade’s activities for the preservation of the oral Brazilian traditions and Tristan Tzara’s campaigning for human rights.
Chapter Two

Language and folk influences in Modernist prose: *Personnage d’insomnie* (1933-35, Tristan Tzara) and *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* (1928, Mário de Andrade)

In this Chapter I am going to explore the relation of oral and written language and the influence of folk traditions in the prose of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara. Furthermore, while Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara are broadly considered as being on the periphery of Modernism, their style, themes and narrative features reveal that they share ideas that have continued beyond Modernism to influence literature as well as thought on art. Particularly, both works that I am going to analyse here, *Personnage d’insomnie* by Tzara, and *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* by Mário, belong to a broadly Surrealist style. Chronologically they are examples of the mid-career works by each author, which come after the experimental and autochthonous poetry discussed in the previous chapter, and followed by the militant pieces and mature poetry that will be explored in the next Chapter. Both works are ahead of their time at this point in time, and address elements to be found in in post-structuralism, ecology, gender and post-colonial studies. The present Chapter will also attempt to show that the comparison between *Macunaíma* and *Personnage d’insomnie* shows that on the one hand, Mário de Andrade confronts the tendencies to negate, oral traditions and the African folk roots involved in Brazilian culture, while on the other Tristan Tzara, despite his negative attitude towards certain elements of Western culture during his Dada years, also draws strongly on his Judeo-Occidental cultural roots.

The novel *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* is well known to Brazilians and to academic circles in Brazil and abroad; most Brazilians may remember it as part of their school curriculum as an example of Brazilian Modernism, as expatiated in my Introduction. There has even been a Pythonesque film based on it by filmmaker Joaquim Pedro de Andrade in 1969, which formed part of the Cinema Novo and Tropicalia movements. Mário de Andrade sometimes refers to the title
character, Macunaíma, as “the hero” or “the hero of our people” in the novel, and many Brazilian critics assign a literal quality to this phrase. In the narrative, Macunaíma is born in the forest without a father. When he grows up and his mother dies, he and his brothers Jiguê and Maanape leave their territory behind in the “mato virgem” and embark upon a quest, travelling all over Brazil and the northern Amazonian territory. Their first stop is in the forest with the native Icamiabas, where the Icamiabas leader, Ci, the mother of the forest, becomes the hero’s partner. She gives him an amulet, the Muiraquitã, and offers him the title of the emperor of the forest. When she is poisoned fatally by a serpent’s bite, Macunaíma loses the Muiraquitã and learns that it is now in the hands of merchant Pietro Petra in São Paulo. On their journey, Macunaíma, Jiguê and Maanape experience many physical transformations and encounter a variety of people, animals and mythical creatures.

Critical perception of the novel has changed over time. It was badly received on publication in 1928, with some commentators, such as Tristão de Ataíde saying in the newspaper O Jornal of Rio de Janeiro that the novel is an often dispensable pornography (Ataíde De, p.4). More recently though, it has been seen as symbolic of Brazil by scholars such as Telê Porto Ancona Lopez. (Porto Anconá Lopez, p.9-81) In this chapter I am arguing that, while we cannot deny that there are certain elements in Macunaíma that derive from indigenous traditions - mainly the protagonist’s name and certain mythological creatures - the references to African mythology and customs that the novel contains have been overshadowed by many scholars’ tendency to focus on Native American ones. While the novel is a synthesis of “Brazilianism” in a way, something that Mário de Andrade wanted to achieve through his previous poetry collection Clã do Jabuti analysed in the previous Chapter, it also includes criticisms of Brazilian society. The fact that Clã leads thematically to Macunaíma has also been pointed out by Telê Porto Ancona Lopez, who says that Mário deals with the symptom of Brazilian culture in both Clã and Macunaíma. However, she sees Clã as addressing popular culture and in the past, while Macunaíma speaks of the past and present, with social classes being brought into focus. (Porto Ancona Lopez, p.239) While in Clã, Mário addresses sociocultural difference in the poems “Coco do Major” and “Dois Poemas Acreanos”, also discussed in the previous chapter, in the case of Macunaíma, the medium of the novel facilitates further investigation of those differences. In addition, by the time he wrote
the novel in 1928, his journeys to Northeast Brazil and to Amazônia had already enlightened him about the vast inequalities and differences in his country. Furthermore, as I will show, the novel is important because of interplay in it of the oral and written language, which also relates to its heavy reliance on oral autochthonous and African traditions.

By contrast to *Macunáima*’s popularity, Tristan Tzara’s *Personnage d’insomnie*, which was only published as a complete narrative posthumously, is not widely known and it can only be found in the author’s complete works, together with the only existing commentary about it by their editor, Henri Béhar. However, it is the common themes coming from the other side of the Atlantic that make this prose text by Tzara an exemplary point of comparison with *Macunáima*. In Tzara’s novelette, a tailor at work experiences a strange pain in his chest that turns out to be a fresh bud growing out of it. Little by little he metamorphoses into a humanoid tree and starts wandering around trying to make sense of his condition and his humanity. Because of the unexplained reason for the protagonist’s transformation, the novel could be seen as relating to Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1915). However, contrary to Kafka’s work, in *Personnage d’insomnie* the tailor turning into a tree-man has a positive outcome for his mental health and wellbeing. The transformation of Kafka’s Gregor into a vermin makes him feel that he is a burden, while as a moving tree-person, Tzara’s tailor discovers more about himself and experiences feelings of hope, pleasure and happiness that he would not have imagined before.

A common trait of both works that will be explored further ahead is the introduction of inner stories told either by the authors themselves or by the characters. *Macunáima*, for instance, includes stories that the eponymous character narrates, along with Mário’s own insertions, while in *Personnage d’insomnie*, Tzara discusses daydreaming, the problem of insomnia and how these two situations are the excuse for jumping from one story to another within the main narrative of the “divin tailleur” himself. One characteristic example of this is the inclusion of a story about the fictional island Atoua. Tzara tells the reader that the island was flourishing until a ship called Potemkine came over and his captain offered two goats to the chief. The island was completely destroyed after the goats were declared taboo because they were a gift and did not exist in the island. Eventually, they ate all the flora.
Fraîcheur des sentiments en herbe, je pense à la mobilité des épreuves qui vous précipitent, quand il s’agit de mettre à jour un rêve ancien, dans le néant de verre…Je pense à la détresse qui plane sur une petite île polynésienne… (Tzara, p.195)

In the stories of both authors there is an interchange of omniscient and first person narration, and when they speak in first person the narrative at times resembles travel journals or ethnographers’ notes. However this superficial appearance of an ethnographic journal is used to a satirical end; at their core both works remain playful and fictional. We see then that Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade use elements from their previous research of autochthonous poetry, and missionaries’ and ethnographers’ studies.

Two connecting points between the authors are again the poet Blaise Cendrars, and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter One, Blaise Cendrars visited Brazil in 1924 and, in the company of Mário de Andrade and other poets and artists, organised a journey to the interior, to the historical colonial sites of the state of Minas Gerais, following the route of the first Portuguese Bandeirantes (soldiers, scouts, bearers of the flag). On Tzara’s side, Adriana Varga points us to Ovid Crohmalniceanu’s remarks, which demonstrate the early influence of Cendrars on Tzara: “Fritz Glauser, who was present at the ‘birth’ of Dada in Zürich, complained that as soon as he met Tristan Tzara in 1916, the freshly arrived Romanian refugee began spouting off names Glauser had never heard before, Blaise Cendrars, Max Jacob, Douanier Rousseau, Picasso, Derain, Franz Marc, and Vassily Kandinsky”. (Varga, p.137-138) Later on, Cendrars and Tzara became friends. In addition, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Dina Lévi-Strauss collaborated with Mário de Andrade in the French Cultural Mission to Brazil in 1935. Furthermore, Tristan Tzara and Claude Lévi-Strauss both lived in Marseilles during the Vichy government, hoping and waiting for visas to flee the country. (Guiraud, p.91, 121)

However, it was not Blaise Cendrars’s journeys that influenced Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade as much as his unconventional verse. Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade did not travel all over the world like Cendrars did. Mário’s focus on Brazil and Tzara’s activism in Europe, as well as the persecution he suffered at the hands of the Vichy government due to his religion and race, kept both writers from
transatlantic journeys. In contrast with ethnographers, the two writers were more interested in language, in narrative and its performativity as seen in different cultures, rather than visiting those cultures for statistical, anthropological studies. Tristan Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s personal studies of missionaries and ethnologists who worked in Africa, Austronesia and the Americas, which was discussed in reference to their poetry in the previous chapter, will be examined further in this Chapter through a reading of their prose.

1. From traditional storytelling and mysticism to modern folk narrative

Due to his position as a leading figure in the movement of Dadaism from 1916, Tristan Tzara is mostly associated with anarchic ideas about art, the idea of anti-art and with challenging the values of Western culture. In his post-Dada works, as Stephen Forcer\(^\text{10}\) discusses in his study of some of Tzara’s poetry collections, the Romanian poet navigates in Modernist and universalist waters, and at the same time he has on board cryptographic experiences and memories of the traditions of his homeland, its religion, its customs and rituals. In *Personnage d’insomnie* the references to the writer’s experiences and memories feed the insomniac’s mind, which is both restless and hypnotised into creating the story of the tailor, his metamorphosis and his quest.

In Chapter One, I discussed the application of melody, rhythm and the inscription of characteristics of oral poetry in the poems of Tristan Tzara *Poèmes nègres* and in Mário de Andrade’s *Clã do Jabuti*. In the current chapter, in the writers’ prose we encounter the sense of rhythm in a latent way, as well as questions about the preservation of oral traditions. On the one hand, in Mário’s work it appears that the main narrative concerns the trickster Macunaíma, his multiple metamorphoses and his journey/quest, and on the other hand, in *Personnage d’insomnie* the workaholic tailor transforms into a tree-man and commences a journey of self-discovery. Added to that, we have the inner stories of the writers/narrators as well as examples of *mise en abyme*. Mário de Andrade suggests that he is the one singing the narrative (or rhapsody as he insisted on calling his novel) while playing his guitar. The author

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\(^{10}\) Forcer S., 2005, *Modernist Song: The poetry of Tristan Tzara*
claims it was the parrot to whom Macunaíma narrated his story before ascending to the sky to become a constellation that told him that same story. The epilogue of *Macunaíma* begins as if Mário de Andrade, a storyteller, speaks to us or to an audience of listeners:

Acabou-se a história e morreu a vitória. Não havia mais ninguém lá. Dera tangelo-mangolona tribo Tapanhumas e os filhos dela se acabaram de um em um. Não hava mais ninguém lá. Aquêles lugares aquêles campos furos puxadouros arrastadouros meios-barrancos, aquêles matos misteriosos, tudo era a solidão do deserto... (Andrade de, p.213)

Thus Macunaíma passed on the story to the polyglot parrot and then, the bird narrated it in Portuguese to the rhapsodist Mário when he was visiting the deserted banks of the river Uraricoera. “Um silêncio imenso dormia à beira-rio do Uraricoera. Uma feita um homem foi lá.” (Andrade de, p.213) This man is the narrator/rhapsodist Mário. *Macunaíma* is presented as a story within a story. The main narrative is that of a man who met a storyteller parrot while traveling around Brazil. Macunaíma’s quest is then shared with the reader as the man recounts the parrot’s tale.

In *Personnage d’insomnie*, Tristan Tzara begins his own narrative by describing the isolating feeling of (his) insomnia, the being of insomnia (“personnage d’insomnie”) and the story of the tailor as a result of that. Tzara’s narrator is part of the story and interrupts the trail of the tailor-tree to talk to the reader about various things that the tailor brings to his mind. The storytellers are active ones in both novels. For instance, at the end of the “Macumba” chapter, Mário writes: “Então tudo acabou se fazendo a vida real. E os macumbeiros, Macunaíma, Jaime Ovalle, Dodô, Manu Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raul Bopp, Antônio Bento, todos esses macumbeiros saíram na madrugada.” (Andrade de, p.83) The writer mentions that the fictional character Macunaíma was in the Macumba ritual, which I am going to analyse later in the Chapter, along with many of Mário’s own Modernist friends, poets and musicians. And in Tzara’s prologue to the final chapter of *Personnage d’insomnie* he writes:
La vie des papillons est remarquable. Qui ne prendrait un plaisir de
la plus vive complexité à voir voler au-dessus de lui, dans les
méandres mêmes de sa tête, des jambes de femmes d’une douceur
veloutée, aux reflets de veines et aux chairs émouvantes, ces
papillons gaspillant par paires des fortunes improvisées et emplissant
l’espace vide des branchages de leur frétillement lunaire des fraises
de bois? ... Il faut être aveugle pour ne pas applaudir à l’apparition
des Doleschallia odeur d’automne qui par un défi de sympathie
empruntent la couleur mourante de vos feuilles des figures de ballet,
des Ornithoptères de la Malaisie. À l’irisante opalescence des
lampadaires de cadmium, des Macroploea de velours de sarcophages,
des Satyridés et de Catagrammas, ces apôtres de la civilisation pré-
colombienne… (Tzara, *OC* t3, p.213)

As we can see from the above detailed presentation of Lepidoptera,
Coleoptera etc., both the storytellers bring elements of both reality and the
imagination to their narratives. At times they even adopt a didactic tone in addressing
ecological issues, as we are going to see later. For instance, in this quotation Tzara
wonders how it seems impossible for him to ignore these “magnificent species”, the
butterflies. He informs the reader of various butterfly species by presenting their
scientific names and some of their characteristics. The butterflies here symbolise
apostles of the pre-Colombian civilisation. Béhar notes that this metaphor is a
characteristic of Tzara’s way of rewriting certain ideas. Rewritten versions of many
parts of *Personnage d’insomnie* apart from being a characteristic of the attention with
which Tzara chooses his words, is according to Béhar an indication that the poet may
be using real dreams at times to feed his story. (Béhar, p.558) There are metaphors
within metaphors, such as the different types of butterflies that bring to mind different
cultures, from South American to Middle Eastern. The metaphor also becomes one
for poetry itself. In the paragraph that follows, he associates the admiration of
butterflies with the overwhelming feeling of being inspired by nature and poetry. At
times, the narrator appears to share characteristics with Baudelaire’s “ennui” as well
as “flâneur” and it seems that the very existence of the tailor-tree is a character that
battles this notion. When “le divin tailleur” who is half tree wanders deserted streets,
waiting for night to fall so he can look in windows to catch new stories as
Baudelaire’s narrator does too, the narrator wonders about existential matters regarding his, or any human’s position in the universe:

Mais si la durée n’était pas une continuelle dépense échelonnée sur de divers rapports de choses et d’êtres, au long d’un target donné, la mort coïnciderait avec la naissance et l’univers se réduirait en un point…”

In the paragraph that follows he states that the tailor does not debase the content of the universe:

“Il voulait, au contraire, qu’il soit immense car à son accroissement malgré sa propre déchéance, il pouvait mesure sa secrete splendeur.”

(Tzara, p.186)

At times there is a sacred approach in Personnage d’insomnie that, at first glance, because of the popular association of Tzara with the anarchic character of Dada and the oneiric character of Surrealism, might be thought of as the result of a pagan influence. However, Sandqvist draws parallels between the Balkans’ Jewish folk culture, Eastern Orthodoxy, the diversity of Romanian culture and the birth of Dadaism. He argues that Tzara’s Dada poems have a connection with the way Rabbi Moses de Lèon, and the Kabbalah canonical text ascribed to him, composed texts. (Sandqvist, p.276) Sandqvist does not analyse Jewish readings in depth but he looks at the possible influences that created Dadaism. Observing Tristan Tzara, Marcel Iancu and Arthur Segal, Sandqvist argues that they had in common the Hasidic traditions of the Jewish communities they grew up in, including the community Purim plays and the Yiddish folk idiom and its polyglossia, and that these were the foundations of Dadaism. The point here is that as in Faites vos jeux, Tzara’s first prose work (that remained unfinished), the reader encounters biographical elements about the personal relationships and feelings of the writer; and in Personnage d’insomnie, as well as the psychoanalytic elements, there are also spiritual concerns deriving from Tzara’s biography. Folk, myth and religious philosophy are shown to be interconnected, so it would not be incongruous to speak about Personnage d’insomnie as a modernist myth, folk story or legend.
The description term modernist myth or folktale might sound oxymoronic. But I intend to show that *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum cará ter* and *Personnage d’insomnie* need to be read as tales with mythical elements. Both narratives include elements of other myths and folk stories, and try to familiarise the reader with social as well as natural phenomena. In addition, they include rituals that still take place, like “Bumba-Meu-Boi” (ritual/dramatic dance/performance that is still re-enacted nowadays portraying a bull that dies and comes back to life) in *Macunaíma*, and reference to the fate of the Easter Islands’ population in *Personnage d’insomnie.* (Andrade de, *DD*, p.545) Lévi-Strauss, who met Mário de Andrade quite a few years after the latter published *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum cará ter*, suggests that the themes of mythology can be unfolding ad infinitum. (Lévi-Strauss [a], p.16) How many myths influenced the creation of great tragedies? Tragedy and music preoccupied Nietzsche, myth and ritual were addressed by Malinowski, and then of course there is Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), both key texts for the twentieth-century avant-garde, where myth, folklore and science come together. These are all scholars that influenced Modernists and particularly its avant-garde. In addition to anthropologists, ethnologists and psychoanalysts who research mythology to form and justify their theories, artists conversely engage with scientific theories to develop their work.

Myth is most commonly defined as a traditional story containing supernatural elements, which serves to explain some natural phenomena or as an indicator of the appropriate behaviour for members of a community. In addition, “myths may be enacted or reflected in rituals, ceremonies and dramas, or provide materials for secondary elaborations”. I agree with Doty who, with regards to the definition of myth, points out that “only a polyphasic definition will provide appreciation of their manifold roles within a society”. (Doty, p.531) Myths are not static, they are alive and evolve. By using the term myth here, I want to specify that *Macunaíma* and *Personnage d’insomnie* use elements of mythology and also extract material from legends, fairy tales and pseudo-historic traditions as well as religious rituals. Myth speaks of what there is behind the signified. Myths become part of the *ethos* and even if individuals do not fully comprehend a myth, they can still sense its effect. The definition of myth used in this chapter is based on the ones given by Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss. The former asserts:
Myth is an indispensable ingredient of all culture. It is, as we have seen, constantly regenerated; every historical change creates its mythology, which is, however, but indirectly related to historical fact. Myth is a constant by-product of living faith, which is in need of miracles; of sociological status, which demands precedent; of moral rule, which demands sanction. (Malinowski, p.122)

Myth is not just something archaic, a museum piece. On the contrary, as Lévi-Strauss says, myth helps us to form some understanding about when and why we place a border between culture and nature. (Lévi-Strauss, 2001) Of course, this is an extremely complex task for anthropology. As we are going to see, Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara address in their prose the difficulty for mankind to negotiate the distinction, but the conclusions taken from Macunaíma and Personnage d’insomnie are significantly different. Mário’s novel is about Brazil and he does not idealise his country and its men. His novel does not promote a return to nature, or on the contrary, an embrace of urban life. It criticises the fact that despite the abundance of culture, the “preguiça” attitude, similar to “ennui”, and most importantly, opportunism, are determining factors in holding the country back. On the other hand, despite the death of the tailor-tree at the end in Tzara’s story, there is still a feeling of hope about the idea of the capacity of humanity to value nature.

Avant-garde paintings that are influenced by native, ancient and prehistoric art have been engraved in the memory of the public because of the fame of painters who dared to create this type of cultural cross-fertilisation. Max Ernst, Tzara’s former fellow Dadaist, later turned Surrealist, is a good example since he did not just create visual artefacts but used visual narratives to create a kind of modernist story board. Legge says that Ernst meant the technique of frottage as a deliberate technical atavism, nonetheless his production of the portfolio Histoire naturelle (1926) invites the viewer to act as a natural historian combining any means of analysis from botany and biology as well as mythology, mathematics and cosmology. (Legge, p.147)

Later in the Chapter we shall return to this association of nature and natural science with myth and cosmological ideas. For the moment let us stay focused on the representation of something beyond socialised reality, a truancy of nature as Tzara states, or something between the effects of insomnia and mythical metamorphosis.
The drawing of Max Ernst entitled *Totem and Taboo* (1941) is the closest to how “le divin-tailleur”, the protagonist of *Personnage d'insomnie*, can be depicted, at least the closest to my imagining of him. Interwoven branches, leaves, lymph-like foliage and leafage, even glimpses of micro-organisms and small animals in forest green, fresh grass and yellow tones lead the viewer to a male face which is formed on a trunk. This association of myth with music, the human need for narrative and rhythm in combination with analysis of the psyche in order to understand oneself and nature, and the self as part of nature, is not foreign in the prose and poetry of Tristan Tzara or in that of Mário de Andrade. They both questioned the traditional separation of written and verbal narratives. Tzara, in his many drafts of *Personnage d'insomnie*, reveals the care with which he chose words for their sound, in a manner reminiscent of the composer’s choice of notes. What makes Tzara’s work distinctive is the elemental, earthly, natural arrangement of vocabulary and expressions. This is also the case in other works by Tzara, particularly in his notes *Grains et issues* and the well-known poetry collection *L’Homme approximatif*. Mário de Andrade, a professional pianist and singer, is interested in both the content and the musical texture of oral poetry, and at times includes his own lyrics in songs that appear in *Macunaíma*. Some of the songs in the novel are original songs from the Northeast Brazil and Rio de Janeiro that Mário collected during his field research in these regions. Both writers are aware of the paradox of imitating and writing down oral traditions: the interchange between the role of the storyteller and the ethnographer is a distinctive element in their narratives.

Tristan Tzara has left his notes in the outline of the story of “le divin tailleur”. After the description of his main narrative, various moments of self-criticism emerge:

*L’auteur se défend d’avoir voulu ‘par un procédé quelconque de symbolisme’ mettre en évidence ou justifier une attitude sceptique devant les ‘phénomènes’’ […] Mais aussi il avoue, pour s’être laissé prendre au jeu, avoir en partie échoué dans son dessin de démontrer par l’absurde l’inconsistance de certaines ‘écoles’ ,[…] quand elles se piquent ‘en partant de simple fantaisies’ d’embrasser la totalité des lois humaines en partant de quelques plaisantes fantaisies. (Tzara, *OC t3*, p.553)*
Tzara seems to wish he had made his criticism of certain theories and schools of thought, which tend to speak of human nature in a unified, at times simplified perspective. Only assumptions can be made about the modern theories that Tristan Tzara refers to here. However, the emphasis on the “organic” versus “modern/artificial” in Personnage d’insomnie can be viewed as a satire on the technological and scientific enthusiasm of the time. The excitement and extreme faith in technology, progress and modernity is an object of satire for other Dadaists and Surrealists too. A characteristic illustration of that is the 1917 drawing of Francis Picabia for the sixth issue of the magazine 391; it depicts a light bulb with a reflection entitled Américaine, and the excitement of electricity, the promise of progress and the American dream. Béhar wonders which particular school of thought Tzara is evolving when he says “l’absurde l’inconsistence de certaines ‘écoles’ theories modernes” and suggests psychoanalysis, Marxism, evolutionism or Surrealism itself. (Béhar, p.554) In Personnage d’insomnie it is difficult to distinguish which one of these schools of thought Tzara criticizes, exactly because he condemns any school of thought which claims absolute difference and originality. Similarly, Mário de Andrade criticizes the popular belief that progress is the equivalent of the inventions of modernity and technology, from the automobile to the lift. In addition, bearing in mind that Mário writes Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter in 1927-28 while spending time in the North Eastern states of Brazil, he uses his protagonist as a projector of the great differences that separate the nation in terms of infrastructure and capitalistic versus agrarian society. In the novel, while Macunaíma runs all over Brazil being chased by Piaiman’s wife, Ceiuci, he seeks shelter with other creatures. In Pernambuco, he gives a little diamond ring to a bushmaster to bribe him, and its diamond transforms into: “quatro contos de carros de milho, adubo Polisu e uma fordeca de segunda mão”. (Andrade de, p.136) A fertilizer and corn can be of some use but the second-hand car cannot be of much help in the dry land. The infrastructure and lifestyle in São Paulo was not comparable to the mud roads of the North East and the lack of many things to cover the basic needs of the inhabitants of the grasslands. According to Roberto Schwarz:

On the one hand, there were the slave trade, the latifundia and clientelism… consolidated in colonial times and impervious to the universalism of bourgeois civilization; on the other hand, stymied by
these relations, but also stymying them, there was the Law before which everyone was equal…The ensuring of the stable coexistence of these two conceptions, in principle so incompatible, was at the center of ideological and moral preoccupations in Brazil in the nineteenth century. (Schwarz, p.13)

Schwarz argues that the reflection of this absurdity is present in Brazilian literature in general. Through Macunaíma’s status as the “emperor” of the forest, Mário de Andrade criticizes this coexistential paradox of remaining colonial attitudes regarding class separation and at the same time a constitution that sees everyone as equal. Macunaíma does not work for the title of “emperor”, but instead forced his way into the position through his sexual assaults and his general attitude that he deserves to be served “just because”.

