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ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

## ONCE AGAIN THE CITY THAT I LOVED

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### **Once Again the City that I Loved**

#### **Synopsis:**

There is no denying the fact that city and literature keep a very close relationship. The very great changes that have been brought about by modernism require the “individual’s environmental skills in order to adopt the new way of urban life. As it has been explained by Payne the rise of the city encompasses a very huge “perceptual shift”. Talking about Mário de Andrade and his relationship with São Paulo, it is necessary to keep in mind that São Paulo for him is more than a mere geographic concept, by way of explanation, it is the incarnation of Bellow’s opinion for whom the city is a human experience.

The city speaks to its inhabitants,  
 we speak our city, the city where we are,  
 simply by living in it, by wandering through it,  
 by looking at it.

Roland Barthes

### Once Again the City that I Loved <sup>1</sup>

The very dynamic culture of city, full of diverse ideologies as well as contradictory coexistence, gives rise to the modern arts. All this goes to prove the concept of “place-identity” and consequently “urban-identity” developed for the first time by Proshansky. His intention is to suggest theoretical connections between self-identity and the cognition about the physical world (Proshansky et al 59). The urban identity that will be treated as a crucial dimension within the space of this manuscript is explained in terms of the city and I: “association between the array of physical settings and the complex pathways that connect them which constitute an individual’s conception of the city, with his definition of “who I am” (Proshansky et al 78).

The very tremendous changes that have been brought about by modernism require the “individual’s environmental skills” (Proshansky et al. 78) in order to adopt the new way of urban life. To gloss Payne, the rise of the city encompasses a very huge “perceptual shift” (Payne 101) and from now on “we can no longer look at the world with pre-city eyes” (Payne 101). Talking about Mário de Andrade and his relationship with São Paulo, it is necessary to keep in mind his social role as a poet and actually a modernist poet, his beliefs and the way in which he perceives the new modern São Paulo: the city that will constitute

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<sup>1</sup> The title of a very famous Persian novel by Nader Ebrahimi

his place-identity. São Paulo for him is no longer a merely geographical concept rather it is seen as the incarnation of Bellow's opinion for whom the city is a human experience (64). Henceforth, Mário de Andrade's São Paulo is an experience "to be lived, suffered, undergone" (Preston 2), a body composed of numerous lives, deaths and loves that are mapped alongside with the geographical descriptions of it. Similar to Julien Gracq<sup>2</sup> and his Nantes, São Paulo has "shaped" or "reshaped" a poet called Mário de Andrade for whom all the streets and boulevards of São Paulo have a very specific meaning. My argument is that the city, São Paulo, in *Paulicéia Desvairada* has been presented as a cannibalistic harlequin with a very big mouth and this is the fantasy of Mário de Andrade who wants all the utopias in this anthropophagic town. So, the fantasy and imaginations of the poet go far behind the reality full of pain and this is the harlequin who makes the poet to hallucinate about his city.

The new São Paulo affected by the waves of migration as well as the era of technology is a new cosmopolitan similar to the harlequin figure and his costume made up by too many different pieces of clothing. This is the São Paulo of 1920 onwards. A very "multifaceted city" (Suarez and Tomlines 52), immersed in Parisian perfumes and Russian ballets, makes São Paulo a fragmented city which does not have a fixed character like *Macunaíma*, the first novel of de Andrade. By the same token, the motley São Paulo makes Mário de Andrade confused, because, he faces not with just a city, but the accumulation of multiple cities in a harlequin style. This is the first impact of a place called São Paulo on

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<sup>2</sup> In his very touching book *The Shape of a City* he explores how Nantes shapes him: "... how Nantes has shaped me, that is to say, both promoted and forced me to look at the world through a prism which distorted my vision, a world just talking form in my imagination... I have reshaped it to fit the contours of my secret dreams, breathed life into it according to the laws of desire rather than those of objectivity" (7).

