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The Nature of Comparison: Macunaima and Orlando

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ABSTRACT

Dominant modes for comparing modernist literatures do so by coordinating individual texts against a larger narrative of modernity conceived as economic or political globalization. This article proposes an alternative premise for comparison. Instead of focusing on development, it considers the ways in which different national modernisms registered a changing modernity in terms of nature and natural history. This switch is demanded by two texts that bear a number of thematic and conceptual similarities and were published months apart in 1928: Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Both works rethink Darwinism's import for national representation by adapting the genre of the national romance or prose epic. They come to offer a sense of nations as living or organic in queer and unexpected ways. Tracing this process in relation also to the context of rising fascism, the article sheds light on modernist views of nature and their heuristic value as a basis for comparison.

KEYWORDS: modernism, Darwinism, queer theory, national narrative, epic, romance, world literature, fascism, ecocriticism

For a long time, ecocriticism and modernism were opposed fields. On the syllabus for one, there were the environmentalists, Thoreau and Aldo Leopold; on the other, the technophilic antinaturalists, Marinetti and Wyndham Lewis. Lately, this opposition has been extensively challenged. As literary critics have turned their scrutiny to both nature and modernism, new familiarities have emerged. Bonnie Kime Scott has shown urban writers to have been deeply invested in the natural world.¹ Joshua Schuster, Benjamin Bateman, and Robin Schulze have developed earlier studies of modernism

and degeneration or eugenics to expose its queer involvements with ecology and Darwinism.² And others have found in it a literature especially adapted to the conceptual demands of an environmental posthumanism. So, for instance, Alison Lacivita's 2015 *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* shows "[t]ime and the river and the mountain" to be, as James Joyce claimed, "the real heroes" of his last book.³

Modernism's newfound intimacy with ecocriticism coincides with another, larger expansion toward global reach. In 2008, Doug Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz observed that "there can be no doubt that modernist studies is undergoing a transnational turn,"⁴ a claim that has only been confirmed and consolidated in the decade since. Where once the discourse was dominated by a few Paris-based writers, new scholarship stretches across the planet. Modernism is no longer uncritically Eurocentric. Nor can it easily be contained by national frameworks or particular period boundaries. For Susan Stanford Friedman, the leading and most radical exponent of this enlargement, modernism is simply the "*expressive dimension of modernity*" in its miscellaneous, recurring, contradictory forms.⁵

On account of their broadly anti-metropolitan bent, modernism's two expansions—into nature, across the globe—should be closely related. Rarely, however, do they work in tandem. Scholarship that reconsiders modernist literature's engagement with nature typically has a specific focus, looking at individual, canonical texts and authors in United States and British settings. Studies associated with the transnational turn on the other hand, do not usually reveal nature or ecology to play a fundamental role. In general, they define global modernity in a broadly Marxist vocabulary.⁶ "I believe," writes Fredric Jameson, articulating the basic principle here, "that the only satisfactory semantic meaning of modernity lies in its association with capitalism."⁷ Modernity is seen as economic, political, and technological uneven development, and postmodernity is "what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good."⁸ Any text that dwells too much in the local environment registers, consequently, as a reactionary other to modernity, "retrospectively erasing the history of intersection that enables its existence."⁹ Indeed, it is partly in order to make space for ecology alongside economy that Friedman calls for a perspective that includes "a consciousness of the earth as planet, not restricted to geopolitical formations and potentially encompassing the nonhuman as well as the human."¹⁰ Yet within *Planetary Modernisms*, where this call appears, ideas about nature are pushed behind histories of trade and politics. World systems eclipse ecosystems. As Anne Raine comments: "critics are just beginning to work out what an ecocritical or planetary account of modernism might look like."¹¹

How can we read different modernisms comparatively not as plotted along one developmental movement away from nature toward postmodernism, but as expressing the increasingly complex network of connections between the natural world and human culture that thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, and Stacy Alaimo have taught us, is constitutive of modernity? In proposing one answer to this question here, I want to look at two peculiar national fictions, both published in 1928: Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Both works are examples of the same genre: the national romance or prose epic. Although seldom credited as a site for modernism, this genre was used by innovative writers throughout the early twentieth century in different parts of the world as a means of thinking about the changing nature of the nation. Texts such as John Cowper Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance*, José Rivera's *La vorágine*, Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans*, Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi: An Epic of South African Native Life*, or Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*, each have a stake in, and operate on, the idea of a national nature. Such works creatively represent what Roberto Esposito describes as the "geophilosophical" relation of a nation's "living thought" to its territory.¹² And in this capacity, they provide a potential large-scale litmus to nature—nature simultaneously material and constructed—as a changing historical agency.¹³

At first sight, however, this choice of genre will appear perverse. Implicit already in the label transnational modernism is that the nation, as an imagined romantic unity—a Herderian end in itself—must be overcome. Regardless how formally innovative the texts, nativist national fiction is surely diametrically opposed to the transnational project. Focusing on such works as the basis for a new comparativity appears regressive, both politically (since they are often associated with reactionary mystification) and methodologically. The process seems to hail back to a nineteenth-century mode for comparative literature, seen in, for example, Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett's seminal *Comparative Literature* with its links to Spencerian evolutionary theory and comparative anatomy. Although a number of critics have urged a reconsideration of this field of comparative scholarship, in general the optic meets with unease.¹⁴ In his article, "Racial Memory and Literary History," for example, Stephen Greenblatt warns against the returning deployment of organicist models of national literatures, specifically on behalf of historically disenfranchised groups:

. . . the acceptance, even if it feels clever and tactically enabling, of the traditional model of literary history, with its concern to purify the dialect of the tribe, robs the hitherto marginalized groups of

their revolutionary potential: a potential that lies in the impurity of languages and ethnicities, in tangled lines of access and blockage, in the flesh-and-blood intensity of loss, assimilation, and invention, and in the daring intersection of multiple identities.¹⁵

Greenblatt suggests that reading traditions on organic grounds involves fixing identities into essential categories, as well as an attendant agenda of “purifying” or, implicitly, of “ethnic cleansing.” His conclusion is to urge us to closer historical scrutiny. “To write literary history, we need more a sharp awareness of accidental judgments than a theory of the organic.”¹⁶

This article challenges Greenblatt’s conclusion, asserting the value of a more sensitive understanding of the organic alongside a “sharp awareness of accidental judgments.” It holds that not thinking about organicism does not mean dispensing with it, or immunizing ourselves against it, but rather, accepting a set of impoverished and essentialist assumptions about it. To appreciate why 1920s modernisms might offer something new or unfamiliar on this topic, it’s worth looking at the state of the key scientific discourse behind sociobiological and vitalist thought at the time: evolutionary theory. Fitting into the longer period sometimes called the “eclipse of Darwinism,” the 1920s was a decade when the meanings and processes of evolution were frequently contested. Many different interpretations of evolutionary thought competed during this period, ranging from various schools of eugenics, on the one hand, to Henri Bergson’s *Évolution créatrice* or Peter Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* on the other.¹⁷ In turn, these different interpretations of evolution’s mechanisms and meanings implied different understandings of national identity and destiny: racist definitions vied with new cultural understandings, such as that of Franz Boas and his followers. In the dictatorships of the 1930s, several of these different positions on questions of evolution would become enshrined as state ideologies. (Nazi Germany claimed an evolutionary distinction between Aryans and Jews; in the Soviet Union, Lysenkoism was adopted; while in Brazil, the Vargas regime instituted an official policy of “racial democracy.”) The 1920s, however, was, in broad outline, a decade of evolutionary debate and controversy.

If our own attitudes toward nativism tend to be dismissive a priori, in part that is because of the way in which a binary has been set up for us by history. As Pheng Cheah notes, critiques of the organicist metaphor written in the aftermath of National Socialism “remain extremely influential in contemporary discourse.”¹⁸ Our terms for treating the relation of nature to nationhood are still heavily determined by Hans Kohn’s broad dichotomy between a good, Western, liberal, nationalism, and a bad, Eastern, ethnic nationalism.

