Brazilian Transcreation and World Literature

Macunaíma *Journeys from São Paulo to Caracas*

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Abstract

How does one translate an avant-garde classic? How might a translation mediate between experimentalism and canonicity as a work travels away from its culture of origin? This article studies Héctor Olea's Spanish translation of Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1928) as one response to these questions from a Latin American translation zone. First translated for the Barcelona publishing house Seix Barral (1977), his work soon traveled back across the Atlantic to be re-edited into a critical edition for Biblioteca Ayacucho (1979). This article examines letters from the publisher's archive to demonstrate that debates over the novel as avant-garde art, literary ethnography, or Brazilian national allegory influenced their views on translation. By including two incompatible translation approaches—transcreation and thick translation—the volume reveals an unresolved paradoxical treatment of cultural hybridity at the heart of the text.

Keywords

Macunaíma – Mário de Andrade – Héctor Olea – untranslatables – transcreation – Biblioteca Ayacucho

How should an avant-garde classic be translated? How might a translation mediate between experimentalism and canonicity? *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter* (*Macunaíma: the hero without any character*) (1928) by Mário de Andrade (1893–1945) is a central text of the avant-garde movement known as Brazilian *modernismo*. Borrowing stories and narrative techniques from indigenous cultures and European avant-gardes, this novel provokes debate about the placement of indigenous and European cultural forms in Brazilian cul-

ture. Haroldo de Campos relates the structure of *Macunaíma* to the cannibal as a national allegory of Brazilian cultural production as elaborated by Mário's contemporary Oswald de Andrade. Gilda de Mello e Souza understands the work as a melancholic critique expressing the mutability of human nature and the impossibility of finding a stable self. Despite their divergent analyses, both Brazilian scholars act as "agents" in the publication of the Spanish translation of *Macunaíma* by Mexican poet Héctor Olea. First packaged as an artful "transcreation" by the Spanish publishing house Seix Barral (1977), the re-edition of the same translation by the Biblioteca Ayacucho in Venezuela (1979) adds an extensive critical apparatus that responds to the tension between interpretations. Letters from the Biblioteca Ayacucho archive demonstrate that the Spanish translation was also influenced by debates over the novel as avant-garde art, literary ethnography, or Brazilian national allegory. I focus on their contested treatment of "untranslatable" elements.¹ By including two incompatible translation approaches—transcreation and thick translation—the Ayacucho edition remains consistent with these debates and with the unresolved paradoxical treatment of cultural hybridity at the heart of the text.

Macunaíma between Transcreation and Thick Translation

As it travels from São Paulo to Barcelona to Caracas, the agents of the Spanish translation also negotiate between two seemingly incompatible methods: transcreation and thick translation. Olea studied with Brazilian scholar, poet, and translator Haroldo de Campos, and he labels his translation a "transcreation," a term coined by Campos. A transcreation is a translation that prioritizes the preservation of aesthetic information and considers other kinds of information—semantic and documentary—merely incidental.² I contrast

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- 1 Emily Apter draws from the "construct of the Untranslatable" in Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (Apter *Against* 31). Untranslatables include "[w]ords that assign new meanings to old terms, neologisms, names for ideas that are continually re-translated or mistranslated, translations that are obviously incommensurate (as in the use of *esprit* for 'mind' or *Geist*), these are amongst the most salient symptoms of the genuine Untranslatable" (35). Olea labels a Brazilian idiom "untranslatable" when defending his recreation of the phrase in Spanish.
 - 2 "[E]very translation of a creative text will always be a 're-creation,' a parallel and autonomous, although reciprocal, translation—'transcreation.' The more intricate the text is, the more seducing it is to 're-create' it. ... [T]he semantic parameter becomes just a kind of boundary marker for the 're-creative' enterprise. We are, then, at the opposite end of the 'spectrum'

transcreation with “thick translation,” defined by Kwame Anthony Appiah as a tool appropriate to the politics of translation in a postcolonial setting.³ He locates the need for thick translation within academic institutions and pedagogical contexts where “what counts as a fine translation of a literary text—which is to say a taught text—is that it should preserve for us the features that make it worth teaching” (426). He argues that glosses and contextual information best support decolonial pedagogy when they make up for the information deficit created by power imbalances between source and target cultures. In thick translation, Appiah imagines a political utility for translation similar to that pursued by Uruguayan intellectual Ángel Rama at the Biblioteca Ayacucho: a pedagogically-minded translation can promote intercultural competence and combat racial or ethnic stereotypes in the target culture. Producing a thick translation that responds to these concerns necessitates including contextual information beyond the norms of a critical edition.

The two editions measure the distance between transcreation and thick translation as “translation manuals.” Language philosopher Willard Quine posits a principle of the “indeterminacy of translation” in which there can be an infinite number of “translation manuals” that produce equally consistent and logical translations, which nevertheless are entirely disparate from one another.⁴ Working from Quine’s insight, Efraín Kristal understands these “translation manuals” as the set of written or unwritten guidelines a publisher, grant institution, or translator may impose on the process (37–9). Olea transcreates Andrade’s process of combining colloquial language from regions throughout Brazil. In doing so, Olea draws from the broadest possible lexicon of Spanish-American vocabularies and interpolates cultural details from indigenous and Afro-Latino communities. He rewrites Andrade as often as he translates the words on the page. The Seix Barral edition presents his work unmarked by explanations, and Olea defines his logic and methods of transcreation in a “Posfacio.”⁵ When Rama purchases the rights to Olea’s translation

from the so-called literal (or servile) translation” (Campos, *Novas* 315–6). Campos takes these information types from German semiotician Max Bense.

- 3 Appiah takes his term from anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s notion of “thick description.” He focuses on English translations of African oral literatures and the context necessary to understand culturally situated proverbs in Twi.
- 4 “[R]ival systems of analytical hypotheses can conform to all speech dispositions within each of the languages concerned and yet dictate, in countless cases, utterly disparate translations; not mere mutual paraphrases, but translations each of which would be excluded by the other system” (Quine 73–4).
- 5 The title of this afterword is the first of many loan-words and portmanteaus Olea invents,

from Seix Barral, the text receives different treatment when he incorporates it into the Biblioteca Ayacucho Colección Clásica, a project the Venezuelan government sponsors. Following Rama's direction, the Mário de Andrade volume editor Souza adds explanatory notes that refer back to Andrade's many sources. Reading letters exchanged among these "agents of translation"⁶ in the publishing house archive demonstrates the incompatibility between these two translation manuals from the perspective of those participating in the process. The resulting volume includes slippages that draw attention to the simultaneous use of two incompatible translation manuals. Combining creative recreation with culturally situated explanation puts into practice what Emily Apter calls a "'worlded' minoritarian comparatism" in the specific Latin American "translation zone" (Apter *Translation* 45). Apter understands the "translation zone" as sites that are "in-translation" but also "theaters of war" (6). I view Latin American translation zones as those spaces where indigenous and African languages enrich Portuguese and Spanish, but which also carry in language the memory of the violent coloniality that produced these linguistic mixtures. The varied translation values held even by scholars with shared ideological goals highlight the paradox at the center of the source text: *Macunaíma* performs cultural mixture as a simultaneously celebratory and melancholy act.