2. The beginning of Metamorphosis

Macunaíma from his birth has a strange appearance. Firstly, he is born black and shortly afterwards he is described as having an unusually small head, and later, he sometimes transforms into a white blond prince. Then his skin becomes white. He also transforms into an ant, once dresses as a woman and once transforms into a female prostitute. In one incident, he is disassembled by an enemy and nearly dies but his body is put back together thanks to his brother Maanape’s status as a feitiçero. When Macunaíma arrives in the city, his skin has already metamorphosed into white, but he remains an outsider since he cannot recognize the new things he sees around him, such as cars, skyscrapers, lifts, cranes, telephones, electricity poles, etc. “A inteligência do herói estava muito perturbada…” he is confused and only finally understands that most things there function because of machines when some girls explain it to him. (Andrade de, p.52) He then considers that a machine (a máquina/ feminine noun in Portuguese) is a female entity and tries to have sex with “her”. This is an early paradigm in the narrative regarding the libidinal fascination

11“Feitiçero”can mean sorcerer or initiate and derives from the word fetish, it mainly refers to people that practice syncretic religions, mixed African practices that often have elements borrowed from Christianity but are seen by the latter as satanic. (Johnson, p.86)
that machines can create. Earlier avant-garde visual works showing this fascination can be found in many paintings by Duchamp, such as Coffee mill (1911) and Picabia’s Paroxysm of Suffering (1915). Braidotti states:

Machines fulfill a fundamental libidinal structure, which mimes the workings of sexual energy. They question the variable between the functional and the gratuitous, productivity and waste, moderation and excess…From Eisenstein to Cronenberg the erotic power of the machine has not failed to impress filmmakers, artists and activists. (Braidotti, p.217)

Such is the case in Mário de Andrade’s text. He shows that Macunaíma is surprised by the many “daughters of manioc”, as he refers to the white women in São Paulo once he arrives there. However, he ignores them for a very long time once he sees the machines which he cannot stop desiring. When the people passing by convince him that trying to have such an encounter with any type of machine, since it is made out of various screws and cogwheels, could cause fatal damage to his body, Macunaíma picks up a few fancily dressed women on the street. He is surprised when they ask him for money and last but not least he wakes up with a terrible pain in his genitals and a fever. It takes many days for him to recover, yet when he does he transforms his brother Jiguê into a telephone booth from which he orders lobster and French prostitutes. (Andrade de, p.51-53) He performs the telephone booth trick on other occasions while the three brothers are in São Paulo and he needs to make a phone call. It is another humorous way to show that Macunaíma will use technology libidinally according to what he desires or needs at a particular moment in time.

The use of metamorphosis in Tristan Tzara’s narrative is a form of resistance; simplistic yet powerful, it occurs without any logical explanation. In Mário de Andrade’s Macunaíma, metamorphosis happens in magical ways. The surprise of transformation reminds us of African folk tales - absurd, challenging and unfitting for some, rejuvenating for others. What is more, the act of metamorphosis is linked directly to questions of identity. Kacou Christian notes that the “wonderful and magic” in African and Latin American narrative is synonymous with the quotidian. (Kacou Christian, p.119) We have to keep in mind this major difference in attitude between
Western and African (and by extension Latin American) narrative regarding the “magical” and the “fantastic”.

Before looking at the consequences of and possible reasons for the tailor’s metamorphosis in Tzara’s text, it is worth examining how the tailor himself perceives the event. The dramatic tone with which the narrator tells us how the tailor observes and counts the branches emerging from his body becomes lighter with Tzara’s play of words, for example “l'égalité des forces de mourir et de sourire” in the following passage:

Les certitudes crispantes baignent dans les vitres et la pluie désorganise leurs phosphorescentes inversions. Craintives et disproportionnées, fuient les équations fondamentales, seules capables de désarçonner le cavalier du moment et je passe sous silence les diverses visions qui les mettent sur la trace d'un brumeux avenir. Cependant, l'égalité des forces de mourir et de sourire qui se révèle comme un dégrèvement massif des soucis parasitaires et dont l'unique but est l'apaisement, semble dépister les appréhensions les plus récalcitrantes. Elle laisse au temps assez de place pour passer. Mais le divin tailleur s'appliquait à dénombrer les entailles précaires par lesquelles de nouvelles branches pouvaient montrer leurs langues hésitantes et à étouffer, le long de cet austère lèchement d'échancrures qu'est la durée sylvestre, le trop rapide élan des fruits prêts à se dégager de leur chair désobligeante. (Tzara, p.174-175)

In this passage, it is unclear whether the certainties shown on the windows in phosphorescent inversions are being disrupted by the rain, or whether they are the narrator’s disruptions, or even the tailor’s. The choice of words is applicable to all of these possibilities. Firstly, the certainties of the narrator are shaken: he passes over in silence the diverse visions on the trail of an uncertain future. The narrator is the insomniac and it is possible that for the reason he is unsure of what is real and what a creation of his insomniac mind. However, the personality created by insomnia is the tailor, and he cannot be sure of anything at this particular moment; nothing is certain, and his chest produces tree branches with fresh bulbs.
The protagonist tailor, or “le divin tailleur” experiences the process of metamorphosis gradually, but the first metamorphic event happens suddenly. “Le divin tailleur” is a hard-working tailor, absorbed in his daily work. Tzara introduces the tailor in the second chapter by implying at the end of the first paragraph that there will be a change in the course of events:

C’était un beau matin du mois de mars et le divin tailleur s’en apercevait à peine. Absorbé par ses tâches journalières, dont il arrachait ses moyens de subsistance, il ne se rendait plus compte que le travail avait fini par manger sa vie, l’engloutir entièrement, tant et si bien que l’un se confondait dans l’autre sans laisser de place à la libre interprétation de ses velléités ou même de ses tics. Il y avait de quoi grincer des dents. Et rien d’étonnant à ce que, en dédoublement du dégoût profond que lui inspirait sa vie à répétitions, sa révolte dût s’exprimer d’une manière exhaustive, presque à l’insu de sa conscience corporelle. (Tzara, p.157)

The writer creates an atmosphere of dullness by underlining that work had swallowed the tailor’s life to such a degree that one cannot be distinguished from the other. In this way he demonstrates how the routine of the tailor has severely damaged his perception of his own being, and there is no room for his inclinations. Here Tzara’s Marxist ideas regarding work are obvious, something he demonstrated actively within the French Communist Party and later independently of it, as will be discussed further in the final chapter. The tailor is in a state of alienation, but that paradoxically will change when the process of his metamorphosis starts:

Nullement étonné d’abord, le divin tailleur constata qu’un bouton paraissait poindre sur son deltoïd droit. Un bouton comme un autre. Mais bientôt, à la dureté inaccoutumée et pointue de cette déségrégation cutanée de plus en plus apparentée à la cellulose, il reconnut qu’un vrai bourgeon d’un vert jaune encore indécis allait faire irruption sur le champ d’observation encore inculte de son corps.

Avec les milliers de considérations qu’elle traînait à sa suite, une branche allait lui pousser en pleine poitrine. Serait-ce là les suites
incongrues d'une sorte d'école buissonnière de la nature? Serait-il vrai qu'un printemps intolérant et sans scrupules fût capable de bouleverser la torpeur apprise en éveillant des candides impondérables dans des calices impropres à la germination? (Tzara, p.158)

The process of transformation is presented step by step. Tzara gradually introduces vocabulary evoking flora and botany. Firstly, the “divin tailleur” stoically observes the buttons that are being pushed out from the interior of his garment. At the moment that a yellow-green bud appears on the tailor’s chest, another comment indicates that he had not had the chance before to develop emotionally, overcome as he is by work. The point from which the branch emerges is his chest, the heart, which further signals his lack of emotional depth. In the second paragraph, Tzara continues his play on words with rhetorical and humorous questions about this unusual event of the appearance of a branch in a man’s body; is it nature’s truancy, he wonders, “l’école buissonnière de la nature”. As well as an expression meaning truancy, the second word in the phrase also evokes an inhabitant of the woods or the bushes. In mythological narratives, metamorphosis can be used as a tool of seduction, to achieve a personal goal, to assist a third party or to assist in salvation, as a punishment or way of protection. To understand that, it is helpful to look at Barkan’s chronological account of the use of metamorphosis, even though he refers only to Western narratives. Beginning with Ovid’s account of Arachne who is transformed into a spider by goddess Athena because of the former’s arrogance and Daphne’s escape from Apollo thanks to her transformation into a laurel tree, Barkan then touches upon examples from the Middle Ages through to the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, according to the Christian doctrine metamorphosis is associated with pagan multiplicity and is ultimately replaced by metempsychosis. The Renaissance sees a revival of metamorphosis in works by Titian who was influenced by Aretino’s and Dolce’s narratives of psychological intensity. (Barkan, 1986) Tzara only offers a discreet suggestion to show that the metamorphosis here is an instrument of the tailor’s salvation, “il reconnut qu'un vrai bourgeon d’un vert jaune encore indécis allait faire irruption sur le champ d’observation encore inculte de son corps”. The tailor, ironically, is going to learn more about his own self, he will cultivate his feelings, when his self is transformed into a tree-man. Again, we encounter a semantic
game generated by the word “inculte”. Its polysemous quality here plays with the tailor’s status: he is not developed emotionally and mentally, his branches-leaves are not fully cultivated (literally, they need time to be cultivated as they belong to the flora), and he has yet to transform into a somehow complete humanoid-tree.

Lévi-Strauss believed that music and myth have a relationship of contiguity. These elements combine to bring Tzara’s story closer to something that might be called a modernist folk story. This idea is evident not only in Personnage d’insomnie but also Macunaíma. Firstly, as Lévi-Strauss points out:

[…] We have to read the myth more or less as we would read an orchestral score […] That is, we have to read not only from left to right, but at the same time vertically, from top to bottom. […] And it is only if we treat the myth as if it were an orchestral score, stave after stave, that we can understand it as a totality, that we can extract the meaning out of the myth. (Lévi-Strauss [a], p. 40)

The story of Personnage d’insomnie becomes comprehensible when we consider the parallel between Lévi-Strauss’s argument that mythology passes into the background during the Renaissance, not disappearing entirely but with ‘music taking over its structure and function (Lévi-Strauss [a], p.40). The kind of music that he mentions, such as creations of Frescobaldi and Wagner, instrumental compositions (often for church organs) and operatic pieces did not just take over the function of mythology. The process signals a separation between the “high” art and folk art. The European avant-garde of the first part of the twentieth century challenged this particular separatist attitude: canonically, Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907) is characteristic of the inspiration that folkart from non-Western cultures provided. However, there are fewer indications that poetry and literature are as influenced by lore and folk tales as the visual arts. As Ernst Gombrich notes regarding the preference for the “primitive” in the twentieth century, the kinship that was seen between a torso from Ecuador, Cycladic idols and African masks conditioned the public and artists to respond to these images of a long forgotten past with immediacy. (Gombrich, p.229) Moreover, the narratives that came from these cultures also nurtured an idea of kinship. For Mário de Andrade, they were part of his cultural roots and for Tristan Tzara, they represented his experience of the Diaspora.
3. Questions of identity

It is necessary to draw a line and differentiate Macunaíma and its author from the Manifesto Antropófago, which became almost synonymous with Brazilian Modernism, something that I have also touched upon in the Introduction. Oswald de Andrade wrote the Manifesto Antropófago in 1928. Meanwhile, Francis Picabia and Tzara wrote the Manifèste Cannibale Dada in 1920. The two manifestos are different but there is a mockery of the bourgeoisie common to both. The latter is one of the many playful, noisy, and satirical Dadaist texts. The former text, as its title indicates, refers to cannibalising foreign cultural products in order to create new ones that will express Brazilianism (“Brasilidade”). The famous phrase from the Manifesto written in English, “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question”, summarises its purpose. Schwarz comments on Oswald’s English phrase: “Oswald’s famous saying, with its contradictory use of English language, a classical line and a play on words to pursue the search for national identity, itself says a great deal about the nature of the impasse”. (Schwarz, p.9) It is worth adding that in Sept manifestes dada, Tzara insists that one should beware of manifestos. That is the reason why Dada texts do not declare anything, just the spirit of carnival or nihilism depending on the point of view of the reader. (Tzara, OC t1, p.359) Oswald de Andrade on the other hand, falls into the trap of utopianism by dreaming of a pre-colonial Brazil. The fact that Macunaíma is born in the forest and then moves to the city for a while, along with the coinciding dates of the publication of the novel and the manifesto (both in 1928), has deceived many critics into reading Mário de Andrade’s novel as a product of Antropofagia. On the other hand, Kimberle López sees that despite the fact that Macunaíma includes direct references to cannibalism, such as Curupira offering the meat of his own leg to Macunaíma or the giant man-eater, Piaiman Pietro Petra, “the anthropophagic consumption of the Other in Andrade’s rhapsody goes far beyond the simple representation of cannibalistic acts: in a more general sense, the entire project is anthropophagistic in that it consumes materials from a broad range of sources and incorporates them in a de-hierarchized whole, without categorically excluding any discourse, including that of the coloniser”. (López, p.28) Doubtless, Mário de Andrade shows a particular loyalty to his country but he never expresses a nationalist intent in his works. In contrast with many of his contemporaries that went on to found extremist groups and parties, Mário speaks rather of the need for patriotism.
Macunaíma includes criticism of and recognition of the fact that the extreme class separation that characterises Brazilian society is a result of the memory of slavery. Mário was born only five years after the abolition of slavery in Brazil, making it easy for him to see that prejudice amongst Brazilians cannot coexist with social progress. The absurdity he sees in Brazilian society is represented in Macunaíma in a satirical way that approximates more to Gargantua than a hero.

Although I agree with Lopez regarding the notion of consuming the Other, I have to disagree with her when she argues that the Brazilian author sees things as a mulatto from São Paulo, and that his journeys to the Northeast took place only later because Blaise Cendrars had previously organised a journey to Minas. Haberly mentions that we should read Mário as a racially mixed author but does not develop the idea. (Haberly, p.161) While it is true that Mário de Andrade had a mixed Portuguese, African and indigenous background and grew up in an upper class family in São Paulo, as I discussed in Chapter One, he was acutely aware of the inequalities among the various regions of Brazil. His first journey to the Northeast provided the inspiration and research for Macunaíma, which he began shortly after his trip. We know from extensive research by Flavia Camargo Toni and Mário’s own O Turista Aprendiz (1943) that the purpose of his journey was to research music and “danças dramaticas”, which he turned into an official research project while he was the director of the Department of Culture of São Paulo in 1935. (Camargo Toni, 2008)

As well as the post-colonial criticism (Nunes, p.115) concerned with national identity (Fiddian, 2000), and the effort to create a Brazilian novel etc., Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter represents Mário de Andrade’s personal views on national identity, community spirit and language. For instance, the writer’s homosexuality is never mentioned in that critical dimension. The intense sexual power of Macunaíma is always analyzed as a metaphor for the wild nature of the character, or is attached to his status as a trickster. However, even if the book received some negative criticism for Macunaíma’s sexual activity, ultimately it was considered as a symbolism for the free exchange of sex as opposed to the hero’s surprise at the existence of prostitution or, as Haberly suggests, an expression of sadomasochistic elements that would reveal “Macunaíma’s destiny as a destructive rather than a

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creative force.” (Haberly, p.155) Yet Haberly does see Macunaíma’s disguise as a woman, adopted to access Piaiman’s manor, as symbolic of his loss of masculinity in the city. (Haberly, p.154) This transgender appearance can be seen as empowering too. It is related to the Afro-Brazilian worship of fertility gods where gender is more fluid than the one Mário would have been used to from his Catholic upbringing. In 1928, when Oswald de Andrade published an article under a pseudonym in which he referred to Mário as “Miss São Paulo”, the latter had to act immediately out of fear of losing his position as a music teacher in the Conservatory of São Paulo. (Antelo, p.67) Green says that even other homosexual artists would not be sure of Mário’s sexual identity since he never spoke of it openly. (Green, 2001) 

Macunaíma is also a reflection of the emerging music of its time; it is Mário’s opportunity to leave behind the classical tunes of the Conservatory and explore African rhythms, “danças dramaticas” and unknown deities. Such transformations were emancipatory not just for Macunaíma, but also for his creator who found inspiration through these cultural manifestations to which he was exposed travelling in Nordeste.

Later I will discuss the association of Macunaíma’s sexuality with that of Exu, the African-Brazilian deity. There are many Exus that are depicted with an oversized phallus as well as female versions of Exu, but the references to Africa are not just about religion and storytelling. On another occasion when Macunaíma is cold he finds shelter in Vei’s raft. Vei, the sun, and her three daughters enjoy the tranquility of the river with Macunaíma. One of her daughters plays an African drum and sings. “A cunhatã mais moça batia o urucungo que mãe trouxera da Africa.” It is implied that the sun came from Africa and brought this musical instrument along. Despite the tranquility of the scene - the narrator indicates there is not a single cloud in the sky and that the hero enjoys resting on the raft - the song of the girl is melancholic. “Quando eu morrer não me chores…Tive por pai o desterro, Por mãe a infelicidade… Um colar feito de dor…” (Andrade de, p.89) The lyrics refer to the African Diaspora created by the slave trade, and the refrain refers to an African woman’s hair. Mário plays with identities once again when Vei permits Macunaíma to become her son-in-law if he vows to be faithful. Immediately after Vei and her daughters depart to fulfill their duties of providing day light, Macunaíma cannot restrain his urge and makes love to a Portuguese fisherman’s wife who happens to be there. Mário’s references to African culture within and as part of the Brazilian one
takes place through popular and religious songs, such as the one that Vei’s daughter sings. The dispute with Vei does not finish with Macunaíma’s infidelity though. When Macunaíma’s African brother, Maanape, and his indigenous brother, Jiguê, die due to the hero’s negligence, Vei makes life difficult for him.

Jiguê becomes a shadow after being infected by a fishing hook made of a poisonous anaconda tooth. Since the shadow has no understanding of the impossibility of satisfying its hunger, it follows Macunaíma in the hope of eating something that the hero finds. In his attempt to discard the new follower, Macunaíma jumps “sem pedir licença entre a sombra de Jorge Velho e a sombra do Zumbi que estavam discutindo”. (Andrade de, p.194) Mário inserts a historical reference to the famous king of the Quilombo dos Palmares, the settlement-symbol for the African resistance during colonial times. The Portuguese, among them the fierce “bandeirante” Domingos Jorge Velho, defeated Zumbi who “has enjoyed an apotheosis as an ethnic hero. More than a secular hero, Zumbi is viewed as an ancestor, antecedent in what the outsider might see as a fictive lineage.” (Nelson Anderson, p.545) Mário here suggests that, following the African ancestral worship that Nelson Anderson mentions, Zumbi also continues to fight as a shadow. Mário inserts a little story referring to the “dança dramatica” Bumba-meu-Boi in the narrative of Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Macunaíma tricks the shadow and lures it to follow a bull named Espácio instead of himself. The shadow then happily rides the bull around singing the famous melodies of this ritual. As the shadow devours anything that the animal attempts to eat, the bull dies and the shadow is devastated, but finds consolation in its singing. In the “dança dramatica” the bull dies and is resurrected for different reasons than those we see in the novel. However, Mário says: “E foi assim que inventaram a festa famanada do Bumba-meu-Boi, também conhecida por Boi-Bumbá”. (Andrade de, p.198) Once Macunaíma remains without his brothers, all the other creatures and personifications of nature, depicted with African and indigenous names, stop helping him too. His alienation from cultural roots means that he is unable to survive.

4. Craftsmanship

At the beginning of Personnage d’insomnie, the protagonist is characterised purely by his craftsmanship. On the contrary, in Macunaíma: o herói sem
nenhum caráter the protagonist has a name but the title indicates that he does not have a character. This shows not only a lack of an identity but its adaptability, one which differs from the tailor/tree because Macuñaima’s transformations are sudden and usually serve his self-interest in relation to a particular situation. In the first draft of Personnage d’insomnie, Tzara chooses to make his protagonist an accountant. He does not explain his final choice of a tailor but accountancy suggests bureaucracy, and a Kafka-inspired monotony and alienation from one’s object of production. In addition, Tzara had originally enrolled in the University of Bucharest to study philosophy and mathematics. However, with regard to his use of the term “infini mathématique”, Béhar notes Tzara’s radio interview with Louis Mollion in 1957 where he said: “…pendant mon adolescence, je croyais pouvoir devenir mathématicien… mais le terme d’infini m’arrêtait chaque fois puisque l’infini pour moi était réellement l’infini, tandis que pour les mathématiques ce ne devait être qu’un signe, une convention”. (Béhar, p.570) According to what Tzara says, the choice of a profession related to mathematics and finance represents a lack of creativity and alienation from the natural world.

There are two further possible reasons for Tzara’s choice of tailoring as a profession for his central character. In Romanian cities many of the Yiddish-speaking townsmen were practicing tailors and many examples of Yiddish folk songs from Eastern Europe refer to the hard work of tailors. It is a profession that requires skill, precision and long hours. Rubin notes that Eastern European Jews, such as those in Tzara’s community, developed the tradition of Yiddish folksongs and Hasidic tunes that reflect the richness of culture of the largest Jewish community of modern times until its destruction in World War II. (Rubin, p.5) The evocation in some of these songs of how a tailor is dedicated to his work resembles Tzara’s description of his protagonist’s commitment to his craft. One characteristic example of these Yiddish songs entitled Ot Azoy Neyt A Shnayer (This is How a Tailor Stiches), begins with the following verse:

This is how a tailor stiches,

This is how he sews and sews,

Making other people’s britches,

All day long he sits and sews. (Silverman, p.84)
At the same time the profession of the tailor in Western Europe also represents modernity, the new fashion trends on display in the already popular fashion magazines. In his essay *D’un certain automatisme du goût* (Minotaure, 1933), which dates from the same year as the manuscript of *Personnage d’insomnie*, Tzara refers to the psychosexual implications of certain norms of fashion at the time, and he wonders how mostly women but also men do not realise that in the name of Haute Couture they go around wearing any type of genitally allusive hat. (Tzara, *OC t4*, p. 321) “Le divin tailleur” when metamorphosed, with his plant-like consciousness, freed from any human taboo, starts being more human. The tailor diverges from the route he had taken, the route of modernity illustrated in fashion that is also a diachronic connotation of vanity and materialism. Moving away from the modern, the artificial, the soulless mannequins who figure as his only company, the tailor is forced to explore the natural world, to sail upon a quest for pathos. It only occurs to him to seek a companion in life when he is metamorphosed into a tree-man. From the very early moments of his transformation to “l’homme à branches” his goal becomes to find “la femme à branches”. While searching for his potential female partner, he carries all kinds of new acquaintances such as insects and fungi but also he observes humans from distance.

It appears bizarre at first that Tzara refers to the protagonist as “the divine” tailor. Béhar, in Tzara’s *Œuvres complètes*, makes only one comment. He wonders about a possible reference to Marquis de Sade because Tzara mentions the writer in *Essai sur la situation de la poésie*. (Béhar, p.564) Still, there is no connection between Tzara’s apollonian and at the same time natural character, the divine tailor-tree, and any of Marquis de Sade’s work. The epithet “divine” was given to Marquis de Sade because of its previous use by Pietro Aretino. The latter is considered the first pornographic poet satirist.13 Portraits of Aretino appear most frequently with the title “Il Divino Pietro Aretino”. (Waddington, 2004) Aretino approaches pornographic verse playfully, using verse and meter to create humorous effects. Apart from referring to his sexual encounters and that of others among the Roman and Venetian society, he used myths with nymphs, Priapus and Pan, as well as the myth of Daphne.

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13 His activity coincides chronologically with Rabelais and Villon’s whose work preoccupied Tzara, as we know from his in-depth notes and analyses. Villon’s poetry explores different themes than Aretino’s but both have a very intimate tone. (Tzara, 1991, *OC* tome VI, *Le Secret de Villon*)
Daphne’s metamorphosis into laurel was a popular subject in art at the time, and in the light of the other myths that influenced Aretino a pattern emerges. The character that pursues a nymph and wants to impose his sexual desire by means of violence is always conquered by nature. Nature as an escape from violence and alienation is a main theme in *Personnage d’insomnie*.