For modernist authors, however, this opposition was not so sharp. Often they tended to engage with debates about evolution's national significance, and to take part in them through their fiction. In particular, at the end of the 1920s, the question of the uses of nativist fiction remained open, if marked as a site of ideological contest. In Germany, fascism worked to appropriate ecological discourses.¹⁹ Books such as Richard Walther Darré's 1930 *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, popularized the term "blood and soil" and partly shaped the expectations for the increasingly popular *Heimat-* or *Schollen-Roman*. Elsewhere, however, authors imagined other possible applications and forms for nativist fiction well into the 1930s.

Modernist fiction—partly because it was composed against the uncertainties of the eclipse of Darwinism, partly because much of it was written before and against the twentieth century's biopolitical totalitarianisms—helps us to open up Greenblatt's binary opposition between "accident" and the "organic." Instead of accepting a reified conception of the relationship between natural and national history, the world and language about it, such fiction aims to bring the nation to a kind of life as a mesh of elements in process. Often, in modernist texts, the concept of a biologically involved national identity is less monolithic, less stable, and less clearly tied to purity than we may expect. Such fiction allows us to imagine large territories as having comparable interwoven living histories. And in turn, it invites us to reconsider organicism, and begin to reclaim some of its heuristic power for literary comparison.

Orlando and Macunaíma

The comparative methodology that I imagine here is demanded, and justified, by the two texts that this article will now focus on in detail: Virginia Woolf's very English *Orlando: A Biography* and Mário de Andrade's very Brazilian *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*. These books have a number of striking similarities. Both were written hastily and published three months apart in 1928. Both are mock epic narratives offering fictional versions of their respective national histories. And both are titled after their protagonist, a figure who in each case undergoes an unlikely bodily transformation. *Macunaíma* tells the picaresque story of the eponymous hero's various adventures through Brazil, from his youth in the Amazon, through his racial transformation from black to white, his sojourn in São Paulo, and back to the devastated jungle. *Orlando* traces a young man's progress

from his country seat in Kent, to the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts, to Constantinople, where he changes sex, and back home to England. Throughout, both books maintain an idiosyncratic, melancholy yet comic tone. Both luxuriate in extravagant linguistic play. And both end with a reference to the moment of narration—a reference that, in each case, works to deconstruct, along lines theorized by Carolina Correia dos Santos, the relation of fiction to criticism and the national tradition.²⁰ Andrade and Woolf are, in this sense, exemplary modernists in their separate spheres. Already in February 1922, Andrade took part in the foundational “*Semana de Arte Moderna*.” In the same year, he published the book that is claimed to have introduced European avant-garde poetics to Brazilian poetry, *Paulicéia desvairada*. He helped to update various Brazilian genres, was associated (partly against his will) with the *Manifesto antropófago*, and became a vital influence on later innovative Brazilian writing.²¹ If Woolf’s writing has come, in part, to define literary modernism in English, the same is true of Andrade’s works for 1920s Brazilian *modernismo*.

Despite their similarities, however, *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* have not been considered alongside each other; their modernisms have not been shown to intersect. Rather, each text is taken to belong to, and operate on, a seemingly incommensurate national canon. *Macunaíma*, for many years, was seen as “intrinsically Brazilian.”²² The protagonist is regarded as a part of the Brazilian patrimony, or as the opening epithet has it: “herói de nossa gente”²³ (the hero of our people). Haroldo de Campos dubbed *Macunaíma* “nossa Odisséia” (our *Odyssey*),²⁴ and others have recognized it as “the most important book of Brazilian modernist nationalism.”²⁵ Although the author resisted facile equations making the hero into a national representative, in his long-unpublished “first preface” he explained that writing the book and the hero was part of an ethnographic project, a way of articulating Brazilian identity: “O que me interessou por Macunaíma foi incontestavelmente a preocupação em que vivo de trabalhar e descobrir o mais que possa a entidade nacional dos brasileiros”²⁶ (What interested me in *Macunaíma* was incontestably my life aim of working out and discovering as much as I could of the national being of Brazilians). *Macunaíma*’s supposed lack of character and promiscuity are, in this same preface, explained as epitomizing Brazil’s alleged lack of character and the “disorganized pornography” that makes up its “everyday life.”²⁷ Orlando, on the other hand, is “English root and fibre,”²⁸ just as Woolf was “the most English of all the modernists.”²⁹ Based on Vita Sackville-West’s biography and family history, Orlando’s story is coterminous with England’s modern history: Orlando grows up

with royalty, curates a definitively English house, works as an ambassador of the nation, and serves as a mirror to the changes in the nation's *Zeitgeist*. Both are coterie works that signify primarily in regard to a set of emic references. Even the transformations of these two figures stand to be interpreted in national terms. Macunaíma is born in the northern Amazon to “an Indian woman of the Tapanhuma tribe” with “skin black as calcined ivory.”³⁰ This oddity, and his subsequent metamorphosis into a blue-eyed Aryan on his way to São Paulo, are, most readers suggest, references to Brazil's conflicted history of racial mixture.³¹ Orlando's sex change, likewise, is set off by her subsequent inability to fit in with the “gipsies” and her nostalgia for England. She can leave behind her sex, but she cannot leave behind her national roots. And indeed, her new body only begins to “matter” in Judith Butler's sense, in the larger context of English gender norms, once she embarks on the “*Enchanted Lady*.”³²

In trying to appreciate *Orlando* and *Macunaíma* as parallel testimonies to a shared modernity, we might be tempted to read in them both a larger history of economic and technological development. The problem, however, is that neither text is particularly interested in expressing modernity in this idiom. In *Orlando*, the characters of different centuries depend rather on changes in the climate. Woolf's book was loosely inspired by Sackville-West's *The Land*, and like that poem, it exists in a peculiar national organic time.³³ Andrade showed little concern to see the latest advances; he never crossed the Atlantic. In *Macunaíma*, São Paulo and its machines are offered to us through the mythopoeic eyes of the hero as a type of jungle. The book resists a view of modernity as fully accounted for by development, both in its celebration of laziness and in its satires of instrumentalized time.³⁴ While certainly both texts involve mixed feelings about new technology, when read against a larger narrative of uneven development, the majority of their narrative parallels do not signify.

In order to reveal the similarities between *Orlando* and *Macunaíma* as more than coincidences, therefore, we need to adduce another version of the story of modernity—inseparable from the natural world—operating in the background of both. Both works are aware of, and communicate this story through their own idiosyncratic historiographies, in which human actions are prompted by and in an elaborate symbiosis with clouds, nettles, mosquitos, birds, worms, dogs, ants, and the whimsicalities of the language representing them. It is the need for, and construction of, this story in both texts, which makes them into an excellent sample pair for a new methodology of comparing modernisms.

Evolving Nations

The nativism of *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* is asserted early in both. Both are premised on a romantic nationalist logic, by which the hero is linked to the ground of the nation by a kind of natural covenant. When the child Macunaíma misbehaves, his mother carries him to a part of the forest, “onde ele podia crescer mais não” (*M* 17) (“where he would be unable to grow” [11]). He is like a plant, rooted metaphorically in the soil. Orlando likewise extends into the ground through the roots of the symbolic oak tree, to which, in the opening pages, he tethers his heart:

... he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to; the heart that tugged at his side; the heart that seemed filled with spiced and amorous gales every evening about this time when he walked out. To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself; the leaves hung; the deer stepped nearer and the rooks wheeled round him and the swallows dipped and circled and the dragonflies shot past, as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer’s evening were woven web-like about his body. (*O* 15)

Orlando’s oak tree is an English national symbol: the tree that sheltered a king, and thus guaranteed the royal line. Woolf repeatedly describes this oak tree as rising above all of England. “It was very high, so high indeed that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath; and on clear days thirty or perhaps forty, if the weather was very fine” (*O* 14). The connection is clear: the blood that courses through Orlando’s heart is pumped through the veins of the oak tree, which draws its nutrition up through its roots from the national soil.