Mário de Andrade who is living in a cultural mestizo and “bricolage” form of art and urban style life in terms of Claude Lévi-Strauss<sup>3</sup>. The body of harlequin, symbolizing the body of São Paulo, envisages the contradictions like Brighton of Elizabeth Wilson that is “a cultural sponge that soaks up the contemporary experiences” (37). The dual images used by de Andrade in order to describe the city show the dichotomy of his feelings toward this city. With attention to juxtaposition of harlequin figure and his partner, clown in the poem “Inspiration”, it seems that this city is not just one city:

São Paulo! tumult of my life ...  
 My loves are flowers made from the original...  
 Harlequinade!... Diamond tights...Gray and gold...  
 Light and mist...Oven and warm winter...  
 Subtle refinements without scandals, without jealousy...  
 Perfumes from Paris...Arys!  
 Lyrical slaps in the Trianon... Cotton field!...  
 São Paulo! tumult of my life...  
 Gallicism crying in the wildness of America!

São Paulo is the nightmare, and at the same time, the source of inspiration of the poet in this collection, as though São Paulo is the reason of life and suffering. Thus, from the very first poem, it is clear that Mário de Andrade has a dualistic as well as contradictory relationship with the city. So, it seems that the city of São Paulo, same as many other modern cities would prefer to be like the city founded by Theseus, but it ends up being like Cain’s city<sup>4</sup>. As can be seen Mário de Andrade loves São Paulo and there is a romantic love that at the same time is the reason of the hallucinations of the poet; a relationship that is

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<sup>3</sup> . Based on Lévi-Strauss the “nature” is “universal, spontaneous, and not dependent on a particular (Payne 79).

<sup>4</sup> . In the ancient world there were two originators for cities: one of them Theseus with a very “organized and coherent city” and the other one the cursed Cain with his city full of “aliens, vagrants, anonymity, and randomness” (Payne 99-100).

interpreted as the oscillation “between acceptance of modern-civilization and nostalgic rejection of it” by Perrone (21).

The figure of harlequin has been originally treated as a primordial personage in Italian *Commedia dell'arte*. Harlequin with his magic scepter changes everything and precisely it is the same magical power, embodied in the body of the city that transmutes Mário de Andrade into the state of hallucination. For this reason, rather than calling São Paulo as the muse of Mário de Andrade’s poems, I would like to state that the harlequin city is making the poet to hallucinate about the city and his desires. The old São Paulo of Mário de Andrade is gone like the old Paris of Baudelaire<sup>5</sup>. All that is left for Baudelaire is “melancholy mood” (Baudelaire 175) and for de Andrade “Sadness”. In this state, Baudelaire tries to keep his “dear memories which are heavier than stone” (Baudelaire 175) and de Andrade is starting to fantasize. Now, the poet is in front of the cannibalistic harlequin city as if it wants to eat its own habitants: The city of São Paulo, which is supposed to be the dream city of Mário de Andrade, has been converted into a huge monster, fed with bourgeois class.

I insult the bourgeois! The money-grabbing bourgeois,  
the bourgeois- bourgeois!  
The well-made digestion of São Paulo!  
The man-belly! The man-buttocks!  
The man who being French, Brazilian, Italian,  
is always a cautious little take-your-time!

The poem “Ode to the Bourgeois Gentleman” at the same time is a really explicit satire and criticism of bourgeois that is making fatter the monster of city, that is to say, the process of dehumanization of the city is clearly evident in the form of describing it and this

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<sup>5</sup> Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory, /As I walked across the new Carrousel./— Old Paris is no more (the form of a city/Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart)

is what John Wirth has termed the process of “transition from a society of ‘estates’ (sociedade estamental) to a society of classes, creating a bourgeois revolution” (25). This harlequin city is preoccupied with its digestion and savage consumption. The city would surely be a better place to live in if it does not need to build more and more jails to preserve its civilization:

A St. Bobo goes by, singing beneath the plantain trees,  
a tra la la... The city police! Jail!  
Are jails necessary  
to preserve civilization?

As I see it, the dehumanized São Paulo is hunting its habitants, due to that the newspapers are full of crimes. The city is fed with the blood and poets, among them, Mário de Andrade are lost in this city:

The 100-degrees of wealth. The wind freezes...  
Desertions! Pallid ideals!  
Lost are poets, youths, lunatics!  
No wings whatsoever! no poetry whatsoever! no joy whatsoever!  
The mist snows... Harlequinate!  
But long live the Ideal! God save poetry!