The novel follows Macunaíma on an ambivalent journey from his home in the Amazon through São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and back. He succeeds in his quest to recover a powerful amulet stolen by his antagonist, the cannibal giant and Peruvian-Italian merchant collector Piaimã Venceslau Pietro Pietra—but he loses it again. Trickster hero Macunaíma acquires new regional idioms and habits through contact with new communities. Yet he ultimately fails to gain any stable character or retain any material gains. I follow Alfredo Cesar Melo in understanding this paradox as central to the text, as he writes in "Macunaíma: Between Critique and Praise of Transculturation."⁷ The journey of

both in this essay and in his transcreation. "Posfacio" is not a word in Spanish as an antonym of "Prefacio" or "Preface." With these stylistic devices, Olea writes in a fertile mixture of invented words, words in other Latinate languages, representations of informal speech and the attendant changes to orthography, and etc.

- 6 In *Agents of Translation*, John Milton and Paul Bandia propose that "agents of translation are much more than gate-keepers" (10). Instead of focusing on the intentional, they incorporate unintentional consequences and the "casual and personal way in which ideas gain currency" (12).
- 7 "The novel contains elements that elevate Brazilian hybridity and at the same time critically examines the aims of anthropofagic appropriations and suggests another type of hybridism for Brazilian culture, which I call subaltern, which valorizes cultural exchanges between

Macunaíma—both the character and the book—shines through the Ayacucho edition as a series of exuberant and yet failed translations, a celebration of cultural hybridity and contact that also critiques assimilation.

Macunaíma Becomes World Literature

My analysis focuses on *Macunaíma*'s journey from São Paulo through Barcelona to land in Caracas as a newly consecrated Latin American classic in Spanish.⁸ However, the work has a longer history in becoming World Literature in the two-step process defined by David Damrosch: "first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin" (*What* 6). Andrade completed the first step when he rewrote indigenous legends collected by German ethnographer Theodor Koch-Grünberg. In *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco: Ergebnisse einer Reise in der Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911–1913* (published 1916–1924), Koch-Grünberg collected stories from indigenous cultures including the Taulipangue and Arecuná along the river Orinoco that runs through Venezuela and the state of Roraima in northern Brazil. Not the first to record or repurpose these legends, Andrade critiqued English missionaries for naming the Christian God "Macunaíma" when translating their bible into the indigenous language (Campos, "Prólogo" 13). Giving the first *literary* treatment to the story of Macunaíma and his brothers, Andrade develops a style of creative orality and weaves stories together in what Campos calls a "mosaic," an "archifábula, una fábula ómnibus" (15).⁹ Kimberle López provides a complete discussion of Brazil-

countries of the Southern Hemisphere" (Melo 205). This translation is mine, as are all the following unless otherwise indicated.

- 8 Not the first to translate *Macunaíma*, Olea succeeded in incorporating his transcreation into another literary system. Prior translations include the Italian by Giuliana Segre Giorgi (1970) and the French by Jacques Thiérot (1975). Margaret Richardson Hollingsworth translated several chapters into English during Andrade's lifetime, but she did not complete or publish her translation. The Argentine artist Carybé produced a Spanish translation along with illustrations; his images appeared in an illustrated Portuguese edition in 1957, but his translation remains unpublished to my knowledge, despite mention of a possible Argentine edition (Lopez 407–9). Andrade describes reviewing Carybé's translation manuscript months before his death in 1945 ("Em cartas" 280–5). Unfortunately, colonialist ideology mars the English translation by E.A. Goodland (1984), where words like "devilish" characterize Afro-Brazilian cultural forms, which are celebrated in the source text, not demonized (Braz 190).
- 9 Campos builds on *Morphology of the Folktale* by Russian formalist Vladimir Propp: the "proto-fable" elements of fairytales obey a "law of transferability," serving the same function in

ian *modernismo* as a movement responding to European avant-garde Primitivism. She concludes that the cosmopolitan authors of *modernismo*, while Brazilian, viewed indigenous cultures with the same “imperial eyes” as European authors (Mary Louise Pratt qtd. in López 35).¹⁰ Conversely, José Luiz Passos connects the novel to a Brazilian narrative tradition, using *Macunaíma* to identify a series of central tenets in its precursors: the *malandro* or trouble-maker protagonist, the centrality of racial mixture, and morbid irony. “[A]fter Mário de Andrade, Manuel Antônio de Almeida, José de Alencar, and Machado de Assis can be read in a Macunaimac way” (19). Passos demonstrates that, while the work’s structure may be borrowed, the character formation Andrade applies to *Macunaíma* is Brazilian beyond a reappropriation of the Primitive exotic.

Macunaíma in Brazil: An Ambivalent National Allegory

The Brazilian literary field continues to debate *Macunaíma* and its representation of Brazilian modes of cultural hybridity. The divergent views of poet-scholar Haroldo de Campos¹¹ and critic Gilda de Mello e Souza¹² capture the debate.¹³ Campos centers his interpretation on the cannibalistic metaphor from the “Manifesto Antropófago” (1928) by Oswald de Andrade. Oswald declared cannibalism to be Brazil’s major cultural contribution, reframing the indigenous practice of honoring the enemy through ritually consuming and

multiple stories. For Campos, Andrade’s artistic achievement lies in his elaboration of an “arch-fable” in which elements of indigenous legends maintain their function but are put together in a larger mosaic. “[Andrade] could creatively play with the *variable* elements on the basis of the schema. In this way, he produced a synthesis, an amalgam, a mosaic-tale” (“Prólogo” 16).

