

HUMANITIES



# Within the entrails of invention

Project reviews  
Mário de Andrade's  
creative path

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“**T**his ran through the month of April. I took the blank pages at the end of a notebook and, in the manicured lettering of the calm beginnings of a book, started to write. However soon the handwriting became hasty, speedy, illegible to others, magically spelt phrases that stopped in the middle, in which I included both a y in the word ‘notebook’ and a hyphen in ‘garden’; I was writing with fire. Everything was gentle in coming, foretelling an impassioned ardor, in an adoration of myself, of my possible intelligence, such as I have only rarely enjoyed as easily in this life,” described Mário de Andrade (1893-1945) in relation to his creative process. How equally easy the life of the researchers involved in recreating this process would be, had there been more texts such as this one, so explicit about the labor of creating a book. Hence the importance of the theme project headquartered at the Brazilian Studies Institute of the University of São Paulo (IEB-USP), *Estudo do processo de criação de Mário de Andrade nos manuscritos de seu arquivo, em sua correspondência, em sua marginália e em suas leituras* [Study of Mário de Andrade’s creation process in the manuscripts of his files, in his correspondence, in his marginalia and in his readings], which has FAPESP support and is coordinated by professor Telê Ancona Lopez. “We plan to discover how the entire organization of an invention took place, in search of the creative process. IEB centralizes most of the dossiers of folios left by the writer. Based on all of this material, it will be possible to recover the path of such creation,” explains the researcher.

The subject matter of the research consists of 102 manuscripts at IEB-USP. The classification is to be divulged on a database, an analytical catalogue of the literary manuscripts and an index of the titles of all the areas, along with a chronology of their creation and publication. “The catalog’s novel aspect is that we will try to reassemble the creative path. Researchers will be able to examine a facsimile of the manuscript and to resort to the path reassembled in the dossier, as well as to the research notes that explain the organization’s pathways and all the other information found,” warns Telê. “A research powerhouse will be formed.” The classification in the catalog and in the index extends to the production of scanned facsimiles and to the microfilming of all the folios, as an extra resource to safeguard the documents from being used by researchers. Everything will be offered in detail: the dimension of the paper used, the type of pen employed to write the poem or to correct a text, the color, etc. “There is even the interesting case of a poem in which the paper folds indicate that Mário carried it in his pocket, which points to his having shown it to other people, to his being concerned about his writing and so on and so forth, a mystery that may be solved by a researcher interested in genetic critique and in the life of the document. This type of analysis also allows one to date documents by comparing the paper’s texture, etc.” states Telê. Another result of this project is the partnering agreement with the Agir publishing house, which is publishing the complete works of Mário de Andrade based on the editing provided by the theme project team, which has already

resulted in new versions of the works *Amar, verbo intransitivo, Macunaíma, Obra imatura, and Os contos de Belazarte*, among others. The collection will also include, in a new edition of *Poesies completas* to be released in May, a series of hitherto unpublished poems by the author, which he had thought about publishing but discarded in the final version of his collected poems.

**M**ário de Andrade was a constant reviewer of himself in his works, forever busy with adding the final touches to his writings while leaving room for yet one more future touch-up. Hence his huge personal archive of folios left for posterity, which reveal a creation always in action and never completed, and carefully kept. “The writer, an archivist of his own work, identified and separated sets of background documents that he composed in the course of his lifetime, storing them on a shelf and a large chest of drawers in his home in Lopes Chaves Street in São Paulo. In the series *Manuscritos Mário de Andrade*, the documents of the creative process include pathways to be decoded in the dossiers of the unpublished materials, the largest and richest stored by the writer in green envelopes and cardboard folders, the latter, in turn, reused, as one can tell from the sequence of crossed out headlines,” says Telê. “Itineraries are decoded or established via an analysis and interpretation that is subject to setbacks and mistakes. Actually, such work must always keep in mind that the dossiers do not materially integrate the creative process, both that of the craftsman of literature and the arts and the humanities essayist. The creation overcomes the dossier, the file and, above all, materialness itself, by toying, concerning the last point, with the writer’s psyche.” Hence the team’s work of crossing any given manuscript with other archive sources, such as letters (IEB-USP has the largest collection of correspondence sent and received by *Macunaíma*’s author), interviews, other manuscripts and books’ marginalia; in sum, everything that might cast some light upon the reading of a given work and clarify Mário de Andrade’s creative pathways,

thus transforming the writer’s library into a site of creation, a creative space par excellence, the cauldron into which he cast all the ingredients that might generate the “ideal” mixture, no matter how ephemeral.