To give an illustration of what I said, let’s look at the definition of desire and fantasy by Jacques Lacan. Based on Lacan, there is a really stretch relationship between unconscious desire and lost fantasized object. To put it in another way, fantasy has the elements of unconsciousness and is deemed necessary to cover up a reality full of pain. As Lacan puts it, the experience of the reality is in tune with the horror. Moreover, fantasy is a desire for wholeness, hence, Mário de Andrade in his fantasmatic landscape, is hallucinating or desiring all the possible utopias in his São Paulo. If the real São Paulo with his big mouth and teeth is eating his dreams, so the space of that lost dream and aching tears would be sutured with the fantasy of a big whole from Europe; from Paris to Persia,

Babylon and Turkestan likewise the Paris of Baudelaire which is “full of dreams” (177). In fact the city is imposing his authority on the poet. As a consequence, the space of city is changed to the space of dreams in the hallucination phase. Given the centrality of hallucination and dream in my study, I believe that the dream is “reproducing” the reality. In other words, Mário de Andrade’s dream gathers all the cities of the world in São Paulo and in this way the power of “dreamed” São Paulo will defeat the “real” São Paulo which is full of *agitating absences!* (“The Processions”); absences of all what Mário de Andrade is seeking to find in his São Paulo. This horrid city is full of absences; the absence of “Paris”, of “Persia”, of “Orient” and a whole. The desired city of Mário de Andrade is not made of flesh and blood; therefore it cannot be “presented” in front of his eyes. Hence, his city is going to be “represented” in his fantasy or his unconsciousness. The hallucinated Brazilian poet is making an image of the Babylon of his desired city, so he is making his own São Paulo (“Colloque Sentimental”). Above all, it seems pertinent to remember how fragmented are both the “city of flesh and blood” and the “desired city” of Mário de Andrade.

Around the Avenue. Trolley 3.  
 Asphalts. Vast, high fountains of dust  
 beneath the harlequinade of the sky gold-pink-green...  
 The intricate ordures of urbanism.  
 Manueline fillets. Baldnesses of Pennsylvania.  
 Outcries of Gothicism.  
 Ahead the sprinkles,  
 where a sorcerer sun in shattered  
 in a Persian triumph of emeralds, topazes and rubies...

It seems reasonable to assume that the São Paulo of Mário de Andrade is a “repetition” of the “real ambiguous São Paulo”. To focus more on the relationship between these two São Paulo let’s use the analytic lens of Gill Deleuze and his definition:

Relations are exterior to their terms. ‘Peter is smaller than Paul’, ‘The glass is on the table’: relation is neither internal to one of the terms which would consequently be



subject, nor to two together. Moreover, a relation may change without the terms changing...Relations are in the middle and exist as such. This exteriority of relations is not a principle, it is a vital protest against principles... If one takes the exteriority of relations as a conducting wire or as a line, one sees a very strange world unfold, fragment by fragment: a Harlequin's jacket or patchwork, made up of solid parts and voids, blocs and ruptures, attractions and divisions, nuances and bluntnesses, conjunctions and separations, alternations and interweavings, additions which never reach a total and subtractions whose remainder is never fixed ( Deleuze in *Taking-Place: Non-representational Theories and Geography* 15)

We can see Andrade's work through Deleuze as a repeated re-creation of São Paulo through the process of conceiving relations with various sights. In better words, São Paulo is not an identity per se, but a collection of apparently unconnected experiences. When these unrelated experiences are related to each other externally, when the image of migration, different classes as well as the city's weather are related together, we can feel a city called São Paulo in the modern era. The lenses through which Mário de Andrade is connecting his sensation are quiet vast (from Turkestan to Paris, London and everywhere) and fragmented like a "harlequin's jacket" (Deleuze). This harlequin at the same time is driving de Andrade to the state of hallucination. The formed relations, when Mário de Andrade is hallucinating, create new intensities through which São Paulo is made-anew and is virtualizing the desire of the Brazilian poet.

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