

MACOBEBA: CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITERATURE AND MYTH¹

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Abstract: In 1929, the first text about the monster Macobeba was released. On april 7th, José Mathias (Júlio Bello's pseudonym) published, in the newspaper *A Província* from Pernambuco, Brazil, a text in which he presented the monster: “a horrible fantastic being [...]. Big, very big, [...] with an enormous half lion and half horse tail, four huge red eyes as four big live embers on his face, hook werewolf's nails” (MATHIAS, 1929b: 3). Keeping the presented characterization in the most part of the texts, Macobeba is the main character of 28 publications from April to September of 1929. At the same time, several famous Brazilian authors, as Mário de Andrade, Graciliano Ramos, Jorge de Lima, Manuel Cavalcanti Proença and Joaquim Cardozo, created their own versions of the monster. By the usage of various strategies, their creations are different from José Mathias' production and they also diverge among themselves. That's the reason why they are examples of *authorial refiguration*. On the other hand, Macobeba circulated in several newspapers, being part of advertisements, political criticisms, without the sign of famous authors. The monster also became a popular culture character appearing in *cordéis*, and in local legends, circulating in an almost autonomous way, as if the monster has gotten his own life, in the process we call *autonomous refiguration*. Finally, considering the *authorial refiguration* and the *autonomous refiguration*, we intend to analyze how the difference between them allows us to think about the difference between myth and literature in the discursive praxis.

Keywords: Macobeba; Brazilian literature; Myth; Authorial refiguration; Autonomous refiguration.

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Resumo: Em 1929, o primeiro texto sobre o monstro Macobeba foi publicado. Em 7 de abril, José Mathias (pseudônimo de Júlio Bello) publicou, no periódico pernambucano *A Província*, um texto no qual ele apresentou o monstro: “um horrível ente fantástico [...]. Grande, muito grande, [...] com um extenso rabo metade de leão e metade de cavalo, quatro imensos olhos vermelhos como quatro grandes brasas vivas à flor da cara, aduncas unhas de ‘lobisomem’” (MATHIAS, 1929b: 3). Mantendo essa caracterização na maioria dos textos, Macobeba é o protagonista de 28 publicações de abril a setembro de 1929. Ao mesmo tempo, vários autores brasileiros, como Mário de Andrade, Graciliano Ramos, Jorge de Lima, Manuel Cavalcanti Proença e Joaquim Cardozo, criaram as suas próprias versões do monstro. Usando estratégias variadas, as criações deles são diferentes da produção de José Mathias, bem como divergentes entre elas. É justamente por isso que são exemplos de *refigurações autorais*. Por outro lado, Macobeba circulou em diferentes periódicos, como parte de propagandas, críticas políticas, sem a assinatura de autores famosos. O monstro também se tornou uma personagem popular, aparecendo em cordéis, e em lendas locais, circulando de uma forma quase autônoma, como se tivesse adquirido vida própria, em um processo que chamamos de *refiguração autonomizante*. Finalmente, considerando a *refiguração autoral* e a *refiguração autonomizante*, analisaremos como as diferenças entre elas nos permitem pensar nas diferenças entre mito e literatura na prática discursiva.

Palavras-chave: Macobeba; Literatura Brasileira; Mito; Refiguração autoral; Refiguração autonomizante.

In the south region of the state, riverside of the sea, a horrible fantastic being is freaking the shy children out and he is impressing the gullible *matuto*'s² imagination. Big, very big, as a half century *sucupira*,³ with an enormous half lion and half horse tail, four huge red eyes as four big live embers on his face, hook werewolf's nails, huge wig like “*Mãe-d'água*”, angry as “*João Galafoice*”, fast and unreliable as “*Pai do Mato*”⁴ Macobeba wields a huge broom made of heavy-duty rope of *cruapé*⁵ and devastates every place where he goes.⁶
(MATHIAS, 1929b: 3).⁷

² An individual that lives in the field; a naive, shy, suspicious individual.

³ A common name for two kinds of leguminous tree.

⁴ “*Mãe-d'água*”, “*João Galafoice*” and “*Pai do Mato*” are Brazilian folkloric characters.

⁵ A kind of a venomous Amazon plant.