- 10 López asks “whether, in his cannibalistic appropriation of material from Koch-Grünberg, Andrade can avoid adopting the same sort of ethnographic authority ... [given that he] made his own ethnographic journey, from May to July of 1927, in the middle of the period when he was writing *Macunaíma*” (32).
- 11 With his brother Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari, he founded the “Noigandres” group in 1952, launching Concretismo, a poetic movement of international impact on visual poetry.
- 12 Married to sociologist Antonio Candido, Souza tends to be associated with his Marxist school of thought.
- 13 For Melo, both sides of this debate fail to accept that “it is more productive to extract critical developments from ambivalence than to attempt to resolve [the ambivalence] by eliminating one of its dimensions” (217).

absorbing their body into one's own as an aesthetic practice of creative destruction. Mário de Andrade published a chapter of *Macunaíma* in *Revista Antropofágica*, the central magazine of the cannibal phase of Brazilian *modernismo*. While the author claimed he did not intend *Macunaíma* as a cannibalistic or allegorical work, the reception has understood it as both.

Souza counters Campos's description of the work as a "mosaic," instead labeling it *bricolage* as defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss. She understands the combination of elements as functional rather than aesthetic because of similarities between Andrade's research in musicology and the composition of *Macunaíma*. In fact, Andrade subtitled his work *Uma rapsódia* (A Rhapsody). Emphasizing its European heritage, Souza demonstrates that the piece borrows structurally from Portuguese music and novels of chivalry (*caballerías*) and the picaresque ("Prólogo," xli). Adopting a psychoanalytic approach, her analysis relies on interpreting the ending as melancholic. When the character Macunaíma abandons Brazil, she views this ending as a satirical comment on an inability to construct the right national "mask" rather than a celebration of a national cannibalism and conflagration of past influences. Countering Campos's reading of *Macunaíma* as "an affirmative, anthropological book" (xlviii), she also negates Olea's translation.¹⁴ Instead, she views the work as a pessimistic, ambivalent representation of an indeterminate Brazilian identity. Even when she questions nationalistic readings of the novel—citing the author's pride at borrowing from multiple geographies—she does not explore the Venezuelan connection.

One cannot say that the protagonist of this book, whom I extracted from the work of the German Koch Grünberg, could be the Brazilian Nation. He is as Venezuelan as he is ours, if not more, so ignorant of the stupidity of borders that he wanders into the "land of the English" as Macunaíma calls British Guiana. The fact that the protagonist may not be absolutely Brazilian pleases me greatly.

ANDRADE qtd. in SOUZA, "Prólogo" xxii

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- 14 "In spite of the author's warnings (which in this case correspond with what objective analysis demonstrates) *Macunaíma* was considered—and continues to be today—an affirmative, anthropological book, in other words, as an avid, acritical incorporation of European values by Brazilian culture. The reading I proposed departed from this triumphant interpretation to revisit the pessimistic indications of Mário de Andrade, according to which the work is ambivalent, indeterminate, and more of an open, cloudy field for debate than the definitive mark of truth" (Souza, "Prólogo" xlviii).

Souza shows her awareness of the author's borderless vision of South American culture as visible through the character Macunaíma. Yet she cites the author to counter the *positive* nationalist reading, instead of refuting the conflation of the character with Brazil. Focusing on Andrade musicological research misses the chance to highlight the transcreation as fulfilling the hope Andrade expresses that he could depict Orinoco delta culture as more valuable and coherent than arbitrary borders between Venezuela, British Guiana, and Brazil, or between Spanish, English, and Portuguese.

Reading Biblioteca Ayacucho's Archives as a "Translation Manual"

Archival records of translators and publishers prove fertile ground for scholarship applying Translation Studies to World Literatures. During a visit to the Biblioteca Ayacucho offices in July 2013, I read folders of correspondence exchanged during the editorial process for the critical edition of Mário de Andrade's *Obra escogida*.¹⁵ The values and priorities expressed by the participants in this bilingual conversation—along with the timing of information and allocation of financial resources—all contribute to a picture of the publishing house's formal and informal "translation manual" at that time. Their archive includes documents and correspondence from the conception of a project to sending approved proofs to the printer, though not the proofs themselves. The "translation manual" evident from the ample material available includes the costs of translation, legal considerations about copyrights, concerns about the readability of Brazilian literature, the varied statuses accorded different editors and translators, and a desire to display a set of discernable parallels with Spanish-American culture. Rama does not want the Latin American canon to be formed under a "World Literature" rubric framed by academics outside of Latin America. He takes concrete steps to enact a self-determining "translation zone" within Latin America, inviting scholars and translators from Brazil and Spanish-America to participate. The first Spanish publication framed the novel, perhaps falsely, as a stand-alone avant-garde art object, extracted from its context. This edition presents the reader with a transparent translation, smooth, complex, and uninterrupted by explanations. All commentary is confined to the "Prólogo" by Campos and the "Posfacio" in which Olea discusses

15 Many thanks to editors Shirley Fernández and Elizabeth Coronado for their warm welcome and to Jessica Gordon-Burroughs for introducing me to the Biblioteca Ayacucho editorial team and the valuable resources in their archives.

his translation methods. The Venezuelan edition presents a fuller picture of the challenges inherent in translating, or even merely reading the work. If a work of World Literature must circulate and also become a part of a new literary system outside its source culture, the Ayacucho *Macunaíma* does so more than the Seix Barral edition by provoking debate amongst the agents of translation involved.¹⁶

Héctor Olea's Spanish-American *Macunaíma*: Tactics of Transcreation

Olea asserts that translating this Brazilian work into Spanish-American idioms represents new myth-making; he describes his de-territorialized Spanish as an artistic act promoting a shared cultural imaginary in the Americas. Quoting Argentine poet Enrique Molina, "America is a mirror that invents itself" ("Posfacio" 241), he claims:

Assimilating the *homo brasílicus* into ourselves is an attempt to ritualize the American myth. To reflect on our own reflection. To reveal and redeem priceless traditions so that they may be seen by everyone. To identify a utopia we have in common in a pluralistic language that rediscovers its own transplant.