The tailor has the epithet “divine” because when he is introduced to the reader he is self-absorbed, not unlike Aretino. Later, when he transforms to the tailor-tree he retains the title “divine” because he is closer to the divine in a humble way. Like in the way of the Talmud, the tailor-tree realises his status as a creature belonging to a higher power. Tzara invents a character and a narrative that includes personal views, at times in a cryptic way as in his other works, by using the metamorphic aspect of human nature. Man transforms through his life’s path. However, Tzara manages to show this transformation from a different perspective, other than a simple struggle between an animalistic nature and a higher ethos. If the elemental, earthy vocabulary and the surrealist interventions were absent, one could compare the story of the divine tailor-tree to Renaissance narratives where Greek and Roman literature were rediscovered. While Aretino sees himself as Priapus and talks about bestiality, Tzara dreams of becoming part of nature but not an imaginative, idyllic version of it. His nature is surprisingly realistic, and includes all the mud, bulbs, insects, roots and mollusks that the Renaissance mentality disregards.

When the protagonist of *Personnage d’insomnie* is still a tailor, not only is he a loner, he is also disconnected from the surroundings beyond his tailor’s workshop, and estranged from the natural world. In his poetic prose, Tzara assembles a text almost as a lesson in botany, entomology and other environmental sciences. It resembles the scientific description of the biology of plants. This particular element can be compared with Mário de Andrade’s detailed vocabulary of Brazil’s fauna and flora in the narrative of *Macunaíma*. In *Personnage d’insomnie*, an antithesis develops between working in an artificial environment, the tailor’s workshop, and being outdoors: not in the sense of the benefits of being outdoors, but of the primordial outside, with nature as the prime topos. The tailor-tree has to survive among soil, roots, rocks, and micro-organisms. He has to be sheltered like other plants, trees and animals from natural phenomena such as rain and ice, and becomes more tolerant to them than humans. This applies to Macunaíma to a certain extent too since
the hero, at the beginning in partnership with his brothers and lovers, and at the end on his own, must develop survival skills. It is often observed by critics of the novel, including Unruh (p.157) and Haberly (p.154), that once Macunaíma resides in São Paulo, the modern metropolis, he becomes estranged from the natural world. In fact, Macunaíma never develops any skills apart from giving orders to his brothers and having some unexplained magical qualities. He is incapable of providing for himself either in the forest and or in the city.

5. Diligence and Nurture versus Sloth and Negligence

There is a strong contrast regarding the work ethic between the protagonist of Tristan Tzara and the one of Mário de Andrade. The tailor is a hard worker while Macunaíma’s main characteristic is his indolence. Nevertheless, they both encounter new experiences through their physical journeys. Their quests may refer indirectly to the writers’ life journeys. Mário de Andrade wrote *Macunaíma* the year that he first discovered a different Brazil in the North and North East states and the variety of their cultures. These regions were almost the polar opposite of Mário’s own urban Paulistano environment. It is important to emphasise that the Brazilian writer is not celebrating sloth by making Macunaíma lazy; after all, he ends up alone because of it. The overwhelming feeling of his situation is sadness. Dean Willis adds:

> Macunaíma is left crippled and without the will to go on living. He joins the long-since departed Amazon Queen in the Heavens where he shines as the Big Dipper constellation in the night sky, but it is a consolation prize, because the spirit dwellers inhabiting the Southern Cross constellation - the major stellar reference in the Southern Hemisphere - would not let him join them. Significantly, although the Southern Cross and other constellations appear in the Brazilian flag, the Big Dipper or Ursa Major does not. (Dean Willis, p.108-109)

The ascendance to the sky and his quest remain unappreciated while on the contrary, the death of “le divin tailleur” is approached with calmness and positive
speculation: “Le retour dans le ventre maternel se dédoublait, en se déchargeant partiellement sur les responsabilités participantes.” (Tzara, p.212)

Tzara, as we know from the unedited manuscripts, wrote Personnage d’insomnie in fragments. In his research of the main text Béhar’s states: “L’état que nous reproduisons est daté: Nice, septembre 1933, Varengeville, août 1934, ce qui avance d’un an les dates fournies par Tzara dans ses Morceaux choisis. La première phrase du chapitre XI est, dans un brouillon au crayon, écrite au verso d’une circulaire de la Société des amis du Musée d’ethnographie datée du 20 février 1934”. (Béhar, p.552) Tzara creates the transformed divine tailor’s quest during a period when, according to some information provided by Hentea without any mentioning of the novelette, he spends a lot of time alone. It is a time that his wife Greta Knutson and son are away because of the couple’s disputes, and polemic articles about ruptures with and within the Surrealists are common. (Hentea, p.234) The well-read Romanian poet and writer dedicated time to research his own memories and find the space “in between” which is insomnia. One of his Premiers poèmes (1912-1915), composed before departing for Zürich and translated into French from the original Romanian, is entitled “Insomnie”. The poem’s title refers to an insomnia caused by unfulfilled love. However, the vocabulary is nature-based and we encounter imagery that Tzara continues to use in his more mature poetry. (Tzara, OC t1, p.61) Sandqvist mentions that “Tzara himself found it difficult to support the notion of a discontinuity between his Romanian poems and his Dada poetry.” (Sandqvist, p.140) The references to the Romanian past, although very few, are not negative, suggesting that although Tzara did not often return to Romania, he did not reject his past as a result of his status as a self-exiled émigré, as is often suggested. Through his journey, he did not set a barrier by delimiting a periphery or a center.

The native town of Tristan Tzara is and was small, but went through a period of prosperity and became an industrial center of commerce from 1800 until the beginning of the twentieth century after oil was discovered in the area. Buot tells us how Tzara (born Samuel) spent his childhood vacations: “Pendant les vacances scolaires, il aime retrouver la maison familiale perdue au fond des bois. Il regarde ce grand-père entouré des son armée de bûcherons. Une photo découverte dans les archives familiales les montre au travail. La vie n’est pas toujours facile pour ces hommes, mais Samuel, lui, ne manque de rien.” (Buot, p.17) Codrescu adds a more
detailed image of Tristan Tzara’s family. His other grandfather was the Rabbi of Chernowitz who was present at his grandson’s bar mitzvah in 1910, and his parents owned a saw mill. (Codrescu, p.209) The sawmill and the forestry business are part of Tzara’s family life, biographical elements brought into the writer’s text, but not in the Romanticized form of an idyllic memory. Nor can we claim that the botanical and geological vocabulary brings a realistic aspect to the text, since the metamorphosis and the forces of nature often reach a scatological level of detail. For instance, there is the graphic description of the tailor-tree’s transition from eating like a human to feeding with his roots from wet, sticky earth. However, the earth/land can serve as a connotation for a motherly figure or motherland itself. This association between land/country of origin and trees as symbol of having (cultural) roots is summarized in a Tu B’Shevat song, called Ilanot (Pines), which mentions the idea of longing for the motherland:

The tingling of the needles is gone
Homeland I will call, a snowy distant dream
Greenish frost and ice enclose a mountain stream
A stranger’s land, a foreign tongue in song (Frishman, p.408)

Meanwhile, when Varga talks about the periphery and the centre regarding the Absurd in Romanian literary traditions, she mentions some early poems by Tzara that were written in Romanian, mentioned earlier as Premiers poèmes. She presents part of a poem entitled “Viens à la campagne avec moi” and observes: “Tzara never makes any decisive move to either idealise the province or to find it superior to the center”. Speaking on his writing style, she says: “details are put forth with a devastating simplicity, as if a child is observing elusively… Yet, this elusiveness is deceptive. In fact, these details play a significant role.” (Varga, p.143) One such detail is a reference to the Jewish cemetery serving as the border between the town and the countryside: “Le cimetière juif... Au-delà de la ville, sur la colline…je voudrais lentement disparaître au long du pays… Errant dans le bois”. (Tzara, OC t1, p.33) We can see already in Tzara’s early poetry from 1915 something that we encounter in his 1934 Personnage d’insomnie. This is supported by Tzara’s own notes, in which he says that the world of the trees was incidental and the same purpose could have been
served by the world of the fish. (Tzara, *OC t3*, p.555) Nevertheless, Tzara chooses examples of the earth’s evolution. After the very first aquatic organisms, fish developed in the oceans and trees and plants on the ground. This information could not have escaped Tzara, who was a devoted researcher of the particular vocabulary he needed for each one of his poems and texts. Even if it was fish and not trees, Tzara looks at developing a different human evolution, an alternative way of perceiving kinship.

Tzara’s early negation of Occidental values leads him to develop an interest in more organic societies, such as the Maori in New Zealand and the Loritza in Africa. In his previous poetry collection *L’Homme approximatif*, he investigates the connections between humans, other animals and nature. Nonetheless, by the 1930s, when he writes *Personnage d’insomnie*, the Romanian writer came to the view that Western culture is not to be blamed. After all, the Western is a relative notion and Tzara does not overlook the influence of his Jewish and Romanian roots. It was the Romanian writer Urmuz, a pioneer of the absurd, deconstructed text, who influenced both Tzara and Ionesco. The work of Urmuz was promoted in the magazine *Contimporanul* by many of the artists with whom Tzara collaborated while in Bucharest. This group included Ion Vinea, Sasa Pana and Marcel Jancu, who also became part of the Dada Zürich group. In Urmuz’s *Bizzare Pages* there are references to mechanic, artificial men, and criticism of the bourgeoisie and scatology. (Urmuz, 2007) Again, we see that there are references in Tzara’s work that are traced back to the country in which he grew up.

In the Jewish calendar there is the New Year for Trees, or the festival of the trees called Tu B’Shevat. It is a celebration that occurs towards the end of January when one can see the earliest blooming trees in Israel. The purpose of the celebration is to dedicate thoughts to nature, to the protection of its beings, and most importantly to wish trees a happy year to come. There are particular customs that take place on this day among Jewish families. Given the fact that Tristan Tzara grew up in a Jewish family and community it is unlikely that he would not have known the traditional prayer as well as the meal special to that day. It consists of eating from fifteen different fruits that are characteristic of the land of Israel, including olives, dates, grapes, pomegranates and others. The celebration also encourages children to plant trees. (Vainstein, p.110-111) It is important to mention the strong sense of community
among the largely Jewish population of Moineşti, and that some of the first organised settlements in Israel came from there. (Halpern, Reinharz, p.63) In that light Herscovici emphasises that: “the city became legendary and was mentioned in a Yiddish proverb: Durkh Moinesht keyn Erets Yisroel (Through Moinești to the Land of Israel).” (Herscovici, yivoencyclopedia.org)

Tristan Tzara never refers directly to deeply religious ideas. However, his most sacred work is Personnage d’insomnie. The relationship the “divin tailleur” begins to have with nature after his metamorphosis reflects the sacred way of treating nature according to the Talmud. The first ‘Order’ of the Talmud is called Zera’im (Seeds) and deals principally with the agricultural laws of the Torah in both their religious and social aspects. (Rosner, 1975) In Grains et issues (1935), translated as grains or seeds and outcomes, which was written during the same period as Personnage d’insomnie, Tzara talks of “inflexion de solde des futaies”, wineries and almond trees. (Tzara, p.83) In the same work he emphasises human alienation and ways to overcome it. On close reading his verse and ideas are reminiscent of the Talmudic text. Rabbi Waskow says about Tu B’Shevat: “More than any other day, this day symbolised the longing of the Zionists to be healed of their Diaspora characteristics, to be joined anew to a patch of earth, of land”. He goes on to explain that over the years Tu B’Shevat became synonymous with environmental awareness for the Jews. (Waskow, p.296) Customs and experiences of almost twenty years of Tzara’s life spent in Romania may not be the only source of his expression of respect for nature and love of the Creation. He mentions in Grains et issues the need for social change, specifically people freed from certain material desires. (Tzara, OC t3, p.105) That theme is explored throughout Personnage d’insomnie, where nature is the answer for the tailor’s materialistic lifestyle. Allusions to trees and nature as sacred and generating hope can be observed in the poems that Tzara composed during the Second World War, as I will explore further in Chapter Three.

6. Approximately human without character?

Both Macunafma and the divine tailor could be considered approximately human, to borrow the title of Tristan Tzara’s poetry collection L’Homme approximatif. The former undergoes various transformations and his identity is not always definable,
and the latter is also in the undefined state of a humanoid tree. They could also both been seen to lack character precisely because they each approximate to being something else. The two writers are questioning humanity; they are wondering whether humans think of themselves as the superior species and, if so, what the consequences of doing so are. Could the tailor be less human before his metamorphosis to a tree, and can a hero, if we compare to those found in the Romantic tradition, be devoid of character? Once again, Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade use humour, semantic play and folk storytelling to delve into these issues. Macunáima goes through various transformations and does not have a fixed identity. Neither does the tailor, who is semi-tree, semi-human.

I will now go on to discuss the way in which the fluidity of these characters is inspired by primeval cosmological thought. The narrative act of metamorphosis is directly linked to matters of identity in the broadest sense. Most often our identity, to a degree, is associated with our roots, our social experiences, our childhood rituals, with what we learn, and with what we experience as unconscious desires. Barkan remarks on the power of the metamorphosis of Zeus into a white bull, with Europa riding on his back. He shows that narratives of metamorphosis cannot be interpreted by simply pointing out the victim and victimizer: “So Jupiter and Europa - even as a mute icon - generate strong associations of paradox, of power overcome by beauty, of fertility tamed in agriculture. These doublenesses are part of the enduring appeal of the image and part of its metamorphic nature.” (Barkan, p.9) In Personnage d’insomnie the tailor, who is extremely devoted to his work and slightly materialistic, will be paradoxically tamed by Nature. Tzara’s tendency is to show the breakdown of the tailor’s identity as elemental. “Il se livre un atroce combat d’araignées entre les chaînons de fer d’une multiplicité de désirs prisonniers à vie: c’est ce qui traîne après le divin tailleur. Mais une étoile le précède cependant et papillonne et tangue dans une pochette surprise, prise dans la glace des caravans de myositis.” (Tzara, p.194) The tailor is deconstructed from the human into a tree carrying insect colonies and fungi; he is no longer a monad. “Le divin tailleur”, transformed into “l’homme à branches”, still has a sense of being an individual but at the same time he must cohabit with other beings.

Henri Béhar, in his notes on Personnage d’insomnie, notices a resemblance between the classical myth of Daphne, who turned into a laurel tree (daphne in Greek)
after praying to flee from Apollo’s hands. (Béhar, p.556) However, unlike Daphne who is saved by her change at the last minute, the metamorphosis of “le divin-tailleur” takes place at the beginning of his quest. In his research on the myth of Europa, famed for her abduction and lovemaking with the metamorphosed Zeus, Barkan comments: “Myths of magical change again and again, will be stories celebrating the unfamiliar forms of the sexual impulse, with all their terror and allure. This impulse has to do with the awe of the unfamiliar.” (Barkan, p.13) The tailor-turned-tree experiences the discovery of impulse. Béhar characterizes Tzara’s use of *nourriture*, of feeding and nurture, as “une explication des manières de table” He further characterises the tailor/tree’s liking for gummy food and of receiving food in a different way than before as a desire to return to an intra-uterine state. However, he supports the opinion that Tzara does not express a longing to re-enter the womb, but rather an “intra-cloacal” placement. (Béhar, p.560) This reference to the cloaca requires further analysis since it presents a distinctive imagery from the world of Surrealism.

Firstly, the cloaca leads us to think of an inclination towards the unfamiliar. This inclination generates discoveries; Europa discovers not just sexual experience, but familiarisation with an unknown land, and her ability to bewitch a god. The insomniac mind adopts a process of deconstructing the man, the tailor, to any biota, to bacterial flora and plant flora; and as his metamorphosis develops he becomes an ecosystem:

Un nouveau type d’homme prenait le large sur un champ d’ivraie et de passion, livré à la vindicte des sauterelles par un sycophante mécanique; mais déjà sa nature sursoyait au jugement de sélection prêt à être prononcé. (Tzara, p.163)

It turns out that the journey of “le divin tailleur” to an unfamiliar experience becomes more familiar than he could have imagined. His quest does not guide him into an imaginary world. On the contrary, it leads him deeper into this world, into nature’s microcosm. By using the metaphor of desiring to return to the cloaca, Béhar’s comment raises the idea that Tzara explores. Since the cloaca is something that does not appear in most mammals and serves as the unique opening for the urinary, reproductive and intestinal system in other forms of life, we are presented with an allegorical deconstruction of evolution.
For Macunaíma, magical transformation and the desire for the unknown have already been presented in his first metamorphosis: Mário de Andrade writes that Macunaíma only started talking when he was six years old. Then he starts crying all day while begging his mother to take him for a stroll in the woods. His mother is busy grinding manioc to prepare food and asks her other son’s wife to take him instead. Sofará is described as a beautiful young woman who obeys her family’s wishes and carries Macunaíma on her back into the woods. When she places Macunaíma by a lake, he complains that there are many ants there and asks to be placed in the middle of a bush. There, in an instant, he transforms into a beautiful prince “ficou um príncipe lindo” and they make love for a long time. (Andrade de, p.9-10)

Critics have made numerous attempts to analyse Mário’s novel. As Rosenberg notes: “the metonymic aspect of the narrative - in which everything is in a constant transformation - works against the closure sought by symbolic interpretations.” (Rosenberg, p.84) Here we have to emphasise that the state, if it is a state, of constant transformation and particularly its metonymic aspect is a characteristic of folk, mythology and oral storytelling in general, regardless of its origin. Lévi-Strauss mentions that for instance, a Caraja who was accompanying him from one village to the other was not at all surprised with the variations in the same tales. The fact that the margin of divergence was huge did not at all interest him or the rest of the Caraja indigenous population. (Lévi-Strauss [b], p.25) While reading or listening to a folk story, various elements of it seem out of place, although these apparently insignificant details start making sense once the story has been narrated in full. The opinion of Durkheim (p.190) and Lévi-Strauss ([a] p.5) is that myths cannot be analysed by breaking them down into parts since we will only find out that these parts are knitted together in unforeseen ways. Mário de Andrade uses this “technique” or characteristic of the tradition of oral storytelling. For instance, as I am going to show shortly, the Brazilian writer refers to the Tupi mythical figure called Sumé and he also includes the first colonisers’ version of the same tale, a result of the religious syncretism in the country. Existing interpretations of narrative details in Macunaíma are valuable but often become absorbed in isolated incidents rather than viewing the whole as a rhapsody, a novel and a tale. For example, Haberly argues:

The hero, in part because he has no fixed character of his own, realizes that every identity carries within it a series of other potential
identities…Magic simply involves moving oneself or others from one identity to another. Thus, to give but one example the hero is magically and instantly transformed from infant to adult, a metamorphosis is possible because the hero’s adult identity is already implicit within the child, the father of the man. (Haberly, p.147)

This is his only comment regarding Macunaíma’s first metamorphosis to a prince. Now, if we consider Barkan’s celebration of “the unfamiliar sexual impulse” and Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of native South American myths containing forms of “indirect incest”, the significance of this metamorphosis becomes clearer. Since the mother ignores him he turns to the female next of kin for attention; in this case the beautiful partner of his brother. In addition, Mário places emphasis on the rest of the family’s profound refusal to give food to Macunaíma. Instead of food, he receives lovemaking. Macunaíma is a Dionysian character; he is similar to a faun and there is not necessarily a symbolic explanation for each of his actions. For instance, sometimes he transforms to an ant simply to have access to Piãmã’s house in order to spy on him and find an opportunity to retrieve the amulet Miraquitã. At one point, he also becomes a fire ant to bite someone who insulted him.

However, there is a specific appearance that the hero returns to, after minor transformations like the ones mentioned before. In the novel, it is emphasised that Macunaíma is born black and he does not transform into a Native American. When he is on his way to São Paulo with his two brothers he bathes in a puddle of water that turns out to have magical or rather whitening qualities. It is not by chance that the writer emphasises that the puddle was in fact the footprint of Sumé or São Tomas, a mythological entity of the native Tupi who was interpreted by the colonisers as Saint Thomas. (Combès, p.104) The narration continues by pointing out that the footprint has been there since the time that Sumé was going around Brazil preaching the Gospel of Jesus to the indigenous people. Apart from being a reference to the expansion of Christianity in the country, this is also a way in which Mário comments on the transformation or falsification of oral narratives. Macunaíma bathes first and he comes out:
Branco loiro e de olhos azuisinhos, água lavara o pretume dele. E ninguém não seria capaz mais de indicar nele um filho da tribo retinta dos Tapanhumas… Porém a água já estava muito suja da negrura do herói e por mais que Jiguê esfregasse feito maluco atirando água pra todos os lados só conseguiu ficar de cor do bronze novo…Tinha só um bocado lá no fundo e Maanape conseguiu molhar só a palma dos pés e das mãos. Por isso ficou negro bem filho da tribo dos Tapanhumas. (Andrade de, p.50)

Macunaima’s comments are more significant than the incident of the actual transformation and indicate that he looks down on his brothers. He says to Jiguê: “Olhe, mano Jiguê, branco você ficou não, porém pretume foi-se e antes fanhoso que sem nariz.” Then, he says to Maanape: “Não se avexe, mano Maanape, não se avexe não, mais sofreu nosso tio Judas!” (Andrade de, p.50) There is a sarcastic tone to the hero’s words. He focuses on the fact that the darker colour carries a negative connotation. But the narrator, Mário, sees the fact that Maanape could be recognised by his appearance as a true son of the Tapanhumas as positive. Throughout the narrative, Macunaima continues to be arrogant towards his indigenous-looking brother, Jiguê, and his African brother, Maanape. But if they had not accompanied him or offered their help and even saved him from death several times he would not have survived. Mário de Andrade makes a very clear comment here about the mentality of the Brazilian elite and its opinion regarding race. That is a quite controversial comment regarding racial attitudes in Brazil at that point in time when the novel was published.

This is also reflected in Mário’s engagement with the African-Brazilian composer and saxophonist Pixinguinha. During a period where artists in Brazil were re-evaluating the context of Brasilidade, the Paulistano writer focused upon and used Afro-Brazilian folktale and music in his prose and poetry. As part of his research, he interviewed and concentrated on Pixinguinha and his band, which mixed sounds and rhythms of African instruments with European and jazz melodies. This resulted in a style that would not only become characteristic of the Brazilian identity but would also later be exported to the world and make Brazilian music internationally recognised. Pixinguinha was based in Rio de Janeiro but first met Mário in São Paulo. (Rossetti Batista, p.40) Mário de Andrade had the opportunity to study the religious,
ecstatic melodies of Macumba, a branch of the Candoblé religion. Aspects of them were incorporated into the composer’s modern music and Mário’s novel. Mário’s notes referring to the “terreiro” to which Pixinguinha belonged as a participant of Macumba show that he carefully studied the Afro-Brazilian religion. (Camargo Toni, p.127) He has noted that the initiates or fetishists are called pais-do-santo and he talks about Tia Ciata by emphasising that there can be female, maes-do-santo as well. Tia Ciata was originally from Bahia and she was playing with the violin in her lap in her “terreiro”, composing what would become some of the most famous samba with other African Brazilian musicians. (Andrade de, p.88) In Macunaíma, one of the musicians playing in the Macumba ritual is described as “um negrão filho de Ogum, bexiguento e fadista de profissão”. (Andrade de, p.76) This is a reference to Pixinguinha, who had the Orixa Ogum as his protector. This is emphasised further by the fact that the author mentions Tia Ciata too. The reader is informed that the crowd assembled for the Macumba ritual hopes for the appearance of Ogum, the warrior deity. Macunaíma insists on wanting Exu instead. Capone says that Macumba came to be associated with the degradation of African values because, in contrast with Candomblé, it promotes the fulfilment of the individual’s opportunistic desires rather than looking out for the community. (Capone, p.207) Macunaíma confirms this argument since his insistence turns the entire ceremony to serve his individual wish for revenge. I will discuss the assistance that the hero receives from Exu in further detail next.