⁶ “Na região sul do Estado, ribeirinha do mar, um horrível ente fantástico anda apavorando as tímidas crianças e impressionando a imaginação crédula dos matutos. Grande, muito grande, do tamanho de uma sucupira de meio século, com um extenso rabo metade de leão e metade de cavalo, quatro imensos olhos vermelhos como quatro grandes brasas vivas à flor da cara, aduncas unhas de ‘lobisomem’, enorme cabeleira [...] de ‘Mãe-d’água’, feroz como ‘João Galafoice’, traíçoeiro e rápido como o ‘Pai do Mato’, o Macobeba empunha uma imensa vassoura de grandes cordas resistentes de cruapé e devasta tudo por onde passa”.

⁷ All the translations from Portuguese to English were made by Thayane Verçosa.

The passage in epigraph is part of Macobeba's presentation for the readers of the newspaper *A Província* from Pernambuco, Brazil. In 1929, on April 7th, José Mathias (Júlio Bello's pseudonym) published the first text about the monster called: "Macobeba is uglier than the devil", whose summary reveals: "In article to *A Província* today Mr. José Mathias starts a series of revelations about the so-called Macobeba, a horrible creature that is appearing in the South beaches" (1929: 3).⁸ The first report about the monster emphasizes some of his main characteristics, and some of his attainments that, as the time goes by, become recurrent episodes:

Wherever he passes, as the desert wind, the leaves of the trees dry. [...] everything is burning and falling as if Macobeba were the scorching soul of the fire with his huge broom made of *cruapé*, and the four burning eyes of his "werewolf's" face.

An acrid sulfurized smell that is also left by the devil stays in the passages dizzying, intoxicating, and poisoning people.

Nobody leaves home at dawn.

Macobeba lives riverside of the sea staying no more than 65 kilometers from the dunes' beaches. People are not sure about what he eats.

He drinks so much salty water of the sea that sometimes it's possible to see regions that have never been seen before.

Macobeba is drying the ocean and depopulating the land with his enormous thirst and his "werewolf's" ferocity.

That Our Lady protect the blond curly-hair little kids, the cute little kids from the monster's wickedness⁹ (MATHIAS, 1929b: 3).

The noun "monster"; the adjectives: "burning" (for the eyes), "acrid sulfurized" (for Macobeba's smell) and "enormous" (for his thirst); and the verbs: "dry", "burning", "falling", "dizzying", "intoxicating", "poisoning", "drying" and "depopulating" constitute the semantical field that creates Macobeba's diabolic image, which appears in the most part of the texts about the monster.

⁸ "Em artigo para *A província*, o senhor José Mathias inicia hoje uma série de revelações sensacionais sobre um tal Macobeba, bicho horroroso que está aparecendo nas praias do Sul".

⁹ "Por onde passa como o vento do deserto secam as folhas das árvores. [...] tudo vai se queimando e caindo como se o Macobeba fosse a alma abrasadora do incêndio com a sua imensa vassoura de fios duros de cruapé e os quatro olhos candentes de sua caraça de 'Lobisomem'. Um acre cheiro danado que tanto tem do nauseabundo da maritaca quanto dos vapores de enxofre – que dizem o diabo deixa na sua passagem – fica pelos caminhos entontecendo, embriagando e envenenando as gentes. Ninguém mais sai de casa da boca da noite para o dia. O Macobeba vive na zona ribeirinha do mar não se afastando dez léguas dos cômodos da praia. O que come não se sabe ao certo. Bebe a água salgada do mar e com tamanha sofreguidão a bebe que de quando em vez as vazantes da maré se adiantam de horas e descobrem-se na costa coroas de areia que jamais nenhum cataclismo descobriu. [...]. O Macobeba está secando o mar e despovoando a terra firme com a sua imensa sede de tromba e a sua crua ferocidade de 'Lobisomem'. Nossa Senhora proteja as criancinhas de cachos de cabelos louros, as meigas criancinhas das praias da maldade do estafermo".

Another element that reinforces this diabolic image is the monster's indestructible character, highlighted in the text called "Macobeba is like the Wandering Jew", published on April 11th, 1929:

People around Pina are smelling a strange smell. It's him. It's Macobeba.
He is walking there. Look for him among the iron pilasters or under the bridge that you might find him.
Wherever he passes, he leaves a trail, but there are four days that people can't find his trails anywhere.
Macobeba is like a Wandering Jew: he sows disgrace in his way. And he is the horrible soul of fire and devastation.
It's necessary to hunt him desperately.
*A bullet doesn't kill him, fire doesn't burn him, water doesn't drown him, but it's necessary to destroy Macobeba*¹⁰ (MATHIAS, 1929a: 3; emphasis added).