241; emphasis in original

Referring to Campos, who prioritizes "aesthetic information" in translation (244), Olea outlines the tactics he deploys to transcreate *Macunaíma*. Much like Souza, he justifies his treatment of the work by citing the author, defining a "supertranslation" as one that "captures the 'dynamogenesis of the original'" (Andrade qtd. in Olea, "Posfacio" 244). Olea's transcreation strategies include: linguistic recreation of orality by transferring phonemes or deforming words through apheresis, interpolation of Spanish-American expressions or folkloric details, inventing new portmanteaus, "desgeografización" or geographic dis-

16 "[Claudio] Guillén's cautionary focus on actual readers makes good sense: a work only has an *effective* life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within another literary system beyond that of its original culture" (Damrosch, "Where" 212; emphasis in original). Damrosch asks if this higher bar for World Literature represents a return to the national. In the case of *Macunaíma* at Ayacucho, I contend that the re-orientation was around Pan-Latin Americanism. Returning the work to Venezuela in Spanish was more true to its ambivalent Brazilianism than the first Spanish edition.

placement, rewriting wordplay, transferring idioms from Spanish-American dialects, and stretching Spanish syntax to create a mood of oral speech—just as Andrade stretched Portuguese. To achieve the effect of geographic dislocation, Olea points out his use of Spanish diction marked by the gaucho culture that straddles both sides of the Brazilian and Argentine border (250). He also includes various names for flora and fauna to expand regional associations. For example, after researching manioc and popcorn, two widely adopted staples of Amerindian food culture, he places different names for the same root or grain in different parts of the work (255). Olea “avoid[s] the interference of explanatory notes” with these techniques (244). He freely invents or combines words, or alters orthography, all to recreate effects rather than translating for information, because many of these stylistic details have “scant functional meaning” (244). Olea draws on another concept from Campos: translation as a “laboratory of texts,” a vision of teams of poets, translators, and linguists, crafting translations together and granting all versions equal status (*Novas* 325). To apply this concept, Olea checked his draft against the French translation, not just the source text (248). Creating his own neologism for his process, he calls it “Tradiducing: deducing the tradition. Reinventing patience, slow-paced things” (245). In Spanish “Tradecir: deducir la tradición,” the words “decir” [to say] and “traducción” [translation] also echo in Olea’s portmanteau.

Seix Barral and Haroldo de Campos Frame *Macunaíma* as *Antropofagia*

Olea adheres to the poetic, experimental, and cannibalistic sides of *Macunaíma*—simply put, he remains faithful to Andrade’s work as a practice, as an elaboration of ideas rather than a completed whole. He creates a translation that draws on connections between literary traditions: “*Reconstruction and restoration* of oral or popular literature are constants in the work of the modernist writer [Andrade]. His ethnographic and musicological studies are faithful demonstrations of his interest in *mobile or movable traditions*” (245; emphasis in original). Olea treats the source text as a series of experimental representations of oral speech in written text, representations he recreates in Spanish.¹⁷ He emphasizes the indigenous, Afro-diasporic, oral, and profane ele-

17 Heloisa Costa Milton characterizes his translation as an “homage to the Brazilian writer [that] activates a circuit which reaches at least two poles in two directions: Brazilian and Spanish-American narrative in their possibilities of dialogue” (69). Her comparison

ments of the novel, molding a poetic trajectory and tradition in a particular way. Privileging these aesthetic elements, he uses “untranslatables” as points of contact between Brazil and Spanish-America. Márcia Moura da Silva focuses her linguistic analysis on Olea’s treatment of indigenous terms. She finds that his translation displays loyalty and respect for the Tupi linguistic interpolations. In her evaluation, his translation manages to avoid some of the pitfalls of respect or norms of fidelity the translator will often have for the author precisely because Olea chooses Tupi words as his object of reverence. Moura da Silva posits that Olea gave himself freedom to intervene into the work because he prioritized creating a convincing transcreation of indigenous characteristics (122). Doing so without explanatory footnotes, Olea turns the original into a practice that he repeats in order to demonstrate the underlying connections between the Brazilian and Spanish-American cultures in their shared incorporation of indigenous cultures. Concluding his “Posfácio,” Olea refutes the commonplace that translation is always a loss. Instead, he imagines that his translation responds to a “subterranean internal grammar” (259). He envisions a mystical, messianic connection among indigenous languages of the Americas—a connection that can be tapped into even in the present-day, even through the colonial languages of Spanish and Portuguese.

Biblioteca Ayacucho and Ángel Rama Frame *Macunaíma* as Decolonial

At Biblioteca Ayacucho, Rama sought to re-center a literary canon from a pan-Latin American perspective, and his communications with those involved in the “Colección Clásica” reflect his priorities. In his 1981 essay “Biblioteca Ayacucho as an Instrument of Latin American Cultural Integration,” Rama writes that his publishing goals represent a “struggle against fragmentation and lack of communication that has lasted for centuries” (80–81). I understand his project as decolonial because Rama attributes the isolation of Latin American cultural producers to the colonial legacies and neoliberal realities of their countries and institutions:

[S]ince the origins of Latin America, everything has conspired against internal communication and the development of a common cultural

of Olea’s Spanish and Andrade’s Portuguese demonstrates his many departures from semantic meaning in order to preserve elements of rhyme and rhythm.

discourse, due to its evolution within the administrative system of the colony, the monopolizing regimes of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies and conflicts between them, the subsequent fragmentation from wars of independence, imperialistic interventions aimed at consolidating internal divisions and strengthening separations, and lastly to the interventions of economic monopolies ... Perhaps Brazil represents the best example of this elusive integration.

30 años 80–1

These attitudes were evident in the letters Rama wrote to Brazilian intellectuals. When he asks for their contributions, he privileges Brazilian *modernismo*. Literature students in Brazilian universities *begin* with this avant-garde movement before studying earlier periods. Rama insists that, while Brazilian publics may be familiar with these works, they are unknown in Spanish America.¹⁸ He also imagined a reciprocal benefit for Brazilian literary discourse: “This effort seeks to enrich the Spanish-American culture in which Biblioteca Ayacucho circulates ... and also functions as a challenge to Brazilian culture, which should attempt a similar project of systematic diffusion of Spanish-American literature, philosophy, and history” (Rama, *30 años* 83). When inviting Antonio Candido, Haroldo de Campos, and Darcy Ribeiro to participate as volume editors, he points to the ignorance of Brazilian literature within Spanish-American letters as a sign of continued isolation from other sources of its own culture. His attempt to redress this isolation also represents an opportunity for Latin America to tell its own story, rather than have its story routed through German anthropologists, French literary magazines, USA American intellectuals, or Spanish publishing houses. To decolonize the Latin American canon, translation between the former colonies of Spain and Portugal is needed, recovering a shared past.¹⁹ Candido echoes Rama in his reply, writing in Portuguese that he wants “to strengthen ties between our two peoples of Latin America” (Letter August 6 1975).

18 In a letter to Brazilian contributor Aracy Amaral, Rama claims: “for Spanish America, Brazilian ‘modernism’ is an unknown animal” (29 June 1976).

19 Walter Mignolo and Freya Schiwy point out a persistent assumption in Translation Studies and theory: that translation occurs only in reference to the colonality of European powers and “presupposes the macronarrative of Western civilization from the Greeks to the invention of the alphabet through modern/colonial and European languages. Not all translation involves Europe or the United States. Certainly there have been translations from Chinese to Taiwanese or from Argentinean Spanish to Brazilian Portuguese” (Mignolo and Schiwy 4).

