

Resonances of Tropicália in Brazilian Cinema: a comparative analysis of ‘Macunaíma’ and ‘Tenda dos Milagres’

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Abstract

Through film analysis and documentation of the reception of *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969) and *Tenda dos Milagres* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1976), we will evaluate how the debate on race and ethnicity was articulated in the field of Brazilian Cinema by its intellectuals after the coup in 1964. From an initial literature search on the subject, we chose to focus on the appropriation of the aesthetic achievements of Tropicalia by some intellectuals related to Brazilian Cinema. The goal of gathering films not so close in the same article is to evaluate the temporal effect on the role of intellectuals in transforming the debate about race and ethnicity in the field of Brazilian cinema. Thus, while *Macunaíma* was part of the “Tropicália moment”, *Tenda dos Milagres* took the aesthetic gains of the movement, resonating later the shift in the role of intellectuals in the field of Brazilian Cinema.

Keywords: Brazilian Cinema. Race. Ethnicity. *Macunaíma*. *Tenda dos Milagres*.

Introduction

The civil-military coup in 1964 left deep marks in the many fields of Brazilian culture. Disputed by the left and the right in the years before the coup, the national-popular speech would be appropriated by the winning politically conservative right and exploited within the state apparatus for the purposes of political propaganda and for implementation of cultural policies.

In addition to the visible effects – such as censorship of works of art, purge and, in more extreme cases, imprisonment and exile of artists – the victory of a conception of national-popular right was perceived in the incorporation of the Gilberto Freyre’s Luso Tropicalismo doctrine by the members of the regime, according to Guimarães (2002, p.151-156). On the one hand, this meant the nuisance of the dictatorship with narratives which

contested the ideal of racial democracy and the vision of an ethnically integrated people. On the other, in this exact moment of crisis, it made possible to some left-wing intellectuals to reevaluate the classic narratives of the founding cultural encounters of Modern Brazil.

In parallel, as an artistic movement, Tropicália was gradually gaining supporters, critics and prestige in various fields such as music, visual arts, theater and it publicly assumed the forefront of critical both to the current regime as to the intellectuals. In the case of Brazilian Cinema, we chose to recover two films not to frame them in the panorama of Tropicália, but rather to verify some changes in the intellectual debate about race and ethnicity and a very under discussed point, the incorporation of these “others” to the intellectual activity.

This does not mean that the analyzed films can be qualified as “tropicalistas” but the status of their representations and their narrative took as starting points some aesthetic achievements from the movement. Thus, these changes have left marks on the *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2006) of the agents in the field of Brazilian Cinema and, moreover, the images of people of some films produced and displayed throughout the 1970s.

We also recognize that the effects of artistic practices of Tropicália on the racial and ethnic categories cannot be immediately considered, once its artists rarely claimed to ethnic and racial identity, positioning themselves often dubious and reticent about the question.

Our argument is framed by the fact that Tropicália has catalyzed various structures of feeling (WILLIAMS, 1969) which worked on the revision of the dominant intellectual attitude on the left-wing, related to the appeal to an urban culture that quickly changed and revealed tensions of different origins. Thus, the connection between the cultural production of the movement (or “moment”, as some prefer) and the time in which it was widespread helped to expose racial and ethnic identities that previously appeared encompassed by the category of ‘people’.

The aim of bringing together not so close films in the same article is to evaluate the temporal effect over the role of intellectuals in transforming the debate on race and ethnicity in the field of brazilian cinema. Thus, while *Macunaíma* was part of the “tropicália moment” (SUSSEKIND, 2007), by having appropriated some aesthetic achievements of the movement, *Tenda ...* took these achievements at a later time, resonating the yaw in the role of intellectuals in the field of brazilian cinema. For this, we make use of the filmic analysis of the work and data collection on the critical reception of these at the time of their respective releases.

Tropicalia's kaleidoscopes: the appropriation of the movement by the intellectuals of Brazilian Cinema

As Tropicália is situated in a turning point of the political and cultural moment in Brazil and as it has adopted a very controversial tone in the debate, getting allies as well as critics and enemies in the right and in the left, it won contemporary interpretations and has accumulated so far a critical fortune around itself.