Presented in the summary, the highlighted passage becomes a sort of leitmotif that emphasizes the monster's indestructible and immortal character, always followed by the necessity of killing the creature – something that was found in more than 5 publications. In 1929, from April to September, 28 texts about the creature were published. Among them, two texts were not written by the monster's creator; one is signed by José Lins do Rego, and the other one by Estevão Pinto. The other 26 texts were signed by José Mathias (Júlio Bello's pseudonym). Basically, the publications talk about Macobeba's destructive behavior, its consequences, and the monster's genealogy.

In the text published on May 18th, called "Macobeba's most activity night", José Mathias presents the monster's mythological origin: "The boy's soul got into the supernatural world where the ghosts wander, huge and populated world that we don't know, saw the creature leaving this world, and getting into ours. Then the boy discovered the monster's name and told people what he had seen"¹¹ (MATHIAS, 1929c: 3). This mythological origin and his diabolic and indestructible character seem to explain the reason why Macobeba is part of children's and folk's imagination, something explained later by José Lins do Rego on his text:

The onset of this horrible creature born in the south beaches of Pernambuco is very useful. We were without a werewolf, one of these so necessary fears to folk's imagination.

¹⁰ "Pina em derredor sente-se agora um estranho odor desesperado. É ele. É o Macobeba. Anda por acolá. Procurem-no entre as pilastras de ferro ou rente ao lastro de pedra por debaixo da ponte que são capazes de encontrá-lo. Onde passa deixa o sinal e há quatro dias que não se descobrem traços de sua passagem dali saindo em qualquer direção. O Macobeba é como um judeu errante: semeia a desgraça no seu caminho. E a alma danada do fogo e da devastação. É necessário caçá-lo com desespero. *Tiro não o mata, fogo não o queima, água não o afoga, mas é preciso acabar com o Macobeba*".

¹¹ "O espírito de menino penetrara o mundo sobrenatural onde vagueiam os fantasmas, mundo imenso e densamente povoado que os nossos sentidos ordinários não conhecem, vira o abentesma descendo dele incorporar-se à vida vulgar descobrindo-lhe o nome e a forma e denunciara-o".

Mr. Mathias has started to write Macobeba's life and production [...]. Macobeba could destroy everything, and people would not notice him, as it has happened with other creatures, if his biographer were not so aware of his tricks and the places where the monster goes. Joking, Mr. Mathias made me know the geography of Pernambuco, piece by piece. Every disaster Macobeba makes teaches me a new river, a different mill, a place with a fun name that we'll never forget¹² (REGO, 1929: 3).

In his text, "Macobeba is an excellent chorography teacher", published on June 7th, in *A Província*, José Lins do Rego recognizes Macobeba as a fictional character, moreover, a Mr. Mathias' joke. For the author, this joke has three utilities. The first one, personal, is learning "the geography of Pernambuco, piece by piece". The second one is related to the necessity of a character like Macobeba, "a werewolf", to folk's imagination – "Pernambuco's werewolf is dreading the popular strata. Other day, people were saying that the scarcity of fish in "Lagoa da Mangueba" was Macobeba's fault".¹³ The third utility is related to children's imagination: "With my two kids, this picture is capable of dispatching the most unreasonable desire. [...]. For me [...] Macobeba, God will forgive the image, has fallen from heaven. It's just mentioning the creature's name and the kids soften any unreasonable desire"¹⁴ (REGO, 1929: 3). For the kids, Macobeba is "the most violent genius out there", consequently making them feel "that thing that lots of silly pedagogues consider an evil: the fear"¹⁵ (REGO, 1929: 3). That is the reason why showing the monster's picture or mentioning his name are sufficient to make children change their minds and behave better.