In both books, the symbolic relation of hero and soil is filtered through an interest in native plant and animal life. *Macunaíma* is full of lists of flora and menageries of bizarre fauna, much of it endemic, and hence posing a challenge to any translator. The hero is surrounded by, and occasionally metamorphoses into this larger assemblage. Orlando’s identity is also closely linked to nature. In the scene quoted earlier, when Woolf describes “all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer’s evening” as “woven web-like” about the body of Orlando, the language recalls Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, which is replete with instances “showing how plants and animals, remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations.”³⁵

As in Darwin's famous vision of the "entangled bank" at the end of *Origin* (which, fittingly, was probably based on a hillock within walking distance of Knole House), Woolf here emphasizes the coextensiveness of soil, plants, and animal life; she locates the body of the hero as the naturalist might.³⁶

Interestingly, the particular floras with which Macunaíma and Orlando are associated are not botanically accurate, but rather skewed to constitute national unities. Each nation is imagined as a kind of biocenosis or independent lifeworld. The lists of animal and plant specimens that surround Macunaíma represent an inductive totality. As Andrade wrote in his notes to the first preface: "Um dos meus interesses foi desrespeitar lendariamente a geografia e a fauna e flora geográficas. Assim desregionalizava o mais possível a criação ao mesmo tempo que conseguia o mérito de conceber literariamente o Brasil como entidade homogênea—um conceito étnico nacional e geográfico."³⁷ (One of my interests was, in the style of legends, to disrespect geography and geographical fauna and flora. In this way I deregionalized the creation as much as possible, while at the same time I achieved the merit of conceiving Brazil literarily as a homogeneous being—an ethnic and geographical national concept.) In line with the act of conceiving the whole nation (note the sexual pun), Andrade includes a number of panoramic *tours d'horizon* in *Macunaíma*, where the hero covers the whole territory from border to border. Comparably, Orlando's oak tree brings together a series of different spaces into one fictional *Umwelt*: from its coign of vantage, we are told, one can even see Snowdon and the Hebrides (but not France): "In the far distance Snowdon's crags broke white among the clouds; she saw the far Scottish hills and the wild tides that swirl about the Hebrides" (O 239). This inclusion of the Hebrides as an undistinguished part of Orlando's domain reminds us of *To the Lighthouse* where, as plants like the red-hot poker reveal, the Isle of Skye shares growing conditions with St. Ives in southern England.³⁸ It marks both a disregard for political definitions of the nation, and, like Andrade, a desire to unite the nation into one imaginary ecosystem even at the cost of introducing inaccuracies. Like Andrade, Woolf reveals her full consciousness of this respect in her witty preface: "Finally, I would thank, had I not lost his name and address, a gentleman in America, who has generously and gratuitously corrected the punctuation, the botany, the entomology, the geography, and the chronology of previous works of mine and will, I hope, not spare his services on the present occasion" (O 6).

Within the peculiar web of connections linking nation to nature to hero, an important role is played in both *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* by sexuality or "amorous activity." Both contain many Ovid-like metamorphoses and etiologies explaining the causes of various national phenomena.

But in each case, as often in the romance genre, these metamorphoses are complementary manifestations of the work's performative rendering of sex and desire. In *Macunaíma*, the libido is ubiquitous. The most characteristic verb of the book is to play, "brincar"—a euphemism for making love.³⁹ In a number of descriptions, the hero's hyperbolic sex drive derives from the jungle itself, as a sort of unrestrained procreative urge:

Depois retesou os músculos, se erguendo num trapézio de cipó e aos pulos atingiu num átimo o galho mais alto da piranheira. Sofará trepava atrás. O ramo fininho vergou oscilando com o peso do príncipe. Quando a moça chegou também no tope eles brincaram outra vez balanceando no céu. Depois de brincarem Macunaíma quis fazer uma festa em Sofará. (*M* 12)

(Then, tensing his muscles, he pulled himself up on a trapeze of bush ropes and with a heave and a ho swung himself into the topmost branches of the carib-lure tree; Sofara climbed after him. The slender branches swayed, bending under the weight of the prince; when the girl reached the top they made love again, swinging in great arcs across the sky. This thrilling movement made Macunaíma desire a downright orgy with Sofara. [7])

In *Orlando*, the connection between the libido and the natural world also reaches an extravagant pitch in the Victorian chapter, where the burgeoning vegetation around Orlando's house is matched by the protagonist's pining to be "mated" (*O* 180). Shortly before meeting Shelmerdine, Orlando muses: "Everyone is mated except myself."

There were the rooks; Canute and Pippin even—transitory as their alliances were, still each this evening seemed to have a partner. "Whereas, I, who am mistress of it all," Orlando thought, glancing as she passed at the innumerable emblazoned windows of the hall, "am single, am mateless, am alone." (*O* 180)

The words "mated" or "mateless" of course, and the comparison to the rooks and dogs implies an imperative from the world of animals, shaping the course of Woolf's narrative. Within the context of the chapter, this compulsion is also suggestively linked to a "new discovery," which is surely that of Darwin. When pondering the latest phenomenon of inseparable couples blocking the road, Orlando "could only suppose that some *new discovery had been*

made about the race; they were somehow stuck together, couple after couple, but who had made it, and when, she could not guess" (O 177; my emphasis).

National history, natural history, sex, metamorphosis, and the national language are entwined in *Macunaíma* and *Orlando*. It is a short step from recognizing this nexus of relations to appreciating both works as modeling—in admittedly peculiar ways—evolutionary stories germane to England and Brazil. *Macunaíma* hints as much in its dedication to Paulo Prado. In his influential study, *Retrato do Brasil*, Prado describes how Brazil has evolved from its first colonization on account of the unbounded "luxuria" (promiscuity) of its settlers.⁴⁰ Flagging its relation to Prado's work, *Macunaíma* takes its place in a historiographical tradition in which sexual selection is seen to be key to national narrative—a tradition that would, in the succeeding years, be taken up and questioned in Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, Oliveira Viana's *Evolução do Povo Brasileiro*, and Sergio Buarque de Holanda's *Raizes do Brasil*.

Macunaíma and *Orlando* also adopt the evolutionary topoi of earlier positivist and naturalist novels more explicitly. As Doris Sommer noted in *Foundational Fictions*, *Macunaíma* invokes a practice of Latin American romance, in which heterosexual desire between ethnically distinct characters stands in synecdochic relation to genetic nation building.⁴¹ Before dedicating his work to Prado, in its manuscript version, Andrade's novel was dedicated to this genre's foremost Brazilian representative, José de Alencar; and *Macunaíma* reprises Alencar's *Iracema* in various ways.⁴² Similarly, in an early review, *Orlando* was described as "revolutionizing" the "Galsworthy type of novel."⁴³ The comparison is apt, since on the first page of the opening chapter of his family saga, Galsworthy informs us that his work, too, is a kind of national evolutionary fable. Anyone who has "been present at a family festival of the Forsytes,"

has been admitted to a vision of the dim roads of social progress, has understood something of patriarchal life, of the swarmings of savage hordes, of the rise and fall of nations. He is like one who, having watched a tree grow from its planting—a paragon of tenacity, insulation, and success, amidst the deaths of a hundred other plants less fibrous, sappy, and persistent—one day will see it flourishing with bland, full foliage, in an almost repugnant prosperity, at the summit of its efflorescence.⁴⁴

Woolf, of course, would go on to write her version of the national family saga in *The Years*. But *Orlando* experiments with the genre as well: it is about

the multiple generations of Vita's family. The oak tree is, as in Galsworthy, also a figure for the family tree. Both *Orlando* and *Macunaíma* represent comparable national uses of what Gillian Beer calls "Darwin's Plots"—they are national descents of man or phylogenesees.⁴⁵ Indeed, it would even be possible to read both texts as eugenic national allegories. *Macunaíma*, as Luís Madureira reveals, tells a story of racial whitening or "Aryanization."⁴⁶ *Orlando*, likewise, begins with the hero hacking at a moor's head, as if establishing its point of departure.