From an optimistic perspective, *Tropicália, alegoria, alegria*, a dissertation defended by Celso Favaretto in FFLCH/USP in the late 1970s, launched a few points in this discussion. Perceiving in the movement a dialogue with the literary modernism of the 1920s (especially the work of Oswald de Andrade) in order to affirm cosmopolitanism and the question of a unified national reality, Favaretto (2007, p.26), reminds that “Tropicalismo’s uniqueness came [...] the way it approached the national reality. Unlike the other movements of the time, dealing referentially with this reality, tropicalistas eventually empty it while operating a cultural decentralization”.

After highlighting some formal features of Tropicália, such as the allegory as an aesthetic option of movement beyond political rhetoric, incorporating elements of international pop culture – here valued positively – and the “creation of a syntax not [only] discursive” (FAVARETTO, 2007, p.44) that united verbal, pictorial, musical and gestural elements, emphasizes a point of these artistic practices fundamental to our discussion: as a result of re-reading of literary modernism of the 1920s, Tropicália

pointed out the theme of cultural encounter and the conflict of interpretations, without giving a definite project to overcome; exposed the country indeterminacies at the level of history and languages, devouring them; it reinterpreted in primitive terms the myths of urban-industrial culture, mixing and confusing their archaic and modern, explicit or repressed elements, showing the limits of current interpretations (FAVARETTO, 2007, p.56, *our translation*).

This dimension of bringing repressed elements of the cultural debate is deepened by the rereading made by tropicalistas of the Manifesto Pau-Brazil, in which, according to Favaretto (2007, p.56, *our translation*), had “the appreciation of historical, social and ethnic aspects repressed in artistic production and current intellectual”.

The author claims that because of this appropriation of *oswaldiano*'s modernism, Tropicália's artists will stick “more to the syncretic cultural conception, to the aspect

of searching expression techniques, to the corrosive humor, anarchic attitude towards bourgeois values than to their ethnographic size and tendency to reconcile cultures in conflict” (FAVARETTO, 2007, p.57, *our translation*). In other words, this means that the return of the repressed ethnic and racial elements would not pass through conciliation, but by incorporating the image proposed by tropicalistas, i.e. allegorical, fractured image of these “others”.

Besides, the syncretism of tropicalistas appointed by Favaretto acquires different characteristics of that which lies at the base of the ideal of racial democracy propagated by ideologues of the Estado Novo. It is not to select and to give legitimacy to certain elements of popular culture over others, as it was done before, but to see them in their integrality as the basis for new repertoires that act in the structuring of tastes and artistic practices. His conclusion about the cultural intervention of tropicalistas points out that “the ‘scale’ of Tropicalia, the result of ‘contemporary expression of the world’, explodes the monolithic universe erected in ‘Brazilian reality’ by nationalist interpretations of the cultural encounter phenomena” (FAVARETTO, 2007 p.58, *our translation*).

Still, he underlines the idea of inventory and the fusion of archaic and modern elements to accentuate the dissenting position of the movement in relation to the leftist intellectuals of the time: “the cultural contradictions are exposed by the juxtaposition of archaic and modern, according to an artistic treatment that sparkles historical indeterminacies, highlight the social suppression and cultural syncretism, riding a ghostly scene made of fragments” (FAVARETTO, 2007, p.61, *our translation*). So, instead of the posture of one who has a mandate¹ as did the leftist intellectuals of the time, the tropicalistas preferred its mediation role. The difference lies not only in the choice of the words, since mandate implies the absence of the defendant and hierarchy – speak for – while in the notion of mediation, hierarchy between intellectual and the addressed object is relativized and the repressed may well resurface – talk from/to.

At this point, we need to clear up that parody, allegory, junction temporal and spatially disparate elements, incorporating foreign references, alluding to dreams and magic – among other aesthetics procedures related to Tropicália – were not unknown by the Brazilian cinema. By means of other filmmaking experiences ancient or closest to the time – we think here in *chanchada* – cinema had already made familiar these aspects to its viewers. Hence, what is to be understood here is how to use these formal procedures proposed by Tropicália served in the reconfiguration of the *habitus* of the cinematographic field and in the practices of its agents. Or, more accurately, how these changes allowed the clarification of a rhetoric of race and ethnicity. These appeared, sometimes, clearly in the

1 On the concept of mandate and its relation to the practices of intellectuals in the cinema, please check out: XAVIER, Ismail. Alegorias do desengano. 1989. 241p. Tese de livre docência – Escola de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo.

center of the formulation of identities in opposition to national-popular speech that, even in crisis, had its relevance to the field.