Macunaíma’s first metamorphosis into a prince can be seen as an exaggerated account of a child’s psychosexual development. The choice of the “prince” brings to mind children’s Western fairytales. Macunaíma’s experience, and the repetition of it with his brother’s wife, is characteristic of both his status as a trickster and his sexual desire. Similarly, in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Zeus uses cunning ways to approach and seduce his objects of desire. (Barkan, p.14) In the West African, Yoruba and Efon Pantheon, and following this tradition, in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion, the trickster god Exu is also the one that uses various mischievous devices to approach humans. (Ferris Thompson, p.41) It is no coincidence that Mário de Andrade chose to reveal late in his novel that Macunaíma’s adoptive father is Exu. The revelation that Macunaíma is spiritually related to Exu, and the dedication of an entire chapter to him, is not surprising considering the mythology behind the resourceful deity Exu.
The first, most important point about the influence of Mário de Andrade’s African cultural roots is the status he attributes to Exu. I would like to show that despite the fact that many cultures include a trickster figure in their folk traditions and mythology, the choice of Exu as Macunaíma’s spiritual guide and adoptive father is significant for Mário de Andrade, who shows that despite the tendency to deny it, the West African tradition is not just incorporated into, but is a fundamental element of Brazilian identity. However, here I want to focus on Exu’s status as it relates to Macunaíma. Exu has a complex role not encountered in theological narratives of monotheistic religions. Capone notes: “The Rio Macumbas also incorporated the aspects of the African Exu that Bahia Candomblé had scrupulously hidden or repressed, notably his symbolism of unbridled sexuality. With their Exus associated with the devil, the Macumbas held a fascination for even the most ‘evolved’ segments of the bourgeoisies”. (Capone, p.74) Perhaps this is the reason why the samba compositions of the “terreiro” of Tia Ciata talk about lust and love, an element that became characteristic of samba music, dance and lyrics. The terreiro is usually a place of worship. In the case of Tia Ciata, it was also the creation of a cultural center. (Passos de Azambuja, p.35) Exu is a mediator and messenger, he is responsible for the communication between his fellow Orixas and humans, deity of the crossroads, the one that can assist or punish depending on the actions of the humans who summon him. (Verger, p.131) His ability to punish and bring evil affects to those who do not show their respect to the Orixas meant that Exu was misinterpreted as a purely evil figure by the Christian colonisers. In the novel, Mário emphasises the role of the Orixas, referring to them as “santos”, and describes the ecstasy that the Macumba participants reach. (Andrade de, p.77) In the ritual, Exu appears in the startled body of a Polish prostitute. Tia Ciata attempts the first communication with the deity by murmuring a certain chant. The chant makes it possible for Exu’s voice to be heard coming from the prostitute’s body. Exu agrees to fight the giant Vanceslau Pietro Petra for Macunaíma and he defeats him. All of this is achieved through various transformations. Mário says: “E era horroroso…”, “Lá no palácio… vinham médicos…Vanceslau Pietro Petra sangrava todo urrando.” (Andrade de, p.82)

For the student of the Yoruba religion or its Latin, Central and North American derivatives, such as Candomblé, Santeria, Umbanda, Voodoo etc., Exu (or Eshu in Yoruba) is an Orixá (or Orisha) belonging to the Pantheon of the Orixas. There is also a quasi-fatherly figure, the creator Olodumare and many other Orixas as well as humans with sacred attributes. (Voeks, p.54)
Macunaíma finally kills the giant in order to retrieve his amulet but only through the help of Exu and the power of oral language, the chant that summoned the deity. Not only the chapter “Macumba” shows the impact of Afro-Brazilian religions within Brazilian society, it also utilises the power of oral language expression.

7. Speech comes first

In continuing my exploration of the power of oral language, I want to cite ideas from *Plato’s pharmacy* (Derrida, 1972) and its reference to the myth of Thoth or Theuth as discussed in Plato’s *Pheadrus*: firstly with regard to the interpretation of Macunaíma’s story and secondly, with regard to the relationship which Macunaíma and, to an extent, the “rhapsodist” Mário, has with language. With the help of Derrida’s focus on speech and writing as “pharmakon”, and the insistence in Plato’s original text on dialectics and not repetition “by-heart”, memorisation without understanding, I intend to show that both Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara employ such ideas in order to show that oral storytelling remained dynamic during their time.

So far, we have seen how Macunaíma is a lazy and an opportunistic hedonist. As the story continues the character always puts himself first and even the attempt to obtain the Miraquita is proved to be vain since it is undertaken purely to satisfy his ego. The chapter “Macumba” begins by stating how vexed Macunaíma felt: “Macunaíma estava muito contrariado” (Andrade de, p.73). After thinking that he is not strong enough to kill Vanceslau Pietro Pietra, he takes a train to Rio de Janeiro to ask for Exu’s (or “Exu diabo” as Mário refers to him) help in a Macumba ritual. In the same way that Thoth would not be anything without his father Ra, Macunaíma would be nothing either without Exu. Vanceslau Pietro Pietra, the disguised man-eater Piaimã, had already dismembered Macunaíma once, and without the help of his brother Maanape (who had used his knowledge of syncretic religious rituals and magic to reassemble Macunaíma’s body parts), the second encounter with the Piaimã would be lethal. The hero, as Mário refers to him, is vexed that he cannot have his way with Pietro Petra, and by participating in Macumba he wants to inflict pain to the merchant, to take revenge. But he cannot physically defeat the Piaimã, Pietro Petra. It is a similar situation to that of David and Goliath because Pietro Petra is a giant man-eater and Macunaíma appears helpless in his presence, at least at a first glance.
We have seen already that Macunaíma is outspoken and has a way with words. As in any other religious ritual, in the Macumba the spoken word becomes sacred. Bâ talks about the sacred nature of words in African narratives: “Nas tradições africanas, a palavra falada além de seu valor moral fundamental, possui um caráter sagrado que se associa a sua origem divina e às forças ocultas nela depositadas. Sendo agente mágico por excelência e grande vetor de ‘força etêricas’ não pode ser usada levianamente”. (Bâ, p.181) Victory in Macunaíma’s case is achieved through the power of speech, with the verses that are chanted by Tia Ciata and that have only been preserved orally. In traveling all the way from Africa to the Americas, the Yoruba religion was replanted without the help of any written text. The spoken word indeed has sacred value, and the power to re-establish the sacred.

Derrida notes that in Phaedrus, the god of writing is a secondary figure, a subordinate, a technocrat devoid of power to make decisions, an engineer, an inventive and crafty servant who was granted a hearing by the king of gods. Theuth presents an art and a pharmakon (medicine, remedy) to the king, father and god, who speaks with his sunlit voice. When he allows his judgment to be heard, to be indicated, when he allows it to be dropped from high above, with the same move he will give the order for the pharmakon to be abandoned. Theuth will not respond. (Derrida, p.100) He does not respond because he is born by Ra to serve as his executive agent, to write, to act for Ra’s speech (“parole”). What Macunaíma does is a repetition of this action, he believes that he is free to do as he pleases but it is this abundance of freedom that enslaves him: by refusing to make choices he can never have a character, an identity. As Derrida explains, language, whose designated depositary is Thoth, only represents an already formed divine thought. Whatever Thoth has to write in words, Horus/Ra has already thought and spoken. (Derrida, p.103) He is appointed the god of the moon to be a replacement when Ra, the sun, is away. He appears to be writing and measuring the souls of the dead while Ra or Horus is a creator. It is because of this usurpation that Thoth is the god of writing; writing being a medicine to help with memorialisation rather than active memory. Macunaíma cannot sustain any identity; he always wants to become something else before he has even understood anything about his previous identity. For instance, in his letter to the Icamiabas (Carta pras Icamiabas), which is also the title for the ninth chapter, the reader has Macunaíma’s writing in front of him. He addresses the Icamiabas that he
left after Ci’s death; it remains a matter of conjecture whether the women warriors of the forest can read or receive this letter. The letter here functions on two levels. On the one hand, Macunamíma uses writing as a medicine, a balsam with which he just has become acquainted and he tries to show it off, to make it known that he can use writing which he figures as a tool of the civilized. On the other hand, ironically, even this piece of Macunamíma’s writing is verbally transmitted to Mário, the reader is told, who then had to write it down again.

Derrida says that if Thoth had an identity – but, precisely, he is the god of non-identity - it would be coincidentia oppositorum. Distinct from that of his Other, Thoth imitates the Other’s sign at the same time, becomes its representative, complies to it, replaces it if necessary by force. (Derrida, p.110) Macunamíma, like Thoth and like Exu, appears in the same way, imitating identities, until Mário reveals to the reader that the hero could not handle this lack of identity. Ironically, what we are given to analyze is the representation of Macunamíma’s narration to the parrot, then to Mário and taking form in Mário’s written copy that we hold. Thus, following on from Chapter One, we see that the Brazilian writer and poet explores the position which verbal traditions have among African, autochthonous American and modern westernised cultures (Brazil included). Derrida presents the dialogue between the sophist Hippias and Socrates, emphasising how the latter exposes the superficiality of memorising instead of knowing. Derrida’s suggestion that “the sophist pretends that he knows everything, his erudition is depthless” also applies to Macunamíma. (Derrida p.133) The letter to the Icamiabas summarises this speculation. Firstly, when Macunamíma addresses the Icamiabas, apart from the extraordinary mixture of colloquialisms and superficially grandiose Portuguese vocabulary with which he greets them, he points out:

É bem verdade que na boa cidade de São Paulo-a maior do universo, no dizer de seus prolixos habitants-não sois conhecidas por ‘icamiabas’, voz espúria, sinão que pelo apelativo de Amazonas; e de vós, se afirma, cavalgardes ginetes belígeros e virdes da Hélade clássica; e assim sois chamadas. Muito nos pesou a nós, Imperator vosso, tais dislates da erudição, porém heis de convir conosco que, assim, ficais mais heroicas e mais conspícuas, tocadas por essa plátina respeitável da tradição e da pureza antiga. (Andrade de, p.97)
Sadly, Macunaíma cannot retain the title of son of Exu, or be recognised as the equivalent of Thoth or Hermes. His vanity and his idea of his own superiority do not allow him to respect anyone else, not even the Icamiabas who took care of him and did him the honour of accepting him in their usually strictly female community. The hero’s sciolism disregards any element of African and Native American culture. He mimics the supposedly educated Paulistanos, who concentrate on exhibiting their knowledge of the world but ignore their major cultural influences and manifestations. Mário de Andrade uses the Tupi word “Icamiabas” in referring to the tribe of the female warriors whose legend inspired the conquistador Francisco de Orellana, and to talk of women resembling the mythical Amazons. Macunaíma thinks that because the Icamiabas can be seen as the ancient Greek Amazons they suddenly embody a greater importance. In addition Mário, again in the chapter “Macumba” and the eponymous ritual, incorporates African elements that permit the idea of equality among female and male Orixás. Tia Ciata particularly calls upon the Orixa warrior, Iansã (or Yansa, Oia, Oya). She is a fighter who brings destruction but also beneficial changes.

By looking at the role of the narrator in both Personnage d’insomnie and Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter, we see that the writers play with the difference between memorialisation and active memory. Derrida writes:

Contrary to life, writing - or, if you will, the pharmakon - can only displace or even aggravate the ill. Such will be, in its logical outlines, the objection the king raises to writing: under pretext of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful; far from increasing knowledge, it diminishes it. Writing does not answer the needs of memory, it aims to the side, does not reinforce the mneme, but only hypomnèses (Derrida, p.102)

Tzara plays with this notion in two levels. Firstly, the narrator is an insomniac. He makes it clear from the introduction that there is an alternative state to that of being either awake or asleep. He adds:

Si l’on ne savait d’avance que, suscités artificiellement par la mémoire, ce sont des fragments morts qui entrent dans la composition de cet objet, on pourrait à force de leur imposer la
volonté de ressemblance, leur assigner des fonctions appartenant à des secteurs du corps humain tout en ayant en vue plutôt leur nature disparate que leur cohérence statutaire. (Tzara, p.151)

The reader is informed early about the narrator’s use of the sign *pharmakon*. Tzara says that memory, what is written, is not necessarily reliable because of the artificiality that characterises it. Secondly, the narrative of the divine tailor is a result of the narrator’s insomnia. Once the narrative introduces the actions of “le divin tailleur”, we encounter only vague suggestions about the tailor’s memories. This lack of detail about memories of the tailor can be explained through the “pharmakon”. The peculiarity of the tailor is that he can neither speak nor write. In *Personnage d’insomnie* there are various moments in which the narrator refers to memory. In the third chapter, entitled “Faim de souvenirs et nourriture de la mémoire”, we encounter Freudian ideas about the development of the infant that are paralleled with the development of the tailor into a tree-man. If coprophagy can be associated with the tailor-tree’s new way of receiving nourishment from decomposed elements in the earth, it is also an indication of an infant’s intra-uterine nourishment, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. So, the divine tailor has an unconscious knowledge of the experience of this type of nourishment. He might be deprived of speech and the ability to write but this does not equate to the absence of feelings and memories. In this way, he cannot be corrupted by the double nature of the “pharmakon”.

Throughout the novel, Macunaíma repeats many times and in various situations: “Ai! Que preguiça”. It is also all he says until the age of six. Even at his happiest moments, when he lives as emperor of the forest, because his wife Ci is an Amazon and mother of the forest, he keeps repeating the phrase. Wisnik comments: “Macunaíma tem uma preguiça primordial, que é aquela que ocorre antes mesmo do esforço. Uma preguiça de quem nem sequer trabalhou.” (Wisnik, 2011) Macunaíma’s disinterest and tiredness occurs even before any effort, while the tailor has become disinterested because of making the effort - that is, working to such an extent that work itself has become a convention. Like many other scholars, Wisnik believes that Macunaíma’s disinterest in putting any effort into achieving anything, including pleasure creates a duality: the coexistence of negative and positive elements. He notes that this “serves as an allegory to place the Brazilian in the process of modernisation”. (Wisnik, Folha, 01/09/11) This would mean accepting that
Macunaíma and the tailor are complete opposites. However, the fact that Macunaíma is often characterised as a trickster does not imply that he is a negative representation for Brazilians. The trickster ways of the protagonist are not usually successful. As I have pointed out previously, trickster divinities and personalities are present in many different legends, myths and folk tales. In Norse mythology Loki tricks and insults his fellow gods while he has an unclear status of being a semi-god, semi-giant (Lindow, p.216) as does Anansi in African folk tales, without considering him coming from a divine family line. (McDermot, 1987) While tricksters in these narratives usually succeed in gaining the trust of others, Macunaíma fails to do so and this is the important point that Mário makes about Brazilian society. If people are constantly suspicious of each other, especially due to social inequality that people are responsible for creating at the first place, they cannot become a community working its way towards common values, interests and purposes. That is a theme that Mário touches upon in his more militant work, as I will discuss in Chapter Three.

Tzara’s story shares this reflection on human society in general. After the emotional final moments of the tailor-tree’s installation and mingling in the ground with the rest of the flora, his symbolic death, three more chapters follow. These chapters show what was found next to the dead tailor: “Près de lui gisait, comme un mouvement d’horlogerie qui pourtant n’en était pas un, un étrange paquet soigneusement ficelé indéfinissable sous tous les rapports, quelque insignifiant et indésirable objet, qui contenait le rêve suivant.” (Tzara, p.201) The contents of the packet are “Le rêve de l’hummanité à branches”. It is important to point out that Tzara does not imply that the dream is written down, rather it exists in some way in the packet; it is a product of the “être d’insomnie” or of the tailor. He remains faithful to the oral transmission of the story. Writing of this dream, Béhar notes that, “l’histoire…rebondit ici, l’auteur envisageant une extension de la métamorphose, comme une évolution normale du genre humain.” (Béhar, p.574) Dreaming of a form of humanity with branches resembles a philosophical discussion more than a dream that refers to ecological awareness, placing oneself in the position of the Other and questioning our perception of reality. “Un phénomène contagieux qui ne devait être une maladie ni même un malentendu s’empara subitement de la carapace du globe
terrestre."  

(Tzara, p.202) The author emphasises that the tailor did not turn into a tree-man due to a disease but rather an evolutionary change. “Il était au plus haut degré instructif et presque douloureux de constater combien on avait négligé le bien-être des arbres tant que ceux-ci n’étaient aussi intimentement accordés à la nature des hommes.” (Tzara, p.203) Of course Tzara also finds humorous ways to point out that human egotism continues to exist after the mass transformation. For instance, people may have neglected trees but all of a sudden they became very inventive about keeping themselves safe from drought. The fact that the tailor-tree was a sensitive soul, as Tzara describes him, does not mean that if all humanity experienced the same transformation it would have the same results. In his allegory where all humanity bears branches it is indicated that self-obsession is undoubtedly a human characteristic, even with branches or without.

Moving to the Americas, the character “Makunaima” who appears in the stories of the Pemon and Yekuana people, natives of north Amazonian regions that belong to Brazil and Venezuela, is not a trickster; he is the wise creator of things. Ishmael looks at stories of cosmogony further northeast, in Guyanese folk. In his study, “Makonaima” and his twin brother Pia are responsible for populating the Earth, and they also bring fire to humans from the mount Roraima, not unlike Prometheus. (Ishmael, p.10) On the other hand, Mário de Andrade’s Macunaíma shares characteristics with Anansi, the West African popular trickster. The legends of Anansi were narrated among the slaves in South, Central and North America and they are also part of the African-Brazilian tradition. In the Caribbean, the character is known as Anansi, Anansy or Nanci. In the southern states of North America the name of the hero transformed to aunt Nancy. In Brazil it became Saci, or Saci Pererê and is mixed with autochthonous folk. In a Jamaican Anansi story entitled “The Substitute”, Anansi bares characteristics that are also recognisable in Mário de Andrade’s Macunaíma. (Warren Beckwith, 1924) Anansi cannot wait for his own crop to ripen and turns to Tacoomah’s crop next door to satisfy his hunger. When the latter becomes suspicious, Anansi not only finds an excellent alibi for his alleged innocence, he also accuses a goat which ends up being eaten by him and Tacoomah. (Warren Beckwith, p.50)

15 Although operating on a different style, the introduction of chapter X Le rêve de l’humanité à branches is an anticipation of fellow Jewish Romanian Ionesco’s Rhinoceros which was written almost thirty years after Tzara’s Personnage d’insomnie.
Anansi is greedy, lacks patience and becomes bored with the idea that hard work brings rewards. Like Macunaíma and his two brothers, Anansi is often accompanied by Tacoomah, who is variously described as his friend, neighbour, son or brother. However, it is important to point out, as we did earlier in comparing Macunaíma to Exu and Thoth, that the main difference is Anansi’s will to gain something using his wit. It is not by chance that Mário de Andrade refers to the Brazilian version of Anansi – called Saci and depicted as a pipe smoking, one legged black boy – as someone who could resemble Macunaíma but only to an extent. Saci is a trickster but a loved one. At the end, when Macunaíma decides to ascend to the stars, he seeks help from Caipéi, the moon, the morning star, and other “inhabitants” of the sky. At first, they mistake the hero for Saci and they consent to help, but when they realise that it is Macunaíma, they revoke their assistance. At times, Macunaíma shows signs of intelligence but mostly he chooses the lazy way out rather than the smart one.

The protagonist is introduced to the reader as being familiar with nature, born in the “mato virgem”, but by the end of the novel even the language of his people becomes extinct and he becomes alienated from his natural surroundings. At first glance, this could be seen as a result of Macunaíma’s shift from expressing himself in his tribe’s language, the Tapanhumas (indicated in the novel with colloquial Brazilian Portuguese), to expressing himself in European Portuguese for formal occasions while he stays in São Paulo. There, he becomes familiar with the vocabulary of the city, modernisation and technology. In contrast, the protagonist-tailor in Tristan Tzara’s story cannot express himself with words when he is transformed into a tree. Despite this, he no longer feels the alienation he experienced as a human being. Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade demonstrate through their narratives that despite the existence of many languages and the great variety in verbal expression, the quest for extreme rationalisation in speech and language can lead to the impossibility of expression; they rather see language as a playful tool. Both writers re-emphasise the role of verbal language sourced from the instant, from the there and then sound production and auditory experience.

Derrida writes that if writing has the opposite result than the one Thoth attributes to it, if the “pharmakon” is pernicious, it is because it does not arise in the here and now, from nature. Perhaps we should think that the written traces, because they are not living beings, do not belong in the order of nature. They do not
germinate. (Derrida p.129) And the tailor, “le divin tailleur” grows (germinates) physically and mentally without having been seeded (as a tree-man); or alternatively, has not died before (as a man). He is created (including his metamorphosis) in the space in between, the product of insomnia. The space of difference between being awake and sleeping is as thin as the one between memory and its alternative, memorisation, mnemonic tricks. So Tzara narrates, writes a truth, which at first glance does not seem natural and therefore does not appear as truth. However, Derrida points out that the thin difference between live speech and memory, philosophy and sophisms, soulful truth and replica of truth is like a “leaf”; with its recto and verso it appears as a surface and supporting device for writing. In the same way, the uniformity of the system of this difference between signifier and signified is also the impossibility of distinguishing between dialectic and sophism. (Derrida, p.140) Tzara uses the same complicity inside the rupture; it is like medicine (pharmakon). By mimicking a writer he battles insomnia, or by pretending to be insomniac he is allowed to invent a story.

Tzara concludes his story in a similar way to Mário, by reminding us that the narration was but a memory of a dream and now the sun has risen and it is morning:

Les hommes-forêts se débandèrent[…]Et, du rêve projeté sur la réalité, à travers les passages à niveau et les compensations nécessaires, après les erreurs de la vie végétale qui cachaient, pour mieux la faire valoir, la prédominance de l’eau, l’homme reconstruit le processus du retour, non pas en arrière, mais en l’avenir[…]

Et déjà le matin balaye la rue, les chiffonniers s’enfuient avec des soleils sous le bras et les laitiers avalent en hâte leurs premières gorgées d’escaliers. (Tzara, p.216-217)

Mário simplifies the projection of the idea that *Macunaíma* is a pseudo-oral story by emphasising that he narrated the story like a rhapsodist while playing his guitar. In Tzara’s case, pseudo-oral narration is achieved by relying on memory. Like in the Socratic dialogue mentioned earlier, Tzara discusses various ideas of dreams and states that it is human nature to reconstruct (or deconstruct) return, a return to our roots (oral traditions) or to the cloaca/uterus in order to look at the future.
In the present Chapter, a combination of readings of folk stories, myths, legends and rituals, as well as the action of writing down stories that usually would be presented by active, verbal narration guides us to an understanding of the role of traditional storytelling and direct cultural experience within *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* and *Personnage d’insomnie*. In addition, we have seen that both Tristan Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s approach to language can be explained by the double nature of the “pharmakon” (written language). Not only written language as “pharmakon” as opposed to the oral becomes the place of the narrators’ play, but also they use “pharmakon” in the sense of memorisation by opposition to memory. Through their stories, Tzara and Mário speak of memory in the form of their cultural experiences, rituals, folk storytelling and dreams. Thus memory becomes relevant to the identities of the two writers which in turn concentrate on Judaic and Brazilian culture relying heavily on oral tradition. I believe that I have shown how a tree that moves and has no roots in a particular place, serves as the ideal metaphor for Tzara, a foreigner in France, a French in Moinesti, as indicated on a little information plaque where his family house used to be in his hometown. By contrast, Mário de Andrade has his feet in Brazil, but the land is split in many ways and pieces and he tries to put it together.

Tzara’s approach to knowledge sees that a relation to language is not fixed, but it evaporates: to explore that relation allows things to be said but also to remember that things are not static. Similarly, within *Macunaíma*, Mário recognises that Brazil cannot be reduced either to native or European influences, since African cultures and religions are also prevalent. He suggests that only when Brazilian society recognises the equivalence between these cultural elements will it have a better understanding of itself. In both *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* and *Personnage d’insomnie*, we encounter the idea that, with language one can transmit culture, but as S. Forcer says “meaning and identities can only be approximate”. (Personal interview, 6th of September, 2013)
Chapter Three

Militant work: the evolution of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade’s work through times of social turmoil and war

Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara, since their early Modernist encounters with oral traditions as analysed in Chapter One, moved later on to a more surreal exploration of the human tendency to create narratives, as demonstrated with examples of their prose works in Chapter Two. From earliest times, these narratives have served as bridges between primal instincts and the modern mentality of each specific time. In the previous chapters I have presented case studies that show a common pattern in the creative paths of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara. Both were characterised by avant-garde creativity and research into autochthonous poetry. These twin influences can be seen in their Surrealist style combined with their respective cultures. Tristan Tzara’s personal study of African cultures made him an expert in the field. Correspondingly, Mário de Andrade’s documentation and exploration of folklore, not only as a sterile field of study but as an active part of culture, have implications that stretch beyond national borders. The question arises: were the two writers preoccupied with identity, culture and society only for aesthetic purposes or were they militant poets?