In this regard, it is telling that both texts toy with the notion found in the work of Leo Frobenius and Oswald Spengler that the nation itself constitutes a tribal body or superorganism, which passes through stages of evolution. Among other places, Virginia Woolf would have encountered this idea in Leonard Woolf's 1926 review (and to some extent satire) of the first volume of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. We know that Andrade was also conversant with contemporary expressions of this conceit, because in his second preface he refers readers seeking to understand *Macunaíma* to Christian Sénéchal's preface to the 1927 French translation of Hermann Keyserling's work, *Le Monde qui naît*.⁴⁷ Casting Keyserling as Spengler's major "counterpart," Sénéchal underlines the philosopher's belief that ". . . les cultures primitives sont des formes de vie indépendantes qui germent, croissent, s'épanouissent et dépérissent à la manière des plantes"⁴⁸ (primitive cultures are independent forms of life which generate, grow, flourish and waste away in the manner of plants). According to Keyserling, the work of the author is to take part in this evolution in a peculiar, vital way.⁴⁹ Both Andrade and Woolf can be understood to do something like this in *Macunaíma* and *Orlando*: they embody the question of how a national culture and history might be understood as a living organism with its own life story, and they take control of that story.

Queer Nativisms

If *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* adopt a familiar organicism, it is not to leave it in place undisturbed or to lead it to its conventional conclusions. Both works interrupt the biological punctuation and reproductivism that typically premises a national romance or family saga. And both are conscious of coming after a moment in the history of evolutionary thought in which arborescent systems expand outward fractally to national narrative and, in Haeckelian fashion, provide the key to the riddle of the universe. Indeed, the point of Orlando's reference to a "new discovery" having been

made “about the race” is exactly to historicize Darwin. The fact that the couples produced by this discovery block the road suggests that this is not the allegorical way forward. Rather than seeing his work as articulating a natural law, the book exposes sexual selection, or at least, a particular self-conscious heteronormative form of it, as socially constructed and historically contingent, just as sex and gender are more generally exposed as socially constructed by Orlando’s transition.

While the metaphor of roots connecting hero to land is never fully rejected in either text, the larger Darwinian logic of “Growth with Reproduction” that it implies, is transmuted.⁵⁰ In *Macunaíma*, the suggestion of growing up is exploded when the hero encounters a “cotia” or cavy (a capybara-like rodent), who then transforms him:

Então pegou na gamela cheia de caldo envenenado de aipim e jogou a lavagem no piá. Macunaíma fastou sarapantado mas só conseguiu livrar a cabeça, todo o resto do corpo se molhou. O herói deu um espirro e botou corpo. Foi desempenando crescendo fortificando e ficou do tamanho dum homem taludo. Porém a cabeça não molhada ficou pra sempre rombuda e com carinha enjoativa de piá. (*M* 19)

(. . . she snatched up the wooden bowl full of poisonous manioc juice and threw the liquid over the child. Macunaima dodged aside in fright but only managed to get his head out of the way; the rest of his body was drenched. The hero sneezed and fell to the ground. As he was wiping himself he felt himself growing bigger and getting stronger until he reached the size of a strapping young man. However, his head, which had not been doused, stayed the same as before—the nasty, oafish mug of the child he had been. [13])

This is not the natural conception of *Bildung* implicit in *Macunaíma*’s need to be in a fertile part of the forest in order to grow. Rather, it is a cosmetic, exterior maturity that has no impact on the character of the hero. *Macunaíma*’s often-cited racial transformation reprises this moment. Nothing about Andrade’s description encourages us to read it any differently than, say, *Macunaíma*’s transformation into a prince or a fish. Like Orlando’s sex change it is not significant to the hero’s personhood; it is merely one of a number of much more extraordinary protean metamorphoses.

In part, *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* display what Jed Esty describes in relation to the “early achievements of Conrad, Woolf, and Joyce” as a “central, yet surprisingly underexplored nexus between modernist aesthetics

and modern colonialism: the disruption of developmental time in reciprocal allegories of self-making and nation-building.⁵¹ Neither *Macunaíma* nor *Orlando* grows in ways that accord with their book's promptings of producing organic national coherence and unity. Yet, unlike *Bildungsromane*, the central drama of these works is not only the growth of the hero as a bourgeois individual, but also a transhistorical national being that is carried on through multiple generations. *Orlando* is aware of her peculiar ubiquity. In one passage, she adds the following lines (the "most insipid verse she had ever read in her life") to the "Oak Tree":

I am myself but a vile link
 Amid life's weary chain,
 But I have spoken hallow'd words,
 Oh, do not say in vain! (*O* 174)

What is troubled in these texts is less the expected equation between nation building and an individual's growth, and more the larger scale mechanics of national genetics, and the vitalist category of racial memory. Both texts imagine the national figure surviving through history and extending outward in ways other than those suggested by the allegory of natural and sexual selection.

Macunaíma and *Orlando* are, thus, less like *Bildungsromane* and more like peculiar national epics in prose. I mean this not because they both reprise the tradition of chivalric epic but because they both, like Pound's *The Cantos*, present themselves as "tales of the tribe." "There is no mystery," Pound wrote in *Guide to Kulchur* "about the *Cantos*, they are the tale of the tribe—give Rudyard credit for his use of the phrase."⁵² Pound, here, as Michael André Bernstein describes, is referring to Kipling's 1906 address to the Royal Academy Dinner. Kipling's address was about "an ancient legend" of a man who, having accomplished a "most notable deed,"

... wished to explain to his Tribe what he had done. As soon as he began to speak, however, he was smitten with dumbness, he lacked words, and sat down. Then there arose—according to the story—a masterless man, one who had taken no part in the action of his fellow, who had no special virtues, but who was afflicted—that is the phrase—with the magic of the necessary word. He was; he told; he described the merits of the notable deed in such fashion, we are assured, that the words became alive and walked up and down in the hearts of all his hearers.⁵³

As Bernstein summarizes, "gradually the tribe realized that only through the power of words 'will our children be able to judge of the phases of our

generation.”⁵⁴ By assuming the same role of ventriloquizing a narrative of a tribe, and thereby ensuring the tribe’s cultural survival, Pound, Andrade, and Woolf (or at least Orlando’s “biographer”) arrogate for their works a kind of evolutionary importance. In Pound’s work, the “tale of the tribe” is a term that brings together both his own reading of Frobenius’s work on cultural inheritance, and his sense that this memetic inheritance can be represented by one body: “The whole tribe is from one man’s body, / what other way can you think of it.”⁵⁵ *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* share this interest. They are versions of a national story that is also a living figure (*Macunaíma* is *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* is *Orlando*). But at the same time, both texts disrespect the normative evolutionary dynamics that a tale of tribe imply. In *Macunaíma*, this becomes explicit when we learn, in the closing paragraphs, that *Macunaíma*’s tribe has now entered the ultimate Darwinian category: extinction. The story survives however, because before he left “this earth” *Macunaíma* narrated it to a parrot, who repeated it to the author, who now (the moment of the narration) is singing it to us. Raúl Antelo suggests that here “o cantador representa a raça” (the singer represents the race): the foundation story is thus reconceived.⁵⁶ *Macunaíma* perpetuates himself and itself and Brazil—keeping it “alive” to “walk up and down the hearts” of Andrade’s hearers—by a bizarre genealogy, leading back through the animal world.