Regarding parody, several films from the late 1960s began to recover it in order to deal with the speech and the myths spread by conservative modernization. *Macunaíma* (1969), directed by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, retakes the same literary moment visited by the artists of Tropicália, and as the movie has exacerbated the parodic tone of the original text and also incorporated updated references of mass culture, it was considered at the time of its release one tropicalista creation².

The film begins with the opening credits accompanied by Villa-Lobos's music *Desfile aos heróis do Brasil*, whose lyrics appeals to nationalism in many parts. Verses like "glory to the motherland, this beloved country that is our Brazil" (*our translation*) and "Glory to the heroes of this country of *Cruzeiro do Sul*" (*our translation*) can be considered quotes to the speech of the current regime. Next, the sequence of Macunaíma's birth: the speaker's voice-over is suddenly interrupted by the screams of pain of a white lady (Paulo José transvestite), who gives birth to a childish black man (Grande Othelo) and let him go, and then he is packed by his brother Jiguê (Milton Gonçalves).

Jiguê asks his mother if she thinks that the newborn son was cute and hears the answer: "That ugly boy, dam it!". The sequence ends with Jiguê packing Macunaíma and shouting "Viva Macunaíma, the hero of our people". Thus, the film introduces parody – in this case, to the heroes alluded in Villa-Lobos's song and therefore to the nationalist discourse of the military dictatorship. It is noteworthy that this parody begins to reveal its racial aspect that would be developed in other parts of the narrative and, if we add that it has an ironic tone that seeks to disallow this official discourse, the forms of racial imagination of the Brazilian people are also being challenged.

Following the transformation of Macunaíma, after appearing twice as a white man (Paulo José) during the spell of Indian Sofara (Joana Fomm), the black boy walks with his brothers Maanape (Rodolfo Arena) and Jiguê after being expelled from their land by a flood. From a hill of sand, a fountain of water arises and Macunaíma decides to take a bath in it. The camera gives a close in the sudden transformation of Macunaíma from Grande Othelo to Paulo José, who will play the character until the end of the movie. Stunned, Macunaíma looks up and shouts to the brothers: "I became white, I became beautiful!". Maanape runs toward the source and Macunaíma says jokingly: "If you're white, you'll become black". And Maanape pulls back immediately. Finally, Jiguê goes bold to the fountain, but it dries

² What was denied by the director in a statement to Heloisa Buarque de Holanda (1978), in which he shows his suspicion in regards to the project of tropicalistas.

quickly. Desperate, he tries to bathe in the remaining pool and complains: “where is it? Oh, it was only to whiten the palms”, to which Macunaíma answers: “Don’t be sad, bro, it’s better to be ugly than not to have a nose”.

About this sequence, comparing it to Mario de Andrade’s book, Robert Stam points out that “the movie eliminates the Indian as an intermediate stage” (2008, p.349, *our translation*) and that, therefore, it would be a mockery to the ideal of whitening. In this review, we add that it also parodies the “myth of the three races” (MATTA, 1988), since one of them is excluded from this meeting. Therefore, it attacks racial democracy by eliminating the call for *mestizaje*, since there are only two possibilities of racial identification – white or black. Still, it operates an attack on Luso-tropicalismo’s doctrine that was taken over by the dictatorial regime.

The sequence also elected as an object of parody a racist popular imaginary, in that the funny threat from Macunaíma to Maanape takes effect and he refuses to bathe in the fountain. There is also the desperate desire of Jiguê in bathing to become white and, with his failed expectation, he regrets to continue black (“it was only to whiten the palms”) and relates his skin tone to ugliness.

This parodic procedure is accented with the trajectory of the character: initially shown as lazy, slanderous and opportunistic, the racial transformation in Macunaíma did not imply any change in his conduct, as noted by Macario (2006). Thus, racist stereotypes built by the ideal of whitening around the indigenous and black populations which have migrated to common sense³ – presenting these populations as “naturally” retrograde, indolent, averse to an ideal of progress taken over by modernity – are reversed, when the movie shows the white character with the same characteristics.

In the sequences of the birth of the hero and the bath which whitens Macunaíma – which were already analyzed – there is a verbal and gestural game which refers to the parody of *chanchada*, now freely used by virtue of the appropriation of authority that was being built by the artistic practices of Tropicália.