When Rama founded Biblioteca Ayacucho with an editorial board in 1974, he had already critiqued proponents of the “boom” of Latin American literature, including Emir Rodríguez Monegal. Arguing that the very term indicated the capitalist logic driving that literary phenomenon,²⁰ he took the opportunity in Caracas²¹ to operate with a different ideological model, an alternative to the Latin Americanism presented in the literary journal edited by Monegal in Paris, *Mundo Nuevo* (New World). Studying Latin American and USA intellectual relations during and after the Cold War, Deborah Cohn demonstrates that institutional and ideological alliances did not always match and lines were not always clearly drawn, as in the “case” that arose around accusations that the journal *Mundo Nuevo* received CIA funding (Cohn 17–24). Cohn contextualizes the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, McCarthy-era legislation, which severely curtailed the circulation of many Latin American intellectuals in the USA (37–63). Identified as a socialist, never a communist, when the University of Maryland invited Rama, first as visiting faculty and then as a tenured professor, the State Department denied him visas and permanent residency (Cohn 45–8).

This editorial project fashions a particular Latin American literary canon around the idea of Venezuela as the cradle of Latin America’s revolutionary history and nineteenth century independence movements with Simón Bolívar figured as savior. Rama proposed the publishing house in 1974 to recognize the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Ayacucho in 1824, celebrated as a decisive victory against the Spanish by Bolívar and South American independence fighters. The concept revived the 1924 project by Venezuelan *modernista* Rufino Blanco Fombona, another editor who included Brazilian literatures within his canon. The name creates a teleological heritage, from the Battle of Ayacucho, to the commemoration by Fombona, to Rama’s renewal of a Venezuelan publishing firm compiling a Latin American canon of continental scope (Ortiz 12–14).

Biblioteca Ayacucho continues with the same goal: to make Latin American culture accessible to a broadly-conceived Latin American audience.²² The dig-

20 Rama “considered the affect of this marketing phenomenon on Latin American literature in a negative light, to the extent that by promoting some few writers, it marginalizes the rest and displaces poetry and the Latin American essay, disseminating almost solely novels” (Blixen 46).

21 His presence in Caracas was both choice and necessity. Rama was teaching there in 1972, but the military coup in Montevideo on June 27, 1973 forced Rama into exile (Blixen 47–9).

22 In the past fourteen years, Ayacucho has launched more accessible book imprints to reach audiences beyond their academic readership. These include children’s editions and

italization project began in 2007; all works in public domain are available for free download as searchable PDFs, much of their catalogue. Some works cannot be distributed online because another party holds the copyright.²³ Even when a work is not available for free online, their prices are low. Rama set the horizon they continue to work from: although he died in 1983, editor Elizabeth Coronado said during my visit in 2013 “perhaps Ángel Rama left Venezuela, but he never left Ayacucho,” a warm tribute to his legacy.

Rama’s vision of Brazil, in particular, determined the way these translations were curated, performed, and executed—despite the ambivalence about the level of transparency or opacity expected from these translation works.²⁴ In three volumes on Brazilian *modernismo*, he included scholars from both prevailing interpretations of this period. He never attempted to resolve this debate; his interest lay in positioning Brazil on his map of Latin American cultural production. In the particular case of *Macunaíma*, Andrade’s work fits Rama’s ideology for his canon by centering the indigenous cultural content of Brazil over and above Portuguese contributions. Lúcia Sá understands the central narrative as a “language quest” rather than a “magical object” quest, as do Campos and Souza (67). As *Macunaíma* changes shape and location, his language also transforms. In her reading, this linguistic journey is visible when the non-European formal elements are studied.²⁵ In her reading, Andrade’s novel goes beyond reforming the language of Brazil, but also implicates its government and land policies. Sá claims that all debates over *indigenismo* in literary or

pocket-sized volumes printed parallel to the book spine for easy one-handed reading on public transit.

- 23 Carmen Balcells (1930–2015), the celebrated Spanish agent who managed many “Boom” authors, held copyright, so no PDF is available for the Ayacucho titles by Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, or José Donoso. Maria Kodama owns Jorge Luis Borges’s rights; his work is not digitalized either.
- 24 The extensive chronologies at the end of every volume present a tenuous version of the unity Rama imagines between Brazil and Spanish America. Biographical information stands on one side of the page, facing a split column of historical information “Brasil y América Latina” and “Mundo exterior.” While this scholarly apparatus creates a clear inside and an outside of the cultural canon shared by Brazil and Latin America, it stops short of unifying those two categories.
- 25 Sá draws out the “language quest,” which “can only be understood if we carefully read those stories that others have considered unimportant in the narrative structure or have disregarded in favor of supposed European prototypes ... what Ellen Basso calls ‘pragmatic creativity,’ in other words, a hero whose behavior changes from situation to situation” (67–8). The “language quest” and “pragmatic creativity” of the novel’s hero map onto the task of the translator.

sociopolitical spheres stem from land rights concerns (xxv). If Brazilian and Spanish-American literatures share indigenous mythic structure—more than shared European heritage—this may have implications for indigenous cultural claims to rights and visibility, or even land and property.²⁶

Reading the Publisher's Archive for the Value of Incompatibility

Rama encourages his volume editor Souza to give as much context as possible to give the *Obra escogida* a “thick” descriptive layer. In a letter to Rama, Souza gives what may be the first sign of a problem. She writes that she “is finishing the notes for *Macunaíma*, which ended up being a lot, perhaps too many” and will eliminate the unnecessary ones later (Souza 1976). In his response, Rama emphasizes that he wants as many notes as possible, to retain the responsibility—and control—to decide which are necessary from the perspective of the Spanish-American reader. He refers to a previous experience with Walnice Nogueira Galvão who did not provide enough information for the translated edition of *Os sertões*, an issue he wants Souza to avoid.²⁷

Although Olea composed a transcreation, the editors Souza and Rama treated his work as a transparent and direct reproduction of the Brazilian literary text, identical to the source for the purposes of producing a scholarly critical edition. Additionally, they explain historical, cultural, and linguistic details incorporated into the literary work in what I am calling a “thick translation” for its particular aims to make up for a lack of information the new readership would have about the cultural context of Brazilian Amazonian geographies and environments. In her explanations, Souza frequently references notes Andrade prepared in 1930 for a never-completed English translation by Margaret Hollingsworth (“Notas” 113). Treating this unpublished, incomplete translation as an idealized ghost, Souza’s notes gain an aura of authorized legitimacy, in spite of the fact that these explanations were intended for an English readership, not the audience for a Spanish translation. Using

26 “[C]laiming the historical importance of Indians in the formation of Brazilian society, one is dangerously close to accepting their ancestral rights to land” (Sá xxv).