Andrade and Woolf’s departures from established models for thinking about national evolution are registered most clearly in relation to childbirth. Although both *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* have a child (possibly several), in each case, it is insignificant. Neither text is invested in reproductive futurity. *Macunaíma*’s child dies a page after it is born. And although the hero spends much of the rest of the book engaged in erotic activity, we are told of no further offspring. Similarly, *Orlando*’s “three sons” with Rosina Pepita are treated as a mere hypothesis by the biographer (*O* 119), and her only other child disappears from view almost instantly. Woolf’s description of her heroine’s labor is so oblique and flippant that readers might miss the event altogether (*O* 217), confounding our supposition that childbirth should be a privileged moment in historiography. Like Andrade, Woolf emphasizes other forms of descent in her book—both diegetic (as when *Orlando* is adopted by Queen Elizabeth: “He was to be the son of her old age; the limb of her infirmity; the oak tree on which she leant her degradation” [*O* 21]), and metatextual. The “oak tree,” for instance, is a family tree and the long poem that the *Orlando* carries around with her through the centuries. What is more important in *Orlando* than childbirth is the “corporeal generation of textuality”⁵⁷: “Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one!” (*O* 12).

The disruption of expectations about how evolutionary stories proceed informs the peculiar narrative trajectories of these fictions. In *Macunaíma*, this emerges often in the thematization of infertility and castration. In place of the “productive eroticism” that Sommer finds in *Iracema*, *Macunaíma* often tends, beneath its veneer of fecundity, toward its opposite: sterility. “[W]hat is striking about Macunaíma’s frenzied sexual activity is precisely that—in contrast to the foundational romance between Amerindian mother figures and Lusitanian patriarchs—it is not ‘re-productive.’”⁵⁸ There is no causal progression toward climax in *Macunaíma*, but merely what Ettore Finazzi-Agrò labels a “copulatory” joining of one thing to another, just as more generally the hero passes from one woman to another, and rather like the way in which Orlando passes, slightly exhaustingly for the reader, from one scene to the next.⁵⁹

A late grotesque encounter with a monkey both epitomizes and complicates the theme of nonreproductive sex and its relation to evolution in *Macunaíma*. The encounter begins when Macunaíma, observing the monkey cracking *babassu* nuts between his legs, asks him what he is doing. The monkey convinces Macunaíma that he is eating his testicles, and—since they taste great—that our hero should try with his own:

O herói agarrou num paralelepípedo. O macaco mono rindo por dentro inda falou pra ele:

- Você tem mesmo coragem, sobrinho?
- Boni-t-ó-tó macaxeira mocotó! o herói exclamou empafioso. Firmou bem o paralelepípedo e juque! nos toaliquiçus. Caiu morto. O macaco mono caçoou assim:
- Pois, meus cuidados, não falei que tu morrias! Falei! Não me escutas! Estás vendo o que sucede pros desobedientes? Agora: sic transit!

Então calçou as luvas de balata e foi-se. (*M* 117)

(The hero picked up a paving sett. The monkey laughed behind his hand and said, “Sure you’ve got enough nerve, nephew?”)

“This should make a lovely monkey, uncle!” exclaimed Macunaima boastfully. He took a firm grip on the sett and brought it down like a pile driver—*crash!*—smack on his nuts. He dropped dead. The capuchin monkey jeered at him, “Now then, my friend, don’t say you’ve gone and killed yourself. Speak up! Let me hear you! This shows what happens to smart alecks! And now, *sic transit . . .!*” He put on his balata gloves and scampered off. [111])

This is not the end of *Macunaíma*. Actually it has little relevance to the fabula since “our hero” is soon resurrected. But the scene does provide insight into the process of Andrade’s reimagining continuity by rejecting reproductive expectations. This rejection is emphasized in the “capuchin” monkey’s Latin moral, “*sic transit . . .!*” short for *sic transit gloria mundi*, or “Thus passes the glory of the world.” Associated with Papal succession, the phrase hints at alternatives to the patriarchal narrative of national fathering implied in a promiscuous hero’s “great shaggy ballocks” (M 161).

In Brazilian Portuguese, a *macaco* or *macaquero* is figuratively someone without originality, a copier. Appropriately, Andrade’s castration vignette, like much of *Macunaíma* is itself copied from the second volume of Theodor Koch-Grünberg’s ethnographic travelogue *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco*.⁶⁰ In the earlier version, narrated to Koch-Grünberg by his guide Taulipäng Mayüluaiipu, the victim is the stock figure of the Jaguar:

Ein Mann Namens *Kone’wó* zerschlug Tucumá-Früchte mit einem Stein zwischen seinen Beinen nahe seinen Geschlechtsteilen. Da kam ein Jaguar von hinten, erschreckte ihn und sprach: „Was machst du da, Schwager?“ *Kone’wó* behielt einen Kern in der geschlossenen Hand und sagte: „Ich zerbreche meine Hoden und esse sie.“ Der Jaguar fragte: „Schmeckt es gut?“ Der Mann zerklopfte eine andere Tucumá-Frucht, aber ohne daß der Jaguar sehen konnte, was es war, gab sie ihm und sagte: „Da! Versuche sie!“ Der Jaguar versuchte die Frucht und sagte: „Es schmeckt gut, Schwager!“ Der Mann sagte: „Schmeckt es gut? Dann versuche deine!“ Da nahm der Jaguar einen Stein, schlug mit aller Wucht auf seine Hoden und fiel tot um. Da sagte *Kone’wó*: „Habe ich es dir nicht gesagt, du würdest sterben? Bleibe hier! Jetzt gehe ich weg!“ Er ließ den Jaguar liegen.⁶¹

(A man called *Kone’wó* was cracking Tucumá fruit with a stone between his legs near his genitals. A Jaguar came up behind him, and, surprising him, spoke: “What are you doing there, brother-in-law?” *Kone’wó* held a kernel in his closed hand and said: “I’m breaking my balls and eating them.” The Jaguar asked: “Do they taste good?” The man broke another Tucumá fruit, but without letting the Jaguar see what it was. He gave it to him and said: “There! You try!” The Jaguar tried the fruit and said: “It tastes good, brother-in-law!” The man said: “Does it taste good? Then try yours!” So the Jaguar took a stone, struck his balls with all his might, and fell dead. Then

said *Kone'wó*: "Didn't I tell you, you would die? Stay here! Now I'm going away!" He let the Jaguar lie.)

In the folktales of *Kone'wó* and the Jaguar, it is the Jaguar who is made laughable, showing humanity's superior intelligence. But here Macunaíma plays the role of the animal, while the monkey outsmarts him. The role reversal is emphasized by Andrade's subtle alteration to the stock greeting of the Jaguar in Mayüluaipu's narrative: "Was machst du da, Schwager?" into an intergenerational, avuncular relation of "tio" (uncle) and "sobrinho" (nephew) (*M* 116). In the wake of the Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925 (the alleged source of the phrase, "Then I'm a monkey's uncle!"), this address might have evoked debates about Darwinism in the classroom. The point of an evolutionary past convincing the evolutionary future to castrate itself is to confuse evolutionary progress, bringing it to a peculiar halt from below. This symbolic confusion, which also seems to echo the famous exchange between T. H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce, is then doubled by the bizarre final detail of the monkey putting on a pair of balata, or latex, gloves. Latex gloves are an object that, in this context, evokes not only the national rubber trade, but also the latex condom invented in 1920 and the sterility of a surgical operation, for which latex gloves had been used since the 1890s.