Some critics saw in the work of Joaquim Pedro a self-criticism in regards to the *Cinema Novo*, even though the film was supported by filmmakers related to the movement.

Ely Azeredo says this could be checked from “his adhesion to the thesis of a hero without stamp (the book’s subtitle). [...] The incantation flows from the character of absence of the Brazilian character”⁴. The critical detects a change in the intellectual attitude that

3 On the concept of common sense, please check out: BERGER, Peter e LUCKMANN, Thomas. *A Construção social da realidade*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2004.

4 Azeredo, Ely. *O Filme em questão – Macunaíma*. *Jornal do Brasil*, 7.11.1969.

began to occur in the relationship between the practice of directors and the representations built by them. This attitude was also shown, in this case, in the appropriation made by the director of other experiences of Brazilian cinema, which was seen by Azeredo as a narrative that “attests the utility of various experiences of the old Brazilian cinema (burlesque) and new (flood reiterates the outcry of *Vidas Secas*, *A Grande Cidade* swallows and vomits its characters, the mixing of genres in *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha*)” (AZEREDO, 1969, *our translation*).

In general, critics also support the director in his dialogue with *Tropicália* and in his option on making a color movie. Qualifying Macunaíma as a “hippie and tropicalesco hero”, Alberto Shatovsky lists the qualities of the film: “Within its turmoil, the organization is its taste: the color crafted with care, clothes and designed scenarios [...] and a cast that responds well to the difficulties of the tropicalesca adventure”⁵. The choice of exaggeration in the scenic elements, typical of *Tropicália*, would be inserted with the purpose to portray “the exasperated adventure around our customs, our morals, the caboclas contradictions, addictions and virtues, which takes the appropriate spice of *chanchada*, instrument of immediate communication” (SHATOVSKY, 1969, *emphasis added*).

In turn, *Tenda dos Milagres* (1976), film adaptation of Jorge Amado’s homonymous novel, Nelson Pereira dos Santos chose to perform racism and the discourse on race in Brazil as the centerpiece of its narrative. The dialogue with *Tropicália* is clear, in the choices of Jards Macalé (who also participated in *Amuleto de Ogum*, Santos’s previous movie) to compose the soundtrack and as the main actor, and of Gilberto Gil’s song *Babá Alapalá*, composed during a trip of the musician to Africa.

Taking a critical tone about the role of mass culture in the constitution of a society oriented towards consumption, the narrative of *Tenda...* focuses on the path of the protagonist Pedro Archanjo in a flow between past and present in three spheres: Archanjo’s fight against the elite from Bahia and against the authorities in the turn from 19th to 20th century and its openly racist and eugenic practices inserted in a high culture that ranked racially subjects; academic and mass culture appropriation of Pedro Archanjo’s figure after the arrival of a foreign academic Nobel laureate who extolled its trajectory; and the process of making a film about Archanjo and its barriers within the state bureaucracy.

Retaking a dialogue with melodrama as also in *Amuleto de Ogum*, *Tenda...* presents racism through the imposed barriers in the narrative to Pedro Archanjo (in the past) and his legacy (contemporary to the film). To the actions of the protagonist, it opposes a villain, Nilo Argolo, whose melodramatic dash will be marked in the middle of the film with the

5 Alberto Shatovsky. O Filme em questão – Macunaíma. *Jornal do Brasil*, 7.11.1969.

revelation that he would be Archanjo's cousin, since the family is the base unit of the genre. The past overrides the present through the action of the historian Edelweiss (Anecy Rocha) who, in her attempt to preserve Archanjo's memory, is opposed to the desire of the owners of the local media and marketing agents in transforming him in a public figure "marketable". The sectors linked to mass culture (which, in the interpretation proposed by the director, would be lied within the Adornian notion of cultural industry) are portrayed as propagators of the myth of racial democracy and the ideal of *mestizaje*, denying possible heterodox versions around race relations in Brazil.

The critics realized this critical tone towards mass media. Anibal Fernando said in his text: "And what you see in '*Tenda*'? An uncanned, no doubt. A film stripped down, raw in its images, poetic, a generous lifting a Brazilian generosity that is threatened nowadays by the TV and the official attempts to put popular culture down"⁶. Inclusively, he amplifies the critical tone of the film to elect the TV as an enemy of Brazilian culture, recovering a tone close to left-wing intellectuals of the early 1960s and also identifies the tension between the director and state officials: "hesitant and ambiguous attempt because it is lost in the halls of Censorship" (FERNANDO, 1977, *our translation*).