27 “With respect to the annotations, I suggest you do not cut too much what you have done, since perhaps it would be better to leave it to us, this task that relies on an understanding of the Spanish-American reader. Above all because we’ve had a bad experience with Walnice Nogueira Galvão [sic] who turned in a set of notes too slim for a book so in need of historical, geographical, and linguistic information as *Os Sertões* [sic], such that we had to ask her to redo the work” (Rama to Souza 1976).

Andrade as evidence also presumes that the best translator of a work, if possible, would be the author. In fact, there is no reason to privilege an author's perspective on their work in translation.

Unnecessary Assumptions of Equivalence: Untranslatables as Inflection Points

When he learned of the Ayacucho publication of his translation, Olea was working on new translations for the Oswald de Andrade volume edited by Campos. That project had already generated differences of opinion between Rama and the translator, primarily over deadlines and payment for his work. Olea remained committed to the project, as Campos mediated between the two parties, ultimately proposing the resolution that the translator receive Ayacucho "Colección Clásica" volumes in addition to his honorarium. However, after Rama purchased the rights from Seix Barral to republish Olea's 1977 version of *Macunaíma*, he wrote to Olea asking him to review the notes by Souza to ensure they coincided with the translation.

Olea responded with a detailed and critical letter, explaining to Rama precisely why his views on translation are diametrically opposed to those in place at Ayacucho. After voicing some surprise that he was not consulted sooner, he expressed deep concern over the incompatibility of the explanatory notes with this poetic work. Olea explained that his transcreation made notes unnecessary by letting the text speak for itself as much as it did in the original. He objected to particular notes that defined certain untranslatables he had chosen to leave unexplained.

Annotating (in note 2 pag. 39) PORÉM JACARÉ ABRIU? NEM ELES! (literally untranslatable to Spanish) demonstrates a naïve position of skeptical arrogance, not only with respect to translation itself but also an aprioristic ignorant blindness to colloquial Spanish and of the diffusion of popular linguistic forms across borders.²⁸

Letter to Rama

In this complaint, he asserted that Spanish-speaking readers would be able to make up for missing information by applying their own understanding of popular speech.

28 The untranslatable phrase is "But did the lizard open [the door]? Not for them!" where "lagarto" is nonsense expressing playful disdain; the mood is conveyed contextually.

In his letter, Olea also argued that the notes mislead the reader by explaining specific words in Portuguese that come from Tupi-Guarani words with Spanish “equivalents” where no equivalence was desirable or necessary, especially in the case of Amazonian flora or fauna. “It’s not the same to say: IANDU CARANGUEJEIRA is a poisonous spider, because the text itself makes that implicit” (Letter to Rama). Olea pointed out the ethical dimension to this concern by arguing from authorial intention. He claimed that “Andrade was only interested in these terms for their specific use-value in the contemporary metaphoric symbiosis of Luso-Tupi terms in the profuse Brazilian lexicon. If the author only included these words for their character as Luso-Tupi hybrid terms, then to translate them is to create foreignness in the translation where none existed in the original” (Olea, Letter to Rama). Souza justifies her addition of explanatory notes by referring to authorial intent because Andrade included this information in his notes for the English translation.

The first publication of Olea’s transcreation presents the Spanish-speaking reader with the difficulties of Andrade’s Brazilian Portuguese without any explanatory footnotes and with reconstructed wordplay and regionalisms. The second publication by Ayacucho adds an introduction and extensive footnotes authored by Souza and translated by Santiago Kovadloff.²⁹ Although the archival record shows that Rama sought Olea’s help to find common ground between the critical apparatus and the translation, the volume itself maintains many inconsistencies, despite the translator’s emphatic protest. Olea pointed out that the anthropological, note-heavy presentation of the text obscured its lightness and irony, claiming that to “attempt to explain poetry is to have no faith in poetry” (Letter to Rama). Did Rama respond? I found no direct response in the archive, and Olea’s general complaint remained unaddressed: there are 439 notes in the Ayacucho edition. Despite his input, it remains evident that the volume editor created notes for the Portuguese original rather than the translation.

Olea also objected to explanations where the context tells the story adequately. Writing to Rama, he pointed out the example of fishing techniques on the Orinoco river: “I ask myself, or rather, I’m asking you, what is the reason for explaining what BATER TIMBO means” (Letter to Rama). As Macunaíma and his family struggle to find enough to eat, they try many methods, filling the chapter with specialized vocabulary for tools and methods of fishing.

29 Argentine psychiatrist Kovadloff translated without much institutional support. As the Argentine economy declined, he asked repeatedly for better pay. Rama could not increase the rate, though he did offer Ayacucho volumes. Kovadloff eventually wrote that he could no longer translate for the press.

Macunaíma quiso divertirse un poco. Dijo a sus manos que aún había mucho mije, mucha guabina, mucho careperro y pez-banana, todos esos peces de río; que fueran a *embarbascar* las aguas! y Maanape respondió:— Ya no se encuentra más *barbasco* [Macunaíma wanted to have himself some fun. He said to his bros that there were still lots of mije, lots of guabina, lots of careperro and banana fish, all those river fish: why don't we go *embarbascar* the water! and Maanape replied: But there's no more *barbasco*].

Obra escogida 7; emphasis added

This scene reads as communicative: the main idea is the abundance of Macunaíma's language, the descriptive lies he tells to pique the hunger of his brothers, in contrast with the absence of food and hunting tools his brothers encounter. The scene describing their fishing method is less about an ethnographic representation of an indigenous practice and more about a storytelling trope, the trickster and his tall tales. Souza annotates: "*Embarbascar* (*bater timbó*). Reference to the indigenous custom of beating the water's surface with the branches of the timbó: a venomous plant that would contaminate the water and kill the fish to be collected after" (115; emphasis in original). The note supplements the translator's solution with the original expression and a useful explanation. While Olea objected to these notes, they successfully allow multiple versions of the same concepts or practices to co-exist. Instead of presenting the smooth assumption of translatability, the Ayacucho edition performs the untranslatability of localized cultural practices.