Linguistic Recreations

Macunaíma and *Orlando*, then, raise up the possibility of an evolutionary narrative, offering this shell for their national histories, before subverting its expected progress. In the case of Woolf's book, this was recognized already by *Orlando's* first reviewers. What was more difficult for this audience to understand was the immediate value of such playful departures. As Conrad Aiken wrote in *The Dial*:

Granted that what [Woolf] wanted to tell us was a fable, or allegory: that she wanted to trace the aesthetic evolution of a family (and by implication that of a country) over a period of three hundred years: and that she had hit upon the really first-rate idea of embodying this racial evolution in one undying person: need she quite so much have presumed on our incredulity?⁶²

“How can we discover in all this the urgent reality of the other works?” asked another French reviewer.⁶³ An awareness of the political claims on evolution in the 1930s, I think, helps. With the benefit of hindsight, the stakes of rewriting the relationship between the nation and biological evolution are clearer. Both *Orlando* and *Macunaíma* offer responses (perhaps not fully conscious responses) to fascism’s appropriations of Darwinism and its categories. Although Woolf’s sympathies for eugenics are well known, no less familiar is her resistance to equations between evolutionary narratives, nationalism, and a “natural” gender role in her later texts.⁶⁴ As Jessica Berman has argued, one can trace the theoretical beginnings of the critique found in *Three Guineas* back to *Orlando*.⁶⁵ Similarly, Sam See discerns in *Between the Acts* a feminist and queer recoding of the significance of Darwinism in the face of threats of Nazi invasion. In See’s reading, Woolf musters tropes of atavism and savagery to suggest that “*homo sapiens* might renounce its civilized claim to a static identity and submit to the remarkably ‘protean and polymorphic’ quality that, Darwin believes, characterizes the human species.”⁶⁶ For See, *Between the Acts* is a work that applies Darwinian ideas of transformation to produce a “comedy of nature” that undermines immovable meanings ascribed to different identities by a rising political far right.

Like Woolf, Andrade was critical of the rise of fascism. Most immediately, as Madureira has suggested, *Macunaíma* emerges in the context of, and in conversation with, Brazilian fascism, with its ideas of “Aryanization,” and its own modernist national epics, such as Menotti del Picchia’s *Republica dos Estados Unidos do Brasil*, Cassiano Ricardo’s *Martim Cerere*, and Raul Bopp’s *Cobra Norato*.⁶⁷ But Andrade was also critical of the fascist use of evolutionary thought in Germany. We gain an insight into this disagreement by looking at the work immediately preceding *Macunaíma* in Andrade’s career, *Amar, verbo intransitivo*. An ironic *Bildungsroman*, *Amar* tells the story of the teenage boy Carlos. Hoping to give Carlos a safe sex education, his father Sousa Costa (who lives in São Paulo’s Higienópolis and deals in stud bulls), contracts the German Fräulein Elsa as a governess to teach his son how to love. Elsa, as we learn, is a committed nationalist and devotee of Wagner. Her rationale for why Carlos needs to be educated in sex is eugenic:

... O sangue deve ser puro.

Vejam por exemplo a Alemanha, quedê raça mais forte? Nenhuma. E justamente porque mais forte e indestrutível neles o conceito da família. Os filhos nascem robustos. As mulheres são grandes e claras. São fecundas. O nobre destino do homem é se conservar sadio e procurar esposa prodigiosamente sadia. De raça superior, como ela, Fräulein. Os negros são de raça inferior. Os índios também. Os portugueses também.

Mas esta última verdade Fräulein não fala aos alunos.⁶⁸

(The blood should be pure, like that of the Germans, strong and healthy because the idea of the family is indestructible in them. German sons are born robust; the women are big and blond. They are fecund. And Fräulein believed that man's highest destiny was to conserve himself in perfect health and to procure a wife of the same superior race. Negroes are inferior, Indians and Portuguese, also, but of the latter Fräulein did not speak to her pupils.)⁶⁹

On the basis of this logic, Elsa teaches Carlos how to make love like "German men": "The Latin wanders, undulates in love while the German [. . .] remains."⁷⁰ The point of his education, it follows, is to teach him to love correctly, not as play (in early scenes, Carlos just wants to "brincar" with his sisters), but as a serious enterprise in "obedience to natural laws."⁷¹

In the end, Carlos grows up and accepts the lesson; Elsa's teachings succeed. Yet by this time, the moral has shifted. Increasingly, Andrade's free indirect discourse mocks Elsa within the space of her own thoughts, suggesting the conclusion that it is she, and not Carlos, that lacks proper education. As indicated by its title, *Amar*, *verbo intransitivo* renders suspect any attempt to instrumentalize—transitivize—love. It is a moral that stakes out the ground of Andrade's rejection of fascism. Indeed, in a passage that is cut in the somewhat abridged 1933 English translation, Andrade makes this agenda explicit by telling us that Elsa was inspired by the "grande sábio alemão," J. L. Reimer (author of a proto-Nazi 1905 conspectus on how the Teutonic race should take over Europe).⁷² What *Amar* does for the grammar of love, *Macunaíma* expands into a new language for Brazilian modernity. It is a book that embraces the body, its energy, and erotic pleasure for its own sake and its own creative evolutions, rather than in the name of some imposed purpose. As Gustavo Lespada recognizes in *Esa promiscua escritura*, *Macunaíma* is a work where change depends on libidinal energies, but not on reproduction. It is through these energies that Andrade produces in *Macunaíma* a modern "ser nacional" (national being) and in *Macunaíma* an "epopeya" (epic) that captures Brazil not as a fixed entity, but as a constantly changing living process.⁷³

Fitting with the metatextual notion of a tale of the tribe, the performance of a changing nature of the nation in *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* is not only revealed through the content of the narrative, but also through attention to its linguistic mediation. The evolutionary theme in these works has a philological dimension. Both texts take up the suggestion, hinted at in Darwin's *Descent of Man*, but more fully developed by August Schleicher, Friedrich Müller, and

Ernst Haeckel, that language is itself an agent of human evolution and racial differentiation. Both represent the national language as the evolving medium and content of national history. *Orlando* advances through English prose styles, beginning with Sir Thomas Browne and variously adopting the rhythms and vocabularies, as appropriate to the period, of Defoe, Sterne, Ruskin, Brontë, and others. The biographer's many self-indulgent divagations make it clear that the English language is as much directing this national narrative as Orlando him/herself. Andrade similarly mixes many different dialectical variants in his book. The language of *Macunaíma* is not geographically or temporally specific. Rather, as Campos recognized, Andrade's "impura" (impure) "fala nova" (new speech) is, like its flora and fauna, an "amalgam of all regionalisms, a mix of all the modes of speaking from the various corners of the country, with incrustations of indigenisms and Africanisms . . ." ⁷⁴

Andrade makes the connection between the evolution of language and nation explicit in Macunaíma's "*carta pras icamiabas*" (letter to the Amazons). This letter, which Macunaíma sends back to the jungle after having arrived in São Paulo, is a mockery of an ethnographic study of the locals, composed in a style mimicking ("*macaqueando*") ⁷⁵ literary Portuguese:

(. . . the richness of their intellectual self-expression is so prodigious that they speak in one language and write in another . . . In their conversations the Paulistas use a barbarous and multifarious dialect, uncouth and polluted with colloquialisms, but which does not lack gusto and forcefulness in figures of speech and coital idioms . . . But although such vulgar and ignoble language is used in conversation, as soon as the natives of these parts pick up a pen, they divest themselves of such crudities and emerge every whit as *Homo latinus* (Linnaeus), expressing themselves in another language, closer to that of Virgil . . . a mellow tongue which, full as it is of everlasting grace, could be called-the language of that immortal bard-Camões!) (*M* 78).