To sum up, José Lins do Rego reveals that in a certain stratum, so-called "popular", people fear Macobeba because of his supernatural origin. For the mentioned "popular stratum", Macobeba isn't a fictional creature written by José Mathias; Macobeba is a real monster living outside. However, José Lins do Rego himself doesn't

¹² "O aparecimento desse bicho terrível nascido em praias do sul de Pernambuco veio mesmo a propósito. Estávamos sem um lobisomem, um desses terrores tão necessários à imaginação do povo. O sr. José Mathias começou a escrever a vida e a obra de Macobeba [...] Macobeba poderia continuar a fazer o diabo, por ali a fora, e ficaria a um canto, como têm ficado outros Macobebas, se não fosse seu biógrafo, tão informado de suas proezas, tão conhecedor dos lugares por onde tem o monstro andado. Numa brincadeira o sr. Mathias me obrigou a conhecer a geografia de Pernambuco, pedaço por pedaço. Cada desgraça que o Macobeba arranjar é um novo rio que eu conheço, um engenho que me entra na memória, um lugar de nome pitoresco que nunca mais a gente se esquece".

¹³ "E nas camadas populares o lobisomem de Pernambuco está metendo um medo sério. Outro dia quiseram atribuir escassez de peixe na 'Lagoa da Mangueba' a coisas do Macobeba".

¹⁴ "Entre os meus dois meninos esse retrato é capaz de liquidar com a vontade mais impertinente [...]. Para mim [...] o Macobeba, Deus há de me perdoar a imagem, caiu-me do céu. É só falar no nome do bicho e os meninos a amolecer a vontadezinha impertinente".

¹⁵ "essa coisa que muito pedagogo besta considera um mal: o medo".

forget the monster's origin, referring to him as a "joke" written by "Mr. Mathias": in other words, a fictional character.

In the last paragraph, he says: "I write this text to thank Mr. José Mathias for the monster's biography he's been writing. I don't write this text to place Macobeba in the literature with Disraeli and Stendhal"¹⁶ (REGO, 1929: 3). Even though José Lins do Rego is convinced that Macobeba is a fictional character, a "joke" of Mr. Mathias, he refuses to "recognize Macobeba's literarity", suggesting that if the monster were recognized as an authorial creation, he would miss his "pedagogical effect" upon the children and the "popular stratum", because he would miss his supernatural origin.

Therefore, José Lins do Rego allows us to recognize two possibilities of reception and refiguration of the monster: one in which Macobeba's literarity is recognized, and the monster can only be refigured under a new author's signature – called the "authorial refiguration"; the second one in which the creature circulates in an almost autonomous way – the "autonomous refiguration".¹⁷

In 1929, on May 3rd, Mário de Andrade, in *Diário Nacional* from São Paulo, creates his own version of the monster with the text "Macobeba". Despite recovering the monster's physical appearance, the author doesn't reinforce his diabolical character. Being extremely ironic, Mário de Andrade refers to the monster as "a very nice ghost", that "always carries an extremely useless broom", because he "uses it for nothing"¹⁸ (ANDRADE, 1929: 3). Therefore, Mário de Andrade subverts and displaces the monster's original figuration, creating his own Macobeba. This is how the monster's *authorial refigurations* have started.

According to the Portuguese literary critic Carlos Reis, the *refiguration* is "the process of narrative rework of a fictional *figure* (usually a character) in the same or in different media and languages"¹⁹ (REIS, 2018: 421). Furthermore, it is necessary to specify, according to Nabil Araújo, in "How to make a myth? (Faust as a paradigm for Poetics)", that as what happens in *Faust* reception, there is, in a smaller scale, in

¹⁶ "Escrevo essas notas para agradecer ao sr. José Mathias o muito que lhe devo com a biografia que está escrevendo de seu lobisomem. E não para botar Macobeba na literatura no meio de Disraeli e Stendhal".

¹⁷ Based on Araújo (2020), we'll refer, respectively, to the two kinds of refiguration as the *authorial refiguration* and the *autonomous refiguration*.

¹⁸ "uma assombração muito simpática", que "carrega sempre uma vassoura de fios duros maravilhosamente inútil" uma vez que ele "[n]ão serve-se dela para nada".

¹⁹ "processo de reelaboração narrativa de uma *figura* ficcional (normalmente uma personagem), no mesmo ou em diferentes suportes e linguagens".