I want to show that Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara did not separate their literature and poetry from the socio-political issues of their time. From the late 1920s until the start of the Second World War, local and national issues were very much inflected by global ones. The reach of capitalism meant that the Wall Street Crash of 1929 had worldwide effects. The Brazilian economy, heavily dependent on exports, collapsed. (Skidmore, p.96-97) At the same time the increasing fascist ideology was not limited within the Italian borders anymore. Suddenly ethnic origin coupled with political outlook had life or death implications. Civil war, military coups and mass killings became daily news, and the lives of Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara were dictated more than ever by political turmoil.
It is important to note once more the coherence and continuity in Tzara’s and Mário’s work. In the previous chapters, I followed Tzara’s preoccupation with poems from Africa and Austronesia that started in 1916 and resulted in the collection *Poèmes nègres*. These poems refer to social structures, the relation of society as well as the individual with natural elements and cosmogony, and the relation of these indigenous cultures to their colonisers. In the 1930s, there followed a personal exploration of the universal dimension of human identity, and an imaginary disruption through Tzara’s figure of the “divin tailleur” of human evolution. When WWII breaks out, Tzara lives as a fugitive hiding from the Gestapo. His only sign of life at the time is literally *Le Signe de vie*, published in 1946, a collection that deals with themes of the era and personal agony. The only form of communication for him at that time is his poetry. Along with the previous collection *Terre sur terre* (1938-45), he builds the basis of themes that will produce his last play, *La Fuite* (1940-47). His concerns included the constant displacement of people, imposed migration, solitude, fear, and the feeling that the enemy is always close.

Like Tristan Tzara’s, Mário de Andrade’s first encounter with autochthonous poetry was through his secondary reading of ethnographers’ works. Mário’s *Clã do Jabuti*, however, also included poems and songs that he collected during his trip to the state of Minas Gerais in 1924. Brazilian culture beyond the city of São Paulo became Mário’s lifelong concern. Of course his native city is also included in his works, but I want to emphasise the writer’s view of Brazil in its unity, liberated from discourses of regionalism that were thriving at the time. As shown in the first chapter, after Minas, his journeys to Northeast Brazil, documented in more detail in the travel journal *O Turista Aprendiz* (written 1928-29, published 1943), provided the poet with material that would continue to feed his poetry and prose. *Macunaima: o herói sem nenhum caráter* (1928) may be his most famous novel for its Surrealist elements entangled with personal, social elements as well as events in Brazilian history, but *O Café*, his opera that I am going on to discuss in this chapter, is a profoundly militant work. It expresses Mário de Andrade’s socio-political position with regard to the Brazilian Coffee Crisis and the Vargas regime that followed it.
1. The Political backdrop of Mário de Andrade’s opera _O Café_ and common ground between his and Tristan Tzara’s work

The political backdrop of the crisis in the Brazilian coffee industry is rooted in the years 1889 to 1930, a period historically labelled as the Old Republic, when the country was ruled by the oligarchies from the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo. The period became known as “Política do Café com Leite”, since a President from the coffee grower state São Paulo would then be replaced by a President from the milk producer state of Minas Gerais, with power alternating from one to the other. (Font, p.236) The economic life of the country then was organised after the export model, but policy rivalries between Minas Gerais and São Paulo allied to generous state subsidies since the early 1920s led to a surplus that, when faced with the collapse of coffee prices in the international market due to the Great Depression, put the country into a political crisis, breaking that cycle and leading to the rise of Getúlio Vargas to the presidency. “The collapse in coffee prices meant a decrease of 25 million pounds sterling in the value of exports, making monetary reform unfeasible if the coffee elites were to be helped. Unsold coffee accumulated in the warehouses.” (Font, p.244) To keep prices artificially high to the benefit of the coffee growing elites, the Government would burn large amounts of coffee. “The collapse in prices and the shrinkage in consumption after the 1929 crisis caused Brazil to burn 78 million sacks; thus, the efforts of 200,000 people during five harvests went up in flames”. (Galeano, p.101) One of the projects left unfinished by the Brazilian polymath due to his early death in 1945 was the novel _O Café_ that, although incomplete, became the inspiration for the opera with the same title. Ideas for the novel started to formulate in 1929, after Mário’s return to São Paulo from his second journey to Northeast where he encountered the “coqueiro” composer Chico Antônio from Rio Grande do Norte as mentioned in previous Chapters. The writer was deeply influenced both by the “cocos” compositions and the personality of the composer, and he based the protagonist of _O Café_ on him. (Longo Figueiredo, p.6) The significance of the unedited, unfinished novel is the contemporaneity of the social problems and inequality that it addresses, which are also present in the opera. The novel recounts the vast numbers of people fleeing poverty in Northeast Brazil to work in the coffee plantations of the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. In that respect, it shares the theme of flight with Tzara’s _La Fuite_.

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In 1942 Mário de Andrade created an opera by the same title, *O Café* inspired by his unfinished novel. It was only published posthumously in 1955. Correspondingly, Tristan Tzara created a play inspired by his poetry collection *Le Signe de vie* that he produced during the Second World War. Both turn to the mediums of theatre and opera as they were seen as more accessible to the public. Yet Mário prefers to call his opera “tragédia secular” and Tzara his play ‘poème dramatique’. As the latter writes in August 1940, “*La Fuite* est un poème dramatique et non pas une pièce de théâtre car l’auteur, au lieu de se placer du côté du spectateur, se situe résolument à l’intérieur même de l’action sans se soucier de l’effet objectif que cette action, constamment transposée, serait capable de produire”. (*Tzara, OC t3*, p.621) *La Fuite*, along with the unfinished prose text *Faites vos jeux* (1923-24) is the only text by Tzara that uses prose to include autobiographical elements. In *La Fuite*, one of the principal characters, “le Fils” has attributes from the writer’s personal life. There are also reciters – *le Récitant, la Première Récitante* and *la Deuxième Récitante* - as well as other characters named as fugitives, women, men, children, the elderly, police officers and ragged soldiers. The male reciter describes the son’s activities and feelings, and at times takes his place. 16

My argument in this chapter concerns militancy. In Act 2 Scene 4 of *La Fuite*, it becomes clear that fleeing does not only concern the individual son who leaves the family in order to discover his own identity. Fleeing is seen as a mass exodus when la Première Récitante says to La Fille confidentially: “La guerre éclate de partout”. (*Tzara, OC t3*, p.466) The Récitante’s prognosis about the war is confirmed in the fourth and last Act. Tzara sets this Act in the waiting area of a train station where we encounter all kinds of fugitives, soldiers and police officers. Here, in sentences spoken by all these characters we find hints of ideas that Tzara used in *Le Signe de vie* and *Terre sur terre*. A woman says, “J’ai entendu hurler la mort à travers les bêtes dans les fermes” and another, “fuite sur fuite s’est amassée et le pays entier s’est mis à fuir”. (*Tzara, OC t3*, p.496) Everyone expresses fear and uncertainty about the war but at the same time there is some hope in life “ses arbres ses oiseaux” (p.498). Later in this chapter I shall discuss the idea of hope in Tzara’s war poetry,

16 The rest of the characters, *la Mère, le Père, la Fille* represent Tzara’s family, in particular his parents’ and sister’s (Lucie) feelings regarding his early departure from them. The two women reciters represent a woman abandoned by a son and another who leaves a son.
associated with nature. In addition, there are the lines of the soldiers that are seen as individuals entangled involuntarily in the heart of war. One soldier says “j’ai un grand fils que je voudrais voir”. (p.494) Another replies to a man that rhetorically asks if the soldiers are responsible for everyone’s misery, “nous sommes comme vous dans la détresse. Nous sommes des vôtres”. (p.494) Tzara presents the humanity of the soldiers caught up in war and who have to fulfil their role fighting an enemy but who also understand the situation of civilians. On the contrary, the police officers who only have three lines to say are unnecessarily aggressive while asking for everyone’s documents. A man comments: “Pourquoi venez-vous tous les jours? Nous sommes toujours les mêmes. Ceux qui sont partis, d’autres les ont remplacés”. (Tzara, OC t3, p.505) The officer does not answer the man’s question, instead he orders him to follow. Tzara is clearly referring to the Vichy regime, and the collaborationist police that pursued Jews, leftists, communists and everyone else persecuted by the Nazi regime, especially after the law of July 1940. Towards the end of La Fuite, the reciter is accompanied by a chorus that talks about solitude and disaster in small towns, an allusion to Tzara’s fleeing from town to town, hiding from the Gestapo.

2. An opera or a secular tragedy?

The first substantial work on the opera Café, by Marta Morais da Costa, published in 1988, argued that the style utilises archetypes such as that of the mother and the axis winter-summer, countryside-city. She sees the socialist spirit of the work as representative of the entire history of Brazil and not of the particular era that Mário wrote it. (Morais da Costa, p.132) Her analysis, although important, takes a rather general approach without taking into consideration the events of the time of composition and details of the text. Subsequent works that refer to the opera as part of different researches have all been again by Brazilian researchers, Coli’s Música Final (1998), Silva’s Camargo Guarnieri: O tempo e a música (2001), Kater’s Música Viva e H.J. Koellreutter, movimentos em direção à modernidade (2001), Alberto de Oliveira’s Café de Mário de Andrade: estudos sobre a ópera coral (2006), and offers

17 “Le 22 juillet 1940, la loi instituant la Commission chargée de réviser les naturalisations accordées depuis 1927 fait perdre la nationalité française à 6.000 juifs…Vichy enonce le clou: le 4 octobre 1940 est promulgué le statut des Juifs et un ensemble de lois autorise leur internement.” (Germain, p.15)
insight mainly into the music of Mário’s opera and the various composers of it. Their significance for music studies does not serve the present thesis. The most recent important work on the opera that I use here, however, is Flavia Camargo Toni’s habilitation thesis, which demonstrates in detail that Mário made use of his knowledge in folk Brazilian music in order to write the libretto. Camargo Toni argues that the libretto of O Café is in line with the dramatic conception of grand operas. (Camargo Toni, p.107) However, she adds that “em seus escritos, opéra e melodrama frequentam o mesmo parágrafo, apesar de nem sempre serem equivalentes. O subtítulo do Café oscilou entre Melodrama, Cântico, Secular e Tragédia Coral acabando por vingar essa última forma, no texto encaminhando à Editora Gaveta datado ‘Natal de 1942’, embora na Introdução redigida poucos dias antes tenha permanecido Oratório Secular”. (Carmago Toni, p.110) While Camargo Toni analyses the different European musical traditions from which choral tragedies, oratorios etc. derive, what matters for the present argument is that Mário did not want to call Café an opera. As I shall discuss later, the Brazilian writer, poet and musicologist associated the height of the opera in Europe as a form of entertainment reserved for the aristocracy, which was his main objection in calling his work an opera. His “opera” not only addresses workers’ rights and rebellion, it also draws on popular musical styles and folk dances. For instance, the “coral do exodo” borrows its music from the folk “toada de Mutirão”. Mário had a list of possible popular melodies for each scene of the opera. (Camargo Toni, p.139)

Café was written between 1933 and 1942 when Getúlio Vargas became the dictator and later president of the country with the help of a coup d’état. Mário faced difficulties regarding the cultural and educational reforms that he wished to implement as Head of the Department of Culture in São Paulo, since he was opposed to Vargas’ politics. With the opera O Café, the poetry collection O Carro da miseria and the poem “Meditação sobre o Tietê”, he advocates that the Brazilian working class should be organised and demand its rights. Although he did not act publicly to promote that ideology, he did occasionally, as we shall see, convey these views in newspaper articles.
3. Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade: the role of the intellectual

By contrast, Tristan Tzara wrote essays about the role of the intellectual in political matters. His speech at the Second International Congress of Writers of the Alliance of Antifascist Intellectuals in Valencia in 1937 sheds light on his position.

“Nous avons vu, hélas, des écrivains qui retournent à une tour d’ivoire que leur raison a depuis longtemps condamnée. Nous avons vu, au nom de la même raison, des écrivains se réfugier sinon dans une indifférence devant les événements, du moins dans un état d’esprit où la justice et l’humanité n’ont que faire et qui, sous la sécheresse d’une balance à caractère purement mécanique, cache leur horreur de toute participation active.” Tzara clearly condemns the intellectual who does not take a position regarding the events of his or her time. He starts his speech by pointing out that the problem posed at the time is that of the writer’s conscience and the conscience that the writer should awaken in his or her readers. (Tzara, OC t5 p.54-55)

Tzara spent some time in other Spanish cities during the Civil War. He became an active member of the Communist party in France, and chaired the “Comité de défense de Nazim Hikmet”, lodging petitions for Hikmet’s release. (Carroll, p.53) Later, when he asserted his independence from the party, Tzara continued to express his political views. The poet also actively supported the independence of French colonies and African nations. In the collections Le Signe de vie and Terre sur terre, Tzara includes anti-war poems such as the poem “Pour Antonio Machado”, which is dedicated to the eponymous Spanish poet, and “Sur une aurore grecque” refers to the Greek Resistance and Greek Civil War. It is important to include the politicised works of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade in this comparison to show their parallel personal, political and poetic developments.

Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara composed these works in the middle of conflict and war. “Dès l’occupation allemande Tzara se retire à Sanary (Var) où en 1941 il est poursuivi par Vichy. Expulsé de Sanary, il s’établit à Saint-Tropez. Mis en résidence surveillée, il arrive à s’en échapper grâce à la complicité de fonctionnaires résistants de la police et se fixe à Aix-en-Province. En 1942, recherché par la Gestapo

18 According to Trueblood, “Antonio Machado, despite a profound conviction that poetry should remain apolitical, found himself drawn into the mainstream of events and became a spokesman for Spanish liberalism during Franco’s dictatorship. He is keenly aware of the European crisis and sees the need for a human brotherhood”. (Trueblood, p.5, 13)
il peut s’enfuir à Toulouse et trouve finalement refuge à Souillac, où il prend part à l’activité clandestine et à la lutte pour la libération.” (Béhar, p.608) As Béhar mentions here in detail, Tzara had a difficult time following the German occupation of Paris. The poet had fled, but was then placed under house arrest, escaping and fleeing again until he arrived in Souillac, where he experienced a slightly calmer and more productive time. He remained isolated for long periods of time then and remained so after leaving Souillac.

Dassin notes about Mário: “Segundo alguns depoimentos, Mário, que até então se comportara como um intelectual ‘não militante’, muda sua postura após o golpe de trinta e sete, quando de fato percebe quão sua atividade ‘não pode’ nem deve, manter-se afastada da política.” (Dassin, cited in Oliveira de, p.18) When Dassin says that Mário de Andrade did not identify himself as a militant intellectual, he refers to the fact he avoided taking a public position until the coup. Mário completed O Café only in 1942; meanwhile realising that the Vargas era was not going to be one of equality and freedom of speech. Dassin is accurate in saying that Mário realised after the 1937 coup d’état that he could not remain silent about it. However, his novels Amar Verbo Intransitivo and Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter were already making their own political statements. In the former, there is a profound criticism of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and its association with anything deriving culturally from France and Germany. In the latter, the pursuit of a Brazilian identity prompts Macunaíma’s quest where many socio-political problems are being exposed.

The engagements of Mário and Tzara with the political upheavals of their times need to be mapped together to show why I have chosen poems by Tzara and Mário’s opera for comparison. The discrimination that Tzara faced from the commencement of World War II coincides, for similar reasons, with the racial and fascist discourses in Brazil at the time. Thomas Skidmore notes that until World War I, Brazil had been living its own version of the “Belle Époque”. Its French-oriented literary and artistic world largely copied European styles, with little room for artistic originality. When the war ended, Brazil faced new and more varied European influences, as the traditional artistic canons of the Old World came under attack from radical innovators such as the Futurists and the Surrealists. Adventurous Brazilian writers and artists from Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul and, of course, São Paulo, headed for Europe soon after 1918 and absorbed these
new ideas, which soon began to surface in Brazilian poetry, sculpture, and painting. The benchmark year dating Brazil’s entry into what came to be called “Brazilian Modernism” is 1922. The Modern Art Week was financed largely by Paulo Prado, scion of a wealthy São Paulo family (their wealth had come from cattle and coffee) and led by Mário de Andrade, a multitalented mulatto (worth noting, since mulattos were not common in high artistic circles) artist, playwright, and musician, also from São Paulo. (Skidmore, p.102) Skidmore’s emphasis on Mário de Andrade’s racial grouping is with regard to perceptions of race and the so-called ‘racial democracy’ in Brazil. The term was inspired by Freyre’s work Casa-Grande & Senzala (1933). The idea that Brazilians were unconcerned with race due to the complex, “continuous miscegenation” among natives, Africans and Portuguese colonisers was popular at the time and became a source of pride for the nation. (Hasenbalg, Huntington, p.133) However, as I have mentioned before, there are numerous studies that demystify Freyre’s theory.

4. Social inequalities in Brazil

Colour-class continuum, co-optation and ideological manipulation are the structure of discrimination in Brazil. (Hasenbalg, Huntington, p.139) My opinion is that the variety of Brazilian vocabulary used to describe even the slightest differences in skin tones reveals the underlying effects of racism in Brazilian society. This is confirmed by Hasenbalg and Huntington who mention the disturbing fact that there are even variations combining skin tone and social status such as “moreno” for a wealthier mulatto, and “preto” for a deprived one. (p.140) These symptoms of the Colour-class continuum are crucial in understanding Mário’s position and also the background of the characters in Café. The main characters are the coffee and harbour workers, their families and the deputies, along with the commissioners and the government soldiers. In fact, the vast majority of the dock workers were Afro-Brazilians. (Cicalo, p.104) It becomes obvious that more than ever before class separation and racial inequality are interlinked in Brazil. The opera also contains direct references to Marx, in contrast with more general hints in Mário’s previous works.
The Brazilian poet was disillusioned with the government while he served in the Department of Culture of São Paulo. Fernando de Oliveira mentions: “Dai o afastamento do autor de Macunaíma de seu cargo seis meses após o golpe de Getúlio Vargas, deixando para trás não só suas intenções transformadas mais tarde em desilusões, bem como sua cidade natal para residir e assumir outros postos na capital do país, Rio de Janeiro.” (Oliveira de, p.18) He abandoned the position at the Department of Culture after the coup d’état by Vargas during which Mário witnessed first-hand the hardships of working–class life. In addition, Mário’s comments about Rio de Janeiro and its society during his 1927 visit, documented in O Turista Aprendiz, shows that the writer finds the extreme inequalities that he sees there appalling. “Não sei, acho o Rio uma cidade feia, mas dizem que é bonita…A natureza sim é maravilhosa, eu sei, mas a cidade, a urbanidade, o trabalho do homem, o sofrimento e a glória do homem, é uma coisa detestável. O mais importante de observar são as ruas dos bairros de residência e os subúrbios pobres.” (Andrade de, TA, p.51) The human suffering that Mário observes in Rio de Janeiro refers to the segregation that characterised the city’s urban allocation after the abolition of slavery. Many freed single males remained unemployed for long periods of time and constructed makeshift settlements in Rio. (Coutinho da Costa, p.47) Despite Mário’s observations about Rio during the summer of 1927, after his journey there and to Nordeste, he first goes on to write Macunaíma. Only when the Vargas regime came to power and Mário was self-exiled in Rio de Janeiro does he directly address social problems in O Café.

In Macunaíma: um herói sem nenhum caráter, Mário often creates surreal and at times humorous examples of the alienation that capitalist modern society can cause. An example is Macunaíma’s choice of objects only found in an industrialised city to carry with him upon his final decision to return to the jungle. When in the Amazonian jungle, he abandons them since he realises they are of no use. Similarly, Tzara in Personnage d’insomnie demonstrates that embracing nature and leaving behind clothes and mannequins, in the case of the “divin tailleur”, can be beneficial for his psyche. In the same story there is also the case of the remote island whose inhabitants, corrupted by the materialism that its colonisers brought over, managed to strip barren its land. However, in Café and the poetry collections Le Signe de vie and Terre sur terre, there is no room for playful allegories. The only exception in the
former work is the satirical speech of “Deputado do Som-Só”, which is pure bruitism. Tzara and Mário deal with the reality of vicious discrimination, fascism, suffering, famine, fear and death, and their language and style reflect that. These works have in common the desperation of their time. And despite the dominant misery they express, which is only appropriate considering their subjects, both Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara see some hope.

5. Tzara’s experience during WWII

The poems “Fluide”, “Exil” and “Quatre poèmes de petite guerre” from the collection *Le Signe de vie* for instance refer to the fluidity and uncertainty of the times of war, and include some highly personal sentiments. A recurring motif is the tree, and parts of trees, leaves, branches, and roots as well as the road. The former, as I am going to argue in greater detail, shows that during the difficult time of war and isolation, one of the few sources of serenity is found in nature. Tzara’s poetry as a whole can be considered quite fragmented with a tendency to use, as Stephen Forcer notes, homophony, word-play and most of all polyvalence. Tzara’s “semantic heterogeneity—his skill in erecting strange and fertile junctions of meaning almost with every word” makes his poetry both extremely appealing and potentially indecipherable. (Forcer, p.106) Regarding the poetry collections mentioned before, Henri Béhar underlines that it is almost impossible to know the exact place and date of the poems’ composition, because only some of them are given a date by Tristan Tzara, after the event. Fleeing from the Gestapo, the poet moved from city to city at the time and did not keep track of dates of composition. (Béhar, p.608) The poem “Exil”, until now dated 1940, presents a feeling of disquiet and coupled with a struggle to remain hopeful.

la route a mis à nu la cendre des misères

et les jours que j’ai vus et les mots passés

et le soleil et moi frileux dans l’inconstance (Tzara, *OC* t3, p.384)
The road in itself can imply that there is still some purpose, an aim in life. However, that aim makes the misery that surrounds the poet even more apparent. Marius Hentea sees the powerful phrase “la cendre des misères” as a literal reference to roads filled with people fleeing Paris and heading for the countryside while the German army was invading in June 1940. (Hentea, p.255) In the second line, we see that elements of past days, ideas, words, remain unexploited given the current turmoil. The sun, usually symbolising positivity, here has become vulnerable due to the inconstancy of life at that point in time. The poet feels exposed to the cold, “le soleil et moi frileux”, since he feels that everything around him is fickle. He also fled to Pinsac at that time with the intention to move further South as soon as he could. (Béhar, p.609) Interestingly, Hentea mentions briefly the poem “Exil” as an example of Tzara’s anxiety when the war broke out in France. He considers it the source from which Tzara developed the play *La Fuite* the same year, given his isolation from his family and friends. Tzara continues in “Exil”:

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la peine la plus pressée l'amour le plus obscur

je suis au bord du monde racine qui s'égare (Tzara, p.384)
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His wife and son were in a different part of France and anti-Semitism in Romania makes him fear for his family’s safety there. (Hentea, p.254) The last line, “je suis au bord…” confirms the poet is conscious of his role and mission as an intellectual. He contains within him archetypes of the knowledge of the world, of the tree of life. Although the world goes astray as the verse says, I see the word “racine” as indicating that knowledge is rooted and cannot be dismissed forever. Although Tzara has been considered a secular Jew, his connection to Jewish mysticism has been pointed out on various occasions in more recent years. “Monde racine qui s’égare” relates to the Kabbalistic view of the tree of life; life is rooted like a tree, or we are rooted to life, but at the same time, as the Kabbalah discusses, life is not still, it transforms. (Koreis, p.98) More references to that idea follow in the last verses of the poem:

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l'angoisse a dépassé le terme du voyage
dans la solitude des villes nous ceux à la mort

apparentés par les fils visibles et invisibles de la mémoire
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In the above verses Tzara clearly shows a movement away from the Dadaist and Surrealist play of words. He composes the poem “Exil” at a time when exile and death are the brutal reality of Europe and beyond. When he talks of anxiety and death it is what he and others around him are experiencing. Responding to Tzara’s poetry collection _Parler seul_ (1948-50), Forcer wonders whether it is difficult to accept members of the avant-garde evolving their style in a way that “runs counter to the youthful energy” that is normally associated with avant-gardist experimentation. (Forcer, 2011, p.103) Indeed, Tzara’s poetry collections written during the Second World War, although published in 1946, were published in very few copies and have not generated much interest or analysis. Forcer also mentions that, “for all its play with signifiers Tzara’s verse is certainly also loaded with unconscious riches, with the fragmented remnants of desires, memories, people, and places - but this re-emergence of substantive, interconnected meanings within a style that retains a consistently ludic and heterogeneous relationship to signifiers is indeed part of the point and value of Tzara as a poet.” (Forcer, p.124) While Tzara describes the dominance of anxiety, solitude and suffering at that time, he starts using the first person plural pronoun “nous”: fear is dominating people and the poet feels that he wants to share that concern in his writing, to unlock and understand the reasons for that fear and for war.