One important concept in Andrade’s creation process was the “working copy,” as he called the printed text of books or periodicals in which he crystallized new versions of his works by adding creative corrections in black ink, or in regular, red or blue pencil. The working copies are added to his notes, versions, plans, etc. in the dossiers in which these were kept. After sending to the publishing house his written text and getting the proofs back, the writer would write on his working copies the changes he wanted to make. “A severe critic of his own work, Mário, in these working copies, embraced to his dying day a fate akin to that of Sisyphus. In 1944, on the cover of an edition of *Macunaíma* published that year by the Martins publishing house, over whose segments he had not even run a spatula, he writes hurriedly, closing the parentheses that he had failed to open: ‘Copy corrected to use for future editions/M.’” says the researcher. At the same time, the efforts involved in the working copies did not always go any further. “It is odd to see that by sparing the working copies, while making clean copies of the corrections in another copy of the book, this one addressed to the printers, Andrade the copyist, perhaps acting thus through an interest in the comparison with the new edition, is careless about the task. The comparison of the corrections in the working copies of *Amar, verbo intransitivo* and *Macunaíma* with the respective texts of the second editions highlights the absence of certain reformulations,” notes Telê.

Here one witnesses Andrade’s idea of his creation of adjustments not as actual corrections (other than when grammar or coherence are faulty), but rather as a new possibility discovered during the creative process, above and beyond the pragmatic notion of right or wrong, especially in literary projects such as his, in which movement and the inability to reach an end form essential traits. In such cases, the working copy

**Mário de  
Andrade, in his  
working copies,  
assumes  
the fate of  
Sisyphus to the  
end of his life**

Mário de  
Andrade’s office  
in Rua Lopes  
Chaves,  
São Paulo,  
October 1945



SPHAN ARCHIVES, SÃO PAULO, PHOTO BY GERMANO GRAESER

becomes a manuscript of the work, encompassing the typology and dynamics in all fields of action of a multi-faceted writer such as the author of *Macunaíma*. An outstanding example of this is, once again, *Amar, verbo intransitivo*, created and recreated between 1927 and 1944 by Andrade and the fruit of his correspondence and friendship with Pio Lourenço Correa, uncle Pio, who was actually a cousin and a friend with whom he maintained intense correspondence from 1917 to 1945. The corrections of the working copy of the book, which had been released during the heroic stage of the modernistic movement, reflect an author less concerned about advocating Freudianism and scientism and more flexible in regard to uncle Pio's suggestions about elements such as using "pra" [*an abbreviated, phonetically correct but grammatically incorrect form of 'for' in Portu-*

*guese*], which the friend preferred in its standard form, "para." On the first page of the corrected copy, he writes: "The edition is to comply with the official Brazilian orthography... of the time," in the same ink he used to correct the word "*intransitivo*" [intransitive], now spelt with an "s" rather than a "z." Thus, the second stage of the whole creation takes place in this corrected copy, between 1942 and 1943, when Mário de Andrade was already a highly regarded figure in Brazilian literature. "A friend stops by for us to go over the proofs of *Amar, verbo intransitivo* again and it comes out quite remodeled. Let's see if it has turned out rather better," he writes to the critic Álvaro Lins in 1944, showing yet again the importance of correspondence in the consolidation of the understanding of the pathways of his creation, as had been the case of uncle Pio.

"The letters are the area where he finds the understanding of processes, pathways and choices; they are something like a production diary for Andrade. At the same time, upon disclosing something about the work, he elicits a reaction from the other party: it is work in progress. His work is not a sealed system; to the contrary, there is room for the other party in the dialogue to provide suggestions and to intervene in Andrade's creative process," explains Marcos Antonio de Moraes, from IEB-USP, the associate coordinator of the theme project, who is in charge of the correspondence of the author of *Macunaíma*. "It is clear that certain expressions, certain vocative words come from I don't know where, no matter how much I psychoanalyze myself. However they vibrate as words, they are word-expressions that are suggestive to me and that is why I left them

as they are,” wrote Andrade in a letter to Carlos Lacerda. “He acknowledges that he doesn’t know why he did this or that, but the wish to understand the creation mechanism imposes itself upon the writer, the idea of a domesticated creative process being refused. Andrade seems to impose the moral of the true artist: the fatal being, aware of his expressive technique and insatiable for knowledge about the inner works of his own person and of his art or, as Drummond wrote, ‘It’s been about two years or a little more since I fell in love with the phenomenon of esthetic creation,’” explains the researcher. The most intense dialogue started with Bandeira and was then transferred to Drummond, when the conversation with the former about the mysteries of creation seemed to be reaching its end. “I started by paying more attention to my creative processes. Not to modify anything at all, not because I recognize the tiniest insincerity in my creative processes, but to verify them,” he wrote to Lacerda.

In Mário de Andrade’s correspondence one finds a constellation of statements that allow the student of genetic criticism to monitor the several stages of the tortuous process of producing a text,” notes Marcos. At the same time, the researcher adds, Andrade had direct impact upon the creative process of artists such as Di Cavalcanti, Brecheret, Mignone, Guarnieri, Anita Malfatti and Cícero Dias, among others. “He and the artists planted in the field of correspondence the essential expression of their work, with drawings as a playful expression and drafts of works in progress or completed, wishing to share the work of invention while also aspiring to eventual suggestions from the friend that was often active as an art critic in the press. Letters thus become a creative territory and the process of authorship falls apart in the collaborative creation, in the exchange of experiences, verses, ideas, etc. This is totally modern and the tools are the letters,” says Marcos.