After analyzing the first point of our argument – that is, the role of intellectuals linked to Brazilian cinema in the debate on race and ethnicity and their appropriation of the aesthetic repertoire of Tropicália – it is necessary to move on to the second part, which will focus on the analysis of racial and ethnic rhetoric mobilized by these intellectuals throughout the debate.

Among spells, candomblé and repressions: race and ethnicity in post-1964 Brazilian cinema

Returning to *Macunaíma*, during the encounter between the protagonist and the warrior Ci (Dina Sfat) – a reference of the director to the option of armed struggle among part of the marginalized politically left – again the ideal of whitening is elected as the target of irony and sarcasm parodic. A white couple played by Silvio Caldas and Roberto Carlos who gave birth to a black child (again, Grande Othello), but suffering mistreatment by his father. And the dramatic punishment of Ci – who dies after an accidental explosion of a bomb that had pitched with the baby – only expanded the satire to that ideal as it has eliminated the black character of the reproduction of the imagined community (ANDERSON, 1989).

⁶ FERNANDO, Anibal. *Tenda dos Milagres, um antienlatado nacional. Folha de São Paulo*, 15.11.1977.

The movie poster also highlights the parodic dimension of this relationship. In it, Dina Sfat holds Grande Othelo dressed as a baby, with a pacifier in his mouth. The racial rhetoric and the parodic tone of the film are well potentized in its publicizing, to the extent that the poster underscores a white mother cradling a black child, besides a direct appeal to the spectator of *chanchadas* (again by the presence of the star Grande Othelo).

In a sequence ahead, Macunaíma and his brothers interrupt the speech of a black man at the foot of a statue, who defends the regime, calling family and country against “certain slavic ideologies” (allusion to communism). To this Macunaíma answers by rising at the foot of the statue, expelling the black man and his allies and making another speech: “it was not like that this mulatto said”. Booed by the public, he is also questioned by his own brother: “It was just getting white and then becoming racist, right?”. After a presentation on agricultural pests before an angry mob, Macunaíma launches his sentence: “A lot of ants and poor health, the evils of Brazil are” being interrupted by shouts of “subversive”.

He was persecuted and almost got caught, but managed to escape, while Jigue was arrested and then released after spending a night in jail. Finally, Jigue was reprehended by Maanape “when a White guy runs, he’s a champion. But when Black guy runs, he’s a thief! You didn’t hear me and this happened!”. Maanape opposed racially the fate of the two brothers, using a racist quote popular at the time. In opposition to the ideal of racial democracy, the film contrasts with an openly racist language and also classifies racially characters in black and white, again a challenge to *mestizaje*, defended as narrative-based cultural contacts by post-1964 dictatorship.

Echoing this dispute, the experience of *Tenda dos Milagres* also appropriated elements of popular culture to denounce the exclusion with racial/racist motivations that some of their practices were submitted. A report made during the production of the film reminded the reader to ethnic persecution that is subjected Candomblé to mark its popular origin and, continuing its argument, referred to the racial relations in Brazil:

And in *Tenda*, in addition to the religious problem, Jorge Amado raises the question of race relations in Brazil, which is not as easy as it is amplified. There is a tendency to miscegenation, the formation of a new man has no connection with European prejudices tribe, race etc. But the process has not been simple; it has been until quite painful⁷.

Thus, it stressed the importance of the (then) future film was proposing to bring to the masses the discussion of race in Brazil, opposing the two reading keys around this: the

7 MARQUES, Clóvis. Do amuleto a Jorge Amado. *Opinião*, 18.7.1975, our translation.

official, who was sustained by the doctrine of Luso tropicalismo to assert that ethnic conflicts were appeased in day-by-day relationships; and critical, which tended to emphasize the specifics of institutional racism and contradictions of the official discourse (i.e. national-popular reinterpreted by the logic of conservative modernization).