Despite the poet’s isolation at the time, he does not give up his hope for solidarity, or the idea of the community. Tzara’s desire for acceptance, for an active community can be traced back to his pursuit of ethnopoetics, as I discussed in Chapter One. Being a member of a community such as ones from Oceania and Africa, from which Tzara’s _Poèmes nègres_ derive, has nothing to do with exoticism. These types of communities had, and some still do have, mimetic ways, namely rituals, to face and release the tension of desires collectively. In that way, they altogether avoided problems that in modern society multiply violence as a result of the individual’s

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19 “Mimetic desire” is a term used by René Girard to explain that desire is mimetic and thus from the beginning of humanity forms of scapegoats were invented in order for social groups to avoid violence due to conflicting interests. (Cowdell, p.5)
alienation from society. René Girard views the rivalries for domination between emperors and other leaders in the first ten years of the nineteenth century in Europe as crucial in the resulting total war and a new historical stage of violence. (Girard, p.159) The Second World War began exactly because of individualistic mimetic desires. I will be revisiting Girard’s notion of mimetic desire later in regards to Mário’s work as well.

The above verses from “Exil” are full of tension and this continues to the next line, speaking in first person plural “remontons”. There is a contradiction in the phrase “remontons absents”. Firstly, Tzara indicates that there is a repetition, people re-ascend and at the same time they are absent. We can only speculate here that he might be referring to his generation that lived through the First World War and shortly after that was forced into another war. Just three years before Tzara composed “Exil” the Spanish Civil War had broken out. The poet observes that ordinary people like him have no say in deciding the commencement of wars.

abandons c'est dans le majestueux silence de vos paillasses
que j'ai appris le langage du sang fraterno
la sourde indifférence à jamais closes les portes désirées
et les moindres lueurs où s'accrochaient dans les branches
la croyance en sa propre vie à peine vivante aux limites du chemin
(Tzara, p.384)

His lines become more personal again by speaking in the first person. The poet refers to the hardships and clinical executions of beloved friends and people he admired. The assassination of Federico García Lorca and the death of Tzara’s friend, poet Antonio Machado pertain to the rise of Fascism in Europe. Regarding Lorca’s execution, the poet wrote: “jamais injustice ne fut ressentie plus atrocement. Elle était là l'injustice, concète, palpable, hideuse, étalée dans toute sa cynique monstruosité…Tel fut le crime de Grenade qui, pour nous, s'identifia au crime contre l'Espagne, le crime qui par la suite devait répandre son sang mauvais sur l'Europe entière…” (Tzara, OC t5, p.309) Tristan Tzara’s sorrow expressed in the verses of the poem “Exil” is a lament at injustice and the loss of innocent life. The extract
presented here about García Lorca follows two other texts by Tzara in memory of Antonio Machado and Robert Desnos that I shall comment upon later.

Apart from feeling loss and sorrow, the poet feels abandoned and helpless. Not only does he use the word “indifférence”, he emphasises it with the word “soured”. When Tzara was hiding from the Gestapo, he was often forced to abandon cities due to informants giving him away. (Hentea, p.261) In addition, he knocked on many doors seeking a visa that would guarantee his safety in another country. Hentea describes Tzara’s situation: “his hopes of leaving France through Varian Fry’s American Emergency Rescue Committee proved illusory. British composer Virgil Thomson recalls the desperate letters Tzara sent at the time, but the equally hopeless situation blocking any escape out of the country”. (Hentea, p.259) Despite the hardships and horror Tzara retains faith and sees the smallest rays of hope at the end of the road, as his last verse in “Exil” shows:

que la pudeur retrouve sa paille maternelle
aux tristesses sans nom écorchées à vif
les arbres et les feuilles suffisent à la tendresse
aucun mot n’est assez pur dans la lumière
pour couper le diamant de leur beauté autour de nous (Tzara, p.384)

Once again the first two lines are contradictory. On the one hand, there is the continuation from the previous verse of some positivity in the reference to the “paille maternelle”. On the other, there is the horrific phrase expressing anonymous sadness and being flayed alive that reminds us of the atrocities of war. The poet speculates about the terrifying events of the war and he becomes prophetic about the fact that there is still worse to come. Then the trees and the leaves become the redeemers: Tzara, the lover of language and of words finds that no word can express the pure light or the truth of nature. The Holocaust too is beyond words. Nikolaus Wachsmann points out that Dachau existed as early as 1933. (Wachsmann, p.19) At the same time, the line beginning with “aucun mot” can be interpreted in the following way: humans can pollute words. But Nazis and Fascists could not corrupt people’s beliefs forever because the light of knowledge will expose the manipulation.
Hentea notes that in 1942, Tzara was hiding in Bagnères de Bigorre, and that “Tzara was at particular risk: of the 80,000 Jews deported from France during the war, 64,000 were either born abroad or had immigrant parents. Procuring false papers he was able to move to Souillac, in the Lot department in December 1942”. (Hentea, p.260)

The poet was trapped and managed to survive with few resources. It is not unusual for Tzara to use the symbol of the tree and other elements of the natural world, such as herbs, in his work. The fact that the tree in particular figures in Exil, and in the poems that followed, a symbol of hope and serenity during difficult times, can be once again connected to discourse of Kabbalah. Giller explains the significance of trees and herbs and their esoteric power in the Zohar, the spiritual text of Kabbalah. “The Zohar displays an almost childlike sense of wonder at the paradox of a tree’s existence…trees represent aspects of the Divine.” (Giller, p.130-131) The majority of poems that Tzara composed during the war was never intended to be published. “Because any publication printed in the unoccupied South had to pass through the Vichy censor’s office, Tzara felt that publication in itself was an act of collaboration… Tzara writes for himself to extirpate the burning fragment, the shrapnel of time that tears him apart.” (Hentea, p.257) Tzara remains hidden in silence for a while in order to survive but that does not interrupt his relationship with poetry. The poet had displayed certain interest in esoteric readings and Jungian psychology since the Dada years. Expressing faith in some divine element, whether God or nature, during the war seems to have empowered Tzara. And the fact that he retains some faith and hope is summarised in the line “les arbres et les feuilles suffisent à la tendresse”. The poet has the material inside him to express himself with his poetry, leaves and trees from his surroundings provide him with enough faith.

The feeling of uncertainty is also prominent in the poem “Fluide”. While its title may be indicative of its content, referring to uncertain, fluid times, there is the indication of some hope:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{il est temps d'ouvrir la grande porte} \\
&\text{il est un temps pour édifier pour la ruine} \\
&\text{il est un temps pour déchiffrer et nettoyer} \\
&\text{c'est le temps où l'oubli se moque du monde où le monde est interdit}
\end{align*}
\]
feuille de la simplicité on te voile le soleil

tu t’effeuilles sur le seuil entre mille épis veillé

verrouillé

où tu trompes le temps bu de servitude

et l’attente (Tzara, OC t3, p.386)

In “Fluide” there is again an invocation of nature with the symbol of the leaf in the first part of the poem that contributes along with the rest of the first verses to a sense of heartening. The encouragement is demonstrated with the repetition of the phrase “il est temps de/pour”. The phrase “ouvrir la grande porte” implies a time for change, perhaps the recovery of freedom. The same applies to the restoration of ruins. The ruins here are not just literal, they are at the foremost emotional. While at the same time cleaning and clearing what the war has created, there is also the need to decipher, to make sense of the situation. Tzara exposes the enemy’s intention to cast freedom, diversity and knowledge into oblivion. The enemy forbids people from embracing the world but it is impossible to make everyone forget.

Once again the poet appeals to the simplicity of nature. However, the invocation of “feuille de la simplicité” results in a negative tone since the leaf is deprived of the sun. The use of pronoun “tu” to address the leaf adds to the personal connection of the poet with nature. It seems as if the poet explains to the leaf that it is about to drop on a threshold. The last four verses refer to loss of time, defoliation, enslavement, and constant anxiety, amplifying the feeling of oppression. Cardinal notes, “passing from Dada spontaneity, to Surrealist automatic writing, Tzara arrived at a mature style of transparent simplicity in which disparate entities could be held together in a unifying vision.” (Cardinal, p.530) Interestingly, as it has been mentioned before, Tzara insisted that there is continuation in the themes used in his work over the years. Cardinal’s point about Tzara’s transparent simplicity becomes comprehensible from the first poems of Le Signe de vie like “Fluide”:

dure vide rude vie

le vent a mis sa colère sur la braise des paupières

et la flame s'est éteinte derrière le souvenir

sur sa route plus d’espoir
plus d'étoiles dans sa folie
le mot plane
tu te caches dans la nuit animale
et tu passes (Tzara, *OC t3*, p.386)

The rest of “Fluide” expresses a rather straightforward melancholy and desperation. The line “dure vide rude vie” speaks of the plainly tragic hardness of life at the time, composed with words that usually form a favourable sound pattern in Tzara’s poems. “La braise de paupières” and “la flame s’éteinte derrière le souvenir” show that although memories can make the poet suffer, he still finds hope. He again evokes the road, “sa route”, and emphasises the idea of staying focused on a path in life. However, he recognises “le mot plane”, that in the time of war, his words cannot be poetic. Even at night, there is no peace. Terrible things are taking place but he is unable to react as he would like.

At first glance, in examining the militancy of the two writers, Tristan Tzara’s war-time experience seems quite different from that of Mário de Andrade’s. Brazil may have joined the war on the side of the Allied forces in August 1942, but the country was closely monitored by the U.S.A., which attempted to create close cultural and economical collaboration, “but in reality it was to verify the relationships between the nationalistic tendencies of some Latin American governments and Nazism.” (Tota, p.38) Mário did not have to hide from the Gestapo but he did have major differences with the Vargas dictatorship. After all, that was the main reason he left São Paulo, his city of birth, and moved to Rio de Janeiro from 1938 until 1942. Franco notes about this time that “o contexto politico também o enristecia. No Brasil, a ditatura de Getúlio Vargas. Na Europa, a Segunda Guerra. Quando Paris foi ocupada pelos allemães, em 1940, ele e o Sérgio Buarque de Holanda esvaziaram uma garrafa de uísque. Nessa época, ‘desmandou-se’ na bebida, disse seu secretário José Bento Faria Ferraz”. (Franco, 2015) Rio was seen as a place of self-imposed exile and it is during that exile that Mário composed Café.

The socialist ideas expressed in Café offer the basis for a comparative case study with the poems from *Le Signe de vie* and *Terre sur terre* that refer to the Spanish and Greek civil wars, and the Czechoslovakian turmoil of 1938. If one is not aware of Tzara’s anti-Fascist activism before the war, or the fact that he was
persecuted because he was Jewish, his poetry of the time, at first glance, might not reveal much. We have seen as much in Chapter Two, and Forcer in his analysis of Tzara’s prose poetry also observes that the principle themes are nature, and an almost pagan oriented reliance on questions of memory. (Forcer, p.108) Memory is often treated as the poet’s own or at times there is a sense that he refers to a collective proto-human memory. In *Le Signe de vie* and *Terre sur terre* there is also an abundance of verses using the first person “je” and “nous” or the possessive pronoun “nos” as well as the second person plural. Béhar notes: “Il ne commet pas l’erreur de croire qu’un poème puisse se substituer à l’action, mais il place la poésie assez haut pour qu’elle puisse égaler les gestes des hommes. Et s’il revient constamment à la première personne, parlant de lui et non des autres, ce n’est pas par orgueil excessif, mais plutôt avec le sentiment d’être comme tout le monde. Mais ce que dit le poète et que ne savent pas encore les autres hommes, ce qu’il inlassablement il répète, c’est ce qui fait le plus défaut à ce moment, l’espérance”. (Béhar, *OC t3*, p.616) As seen in the poems analysed earlier, Tzara aspires to communicate hope while speaking of the darkest times. He is successful mostly because of his nature-based approach, and, as I have argued, his Kabbalistic-like vocabulary. All these elements contribute to keeping Tzara’s Word War II poetry in the shadows of research. Nonetheless, the idea of looking at that type of poetry to understand the individual’s psychology in times of war, the struggle involved in trying to flee from captivity, the fear for the safety of loved ones, the solitude in hiding, presents a striking alternative to traditional war poetry.

In the poem “Berceuse entre deux portes”, Tzara struggles between hope and hopelessness. Again, it is not possible to know the exact date that the poem was composed, only that it was written between 1943 and 1945:

L’hébre sèche sous nos pas

nos démarches ne mènent à rien

que le feu des dures faux

éclabousse notre honte

…
n'ai-je pris à la racine
l'homme aux pièges des grands jours
et perdu au jeu des mots
et la face et ma peine

rendez-nous sommeil des neiges
les baleines les agneaux
et dans la terreur des eaux (Tzara, OC t3, p. 433)

Most of the elements mentioned before can be seen in the above poem. It begins with a rather pessimistic tone with the dried herbs and futile efforts. The poem includes recurring motifs of Terre sur terre and Le Signe de vie such as the herb, root and earth, and here readers also encounter some animals. Tzara, along with others, feels that he cannot do much at the time – “nos demarches ne mènent à rien” – and that there is no positive outcome or hope. In the fifth and sixth line the meaning is ambivalent. It could indicate that the poet established himself falsely in important days of the past, and was deceived by the present wartime. Or that he thought he had found a home, his root, but has had to flee again, like he did from Romania. As he entitles the poem lullaby, his last verse calls upon snow to put people, in first person plural, to sleep. The whales and sheep can only be a positive reference, both being animals associated with tranquillity, peacefulness and perhaps provide a substitution for the lack of human companionship.

However, Tzara’s last line “et dans le terreur des eaux” brings back the feeling of fear. He cannot sleep peacefully because war creates a constant uncertainty. This line could also be an indication not just of the loss of human lives during war, but also for the natural destruction caused by war. There are many examples of such references to barren land or abused nature that can be interpreted both metaphorically and literally. In “Anecdote” the poet writes “ainsi je vais feuilletant des paysages à suivre de bois mort de chair de terre” and in “Chaque jour”, “chaque jour plus profond gémit le sous-bois” (Tzara, p.432, 430). Again, the idea of preservation of
nature, especially during destructive wartime, is addressed in the Torah. Eilon Schwartz, quoting a passage from the Bible about the prohibition on tree-felling while besieging a city, notes that one of the interpretations is: “trees are not human beings and therefore should not be victims of their disputes”. (Schwartz, p.85) In Tzara’s wartime poetry, the militancy is undeniably subtle and original because it considers not only the human factor but also natural one. Even though Tzara draws on his Jewish heritage and Kabbalah connections, similar observations about ecological awareness are present in Mário de Andrade’s militant work.

In addition, Norman Lamm notes that the meaning of the Torah phrase “bal tashhit” (thou shalt not destroy) can be explained as teaching the ideal of the social utility of the world, rather than its being a source of purely private economic interest. (Lamm, p.109) Interestingly this teaching from the Torah anticipates the Marxist views that both Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade expressed. The social utility of the world is also something that the two poets observed to a great extent in autochthonous poetry, and popular chants and music. Mário and Tzara share a mutual recognition that solidarity and a harmonious society can be achieved by acknowledging its cultural roots. The latter writes: “Depuis les formes primitives des sociétés jusqu'aux plus complexes, l'ensemble des phénomènes de religion, de moeurs, de liens sociaux et plus tard, le développement des sciences, des littératures et des arts sont l'apport de l'histoire à la vie collective et à celle de chaque individu.” (Tzara, OC t5, p.60)

6. “L’après guerre”

In Le Signe de vie and Terre sur terre the poet refers also, as mentioned earlier, to conflicts that led to and followed the Second World War exactly because he recognises that such events are not unrelated. He demonstrates this not only in his poetry but in articles, speeches, interviews and anti-fascist activity. For instance, in “Sur une aurore grecque”, Tzara’s last poem in Terre sur terre, he refers to the Greek Resistance against the Nazi occupation and the Greek Civil War that followed immediately after:
la terre est pleine la bête sommeille
l'olivier tordu sous la flamme du rire noir
où la mer trempe son mépris
de se savoir toujours victorieuse
rien que cailloux secret oubli
et la source calcinée de la vieillesse
…
mais le rêve est pourri
…
il a pris au sang des autres
les barrières les fusils
et les roches européennes
comme vautours aux rimes de nuit
et de griffes parallèles
ont déchiqueté le rêve
et le sang est mort souillé (Tzara, *OC t3*, p.436-437)

The poet uses imagery that alludes to typical beauties of the Greek landscape but on the third and fourth verses he sees menace. The olive tree is being burned in dark laughter and ancient ideals are in decay. After the war, Tzara was aware that not everything was magically restored. The civil war in Greece is an example of that, since it was not just an internal conflict. As Béhar notes, the clashes were due to the regime put in place by Britain in order to counteract the popularity of members of the Resistance, since many of them were affiliated with communist circles. It is worthy of note that according to Béhar there is evidence that this poem was composed in 1946. (Béhar, *OC t3*, p.620) With “les roches européennes” Tzara emphasises that everyone has suffered with this war and vultures are still circling the
continent. Although in 1954 Tzara broke ties with the French Communist Party (PCF), he was prompted to join the PCF approximately a year before the creation of “Sur une aurore grecque”. In 1946, a year before joining the party, he attacked Surrealism for inertia during the war. According to Hentea, “economic misery afflicting millions with want, political scores settled by bloodshed: in these matters, Tzara conceded, aesthetic movements were largely powerless.” (Hentea, p.271) Indeed, Tzara had some good reasons to believe that, not only because of the friends that Fascism and Nazism took away from him, but also after what he experienced in the psychiatric hospital of Saint-Alban in 1945. “On voit à Saint-Alban, Eluard, Tristan Tzara, des Juifs traqués, des résistants clandestins…” (Lindenberg, p.96) Tzara was moved and influenced by the patients there and also by François Tosquelles and Lucien Bonnafé. He learned more about Nazi institutionalised forms of suffering and extermination during the war in addition to the horrors of gas chambers. (Robcis, p.212) His tribute to the fallen was not limited to poetry. The loss of Robert Desnos is something that the poet emphasised. He writes: “ainsi, les circonstances de sa vie, sa mort dans le camp du crime systématisé, semblent, aussi affreux que cela paraisse, circonscrits par une nécessité logique, la dure leçon que sa mémoire a pour mission de perpétuer.” He continues by saying that Desnos’ dedication to love and freedom in his work show that his assassination should be a warning about his battle with the inhuman. (Tzara, OC t5, p.343-345) This is a highly emotional tribute to Desnos. At the same time it shows that Tzara wanted to remind people of the atrocities of war and Fascism because in order to speak of “l’après guerre”, he believed that the war itself had to be reexamined.

7. The creation of an unusually socialist opera

Similarly, Café is not the average melodrama. Mário incorporated folk such as the Congos on the text. Carmago Toni confirms that Mário appeals to folk and particularly to “danças dramaticas” in order to create a Socialist as well as a Brazilian opera in the middle of WWII. (Carmago Toni, p.3) In that way, he created a revolutionary-themed opera that celebrates not only the working class but also the popular traditions of his country. Like Tzara’s very personal verse during the war years, Mário puts a piece of himself in Café, his life research and personal efforts to
unify the Brazilian experience. By that I mean that he tried to weave a Brazilian identity that accepts and recognizes the importance of its folk heritage and combines it with modernity. Furthermore, he had made it clear in his articles that, although he never formally joined any political party, he had a taste for socialist and Marxist ideas. However, his focus was more on actively enriching public education rather than actively reacting against the dictatorship. For instance, during the time he served at the Department of Culture he created libraries and playgrounds dedicated to educational activities for children, including traditional dances. The number of library members in São Paulo tripled in just one year. (Da Silva Cabral, p.5) Mário thought that he should maintain a low profile by not participating in political rallies, especially because his brother, Carlos, a politician in the Democratic Party, was imprisoned and persecuted by Vargas’ Estado Novo. (Werneck de Castro, p.50-51)

Another similarity between Café and the Tzara’s poems examined in this chapter is the style. In Café, Mário de Andrade’s style does not have the surreal, playful and humorous incidents that are present in Macunaíma. The poet’s language is more simple, has a realistic tone and the only light-hearted aspect is the invention of satirical names for the figures of authority such as “o Deputado Cinza”. In fact, all figures of authority in Café have satirical adjectives as part of their title. The libretto is at times nonsensical, satirical and humorous. The purpose of that is to demonstrate the indifference of these characters towards the famine and misery that the harbour workers and their families experience. Act 2 Scene 1, entitled “Câmara Ballet” is a parody of the authorities. It represents the chamber of the deputies and a discussion of the coffee crisis. But “Deputado Som-Só” literally speaks nonsense “plápláplá chiriri cócô pum. Blimblimblim…Furrumfunfun”. Mário notes regarding the latter’s speech that, “todos dormiam, mas agora acordam curiosos porque é a estréia do Deputadinho da Ferrugem, filho de papai”. (Andrade de, p.434-435) Not only the diminutive “deputadinho” but also the fact that he is “filho do papai” indicates that this is a person who acquired his position only due to his family’s position within the elite. Carmago Toni mentions: “quando do estudo da gênese do libreto ao me deter na Embolada da Ferrugem, compreendi que Mário aliando seu saber lítero ao musical, pensara essa trecho como uma canção, ou seja valera-se de um esquema rítmico-melodico para selecionar as melhores palavras e combiná-las a versos como se fosse um compositor popular.” (Carmago Toni, p.2) That is why Mário entitles this part
“Embolada da Ferrugem”, following the tradition of the improvised metric of “coco de embolada”. “Deputadinho da Ferrugem” gives a long speech about “ferrugem” and the terrible consequences that rust has when developed in cooking pots:

Porque as panelas

Com ferrugem meus senhores

Na cozinha são penhores

De vitaminas mesquinha

Pois a verdade

Não se oculta com a babugem

Da Oposição: tem ferrugem… (Andrade de, p.435-436)

Meanwhile a worker from the docks shouts “praque panela si não tem o que cozinhar!” The “deputados” appear to live in their glass bubble and are presented as indifferent to the suffering of others.

The opera, or “tragédia secular” is separated into three Acts and five Scenes. The work is published in two parts, firstly, the “concepção melodramatica” containing the narrative with descriptions of the atmosphere, the plot and scenery. There follows the libretto. Interestingly, Mário de Andrade’s opera was the only piece that he created for the stage, despite being a musicologist as well as a writer. Conversely, Tzara had experience with performances at a very early stage in his career, since 1916 in the Cabaret Voltaire. Of course, when Mário created a performance, with his knowledge of music, he felt that it had to be sung. His opinion was that theatre since antiquity, including the folk theatre of his day, was mainly being sung and it was only when it was deformed in its functionality that it came to be called “opera” and functioned only as “entertainment for princes”. (Andrade de, 1982, p.209) Despite his classical music education at the Conservatory of São Paulo and his early admiration of opera, here, he states his displeasure with music, song and theatre that cannot be available to everyone but only to the elite. Camargo Toni notes that when Mário becomes a professor at the Conservatory in 1920, he has eight students and teaches Brazilian composers, as well as Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Massenet, Schumann,
Liszt and Scarlatti. (Camargo Toni, p.12) Mário knows both the early Baroque, Romantic era well, as well as Impressionist music, in addition to Brazilian folk. Here he uses elements of both. The following part is from the first Act and the writer notes that it takes place inside a coffee warehouse in the port, the workers are between the shadows:

Primeira Cena

PORTO PARADO

I

CORAL DO QUEIXUME

Os Estivadores:

Minha terra perdeu seu porte de grandeza...

O café que alevanta os homens apodrece

Escravizado pela ambição dos gigantes da mina do ouro.

O café ilustre, o grão perfumado

5 Que jamais recusou a sua recompensá,

Nada mais vale, nada mais.

Que farei agora que o café não vale mais! (Andrade de, p.425)

In the above extract from the first scene Mário introduces the now historical Coffee Crisis. The workers are desperate because coffee has no value and they are sitting in a warehouse full of coffee sacks. That warehouse represents only a fragment of the vast amounts of coffee that rotted in 1929. In the third line, the dockworkers criticise the coffee business oligarchs. Not long before the growth of the coffee business, the same elite had the monopoly of the Brazilian gold mines. The workers blame the oligarchs’ greediness for the Coffee Crisis and the misery that they experience. The coffee owners cannot be satisfied easily; they kept growing coffee to the point of having an excess that cannot be sold. Mário de Andrade in the ‘concepção melodramatica’ of the first Act underlines: “Desde muito que os donos da vida
andavam perturbando a marcha natural do comércio de café. Os resultados foram fatais. Os armazéns se entulharam de milhões de sacas de café indestinado. E foi um crime nojento.” (Andrade de, p.401) The poet looks at the source of the problem, the covetousness of the plantation owners, and wittily calls them “donos da vida”.