. . . a sua riqueza de expressão intelectual é tão prodigiosa, que falam numa língua e escrevem noutra . . . Nas conversas utilizam-se os paulistanos dum linguajar bárbaro e multifário, crasso de feição e impuro na vernaculidade, mas que não deixa de ter o seu sabor e força nas apóstrofes, e também nas vozes do brincar . . . Mas si de tal desprezível língua se utilizam na conversação os naturais desta terra, logo que tomam da pena, se despojam de tanta asperidade, e surge o Homem Latino, de Lineu, exprimindo-se numa outra linguagem, mui próxima da vergiliana . . . meigo idioma, que, com imperecível galhardia, se intitula: língua de Camões! (84)

Andrade champions the oral expression of Brazilian Portuguese over the written language as the medium for the national epic established by Virgil and Camões. For Pascale Casanova, who cites this passage, it is this drive to produce a new language out of the spoken dialect that makes *Macunaíma* comparable to other modernist texts by authors such as Jean-Joseph Rabaerivelo, Rachid Boudjedra, Franz Kafka, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. "[L]ike all founders of national literatures," Andrade, according to Casanova, wanted "to gather existing resources in order to transmute them into cultural and literary capital."⁷⁶ Indeed here, as Casanova writes, "Andrade's strategy is precisely the same as that of Beckett, who in 'Dante . . . Bruno. Vico .. Joyce' argued that English was an old, if not actually dead, language, no less than Latin was in Europe in Dante's time."⁷⁷

Casanova is correct that Andrade's satire of Portuguese and celebration of spoken Brazilian finds equivalents in many other national and modernist literatures of the time, including that of Joyce. But her assumption that these tactics are directed to the production of literary capital and a national tradition miss the point. What Andrade is interested in expressing, negatively, in this satire of an anthropological study, is precisely the aspect of spoken language that resists commodification: its intransitive dimension entangled in what he is representing. His use of orally inflected Brazilian Portuguese with its "coital idioms" is not so much a nationally motivated attempt to assert value as it is an attempt to perform a generative vitality. This living language is apparently distinct in an evolutionary sense. It is presented as a language of a different species from that of "*Homo latinus*." Yet speciation, here as elsewhere in *Macunaíma*, is evidently due less to survival of the fittest and sexual selection than to the multifarious recreative forces of epic fiction. (*Macunaíma* is all about "re-creation," in both senses, at the same time.) Like *Orlando*, Andrade's book is premised on the notion that the national language, like the nation itself, is living and evolving, and therefore not quantifiable in terms of market value, or reifiable only as a fixed (or written) character.

Back to the Common Ground

When Darwin first landed in Brazil, in Salvador da Bahia in March 1832, he recognized that there was an enormous difference between the verdancy of the rainforest and the English countryside. "In England," he wrote, "any person fond of natural history enjoys in his walks a great advantage, by always having something to attract his attention; but in these fertile climates,

teeming with life, the attractions are so numerous, that he is scarcely able to walk at all.⁷⁸ However, the key lesson for Darwin was not the consequent irreconcilability of these two environments, but that this difference proved a more general rule. For English and Brazilian spaces of nature nevertheless yield, in his vision, to the same broad method of interpretation. Indeed, at one point in *Origin of Species*, he compares his “entangled bank” to a forest overgrowing a set of “Indian ruins”:

When we look at the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank, we are tempted to attribute their proportional numbers and kinds to what we call chance. But how false a view is this! Every one has heard that when an American forest is cut down, a very different vegetation springs up; but it has been observed that ancient Indian ruins in the Southern United States, which must formerly have been cleared of trees, now display the same beautiful diversity and proportion of kinds as in the surrounding virgin forests.⁷⁹

Darwin’s point is that ecosystems are not discrete by accident, or in the absolute, but precisely because they are subject to the same laws of change under different climatic and historical conditions. It is an insight that was not lost on Woolf. As Beer describes in “Virginia Woolf and Prehistory,” one of the crucial, primitivist, recognitions of *The Voyage Out*, like *Heart of Darkness*, or *Between the Acts*, is that of a more fundamental biological similarity or “common ground” between England and a seemingly prehistoric jungle.⁸⁰ Andrade’s coding of São Paulo in terms of the rainforest attests to a similar recognition. Both texts retreat from a predetermined evolutionary national history, to a set of creative principles found in Darwinian thought, which they then deploy liberally within particular geographical and cultural contexts in the service of a their national narratives.

This article began by situating its argument in the untrodden gap where an ecocritical modernism meets transnational modernism. In order to explore this space, I proposed to look again at modernism’s treatments of organic nationalism, as represented by its peculiar national romances or epics in prose. These works, I believe, represent a rich source of thinking about modernity in organic terms. A reading of Woolf and Andrade’s narratives that does justice to their interest in nature need not lead back to the kind of “bad nationalism” described by Kohn and the disciplinary nativism that transnational modernism has defined itself against. *Macunaíma* and *Orlando* offer other ways of thinking about the “traditional model of literary history, with its concern to purify the dialect of the tribe.”

Both are tales of the tribe but they do not subscribe to Mallarmé's dictum as a mandate for literary modernism and for a national literary tradition. Both of them present the narrative of a community through the continuity of a single body. Yet, for Andrade and Woolf, that body is labile. Brazil has no character; England is, in various ways, "trans." More important than achieving an ontologically stable identity is the process and style of incorporation or bricolage and transformation. Each evolves in its own way. Their similarities, thus, stem not so much from a shared attempt to imagine community around the nation-state, or through mutual involvement with international capital or a world republic of letters, but rather precisely through their parallel attempts to recreate a natural history of modernity (a story that Darwin recognized as somehow universal) from a particular national location.

Macunaíma and *Orlando* are, of course, vastly different books. In many parts, they have completely distinct agendas, resulting at least partly, from the great disparity between their contexts and authors. I don't mean to elide these differences or to minimize their importance, especially not for attempts to theorize untranslatability or multiple modernities. Nevertheless, rather than focus on their differences, this article has—in shuttling between *Macunaíma* and *Orlando*—attempted to draw out the underlying similarities between Woolf and Andrade's texts. My argument has been that focusing on the figuration of a national nature in each is one way that the organic might begin to be reclaimed for a comparative understanding of modernism. Both texts represent (and involve themselves in) a history of modernity in which nature is an agent. By confronting the tangled bank or rainforest and its organic relationship to the nation and its mediating language, such a pairing allows us to materialize natural-cultural ecosystems as part of literary history where other approaches to comparing literary modernisms overlook them too quickly.

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Notes

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1. Bonnie Kime Scott, *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

2. Joshua Schuster, *The Ecology of Modernism: American Environments and Avant-Garde Poetics* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015); Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Robin Schulze, *The Degenerate Muse: American Nature, Modernist Poetry, and the Problem of Cultural Hygiene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Susan McCabe, "Survival of the Queerly Fit: Darwin, Marianne Moore, and Elizabeth Bishop," *Twentieth Century Literature* 55, no. 4 (2009): 547–71.

3. Qtd. in Alison Lacivita, *The Ecology of Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 1.

4. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123, no. 3 (2008): 737.

5. Susan Stanford Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies," *Modernism/modernity* 13, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 432. Friedman's emphasis.

6. For a critique of transnational modernism in relation to neoliberalism, see Michael Spiegel, "Is Modernism Really Transnational? *Ulysses*, New Cosmopolitanism, and the Celtic Tiger," *Cultural Critique* 90 (2015): 88–114. For an overview of contemporary paradigms for comparing modernisms, see Peter Kalliney, *Modernism in a Global Context* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

7. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2013), 13.

8. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), ix, qtd. in Petar Ramadanovic, "How to Talk About Nature When There Is No More Nature to Talk About: Toward a Sustainable Universal," *Comparative Literature Studies* 50, no. 1 (2013): 7.

9. Aarthi Vadde, *Chimeras of Form: Modernist Internationalism Beyond Europe, 1914–2016* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 27.

10. Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 495, qtd. in Anne Raine, "Ecocriticism and Modernism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 100.

11. Raine, "Ecocriticism and Modernism," 100.

12. Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 13.