Both films have incorporated artistic practices from Tropicália and reviewed the leftist intellectual's role, especially in regard to legitimacy conferred on narrative and critical reception to popular culture practices. In *Macunaíma*, the character himself is legendary, come from an Indian legend collected by a traveler in the early 20th century and incorporated to literature by Andrade. Throughout the film, various magical elements are exposed at the exhibition of its racial rhetoric. Using the pretext of caring for Macunaima, Sofara takes him into the woods, transforms him into a "handsome prince" (white) and becomes sexually disinterested by Jigue, his black brother. Here, there is the relationship of the magical universe with the opposition between white and black from values like beauty and ugliness, civilization and barbarism, sexual interest and disinterest, and it is another aspect of parody of the whitening ideal already discussed above by explaining on which group fell expectations of reproduction of the nation's body (VERDERY, 2000).

This parody is accentuated in the last scene (partly censored at the time) when Macunaíma is devoured by Iara – the Amazonian myth – accompanied by Villa-Lobos's music that opens the film extolling the "heroes of the motherland". The "hero", completely succumbed to lust and laziness, could not be saved by his whiten – even because he had not changed his behavior – and therefore was punished dramatically. A double unmask is made: of the ideal of whitening and of national-popular speech rightly orientated that was granted the power of choosing the national heroes.

This type of approach with popular was also present in *Tenda dos Milagres*, "for shooting some scenes of Candomblé, Nelson Pereira dos Santos is building an authentic *terreiro* in one of the city parks because, as revealed, 'would not quite make the shots at houses of worship, the respect that should be taken as to the tenets of the black remnants of Bahia'"⁸.

In fact, it is a view taken over from the previous work of Nelson Pereira dos Santos. In *O Amuleto de Ogum*, there was a reinterpretation of race relations under a prism that was beginning to be challenged by the tropicalistas, by some experiments within the cinematographic field and by the role of social movements from ethnic base, which began to reorganize after a general crackdown to leftist movements in the late 1960s, as I stand before (LAPERÁ, 2013). In turn, *Tenda dos Milagres* presented a question incorporating

⁸ Tenda dos Milagres no cinema. *O Estado de São Paulo*, 28.9.1975.

partially the view of critics of racial democracy, trying to reconcile it with an image of heterogeneous people, but integrated, by installing an ambiguity in the analysis of racial and ethnic relations.

At this point, we need to do a comparative approach around the presence of the practices of Afro-Brazilian cults in *Macunaíma* and in *Tenda dos Milagres*. On the first, the protagonist comes amid a *candomblé* ritual to try to take revenge on the powerful Venceslau Pietro Pietra, an Italian immigrant industrial who had stolen his stone of luck (*muiraquitã*). The image shows abrupt cuts between Macunaíma kicking and punching a black woman in possession as a way to reach Venceslau (white) who, receiving the blows, wounds in a pathetic way, dirtying himself with the ritual food which was around him.

In *Tenda dos Milagres*, after several chases against *candomblé*, destroying objects and worship and targeting practitioners, Zé de Alma Grande, elected by the racist official discourse of the time as a “civilized black” after being “converted” from a marginal to a police agent, was the object of a possession during a police raid. After arresting a *pai-de-santo* and release him for not having anything to leave him imprisoned, the chief of Police attacks *candomblé* again, accompanied by Zé de Alma Grande and other officers. This time, when Zé de Alma Grande tries to invest against Archanjo, he is possessed and starts running and beating up the police officers who were part of the delegation that, astonished, shoot to the air in an attempt to dissuade him, without success.

In common, these sequences introduce two characteristics of the possession: punishment and reversing hierarchies⁹. And in all cases, this reversal has their racial or ethnic brand. In *Macunaíma*, Venceslau – white industrial – suffers as an instrument of the black medium. Then, in *Tenda...*, the black cop is lowered dramatically by encompassing speech and practices of the oppression against the practitioners of *candomblé* and also by refusing an ethnic solidarity.

The circulation of myths and popular stories in Brazilian cinema brings us to another practice carried out aesthetically by Tropicália previously mentioned: the reinterpretation of cultural contacts that would form the basis of the founding narratives (SOMMER, 2004) of Brazil. In the case of *Macunaíma*, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade put it this way during its launch, where would be the basis for this assessment: “Andrade found in the source, in the native Brazilian, the seed, the incipient picture of the Brazilian, a result of the mixture of many races. [...] He has a very adventurous life, dating a thousand of women, gets into a thousand things, gives creeping worldwide. He was born black and becomes white”.