The behaviour of the owners has consequences for the rest of the society that could obviously have been avoided. Angela Materno mentions that “em Café o coletivo é tema e ponto de vista. Os personagens são, em sua grande maioria, ‘personagens-massas’, como denomina o próprio Mário, e as falas são quase sempre corais. A peça mostra grupos sociais em confronto e em movimento.” (Materno, p.98) It is when people act collectively in Café that they acquire power over the coffee owners. When referring to the workers force in the libretto, Mário speaks of them as a united force. The only reference to a single person among the working class is “a Mãe”. Marta Morais da Costa sees the mother, “a Mãe” as a metaphor for the Virgin Mary suffering along with her son and at the same time as an image for nature’s fertility contradicting the capitalist system. (Morais da costa, p.135) The choice of the mother figure has definitely an archetypal reference; she is a symbol for every worker’s mother. The rest of the time people are referred to with nouns in plural such as “estivadores”, “revoltosos”, “mulheres” with distinctions of whether they are single or in couples, “solteiros” and “casais”. Mário demonstrates social inequalities as wealth is clearly distributed unevenly. The oligarchic system’s failure is exposed. The “deputados” and the “donos” seem unable to understand that the workers have rights. In addition, the period in which Mário chooses to set the opera is relevant to its subject. By 1929, when the story takes place, the Brazilian economy was mostly agrarian but also capitalist. Victor Anderson uses Girard’s theory of mimetic desire to analyse the relations between the colonisers of America that applies to Brazil. Brazil may have been independent since the 7th of September 1822, but the attitude of colonialism was still present and generated a “mimetic inversion”. Although the descendants of the colonisers fought to declare themselves independent, proclaiming that they wanted to adopt democratic values, order and progress, they paradoxically created subalterns of their own - indigenous people and Africans. (Anderson, p.50-51) Mário de Andrade acknowledges these problematic aspects of his society, the mimetic inversion, and expresses his displeasure about them through his poetry and prose. In
Café, it becomes clear that Mário’s later work demonstrates that his dedication in the research of Brazilian folk has both cultural importance and sociopolitical importance.

Part two of the first Scene has the title “Madrigal do Truco”, derived from the Renaissance polyphonic musical form. (Lewis Hammond, p.28) Here Mário, as he informs readers in the conception notes for Café, presents a group of workers that play a game of cards called “truco” in order to pass their time in the warehouse since they cannot work. Their dialogue in the form of the madrigal is a mostly rhyming quintet full of card playing vocabulary with some humorous characterisations. What is interesting in terms of the social dimensions involved are Mário’s suggestive instructions in brackets at the end of that scene.

(O compositor poderá, si quiser, intercalar, ajuntar
com o truco mais dois cantores jogando a morra,
um italiano e um preto, porque assim o ariano
cantará “Trê!” “Cinque!” etc. lá na lingua de Dante
e o tizio cá bem na lingua nossa de Camões, secun-
dando “Dois! Oito!”) (Andrade de, p. 427)

That suggestion by Mário is one of the very few indications that the majority of the coffee and harbour workers were Brazilians of African origin, with the addition of some European immigrants. “Um campo negro emerge na prevalência demográfica de trabalhadores negros no porto do Rio de Janeiro e, ainda mais consistentemente, dentro de sindicatos específicos.” André Cicalo explains that Vargas’ regime inaugurated with its emphasis on “trabalhismo” – some social benefits for the workers – but also juxtaposed that with a phase of corporatist state (1937-45) with restrictions of social and political actions. Through the route of the discourse for “racial democracy”, the Vargas regime focused on class and not race. (Cicalo, p.104) But the process was surrounded by nationalistic tendencies and a silent attempt to “whiten” the population with the “import” of European immigrants.20 However, the

20 In 1931 the Black Brazilian Front was created and developed ‘buy black’ campaigns, employment opportunities, schools and political organizations, but it had a short life span. It was shut down in 1937 by Varga’s Estado Novo. (Hanchard, p.35)
syndicates’ archives from that time do not refer to that matter at all. (Cicalo, p.115) I believe that the reason why *Café* has not been studied in relation to Cicalo’s study regarding races, ethnicity and class is because of this same mentality. As Cicalo also mentions, the method of silencing these issues continued to be adopted by the governments and regimes that followed Vargas until the end of the last dictatorship in 1985. (Cicalo, p.105) While he lived in Rio de Janeiro, Mário de Andrade was fully aware of those working in the coffee trade. The coffee produced in Minas Gerais was mainly exported through the port of Rio and only one third through Santos, the port of São Paulo. (Font, p.237) An Italian worker sings the numbers of the cards in his language, while a black worker who sings in “our language” reveals who is really Brazilian for him. The poet notes that “o Madrigal do Truco feito exclusivamente com frases tradiçionais”. (Andrade de M., in Camargo Toni, p.183) For instance, in the second stanza one player says “arapuca de bambu” in order to show that he bluffs, since the phrase means a trap made of bamboo. In the fourth stanza the expression “sapicuá de lazarento” derives from the Portuguese word for the sacks that lepers would carry to beg for donations. These are expressions that truly represent people since they are used on an everyday basis. Mário illustrates his wish to create a people’s opera.

The following part of Mário’s piece, the third part of the first scene, entitled “Coral das Famintas” is a tragic choir in which even more coffee workers join the rest in singing about the famine they experience. The fourth part, “Imploração da Fome”, sees women coming to join them. When the workers’ women join the choir, the lyrics become more like a dramatic lamentation. They begin calling upon the “grão pequeno do café”. Although initially, the present comparison was based on the themes of social inequality, instability and war, these verses too bear many similarities with Tzara’s verse. For instance, the use of “caminhos” takes us back to Tzara’s persistence with using the word road:

Oh grão pequeno do café, escuta o meu segredo […]

Não te escondas assim ni silêncio infecundo […]

Não dorme na paz falsa da morte, a fome indica os caminhos

[…]
Pois não escutas o rebate surdo das ventanias?

Grão pequenino

Não vês o clarão breve dos primeiros fogos?

Grão pequenino

Logo eu te acordarei da paz falsa da morte

E tu reviveras, razão da minha vida [...] 

E uma fome antiga, de milhões de anos que renasce

(Andrade de, p.428-429)

The third line where the coffee workers state that hunger indicates the roads and paths reminds us of Tzara’s verses in “Exil” and “Fluide”. Tzara uses the metaphor of the road regarding the promise of hope or future. Here, despite the tragic situation of famine, the workers still retain some hope that the coffee trade will revive.

The last line emphasises the famine as being ancient and being reborn. Mário de Andrade inserts this idea to show that the class struggle and racial inequality are not new to the twentieth century. He writes in his conception of the melodrama: “Aquela fome que eles sentiam não era apenas uma fome de alimento, mas outro maior, a fome milenar dos subjugados, fome de outra justiça na terra, de outra igualdade de direitos para lutar e vencer”. (Andrade de, p.403) He also confirms that the last line in the libretto refers to a hunger for social justice, a need to fight for land redistribution, and to win. There is an indication in the conception notes that victory is not unattainable.

In contrast to Tzara, who was active for several years in the Communist party in France, Mário de Andrade never joined the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). However, as mentioned earlier, Café, personal letters and articles in newspapers all reveal his sympathy with communist and socialist models. André Cintra says: ‘No início do artigo ‘Comunismo’, publicado no Diário Nacional em 30 de novembro de 1930, Mário ataca as variantes anticomunistas em curso no País. Está se dando no Brasil um movimento em torno da palavra Comunismo que é dum
ridículo perfeitamente idiota. Comunismo pra brasileiro é uma espécie de assombração medonha’, opina.” (Cintra, 2013) So, Mário openly attacks not only the obstinacy of some fellow Brazilians in general, but also criticises the Vargas regime’s fascist ideology. In a way, with the comment in *Diário Nacional* in 1930, Mário prophesises the witch-hunt that Vargas would begin from 1937 onwards against communists, leftists and even Jewish refugees and Jewish Brazilians.

Scene Two, “Compania Cafeteira, S.A.”, begins with “Coral do Provérbio” and is significant for being the first one that takes place at the coffee plantations. According to Mário the image of an orange tree came to mind before writing that part of *Café*. “Esta claro que a intromissão da laranjeira valoriza plasticamente o cénario, não só pelo contraste do seu verde forte e das frutas maduras no verde aguado do cafezal, como quebrar a monotonia, expressivamente desnecessária do horizonte apenas ondulado do cafezal.” (Andrade de M. in Camargo Toni, p.176) Indeed, the scene setting indicates that while the plantation workers are almost mechanically collecting coffee seeds, a young boy finds an orange tree among them. He cuts a fruit and after sucking it for a second, he throws it away because it is bitter. Then, the elders say the traditional proverb “Laranja no café-é azeda ou tem vespeira” (Andrade de, p.429). Mário mentions that he built the scene around the image of the orange tree and the proverb. While the proverb, if taken literally, matches the action of the scene, it is also an omen of the bitterness of the coffee workers’ situation to come. Mário mentions that although he originally had no intention of transferring the action to the plantation, “a idéia do provérbio me trouxera, agora deduzida e necessariamente, a dedução dos dois colonos, no nervosismo da discussão chuparam laranjas…Eram como palavras cabalísticas, derivadas duma força superior, gravadas por milagre no céu”. (Andrade de M. in Camargo Toni, p.177) Even though the appearance of an orange tree full of fruit should have a positive effect on the hungry workers, its fruit is bitter, as the proverb suggests. Mário describes the tree in a way that is reminiscent of Tzara’s evocation of the tree of life or the Kabbalistic tree symbol, but here the orange tree serves more as a reverse allusion to the Edenic tree of knowledge: when the boy drops the bitter orange, the men and women who had kept working despite being exhausted and malnourished suddenly stop. They realise that it has become pointless to collect coffee beans because the trade has stopped, and nobody pays them for their labour. In addition, the greediness of the plantation owners is analogous to
their disrespect for the land. The coffee plants are described as “arvores já taludas, com oito anos, saias grandes pousando na terra-roxa.” (Andrade de, p.404) The poet points to the lack of crop rotation by describing their size and the large amount of time that they have been harvested. As a consequence the abundance of coffee following the Crash in 1929 left the workers hungry with “almoço insuficiente”. (Andrade de, p.405)

In the libretto, the part entitled “Discussão”, two of the coffee owners “os donos” declare “lavamos nossas mãos: eis vossos donos novos”. But the workers are not satisfied with the response. The owners do not wish to take responsibility and say that is up to the “Comissários” now. The latter advise that patience is the best virtue of the work force. It seems that Mário creates the owners’ and officials’ dialogues based on his disappointment with the establishment in all aspects of Brazilian society. He had heard a similar reasoning in his position at the Departamento da Cultura de São Paulo. Disappointed, he left the Department without fulfilling his project to establish a scientific research centre for Brazilian folklore and the sociology of the city of São Paulo. (Oliveira de, p.12) His last poetry collection, Lira Paulistana (1944-45), further expresses his outrage at the Brazilian establishment. His verse reminds us of Tzara’s periodic separation from the French Communist Party, as I shall discuss later. The two poets share a sense of isolation from their artistic communities during the years leading to their deaths. Mário writes in Lira Paulistana’s last poem, “A Meditação sobre o Tietê”:

235 Por que os homens não me escutam! Por que os
governadores

Não me escutam? Por que não me escutam

Os plutocratas e todos os que são chefes e são fezes?

Todos os donos da vida?

Eu lhes daria o impossível e lhes daria o segredo…

(Andrade de, p.393)
The poet lists people that are traditionally in charge in westernised societies such as governors, plutocrats, people whom he calls the “owners of life”. He declares that the artist should not serve them, “os donos da vida”, and should express himself or herself uncensored. He uses that phrase many times in the opera Café to address the coffee plantation owners and exporters. They are not just “donos” but “donos da vida”. The scene escalates in an unexpected way for the “donos” because the workers start repeating that they demand their payments and threaten to abandon their work. The “donos” retreat with their revolvers to a defensive position.

Before completing Café, Mário had also begun writing a novel entitled Quatro Pessoas that remained unfinished. He says in 1940 that he was writing in Rio de Janeiro when the news about the Nazi invasion of Paris appalled him. “Não era mais possivel preocupar-me com o destino de quatro indivíduos-envolvidos em dois casos de amor-quando o mundo sofria tanto e a cultura recebía um golpe profundo. Desisti.” Many colleagues and friends wrote to Mário at the time to encourage him to complete the novel Café. Moacir Werneck de Castro prompts Mário and characterises the project as a mission, emphasising the gravity that the word holds.21 While Mário did not complete the novel, he delivered the opera, its libretto, narrative and stage instructions. Following the advice of Werneck de Castro, he made sure that his opera was a lesson for the public. Mário says: “Enfim, se tratava muito conscientemente de um aproveitamento de valores estéticos de beleza para criar uma obra-de-arte que iria servir de lição. E uma lição, eu imaginava, tão intencional, que deveria se tornar bem clara, bem legível, e principalmente bem impregnante.”

Act 2 Scene 2 of the opera is entitled “O Exodo” and takes place in a small train station in the countryside, built to serve the coffee plantations. So the exodus of

21 This is a notable comment from the young journalist, activist and member of the Brazilian Communist Party who later on, in 1992 co-wrote with his sister Maria Werneck de Castro the novel No tempo dos barões about the coffee industry after the abolition of slavery, and social problems involved. He also wrote the book Mário de Andrade: Exílio no Rio (1989)
the coffee plantation workers to Rio de Janeiro begins. People, the “coral puríssimo”
sing about their expectations and rights in the capital: “quero trabalho”, “quero
alegria”, “quero descanso”. (Andrade de, p.440) But the “coral da vida”, made up of
the workers plus some couples that entered the scene, begins to mention the problems
they encounter in the city, which now include the “coral do êxodo”. Mário’s
disappointment with the social inequalities and extreme poverty he witnessed in Rio
was mentioned earlier. The workers sing about the hostility of the city and how they
arrived with hope but ended up living in the streets. They are told to obey like slaves
but since they are not offered any work, they are forced to steal and live in misery.
Skidmore mentions that shortly after the abolition of slavery and the influx of the now
free people of African descent to Rio, the mayor, Francisco Pereira Passos
demolished 590 buildings to modernise downtown according to a Parisian model.
“Many of these structures (known as cortiços or tenements) had housed working class
families who were now forced to find new housing, often much further from their
work. The political elite was turning down town Rio into a ‘rabble free’ zone that
would impress the foreigner and keep the ‘dangerous classes’ at a distance.”
(Skidmore, p.77)

Mário de Andrade sees no other option for the workers in his opera but
revolution. Once again, he raises the problem of the unspoken segregation in his
“Coral da Vida” as the exasperated workers begin to realise their potential to revolt:

Raça culpada, raça envilecida maldita,

Os gigantes da mina com os seus anões ensinados

Trairam a cidade e os chãos felizes.

O Homem Zangado, o herói do curacao múltiplo,

O justiçador moreno, o esmurrador com mil punhos

…

De cada planta o cafezal distila o veneco verde do ódio

…

O herói vingador já nasceu do enxurro da cidade (Andrade de, p.442)
The workers are ready to fight in order to change things. The verses reveal that people are aware that a revolution cannot be bloodless but they believe in their power, they will use their fists. The reference to race is significant given the statistics of the time, as mentioned earlier, showing that the majority of the coffee and dock workers were of African descent. It is not by chance then that Mário chooses the choir to sing that their race is considered “culpada” and debased. However, there is the hopeful line that talks about the “dark skinned avenger”. As I showed earlier, in a way, here the message resembles Tzara’s from “Fluid” when the poet suggests that Nazism cannot make his culture disappear. “Coral da Vida” then is what its name indicates, a song of life, a people’s cry for their rights. Michael George Hanchard mentions that the Brazilian elite promoted assumptions about blacks being lazy and incompetent. He adds that “black Brazilians were not only discriminated against before entering the industrial workforce, they were systematically disqualified from objective market competition both during and after their entrance.” (Hanchard, p.34) It is obvious that Mário de Andrade not only rejects such discriminatory assumptions, he also emphasises the workers’ vigour and desire to work and to have a respectable life. After lamentations of the elderly people and the children who cry “Aáai…Aiáaaaai! Meu Deus!” the rest of the people proclaim louder “Sou a fonte da vida” and “Vingança!” (Andrade de, p.443) Just before the last act, “Dia Novo”, the workers come to see their power as “the source of life”.

8. The victorious workers

Mário chooses a hopeful outcome for his opera narrative. The “Dia Novo” finds radio stations taken over by the revolutionaries. Women in the “cortiços” sing “meu homem combate na rua” “Eu tremo, tremo, tremo!” “Mas EU SOU AQUELA QUE DISSE:” “parti!... é hora!” (Andrade de, p.445) The victory is not easy to achieve but people are determined to fight. The last few scenes when most of the action is described by radio announcements include Mário’s notes about the music: “texto e música folcóricos, dos muito conhecidos no Brasil todo, ocorrentes em várias danças dramaticas”. (p.446-447) He wants the victory to be a true representation of the people that made it happen. According to Camargo Toni the “Grande Coral da Luta” that takes place between the two radio announcements is taken by the Canto
Guerreiro from congos of Rio Grande do Norte. Mário notes down information taken during his trip in the North about congos by the singer Jovino, and meticulously studies this “dança dramática” of African origin. (Camargo Toni, p.136-137) Many years later, he adapts the notes for his libretto; one can only imagine that when performed, the insertion of the war song and dance (congo) would leave an impression on the audience, especially as Mário wished, a Brazilian audience would find it familiar.

After the choir, the radio announces that the president “Papai Grande” escaped from the palace. Another announcement declares “VI-TO-RIA!” and that the president committed suicide. Mário de Andrade would never know, since he died in February 1945 that Getúlio Vargas would shoot himself years later, in August 1954. The opera ends on a promising tone regarding the future with the “Hino da fonte da vida”:

Os homens serão unidos

[...]

Eu odeio os que amontoam (reservam)

[...]

que não provam deste vinho

Sangüíneo das multidões.

E deles que nasce a Guerra

E são a fonte da morte

[...] (Andrade de, p.449)

Materno describes the end of the opera: “A própria escolha do cortiço como cénario da revolução já revela os seus agentes.” (Materno, p.99) However, she does not elaborate on that idea. The fact that Mário uses the environment of the “cortiço”, the urban, dense makeshift housing of the disadvantaged citizens as the setting of the revolution is extremely significant. As I discussed earlier, the records of the time show that the workers to whom Mário refers in his opera are in their vast majority of
African descent and/or from mixed with autochthonous populations. It is surprising that this association has not been made before. The Brazilian poet in the narrative of the opera, the “concepção melodramatica” provides a realistic description of the environment of the “cortiço”. He describes its poor infrastructure, lack of fresh water supply and darkness because of the infrequent electricity supply. (Andrade de, p.415-416) Teresa Meade confirms that, in the early 1890s, the working class and urban poor mostly consisted of former slaves that came from the countryside in search of work and resided in downtown Rio de Janeiro in the ramshackle “cortiços”. (Meade, p.66)

Mário de Andrade had expressed his outrage at the extreme poverty in Rio de Janeiro and other parts of the country after his eye-opening trips to Rio and the Northeast in 1928 and 1929. He notes after his journey, “a dor, a imensa e sagrada dor do irreconciliável humano, sempre imaginei que ela viajara na primeira vela de Colombo e vive aqui”. (Andrade de, TA, p.166) This heartfelt statement shows Mário’s sensitivity and recognition of the immense social and cultural differences within Brazil. At the end of the opera’s “concepção melodramatica” he speaks on behalf of the poet himself, like he does in Macunaíma: “Então o poeta não ‘quererá’ ser, se deixará ser livremente. E há-de cantar mandado pelos sofrimentos verdadeiros, não criados artificialmente pelos homens, mas derivados naturalmente da própria circunstância de viver. Me sinto recompensado por ter escrito esta épica. Mas lavro o meu protesto contra os crimes que me deixaram assim imperfeito. Não das minhas imperfeições naturais. Mas das imperfeições voluntárias, conscientes, lúcidas, que mentem no que verdadeiramente eu sou” (Andrade de, p.422) The poet confides that he feels that he makes amends to his people by writing this opera and singing of their true sufferings. He also admits to his imperfections and tries to battle with them. In a way, Mário writes this for himself to apologise, but mainly to promise himself that he is going to fight the conventions that had prevented him from being more proactive against injustice.

Regarding the ending of Café, Materno also sees the myth of revolution in Mário’s work as alluding to the French or the Russian Revolutions, or either of them at the same time. (Materno, p.100) Actually, the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union in 1922 was seen by many intellectuals as a positive model. However, many like Tristan Tzara became disappointed by its totalitarian outcome.
His disagreement with the French Communist Party (PCF) in 1954 over the revolutionary climate in Hungary meant that Tzara was no longer considered a member. “Old friends refused to greet him on the street, and the PCF’s control of certain sections of the press effectively led to him being blacklisted.” (Hentea, p.281)

Tzara continued his work and political activism independently. In 1954 in collaboration with the Hungarian photographer Étienne Sved he published L’Égypte face à face. Béhar notes: “Tzara en tire leçon pour l’avenir, annonçant en 1954, une révolution prochaine des fellahs, ce qui n’était pas si mal jugé, deux ans avant la nationalization du canal de Suez par Nasser”. (Béhar, OC t4, p. 679) Although Tzara’s text focused on Egyptian art and the evolution of culture, he could not omit commenting on Egypt’s political affairs. Tzara did not cease working for a more just society that would never come back to the horrors of the war. Tzara notes while participating in activities of the Centre des Intellectuels in Toulouse in 1944 that they need to keep the spirit of the Resistance alive. He insisted that, “the intellectual must on no account remain foreign to highly important social and political questions, but must play his part effectively in whatever field it be, so that Fascism can never again exist in the world”. (Hentea, p.265) Indeed this was a major preoccupation of the writer after the war. He had disliked totalitarian groups and schools of thought since his early Dada years. When he realised that the PCF was turning into that direction, he could not possibly follow it prescriptions.

Mário’s opera shows once again that he shares with Tzara a faith in solidarity among people and the intellectual’s active participation in social questions. The last verses in Café talk about how the workers are the source of life and “não conta o segredo aos grandes”. Werneck de Castro notes: “Mário jamais pretendeu assimilar o marxismo, mais utilizava conceitos marxistas como instrumentos de análise e de conhecimento da realidade.” He continues by describing what Mário actually wrote to his old student and friend Oneida Alvarenga. He said that, although he does not fully accept Marxism, Marxism today is not Marxist anymore because it is incorporated into general knowledge, human truth. (Werneck de Castro, p.77) I have mentioned from the beginning of the thesis that Mário de Andrade was always reluctant to join any kind of movement or to associate himself with any particular school or group. The plurality of his intellectual interests could not be confined in absolutes. One month before his death, he participated in the Congresso Brasileiro de
Escritores (22-26 of January, 1945). The congress addressed writers and artists’ issues but mainly actions against the “Estado Novo”. A few days after the Congress, Mário de Andrade expresses his disappointment angrily, in a way that he has before: “Já sabemos de fonte certa que o filho da puta de um grande romancista pseudo-esquerdistavem atrapalhar a dignidade da inteligência brasileira propondo apoio ao governo. O caso está se tornando grave porque o homem, além de ficar na posição comodista, arrasta muita gente para o mesmo comodismo fácil e gordo. Seria uma vergonha que, segundo penso, nos afeta a todos. Em São Paulo, há um grupo consciente e coeso que repudiará isso e as palavras-de-ordem de Moscou, da mesma forma que repudia Churchill na Grécia e as Nações Unidas [...] na Itália.” (Andrade de M. in Palamartchuk, p.107) Mário once more emphasises his disappointment with those who characterised themselves as leftists but supported the “Estado Novo” government.

We have followed Mário de Andrade’s personal journey from the 1929 Coffee Crisis through to the years when he lived in Rio de Janeiro, 1938-1941, and began composing Café until completing it in 1942. At the same time he and Tristan Tzara were faced with the commencement of the Second World War. We cannot forget however, that for the latter, who was in the heart of the conflict, it meant fleeing in solitude and uncertainty for his life. For Mário, who, like many others, had underestimated the rise of Fascism, there was shock when the news of the invasion of Paris reached him. Although Brazil participated in the war, dictatorship, fascism and social struggle were his country’s main issues at the time. The works of the two poets during these difficult times reflect these problems. Despite being persecuted by the Gestapo, Tzara remained a part of the French Resistance, and whenever he could, made his voice heard even if it had to be anonymously. Mário de Andrade was not in danger during the war like Tristan Tzara was, and this chapter does not attempt to compare their situations. The years of the Second World War are, however, the period in which both write some of their most militant work and the analysis of that work demonstrates that both positioned themselves clearly during the rise of Fascism. Tzara sees hope in the sacred harmony of nature and Mário in social uprising.