13. See Christa Grewe-Volpp's "Nature 'Out There' and as 'a Social Player': Some Basic Consequences for a Literary Critical Analysis," in *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, eds. Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 71–86.

14. For a reconsideration of the relationship between comparative anatomy and comparative literature, including a discussion of Posnett's work, see Jacob Edmond, Haun Saussy, and David Damrosch, "Trying to Make It Real: An Exchange between Haun Saussy and David Damrosch," *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 4 (Feb. 2017): 660–93.

15. Stephen Greenblatt, "Racial Memory and Literary History," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 61.

16. *Ibid.*, 62.

17. For an overview of this period's many competing beliefs about evolution, see Peter Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

18. Pheng Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 20.

19. See Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* (Porsgrunn, Norway: New Compass Press, 2011).

20. See Carolina Correia dos Santos, "Brazilian Literary Theory's Challenge Before the Non-Human," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature and World History*, ed. May Hawas (London: Routledge, 2018), 334–47.

21. For Mário de Andrade's relation to the school of antropofagia see Héctor Olea, "Comendo antropófagos," in Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*. ed. Telê Porto Ancona Lopez (Madrid: ALLCA XX, 1996), 379–88.

22. Šárka Graouová, "Macunaíma entrevisto das Oropas," in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica* 361. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

23. Andrade, *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 5. Page numbers to subsequent quotations of the text of *Macunaíma* are given parenthetically.

24. Haroldo de Campos, "Macunaíma: A Imaginação estrutural" in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 372.

25. Gilda de Mello e Souza, "O Tupi e o Alaúde," in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 255.

26. Andrade, "Fac-símile dos manuscritos" in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 439.

27. *Ibid.*, 442.

28. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), 89. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *O*.

29. Andrew McNellie, "Virginia Woolf's America," *The Dublin Review* 5 (Winter 2001–2002), accessed Sept. 20, 2018, <http://thedublinreview.com/article/virginia-woolfs-america/>

30. Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma*, trans. E. A. Goodland (New York: Random House, 1984), 11. Henceforth cited parenthetically.

31. *Macunaíma*, in this scene, changes from black to white, while one of his two brothers changes to red. "Most readers," as Lúcia Sá points out, "have seen this tri-colored hero [. . .] as representative of Brazil's three formative races" *Rainforest Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 34. Sá herself, like Luís Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-Garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 104, complicates this equation.

32. For an account of the relation between Orlando's change of sex and her nationality, see Jessica Berman, "Is the Trans in Transnational the Trans in Transgender?" *Modernism/modernity* 24, no. 2 (Apr. 2017): 217–44.

33. Sackville-West announces her intention as being to "sing the cycle of my country's year [. . .] the mild continuous epic of the soil" qtd. by Susan Bazargan, "The Uses of the Land: Vita Sackville-West's Pastoral Writings and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*," *Woolf Studies Annual* 5 (1999): 25–55, 29.

34. See Edgardo Dieleke, "Genealogies and Inquiries into Laziness from *Macunaíma*," *Ellipsis: Journal of the American Portuguese Studies Association* 5 (2007): 9–24, and Madureira's chapter, "God in the Machine: Primitivism, National Identity, and the Question of Technology in Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma*," in *Cannibal Modernities*, 86–110.

35. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 58.

36. *Ibid.*, 360. For the claim that it was "hillock" near Down, that inspired Darwin's "entangled bank" see Vanessa Thorpe, "Darwin's Theory Was Inspired by a Hillock," *The Guardian*, Oct. 22, 2000, accessed Sept. 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/oct/22/booksnews.peopleinscience>

37. Mário de Andrade, "Fac-símile dos manuscritos" in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 444. Andrade expands on this idea in a letter to Luís da Câmara Cascudo on Mar. 1, 1927. *Ibid.*, 492.

38. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005), 71.

39. For a full discussion of the role and connotations of *brincar* in *Macunaíma*, see Finazzi-Agrò, "As palavras em jogo," in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 306–28.

40. Paulo Prado, *Retrato do Brasil* (São Paulo: INL, 1981), 15.

41. Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions. The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 138–71.
42. For this connection, see, for example, Isabel von Holt, “Zwischen jungfräulichem Wald und großem Paulistanerndorf: Die verschlossene Heimat in Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*,” in *Heimat—Räume: Komparatistische Perspektiven Auf Herkunftsnarrative*, ed. Jenny Bauer, Claudia Gremler, and Niels Penke (Berlin: Ch. A. Bachmann Verlag, 2014), 135–48, and Renata Mountner Wasserman, *Exotic Nations: Literature and Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 220–43.
43. Raymond Mortimer, “Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey,” in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London ; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 238.
44. John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.
45. Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123–24.
46. Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities*, 104.
47. Andrade, “Fac-simile dos manuscritos,” in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 464–65.
48. Christian Sénéchal, “Préface du traducteur,” preface to *Le Monde qui naît* by Hermann de Keyserling, (Paris: Delamain et Bouelleau, 1927), 19.
49. *Ibid.*, 9.
50. Darwin, *Origin*, 360.
51. Joshua Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.
52. Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1964), 194.
53. Rudyard Kipling, “Literature,” in *A Book of Words*, Vol. xxxii of *The Writings in Prose and Verse* (New York: Doran & Company, 1928), 3–4. qtd. in Michael André Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 8.
54. Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe*, 8.
55. Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1975), 708.
56. Andrade, “*Macunaíma* Apropriação e originalidade,” in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 303–4.
57. Gabrielle McIntire, *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 234n.
58. Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities*, 103.
59. Finazzi-Agrò, “As palavras em jogo,” 323.
60. For a full treatment of the issue of appropriation in *Macunaíma*, see Raúl Antelo, “*Macunaíma* Apropriação e originalidade,” in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 295–305.
61. Theodor Koch-Grünberg, *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco, Zweiter Band: Mythen und Legenden der Taulipang- und Arekuna-Indianer* (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder Verlag, 1924), 140.
62. Conrad Aiken, Review, in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 235.
63. Jean-Jacques Mayoux, from “Le roman de l’espace et du temps—Virginia Woolf,” in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, 249.
64. For Woolf and eugenics, see, among others, Donald Childs, “Virginia Woolf’s Hereditary Taint,” in *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22–37, and Janet Lyon, “On the Asylum Road with Woolf and Mew,” *Modernism/modernity* 18, no. 3 (February 2012): 551–74.
65. Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, and Modernist Commitments, Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). See also Anna Snaithe, “Of Fanciers, Footnotes, and Fascism: Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 3 (2002): 614–36.
66. Sam See, “The Comedy of Nature: Darwinian Feminism in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 3 (December, 2010): 643.
67. Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities*, 61.

68. Mário de Andrade, *Amar, verbo intransitivo* (São Paulo: Casa Editora Antonio Tisi, 1927), 39.
69. Mário de Andrade, *Fräulein*, trans. Margaret Richardson Hollingsworth (New York: Macaulay, 1933), 38–39.
70. *Ibid.*, 213.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Mário de Andrade, *Amar, verbo intransitivo*, 39. Actually Josef Reimer was Austrian. The work in question, *Ein pangermanisches Deutschland: Versuch über die Konsequenzen der gegenwärtigen wissenschaftlichen Rassenbetrachtung für unsere politischen und religiösen Probleme*, had a significant influence on Hitler.
73. Lespada, *Esa Promiscua Escritura*, 85.
74. Campos, “*Macunaíma: A Imaginação estrutural*,” 377.
75. Maria Augusta Fonseca, “A carta pras Icamiabas,” in *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter. Edição Crítica*, 331.
76. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. Malcolm DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 288.
77. *Ibid.*, 287.
78. See Charles Darwin, *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle Between the Years 1826 and 1836, Describing Their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe. Journal and Remarks. 1832–1836, vol. III* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), 27.
79. Darwin, *Origin*, 60.
80. Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 14.