9 The interpretation of possession as punishment was explored by Ruth and Seth Leacock (1972) in their work on *pajelança* in Belém, in which the “enchanted” (as the natives named the entities that possessed the initiated) punish if the initiated violated any ritual obligation or act contrary to the will of his enchanted, and the punishment can range from a simple throwing on the ground to a self-flagellation that left the person very injured.

Even with a certain lapse, *Tenda dos Milagres* is also located in the same double effort presented in *Macunaíma* to revisit the origin narratives of intercultural contacts which the Brazilian company would be the result and reevaluate the place of authority of intellectuals as producers and disseminators of these narratives. The film clearly divided intellectuals into two political lines, tracing different paths for them both in the place of authority they occupy in the debate about race as the prestige and profits obtained from their commitments. The right-wing intellectuals are portrayed from the characters in the newspaper owner Dr. Zezinho (Wilson Mello), Dr. Nilo Argolo (Nildo Parente) and the police chief (Emanoel Cavalcanti), while the left by Dr. Edelweiss (Anecy Rocha), the protagonist Pedro Archanjo (Jards Macalé and Juarez Paradise), the academic José Calazans (Guido Araujo) and journalist and filmmaker Fausto Pena (Hugo Carvana).

It was up to the right-wing intellectuals to stage the repression from academic world, the police force and the media. Nilo Argolo and police chief have racist theories prevailing in the late 19th century and early 20th century and how they intended to change the ethnic and racial composition of the country. Argolo – one of the main villains of the plot – calls for racial purity, even proposing a ban on interracial marriage. According to him, “*mestizaje* is not only physical and intellectual, it is emotional”. The basis of the theoretical problem of Argolo (a reference to Nina Rodrigues) lies in the fact that there is identification by the elite and the middle class with various aspects of popular Afro-Brazilian culture.

Appointed publicly as mestizo by Pedro Archanjo (in a book), Argolo gets the Medical School janitor sent off for his act of subversion, which he considered an attempt to “discredit Brazil’s family institution” and institutions as the faculty itself. The authoritative discourse taken over by Argolo can be interpreted as a rereading of the past in the narrative proposal, actually, to refer to the institutions elected by the conservative modernization proposed by the military dictatorship as fundamental to their morale.

The character that best combines this line of interpretation is the police chief. He points out Black population as marginal and says that “Black is prone to crime” and samba, capoeira and candomblé are only “manifestations of this crime”. In a flow, his speech was radicalized to the point of declaring that he was in a “holy war” against candomblé. He accompanied expeditions against the *terreiros* and ordered the destruction of these temples, while shouting to the crowd that “those who want to beat the drum to return to Africa! Bahia is a land of white”. Thus, the state repression earned his double time: in the past, against the black population and, at present, against the forces of opposition to the current regime.

Critics recognize racism as the main theme of the movie: “*Tenda...* proposes a new issue: racism. The problem of the African element in Brazilian culture. Jorge Amado’s

book traces a history of the formation of Brazilian racial democracy with a perfect image of prejudice and racial theory of the country. Pedro Archanjo – that in the film will be played by Jards Macalé – fights against racism”¹⁰.

Ironically, the debate about race and racism in the film would be portrayed as barred by the interests of the media and their sponsors. Dr. Zezinho, owner of a local Communication conglomerate, is shown in its effort to manipulate intellectuals. In his first speech in the film, “we seek to make this house a nest of intellectuals. And what happens when we need them? They disappear! I think that our intellectuals are just a few bums and cowards”, complaining that there was no one to replicate the article about Pedro Archanjo conveyed by the newspaper competitor group.

After this, he appears chairing the committee formed by intellectuals celebrating the centenary of the birth of Pedro Archanjo, a fact reported by local media, including in it a seminar on racial democracy in Brazil, to be organized by Dr. Edelweiss. Later, guided by the sponsors of the event, he calls off the seminar, considering it to be an “explosive issue” or, in the words of one of the advertisers, “we cannot mix the figure of Pedro Archanjo with this subject of racial prejudice”, a quote related to the silence around this discussion.

In turn, Dr. Edelweiss is portrayed as an intellectual coopted by the interests of the media in the promotion of Pedro Archanjo. Even reacting to the refusal of Dr. Dewey to fund the workshop on race relations, she appears in the last scene of the film visibly embarrassed applauding the speech of the powerful businessman, while listening that Pedro Archanjo was allied to Nilo Argolo, something rejected by the film itself. By Edelweiss operation, are perceived the constraints to the left-wing intellectuals’s activity.