They both touch upon subjects of discrimination and totalitarianism, freedom and solidarity. Mário’s focus on racial and class discrimination in Brazil coincides with Tzara’s concerns about his own safety as a Jew, and his campaigning
for the decolonisation of other peoples. According to Hentea, “the issue of colonialism concerned Tzara personally. His literary debut in Romania had to navigate questions of cultural imperialism and exclusion because of religion.” (Hentea, p.278) Tzara always had to deal with a rather nomadic identity that is not a far cry from Mário’s. In Romania he was considered foreign because he was Jewish and in Zürich and France he was different because he was a Romanian Jew. While Mário de Andrade’s identity as Brazilian was strong, as he mentions, he does so while speaking “numa língua curumim”: the Portuguese language. The multiplicity of Brazilian identity and its acceptance by the rest of the Brazilians was his life’s work. He highlights in his work the part of that identity which is the import of mainly the West African culture that was largely ignored by the establishment.

Mário shows with Café that cultural claims in Brazil cannot be made without social assimilation. In times when democracy and freedom were threatened, he did not remain silent. He called for social change and revolution. On the other hand, Tristan Tzara’s poetry from the war years shows the thoughts and feelings of a fugitive, an unusual voice in war poetry. Despite his personal struggle with discrimination in Romania and especially anti-Semitism during the war, despite the lost loved ones, he retained hope and his work remained militant.
Conclusion

The aim of this summation is to bring together the interrelation of the works of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade that I have discussed, as a reminder of their contribution to poetry, and to the understanding of language and society.

Firstly, it is important to point out that the comparison offered by the thesis has allowed me to address poetic and literary prose works that for the most part have not been analysed in their entirety before. However, I have tried to avoid any form of critical “poetic license” by basing much of my research on manuscripts as well as comparative cultural criticism. This applies to most of Tristan Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres*, most of the poems in *Terre sur terre* and *Le Signe de vie* and the entire *Personnage d’insomnie* that I have presented. In Mário de Andrade’s case, despite the existing bibliography, many poems from *Clã do Jabuti* have not undergone a close analysis, and have not been approached as ethnopoetics, whether in a comparative dimension or not. A similar approach applies to *Macunaíma*: I believe that I have provided an alternative reading to certain elements of the novel in comparing it with a key but neglected contemporaneous novel from Europe. That comparative insight is developed in my readings of *Café*, in which I address recent critical responses exploring the socio-political backdrop of the time of composition, and in which I show how Mário’s politically orientated activity and thought are alluded to in the libretto.

I have compared a Latin American avant-garde author on equal terms with a European one. Although most recent publications acknowledge Tristan Tzara’s heritage, such as the work of Heyd, Sandqvist and Hentea which I have discussed, they have not addressed its implications in an analytical way. On the other hand, Mário de Andrade’s work has been much analysed but often the concentration on nationalist sentiment has failed to point out the writer’s criticism of that approach and his distinct focus on the social. We have seen that Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade, in addition to being contemporaries also share common principles. Their upbringing in bourgeois environments provided them with an education in multiple languages. In particular, acquiring knowledge of French, German and English exposed them to a tradition of variety in schools of literature and poetry. Their origins
are distinct despite their similar social background, yet there are analogies in their respective intellectual development and social action. Tristan Tzara, born a Jew in Romania, who was only granted Romanian citizenship after WWI, and French citizenship only after WWII, was often seen as a stateless person, providing him with a tabula rasa and the opportunity to challenge attitudes to Western culture, such as his Dada writings and performances. In opposition, Mário de Andrade was expected to be a paradigm of a good Catholic son and a professor of classical music at the São Paulo Conservatory, leaving his mixed origin unspoken. However, their work took each of them in different directions.

In Chapter One, I discussed the adaptation of autochthonous songs and myths that constitute Poèmes nègres (1916) by Tristan Tzara, part of which he used in Dada activities in Zürich. I considered this alongside the adaptation of traditional and native songs and legends by Mário de Andrade, commencing with the journey to Minas Gerais in 1924 that inspired his poetry collection Clã do Jabuti, released in 1927. The comparison between Poèmes nègres and Clã do Jabuti is significant for Modernism for many reasons. On the one hand, regarding Brazilian Modernism, Mário de Andrade came from the centre of Modernist activities, the metropolis of São Paulo that inspired him and offered him direct access to modernity and Modernism. He was one of the first Brazilian “modernistas” to embrace autochthonous and native Brazilian culture and insert it into Modernist material. On the other hand, Tristan Tzara came from the so-called periphery of European culture but would soon become a central figure of it. But while he appears to become a representative of Occidental tradition that values written language, I have shown the influence on his work of the Judaic tradition, particularly Hasidim storytelling, familiar to him from childhood, which relies equally on oral and written language. While he was in his native Romania, living in the predominantly Jewish Moinesti, and long before the invention of Dadaism, he was already composing experimental poetry. Reading ethnographic accounts from contemporary ethnographers and missionaries fuelled his interest in African and Austronesian cultures, their songs and poems. Tzara came to play an important, central role in European Modernism and subsequently some of his work and activities not only reached Mário in Brazil but became a point of reference for him. In particular, in his A escrava que não é Isaura Mário quotes Tzara directly. In the text, Mário values the spontaneity of Modernist verse as well as autochthonous
compositions, and that spontaneity is seen in Tzara’s work as well, and in the way both writers are drawn to the oral traditions that reached them, such as the “hain-teny” from Madagascar and the “cocos” from Brazil.

I have shown that in *Clã do Jabuti*, Mário cherished the polyphony of Brazilian folk traditions. This assisted him in discovering so many worlds within a single nation, his native Brazil that provided him with lifelong inspiration. Mário’s achievement in combining folkloric musical styles and folk stories with Modernist verse is what makes *Clã do Jabuti* unique. Perhaps the most patriotic poem in the collection is “O poeta come Amendoim” where Mário declares his love for his country by recognising the truths of its bloody history. The last poem of the collection, “Acalanto do seringueiro”, also points to the tensions rather than the uniformity that constitute Brazilian identity. He describes how a rubber-tapper from the forest in the North of Brazil cannot envision a writer in the South of his country, sitting in his São Paulo office, and how Mário himself cannot quite comprehend the mind and routine of the rubber-tapper. As we see from the themes of *Clã do jabuti*, both the poet and the reader travel via folk myths from the city to the countryside and to the Amazonian forest. I have shown that this collection presents Mário’s general criticism of elitist undervaluing of Brazilian folk traditions.

In this Chapter I have also shown that Tzara became a self-taught scholar of mainly African cultures but also Austronesian ones. The art of these cultures may have played a primary role in inspiring many of Modernism’s avant-garde artists, but Tzara was one of the first to view these cultures as more than just aesthetic museum pieces. I have shown that Tzara’s *Poèmes nègres* is not a random compilation, as previously thought. On the contrary, the poems can be categorised according to themes and to neighbouring cultures. There are poems that refer to myths, food gathering, rituals, labour and colonial oppression. Moreover in their respective ethnopoetics Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade often leave certain nouns untranslated, although in the ethnographic journals from which they are borrowed translations are provided. This mixture of languages is not intended to add an exotic flavour, rather to make evident and to celebrate the fact that these are not original creations. These first encounters with oral traditions from various cultures that were brought into Modernist poetry constitute something like, to use another avant-garde term, the “ready-made” poem. Despite the geographical distance between them, what
brings together Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade is that while they came from what was considered the margin, this led them to question that very notion. They explored the human capacity for narrative, the possibilities of language, and the melody at the core of speech. Ironically they are both achieving this exploration of oral language through writing, and they are both working with that paradox. The originally oral autochthonous folk that ends up being written serves the purpose of communal activity, of participatory listening through their recitation and performance, both in Dada soirées and in the African, Austronesian and Brazilian communities from which it came. With their use of autochthonous cultural manifestations, Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara demonstrate that autochthons and the writers themselves are, according to Fabian’s terminology, coeval. (Fabian, 2014) This points to Tristan Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s spherical reflection on the sociopolitical issues of their time and, as noted earlier, the coherence in their work as a whole. For instance, soon after Clã do Jabuti, in the travelogue O Turista Aprendiz that Mário de Andrade started writing in 1927 while travelling in the Northeast states of Brazil, he notes his surprise at the diversity of cultures there. At the same time he writes of his anxiety about his and his fellow travellers’ appearance; dressed as explorers, they are Brazilians but look and behave like colonisers. He writes, records and takes photographs and soon comes to talk about the mobility of traditions. In the state of Rio Grante do Norte he meets the coco singer and composer Chico Antônio who, in addition to reinforcing Mário’s interest in folk research, provided him with the inspiration for the novel Café that would later influence the opera of the same name. The polymath Mário writes with great admiration about the compositional and lyrical intelligence of Chico Antônio and his feelings of sadness when the singer has to depart. Chico sings farewell to Mário de Andrade with these verses: “Adeus sala! Adeus cadera! Adeus piano de tocá! Adeus tinta de iscrevê! Adeus papé de assentá!” (Andrade de, p.356) Mário questions who is leaving whom. The singer says goodbye to Mário’s portable piano, Chico does not need it as he has his own instruments, goodbye to the pen for writing and to the paper for taking notes. In the end, Mário de Andrade is left with his writing, which could be seen as either balsam, as a reminder of the coco songs, or a poison, since he might not have the opportunity to listen to the singer again.
In his article *La révélation de l’art africain par l’art moderne* (1933), Tristan Tzara affirms the need to criticise all ethnographical sciences for their assumptions about prehistoric people in the way that they examine contemporary autochthonous cultures. Tzara implies here that scientists of ethnology, ethnography etc., should not view themselves as archaeologists travelling in a time capsule. Tzara’s practice of copying or adapting native oral poems and then publishing them in Dada reviews or using them in Dada soirées constitutes a revolt against the ethnologists’ denial of their contemporaneity with autochthons. According to Tzara, the extraction of a contemporary native oral poem from a scientific review and its placement in a poetry review was justified exactly by the fact that it is a poem.

Throughout their careers the two poets continued to explore the question of what came first, melody or speech, and the relation of that issue to further sociocultural issues of egalitarianism. They saw in ethnopoetics not only alternative ways of expression but as a paradigm for resolving the conflicts in modern society.

Narratives of metamorphosis have fascinated audiences since antiquity. We encounter them in cultures all around the globe, from the myths of ancient Greece many of which survived in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, to African bush stories, Kabuki plays, Indian epic poetry and Native American legends. In Chapter Two, I have explored the allure of metamorphosis that led Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara to use it in their avant-garde prose. Metamorphosis is a device linked directly with identity transformation, or realisation, and with difference. On the one hand, Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara’s preoccupation with themes of identity can be associated with their own marginal positions and with the complexity of their own cultural situations. The metamorphoses of characters in their works *Personnage d’insomnie* and in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* are accompanied by comment on social change. The result of Macunaíma’s bath in the spring of St. Thomas, as he is about to leave the forest and go to the city, only causes a superficial change to him. The water makes his skin turn from black to white, an obvious comment on racial attitudes in Brazil at the time and which remain unaddressed. In *Personnage d’insomnie*, when the tailor has become something closer to the flora than the fauna and enters an abandoned bourgeois house, we are presented with a feeling that the material goods that once were so precious to him now fill him with sadness. In addition, both writers demonstrate the influence of Surrealism’s emphasis on the
unconscious and dreams. Nonetheless, I have discussed the significance in Tzara’s novelette of the replacement of dreaming with insomnia, the state between dreaming and being awake. Similarly, I talked about the Surrealist aspects of Macunaíma being closer to the elements of the African, and by extension Latin American, wonderful and magic narrative.

Equally, Macunaíma and Personnage d’insomnie have many intertextual elements, suggesting an attempt to balance the natural with the man-made. That is why Mário takes the figure of the trickster ‘Makunaima’ from Amazonian songs recorded by ethnologist Koch-Grünberg and creates a text that includes skyscrapers, lifts, phone booths and all kinds of modern technology. At the same time, animals talk with humans and shaman magic turns humans into machines. Tristan Tzara’s protagonist, “le divin tailleur”, is so absorbed by his work that he does not become aware of the arrival of spring. It is surprising how he remains concentrated on working his fabrics while outside his window so many changes are taking place. But a shift occurs in the narrator’s vocabulary from tailoring and fabric-cutting jargon, and it starts to blend with the terminology of botany: an omen of the upcoming metamorphosis of the tailor. I also indicated the association of Personnage d’insomnie with Yiddish folk songs about tailoring, and the celebration of Tu B’ Shevat in Judaism, the new year of the trees. We have also seen how the sacred approach to nature in Tzara’s story relates to Zera’im, the first “Order” of the Talmud, where respect of nature is considered fundamental for society’s harmony.

Mário was a musicologist by day, teaching piano and singing. At a time when other “modernistas” were talking about the revaluation of Brazilianism, often by focusing on the Native American element, he researched and used Afro-Brazilian myths and music. Some of Macunaíma’s metamorphoses are influenced by Afro-Brazilian culture more than that of indigenous tribes. I focused on the meaning that is attributed to the deity Exu in Mário’s novel, as well as the sacred language that, during the Macumba ritual, facilitates Exu’s appearance. The narrative in Macunaíma relies on Brazil’s syncretic religions and traditions. Apart from Exu, we have seen that the whole chapter “Macumba” was synthesised after consulting the musician Pixinguinha. At the same time we looked at how the Macumba and Canbomblé religions are derived from West African religions, mainly Yoruba, which was transmitted from Africa to Brazil relying completely on oral language. It is also
interesting to note that the language used by Afro-Brazilian priests in their religious ceremonies brings to mind verses of *L’Homme approximatif* by Tristan Tzara. A similar language, closer to verse than prose, is also used in the description of how the narrator handles the time of insomnia in the first chapter of *Personnage d’insomnie*. In Tzara’s story, “le divin tailleur” is in a state of continuous transformation: more and more branches emerge from his body and from the top of his head, and he starts craving roots. There is a difference between the consciousness of the protagonist when he is a tailor and when he is more like a tree. When metamorphosed, the tailor becomes paradoxically more human by means of his plant consciousness. He is no longer maniacally occupied with his work and he seeks a companion. Macunaíma on the other hand, after leaving the metropolis becomes highly materialistic, and he cannot retrieve his consciousness from where he physically left it. Each writer in his own way is exploring the relations between nature, the oral and social transformation.

Aspects of myths found in *Macunaíma* and in *Personnage d’insomnie* assist the integration, or at least its possibility, of human primeval instincts and the personality that modernity, in a broad sense, dictates. Elements of classical antiquity and Renaissance can also be found, such as Macunaíma’s emphasis on ancient Greek myths about the Amazon warriors; Béhar associates the tailor’s metamorphosis with that of Daphne’s; and Tzara himself alludes to Aretino. These intertextual allusions reinforce Tzara’s and Mário’s observations regarding continuity in narrative creation throughout the ages. Considering that the tailor becomes a tree-like creature that no longer has the ability to speak, and that the language of Macunaíma’s tribe becomes extinct apart from the one parrot that still speaks it, in the terms of their own fiction both these narratives had to be written down to be preserved. Both the Portuguese and the French texts prompt the reader to question the anatomy of the text, its ambivalent status as narrated in written or oral form. The unfixed, constantly changing nature of the “pharmakon” expresses exactly the nature of Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s prose. As I argue with reference to Gombrich’s emphasis on the the primitive, *Macunaíma*’s composition of African, indigenous and Portuguese elements, as well as the tailor-tree’s quest for a companion of its own kind and a place in which literally to be rooted in, both denote the need to belong.

The comparison of these two writers is based on more than their respective influences by autochthonous legends and the cycles of mythology; other
avant-garde artists and writers were influenced in the same way. The comparison is developed on the basis that the shared interests of these two writers in the exploration of the human condition avoid favouring either the model of the noble savage or the elitist scholar, or other similarly binary oppositions. The comparison allows constellations of concepts to morph and interrelate rhizomically. I use the word rhizome not only because it best describes the nature of the two prose texts compared in Chapter Two, but also to point out that these texts spawned ideas that were theorised only later, in the 1960s. Early in the twentieth century, in *Poèmes nègres* and in *Clã do Jabuti*, Tzara and Mário were already decentring the role of the author. Furthermore, in *Personnage d’insomnie*, apart from writing and memorisation, interpreted in the light of Derrida’s and Plato’s “pharmakon”, the indented ambiguity regarding who narrates what, as well as the elements of pastiche and intertextuality just mentioned, all allow “le rêve de l’humanité à branches” astonishingly to anticipate the transformation of people in Ionesco’s *Rhinocéros*, written nearly thirty years later. This also connects with my argument in Chapter Three, where I refer to the break of Tzara from the French Communist Party and Mário de Andrade’s disappointment with the Democratic Party in Brazil. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara’s opinions about art, society and politics were not only expressed in an abstract way. They both became committed poets and the events of their time were expressed in verse and sometimes in action as well. Tristan Tzara became an activist in the Spanish Civil War, a member of the French Resistance and later the French Communist Party. He was a spokesman for political movements in Eastern Europe, he petitioned for Algerian independence, and participated in the first International Congress of African Culture in Rhodesia in 1962. For Mário de Andrade the involvement in politics was never as active as it was for Tristan Tzara. But he voiced his political views through his work, with a particular interest in the injustices taking place in his country. After the disappointment of the First World War the Dadaists and the Modernists in Brazil believed that they could make a difference. For both groups the War was the disillusionment about the grandiosity of European culture. Then came the Second World War, which for Tristan Tzara meant having to move constantly around the French countryside hiding from the Gestapo, and for Mário meant he had to live by the rules of Getulio Vargas, the fascist leader of his country at the time. I have referred to the fact that Mário’s libretto for the opera *Café* was inspired by his unfinished novel of the same name and that

Tzara was influenced by his own poetry collections *Le Signe de vie* and *Terre sur terre* to create the play *La Fuite*. Both the unfinished novel *Café* and *La Fuite*, not fully analysed here, have in common the subject of enforced migrations.

In the poem “Pour Antonio Machado” from the poetry collection *Le signe de vie*, Tristan Tzara speaks about the Castilian pride that is never defeated, of the pride of the Spanish people who lost their lives fighting against the fascist regime. The poet is disturbed by the civil wars that preceded and followed the Second World War. However, the most striking element taken from the poetry collections *Terre sur terre* and *Le Signe de vie*, is the feeling of Tzara having to flee from the Gestapo. The poet wonders “où sommes-nous sur quelle terre voguent nos voiles?”. Poems in these collections present us with the unique experience of a Jewish citizen during WWII, quite different to the horrors of the Holocaust, but reflecting the disquiet and the fear that he is a potential victim. He remains isolated for long periods of time, but through his poetry we can see that he keeps faith in solidarity. These years meant not only the loss of loved ones, but also betrayals. However Tzara hopes that peace will come when the knowledge and recognition of humanity’s cultural roots prevails. Through the lack of direction created by the War, Tzara finds a shelter in those that resist, in Spain, in Greece, in Prague. It is important to point out that poems such as “Fluide” and “Exil” demonstrate even at this point a parallel with Tzara’s early preoccupations with ethnopoetics. The poet’s voice in these poems reveals the influence exercised on him by autochthonous poetry, characterised by intelligible verse and elemental vocabulary. Tzara revisits the knowledge he has acquired from his past research. However, if one is not aware of Tzara’s anti-Fascist activism before the War, or the fact that he was persecuted because he was Jewish, his poetry of the time, at first glance, might not reveal much. Memory is often treated as the poet’s own, even though at times there is a sense that he refers to a collective proto-human consciousness. In addition, I have discussed that in the poetry composed by Tzara during the War, nature is not only addressed as a source of hope but as a victim of human brutality, alluding once again to Talmudic discourse. Such issues are also touched upon by Mário in *Café*, when he mentions that trees are innocent and suffer from human actions during the Coffee Crisis.

Mário de Andrade started writing the opera *Café* in 1938 and completed it in 1942. It was an opera of collective interest, as he called it. I discussed Mário’s
anxiety when he first heard of the outbreak of WWII. Despite the fact that president Vargas was suppressing expressions of leftist ideology and was openly anti-Semitic, Brazil was officially sided with the Allies. However, as discussed in the thesis, what affected Brazilians more at the time was the Coffee Crisis, when the price of coffee, responsible for seventy per cent of Brazil’s foreign trade, began to drop even before the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. Once again, the working class was the one that suffered the most. Mário raises this aspect in Café when he shows the impact of the Coffee Crisis upon the workers that were immobilised during the crisis, and as a result could no longer meet their basic needs. In addition, I have shown that Mário’s opera addresses the colour-class continuum that characterise racial attitudes in Brazilian society of the time. The archives devoted to the dock workers of that time prove that most of them were of African descent, something that Mário confirms with multiple references in his text. Another reference to note is the action that takes place in the neighbourhood made up of “cortiços” towards the end of the opera. Mário satirises the elite of coffee plantations’ owners and deputies, and their empty words which fail to recognise their responsibility for the overproduction of coffee beans. On the other hand, the workers are pragmatic and blame the oligarchs’ greed. Apart from the subject-matter of the libretto, Mário creates a truly Brazilian opera because he incorporates many of his country’s folk music, verse-forms and dances. At the same time, he avoided calling his work an opera exactly because he wanted it to be a popular work, removed from the pre-conception that classical opera is the province of the elite.

In the piece, Mário sees no other solution to the workers’ struggle than revolution. Mário composes part of this Act depicting the workers’ revolt following the style of the traditional “congos” derived from the African slaves. After their victory, the workers sing that they are themselves the source of life. In his conception of the opera, Mário concluded that he wished to be a true artist speaking of the real problems of life, and apologises for any lack of action. Consequently, one can see why authoritarian regimes at times censored works by Mário de Andrade and Tristan Tzara. In 1940, the fascist dictator Ion Antonescu banned the works of Tristan Tzara from being published in Romania and a student staging of Café was censored in Brazil by the Dictatorship that seized power in the 1960s.
Tristan Tzara’s work and personality have been an intense interest of mine for a long time and I considered that they deserved further research and analysis. As a result, when I was introduced to Brazilian Modernism, the character and range of Mário de Andrade’s work appeared very attractive. My very first encounter with Tzara’s work had been the *Dada Manifestos* and with Mário de Andrade, his poetry collection *Paulicéia Desvairada*. Although these works already seemed interrelated, it was their later work and, it was their respective research into ethnopoetics and its universal application that prompted me to pair the two. My intention from the beginning was to look into Tzara’s cultural roots in relation to Mário de Andrade’s equally complex cultural background. I wanted to further explore Tristan Tzara’s and Mário de Andrade’s work through case studies that compare important elements in their work regarding oral and written language, the development of narrative through primordial sacred and cosmogony related tales, and last but not least their role as committed intellectuals. In particular, their utilisation of ethnopoetics led to a creative path where appreciation for non-Western cultures was followed by life-long sensitivity to cultural imperialism. At the same time, both writers employed innovative forms of expression derived from and contributing to the avant-garde movements of their time. Their research into and employment of autochthonous cultural elements shapes not only their militant poetics but also the idea that any avant-garde exists in interaction with previous cultural expressions.

The contribution of Tristan Tzara and Mário de Andrade to literature and discourse has universal applications. The relation of many of their works to the discipline of anthropology and ethnography can provide the basis for future research. In my thesis there are some references to the relation of the work of the two writers with Absurdism and the magic, yet I trust that there is potential for further research on the relation between these traditions in modern African literature and Mário’s and Tzara’s respective productions. Moreover, I believe that Tristan Tzara’s work can be further researched in the light of the development of Eastern European Yiddish theatre and literature. Perhaps there is also a relation to be explored between Mário de Andrade’s *O Café* and Cesare Beccaria’s review *Il Caffè*, in which the awakening properties of coffee are used to denote the awakening of the spirit by the Italian philosopher, in a similar manner in which the crisis in the coffee industry in Brazil fuelled the spirit of rebellion amongst the Brazilian coffee workers. This, in my view,
is an indication that Mário de Andrade’s works can be read in comparison to other European authors as well as Tzara.

Nonetheless, Mário de Andrade contributed to the formation of truly Brazilian poetics and literature that, long after his death, deeply influenced Brazilian artistic movements such as *Tropicalia* and *Cinema Novo*, which themselves went on to influence other artistic movements in Brazil and internationally. Similarly, Tristan Tzara’s poetry, theatre and essays paved the way for elemental verse and the theatre of the Absurd, even if his contribution is often unnoticed.

I hope that this study has helped in presenting a re-evaluation of two great literary minds of the twentieth century, shaping their own unique outputs as well as the trajectory of Modernism.
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