However, as Andrade was an exemplary polygraph, his archives also harbor his passion for music, with anno-

tated scores, letters to composers, and texts on musical critique, among other manuscripts that reveal his dialogues with composers and, more importantly, his co-authorship, his veritable partnering of musical works, such as the opera *Malazarte* and the unfinished *Café*, where his involvement was not limited to the libretto, but was also reflected on the musical construction. “Just as there is a space that was taken up by literary writing, there is a Mário that is occupied with musical writing, Mário the musicologist who, besides creating verse, also creates music and aims to get a national esthetic developed,” comments Flávia Toni, from IEB-USP, joint coordinator of the thematic project in charge of the musical manuscripts. Besides co-authoring major musical projects by composers such as Camargo Guarnieri or Mignone, Andrade also expressed his creativity through music. “There is a score in which one can see the drawing of what would come to be the *Pequena história da música* [Small history of music]; in another one, there is an unpublished poem, composed after he read the music. There are three popular tunes written by Mário, all of them timid attempts, but there might be others,” says Flávia.

It is in his letters, however, that the writer inspires friends to create. In one of them, the researcher tells us, he devised a unique way of “extracting” the *Cirandas* out of Villa-Lobos, “on purpose, knowing it would work out,” by resorting to the argument that a Chilean composer, Humberto Allende, had written *Doze Tonadas*, popular music arranged for the piano and to be played by students. “I know that this is quite elementary for you and I wouldn’t dare to ask a composer of your stature for something like this, but I cannot imagine who in Brazil, other than our great Villa, would be capable of composing in the style of Allende.” The musical fish took the bait and soon the *Cirandas* appeared along the lines sought by Andrade. His nationalism, running in the opposite direction taken by Villa, was inclined to folklore-based melodies, such as the *Cirandas*, and this was difficult to extract from the composer from Rio de Janeiro. The dialogue was much

more fluid with Camargo Guarnieri, a native of São Paulo and Andrade’s favorite musician, with whom he enjoyed listening to records at home and with whom he also maintained a privileged dialogue. *Pedro Malazarte*, as mentioned above, included in its conception, and not only in its libretto, the co-authorship of Andrade and, now, thanks to the theme project research conducted by Flávia, it has come to light that this partnership became even stronger in two unpublished melodies collected by the writer in 1927, on his first trip through Brazil, which were offered to the musician (who kept them in his archive in Andrade’s originals) and used them in the opera.

“There are also many analyses of almost all the operas by Carlos Gomes, which shows Mário’s desire not only to have an impact on the present, but also to try to understand the past, to track the creation of opera in Brazil,” says Flávia. According to the researcher, Andrade seemed to repeat in music the same quest he had conducted in the 1920s, at the time when he wrote *Gramatiquinha da fala brasileira*. “He had planned to cover the Brazilian musical past and future, to build, one day, a ‘grammar’ of Brazilian musical construction; in other words, to use certain sound constructions to create music, just like one uses words to create verse.” The theme project also plans to recover a dialogue lost in the letters. Whenever Andrade received letters with information for his *Dicionário de música*, in the 1930s, he would place the correspondence in the manuscripts section, rather than the letters section, as they would later be used in the process of creation. Now this flow is being reestablished.

Finally, we have the books’ marginalia as a manuscript. “What one sees is a dialogue, given that Andrade’s annotated readings, a movement in the artist’s research that unfolds in line with his obsessions, implied in criticism, selection or assimilation. His marginalia is the tilled land and the granary that coexist in parallel or that are merged in the archives of creation,” analyzed Telê. “The handwritten marginal notes are part of the pathway of

the creative universe of other texts and, in so far as they fit the writing process' pathway, they duplicate the documental nature of the book. Thus, to the printed library text, one can add the manuscript. By transforming or selecting, in the margins, the subject matter of the author, weaving comments in critical lateral reading, the writer established a coexistence of discourses. This dialogue shows the nascent text that faces a creation in its final stage, i.e., an alien book offered to the public." The marginalia can function in the case of a writer as implicit matrix, in the face of a book of handwritten annotations, but that, even so, one knows influenced the work of Andrade, such as *Les villes tentaculaires précédées de Les campagnes hallucinées*, by Emile Verhaeren, the confessed matrix, according to the letters, not only of the title, but of the contents of *Paulicéia desvairada*.

All of this would be no more than cold and impersonal investigation if it were not of use to the author and his readers. To this end, there is the fine story behind *Os contos de Belazarte*, which reveals Andrade's need to track creation that is always moving, that is never completed, in the several and endless samples of his work. In 1968, during the military dictatorship, Valentim Faccioli, a law student and editor for a publishing company, saw a little wine-colored book propped up on his desk at work. Upon picking it up, he realized it was a mock-up for *Belazarte* (which, among other short stories, had *O besouro e a rosa*), full of notes penciled in what he thought had been written by the author. Having later been jailed, he lost his job and abandoned the university. Years later, by which time he had become a professor at USP, he decided to deliver the little book to IEB-USP. We now know that it is very important document, a working copy with Mário de Andrade's notes. To the writer's happiness, the corrections arrived in time. ■

Andrade in 1932  
photo: always  
correcting his works

ANDRADE, 1932 / PHOTO BY GILDA DE MORAES ROCHA