Conflicting Translation Manuals as Cognitive Highlighter: Proliferating Proverbs

Once I read the letters exchanged by the agents of translation at Ayacucho, I could see the *Obra escogida* volume in a different light. Olea critiqued conflicts between his transcreation and the paratextual apparatus. Alert to the different translation manuals at play, additional tensions became visible. By treating Olea's transcreation as a direct mirror of the source text, the references Souza adds do successfully provide contextual framing that would aid pedagogy. However, in some instances, the "thick translation" ignores or explicitly negates the creative rendering Olea chose.

In her prologue, Souza describes the two catchphrases Macunaíma repeats as "inversely symmetrical" key concepts expressing the "profound ambivalence" of the work (xxx). Kovadloff translates them for the prologue as "¡Ay qué

pereza! [what laziness / I'm so tired / I'm such a slacker]" and "mucha hormiga y poca salud son los males de Brasil [many ants and meager health are the banes of Brazil]" (xxxi). Souza positions Macunaíma's slogans as opposites; the first is an "apologia for idleness" whereas the second references chronicles by colonial administrators bemoaning the poor health of the region, their fears that their investment might infect and kill them (xxxi). In his notes for the uncompleted English translation, Andrade asserts that the phrase is relevant to "the satirical sense of the book and has been created rhythmically in the form of a proverb" (Andrade qtd. in Souza, xxxi). Kovadloff includes the Portuguese phrase and explains his translation even further: "The phrase in Portuguese says: 'Muita saúva e pouca saúde os males do Brasil são.' The *saúva* is a kind of giant, voracious ant common to Brazil (N. del T.)" (translator's note in Souza xxxi).

While her analysis glosses these invented proverbs, Souza does not account for Olea's transcreation into colloquial Spanish. For the prologue, Kovadloff chooses the most direct translation of "Ai! que preguiça ..." (*Macunaíma* 7) which is "¡Ay qué pereza!" (xxxi). However, Olea opts for another Spanish word: "—Ay! qué flojera!" (*Obra escogida* 3).³⁰ Particularly common in Mexico, "floreja" is widely used to express the same laziness or enervated energy as "pereza," but also connotes physicality, slackness or weakness. Given that Macunaíma and his family frequently complain of uncomfortable hunger and food insecurity, the term "floreja" fits their everyday lives even better than "preguiça." Olea also invents a rhyming idiom—as did Andrade—to convey the whimsical nihilism of Macunaíma's worldview: "Mucha tambocha y poco bizcocho, / Luchas son que al Brasil dejan mocho' [Lots of ants and few biscuits / Are the struggles that make Brazil fall short]" (*Obra escogida* 52). Olea's transcreation, unlike Kovadloff's version, maintains rhyme, or "aesthetic information," while altering "semantic information." Olea removes the reference to health, adding instead the idea of food scarcity, again an apt choice given the prevalence of hunger in *Macunaíma*.

Transcreation as Geographic Dislocation: Worldwide *Macumberos*

In one example of interpolation, Olea adds references to Afro-Cuban cultural forms where the source text represented Afro-Brazilian religion. When Macu-

30 It bears mention here that the English translation by Goodland for this phrase is not particularly adequate: more profane and angry than the Portuguese catchphrase, "Aw! What a fucking life!" (3) is another example of the English translation creating a threatening other out of the Brazilian trickster-hero.

naíma journeys to Rio de Janeiro, he attends a *candomblé* ritual for Exú to gain enough strength to get his amulet back. Olea interpolates “la Virgen Caridad de Cobre” (*Obra escogida* 37) the Patron Saint of Cuba, where Andrade includes the Saint of the Azores, “Nossa Senhora da Conceição” (*Macunaíma* 55). As Heloisa da Costa Milton points out, the chapter title “Macumba” in Portuguese appears as “Bembé-Macumba” in Spanish. These references to Cuban *santería* and other local beliefs “effectively fulfill the function of a glossary or a collection of footnotes with respect to the reception of the text” (Milton 64). Olea also adds Afro-Cuban author Nicolás Guillén to a list of “macumberos” where the source text included only Brazilian and French artists practicing *negritude*.³¹

Y para acabar todos *hicieron el bochinche* juntos ... Entonces todo acabó volviéndose a la vida real. Y los macumberos, Macunaíma, Jaime Ovalle, Dodó, Manú Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raúl Bopp, Antonio Bento, *Pierre Verger*, *Peque Lanusa*, *Nicolás Guillén*, todos esos bemberos salieron hacia la madrugada [And everyone ended up *partying* together ... Then everything went back to real life. And the macumba-players Macunaíma, Jaime Ovalle, Dodó, Manú Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raúl Bopp, Antonio Bento, *Pierre Verger*, *Peque Lanusa*, *Nicolás Guillén*, all those bemberos went out until dawn].

ANDRADE, *Obra escogida* 41; emphasis added

Souza adds a note that does not work against Olea’s solution, but misses the chance to point out his expansion of the literary game Andrade plays. Her note explains this list as an example of the author’s mix of “real and fictitious elements” (126), and she gives biographical information about the poets listed by Andrade without mentioning the three figures added by Olea. He adds Pierre Verger (1902–96), a French photographer and student of African religious diasporas who initiated himself into *candomblé* in his adopted home of Salvador. Including Verger reminds readers that to “look” at an Afro-Brazilian ritual means looking at a forcefully transplanted cultural form that many have since adopted and adapted. Peque Lanusa likely refers to Argentine poet José Luis Lanuza (1903–76); he wrote *cancioneros* and studied the *gaucho* tradi-

31 In addition to adding three *bemberos*, Olea interpolates the Central American colloquialism *bochinche* to express their party-making where Andrade used a more commonplace phrase *fazer a festa*: “E pra acabar todos *fizeram a festa* juntos ... Então tudo acabou se fazendo a vida real. E os macumbeiros, Macunaíma, Jaime Ovalle, Dodó, Manu Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raul Bopp, Antônio Bento, todos esses macumbeiros saíram na madrugada” (*Macunaíma* 63; emphasis added).

tion in Argentina. By adding Lanusa, Olea connects the Argentine *gaucho* with *bembero* culture in Brazil. Nicolás Guillén (1902–1989) is the most well-known parallel Olea adds; in *Motivos de son* (1930) and *Songoro cosongo* (1931) he incorporates Afro-Cuban music into his poetry. Olea's Spanish translation interpolates recognizable but geographically displaced representations of Afro-Latino cultures to draw in the Spanish-American reader.