However, the position of this left intellectual did not escape from criticism. In an interview, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, continuing his review started in *Amuleto...*, says: “What knowledge tools we employ to observe our reality [...]? I think that, up to 64, we were still colonized, even in this kind of ‘instrumentality’, that is, the instrument itself generated the colonization instrument rather than a liberating knowledge”¹¹. In the film, a dialogue between the protagonist and the academic José Calazans amplifies this (self) criticism. After Pedro Archanjo – as Ojuoba (babalorixá) – has been able to push the possession of Zé de Alma Grande and cause it to be directed against the police and this fact was sung by the string literature, which helped in their disclosure, the two intellectuals meet in a bar. Calazans questions: “I wonder how you, a man of science, believe in candomblé, in deities? In things so primitive? As a materialist, I wonder how do you balance yes and no?”, with

10 Tenda dos Milagres. *Jornal da Tarde*, 25.10.1977.

11 Entrevista a Tarso de Castro e Jards Macalé. Folhetim. *Folha de São Paulo*, 20.11.1977.

due time proportion, a speech related to leftist intellectuals of the 1950s and 60s. To this, the protagonist answers: “Don’t fool yourself, professor. I’m not two, I am only one, Pedro Archanjo Ojuoba, Brazilian mulatto. (...) Science does not limit me, professor!”, keeping in check scientific discourse; in fact, the political left discourse and how it framed religious practices.

This connection between ethnic groups and intellectuals was taken up by Nelson Pereira in the interview already mentioned:

I am criticizing myself. Now who identifies with me or anyone close to me that accepts criticism, all right. I want to criticize myself and go ahead. Let once and for all end up with this marginal position. In fact, this is very similar to the racial problem. The intellectual is identified with the black, the Indian, the woman. These guys are not realizing. To be good, a Brazilian intellectual has to be superior, brilliant. To be good, a Black has to be a professor at the Faculty of Medicine. Florestan Fernandes clearly puts it in the book *O Negro na sociedade brasileira*. A colonized country cannot have a conscience and the intellectual, the artist – that name there – in short, who is able to think and reflect on their own situation and the people from which it emerges will be marginal¹².

It is noteworthy the reference to Florestan Fernandes’s book, as the official doctrine of the Luso-tropicalism was based on the research of Gilberto Freyre, whom the first was opposed to by an analysis that revealed the contradictions of the ideal of racial democracy.

Still on the cultural contacts shown in the films, we can notice a metonymic relationship between the protagonists of the dramas and their groups. In *Macunaíma*, the trajectory of the hero enacts the desire of whitening from the gradual removal of his rural origins, and its sharp corruption in the city and its tragic end a parody of the “nation’s heroes”. In turn, Pedro Archanjo, initially affiliated to Candomblé practices, tries to insert himself in the academic world, but without success because of the place reserved to him in post-slavery society, in which he survives marginally in his literacy practices (teacher, writer).

Conclusion

Both in their productions as in the critical reception, *Macunaíma* and *Tenda dos Milagres* brought to the debate, at different times, the symptoms of the intellectual crisis

¹² *Op. cit.*

that befell the field of cinema and, in general, about the intellectuals after the 1964 coup and the gradual repression of the regime. This crisis provoked some setbacks in the discourse of national-popular and, because of it, some intellectual practices connected with it were contested.

The central place occupied by Tropicália in this aesthetical and intellectual reinvention in the late 1960s meant that many of its artistic and discursive practices were appropriated by various actors of the cinematographic field and would be reverberated over the next decade. In the case of the ideas about race and ethnicity, it caused a change in the terms of the dispute of the *habitus* in the field, in that “other” racial and ethnic put in a hierarchy and/or deleted could be recovered in the narratives of the films analyzed.

This is not to say the disappearance of rhetoric that supported the ideal of racial democracy and the image of an integrated racially and ethnically people, as it was more visible in the 1950s and until the mid 1960. However, the cultural contacts began to gain further reading by incorporation of myths, beliefs and popular narratives, of the parodic tone and of pop culture references and, above all, by serving critical ideas to the doctrine of Luso-Tropicalismo, so related to the military regime in Brazil.

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