Interpolating Tradition: Peninsular Performances in the Americas

Olea also uses the strategy of interpolation to add in different lyrics for a Spanish-American version (Danza de Toritos) parallel to the Northeast Brazilian dance (Bumba-meu-boi). In this case, thick translation obscures and counteracts Olea's decolonial transcreation that replaced the Northeast Brazilian ritual of the Boi-bumba with a Guatemalan ritual. For Souza, this song performs Brazil's connection to Portuguese music, citing Andrade's musicology to make this point, that Brazilian folk rounds are descended from songs by Portuguese *jograis* or troubadours:

[In] *Macunaíma*, Mário de Andrade transposed to literature, in an intentional and critical manner, the conflict he observed with such sharpness in music between the European tradition inherited from Portugal and the local, popular, indigenous, or African manifestations ... independent of the successive masks that may confer on his narration a savage aspect, its central nucleus continues to be *firmly European*.

SOUZA, "Prólogo" xxxiv–v; emphasis in the original

For Souza, the interpolated songs represent the European foundation of Brazilian letters, assembling the raw materials of Brazilian every day life into Portuguese musical structures. While Olea acknowledges the shared cultural history from the Iberian peninsula ("Posfácio" 247), he is less interested in tracing those origins than in offering a comparative vision of the many different Western Hemispheric iterations these cultural forms have taken in different spaces.

Olea draws inspiration from the many Latin American versions of the Bull dance, not from the European "raw material." This intriguing reversal of values is lost through Souza's introduction and interpretive notes, where she instead understands this element as Iberian Portuguese cultural forms gain new life in Brazil. Olea claims greater authenticity for his interpolation of a "cantiga hispanoamericana" rather than translating the Brazilian folkloric verses: "I found it more authentic to intercalate into the Mariandradian text the Ready-

Made of some fragments of the Refrains sung in the Dance of the Bull instead of trying to reproduce in Spanish the stanzas of Boi-Espacio that appear in the rhapsody" (247). Using the term "rhapsody," he recalls *Macunaíma's* subtitle and musical composition, justifying his own variations on the theme.

Olea also interpolates idioms from popular speech into the text. For example, he remixes a Brazilian nursery rhyme with a similar game from the Central American lexicon, reproducing the aesthetic function of wordplay and child-like repetition, recognizable moods even if the reader does not recognize the song. Where the source text reads "chegou o domingo pé-de-cachimbo" (*Macunaíma* 82), Olea adds the nonsense word "chingolingo" borrowed from a dice game from Central America. His transcreated rhyme reads: "llegó el domingo-chingolingo pie-de-cachimbolimbo" (*Obra* 55). Souza adds a note that glosses and translates only the original:

The expression *Domingo pé de cachimbo* pertains to a nursery rhyme that goes: "Hoje é domingo / pé de cachimbo / cachimbo é de barro / que bate no jarro". Translated to Spanish in a more or less textual way that also tries to preserve the rhythm, we would have: "Hoy es domingo / pata de pipa / pipa de barro / que rompe el jarro" [Today is Sunday / leg of pipe / pipe made of clay / that breaks the jug].

SOUZA, "Notas" 130; emphasis in original

In this case, her note offers her own values of translation, alternative to the translation in hand. Olea preserves the mood without explanation; Souza explains the context but translates creatively to "preserve the rhythm." The translation manuals conflict, but the Ayacucho edition includes all three versions, enriching the reader's experience.

In one example of the diverse lexicon Olea compiles, he adds references to locally produced alcohols to expand *Macunaíma's* geographical reach. At the *candomblé* celebration in Rio, the hero tries a new alcoholic beverage: "cachaça," a sugarcane brandy popular in Brazil.³² Cachaça comes from regions associated with the sugar industry and slave labor, not the territory Macunaíma calls home. He previously had only tasted "cachiri," fermented liquor made from manioc by the Wayana, an indigenous culture in the region of French Guinea. Olea recreates this geographical displacement, but in Spanish-American diction. In Spanish, Macunaíma encounters a new version of his

32 "Macunaíma provou pela primeira vez o cachiri temível cujo nome é cachaça." (Andrade, *Macunaíma* 47)

familiar drink *chicha* called *guaro*.³³ “Chicha” is maize liquor associated with Venezuela, close to Macunaíma’s home; “guaro” is cane-sugar liquor from Central America, an apt parallel for *cachaça*. Olea could have left the reference to *cachaça*, reminding readers this episode takes place in Rio. Instead, he broadens the geography of local products the Spanish-speaking Macunaíma experiences.

At times, Olea chooses phrases associated with Mexican Spanish, such as the verb “ningunear.” Macunaíma causes commotion at the São Paulo Stock Exchange, tricking his brothers into attempting to hunt tapir. When a mob tries to lynch him for the disturbance, he deflects their rejection with typical aplomb and insists on his belonging.

“O quê! *quem que é desconhecido!* berrou Macunaíma desesperado com a ofensa” [What?! *which who is the stranger!* bellowed Macunaíma, exasperated at the insult] (Andrade, *Macunaíma* 92). “Qué qué! *a mí ninguno me ningunea!*—berreó Macunaíma desesperado por la patochada” [What what?! *nobody nobodys me!*—bellowed Macunaíma, exasperated at the slap in the face].

Obra 62; emphasis added

The Spanish expression fits the context perfectly. Analyzed by Octavio Paz in his treatise on Mexican identity, “ningunear” means to ignore, to give the cold shoulder—literally, to nobody another person. Olea took the opportunity to interpolate this idiomatic Mexican expression where none appears in the source.

Failed Smoothness: World Literature and Mobile Untranslatables

The Biblioteca Ayacucho critical edition of *Obra escogida* by Mário de Andrade could be dismissed for failing to present a coherent whole. Instead of regarding its inconsistencies as failures, I use editorial correspondence to understand them as a productive negotiation between the values of transcreation versus thick translation in the publisher’s translation manual. Gerard Aching locates resistance to World Literature within Latin American studies, which he attributes to a tendency to favor opacity and non-standard language in

33 “Macunaíma probó por primera vez la chicha temible cuyo nombre es guaro.” (Andrade, *Obra* 37).

the Latin American literary field.³⁴ As *Macunaíma* becomes World Literature, Olea reproduces the opacity of the text and puts it into motion rather than making the narrative transparent for a wider audience. The conflict between transcreation and thick translation is not resolved. Nevertheless, the very unsmoothness of the Caracas publication speaks to the poly-vocal Brazilian *modernismo* movement. The creative devouring of the source text becomes visible as Olea's transcreation responds to Campos's theories of Brazilian translation.

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34 Latin American literary criticism has received the rubric of World Literature with general skepticism, as outlined by Guillermina de Ferrari in her introduction to *Critical Utopias: World Literature According to Spanish America* (2012 special issue of *1616: Anuario de Literatura Comparada*).

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