Macobeba reception: “a refigurative chain in which every new refiguration is so related to its author, as if the character had received the author’s name like its family name”²⁰. The *authorial refigurations* allow us to recognize and analyze the differences and similarities among Macobebas created by *Mário de Andrade*, *Graciliano Ramos*, *Jorge de Lima*, *Cavalcanti Proença* and *Joaquim Cardozo*.²¹

In 1930, Graciliano Ramos, using the pseudonym Lúcio Guedes, elaborated a pointed allegorical political criticism in the texts “Prehistoric Macobeba” and “Ancient Macobeba”, both published in *Jornal de Alagoas*. On the first one, the narrator ironically presents Alagoas as an idyllic and propitious place for Macobeba arising. Then, Graciliano Ramos mixes the monster with a local politician: “Maybe there were two Macobebas. The first one, born at a heroic age, had [...] a subjective existence” while “the second one, current and bachelor, is a flesh and blood being, just like everyone else. I suppose that the second one gradually took the place of the first one until [...] from the distance, the two seemed to form an indivisible whole”²² (RAMOS, 2013[1930]: 100). By mixing the monster and the politician, the author transfers the devilish characteristics from the first one to the second, highlighting the diabolical consequences of messianism in politics.

Fifteen years later, from December 1945 to January 1946, Jorge de Lima, in *A Manhã*, a newspaper from Rio de Janeiro, publishes three fantastic stories, in which Macobeba is a kind of a villain. Beyond the presented cases, i.e., the authorial refigurations published in different newspapers, there are also authorial refigurations published in other media.

In the book published in 1959, Manoel Cavalcanti Proença first presents the monster as the foreign president of a totalitarian and predatory business megacorporation, ironically called Vofavofe.²³ This megacorporation destroys the environment and the small producers, artificializing and interfering in all consumer

²⁰ “uma cadeia refiguradora na qual [...] se adensarão [...] os vínculos de cada nova refiguração da [personagem] a um determinado nome de autor, à guisa, dir-se-ia, de um ‘sobrenome’, a denotar, então, um laço de filiação”.

²¹ Important Modern Brazilian writers of the twentieth century.

²² “Houve talvez dois Macobebas. O primeiro, nascido numa idade heroica, tinha[...] uma existência subjetiva; o segundo, atual e bacharel, é um ser de carne e osso, como qualquer um de nós. Julgo que este foi pouco a pouco tomando o lugar daquele até confundir-se com ele e, de longe, parecerem formar-se os dois um todo indivisível”.

²³ In portuguese “*Vofavofe*” is a word created by putting together the first four syllables of each word in the sentence “*Vou Fazer Você Feliz*”, that could be translated as “I will make you happy”.

relations, presenting, however, their predatory practices as signs of progress and local improvements. Some chapters later, Macobeba shows up as the monster we know: “Macobeba was a plague, giant man-eater, that drinks sea salty water”²⁴ (PROENÇA, 1960: 161) – bringing death and destruction wherever he passes. Mitavaí, leading figure and hero, first seduced by the conveniences provided by *Vofavofê*, decides to face and to destroy the monster. Later, after killing the monster, Mitavaí gets so popular that his political enemies try to remember Macobeba as a philanthropist capitalist only interested in local improvement.

Fifteen years later, in 1975, Joaquim Cardozo writes the play “Marechal, boi de carro”, in which Macobeba is not a single monster anymore; here the name of the creature represents a group of destructive beings, called “macobebas”, without capital letter. Since the beginning, they are responsible for destroying Muribeca.²⁵ Even though the characters are not capable of defining what macobebas were, if they were “people from hell”, “demons”, “bandits”²⁶ (CARDOZO, 2017: 254-255), everybody knows macobebas’ evil and destructive behavior.

Finally, with this presentation of the authorial refigurations, it is possible to realize that even though the authors may present some of Macobeba’s original characteristics (the ones created by Júlio Bello), they subvert and displace the monster’s original figuration. Besides these cases, there are some examples of Macobeba’s refigurations that don’t fit the authorial refigurations.

Also in *A Província*, the newspaper in which the texts about Macobeba written by Júlio Bello were published, on April 11th, 1929, in the section “Requested (the newsroom is not responsible for it)”, José Pergentino – a character from several texts written by Júlio Bello – is the author of the text “Why don’t we use Macobeba, P.D. fellows?”. In this text, the author ironically proposes that Macobeba becomes Democratic Party president, mentioning José Mathias as someone that writes stories about Macobeba, not as the monster’s creator: “Why doesn’t P.D. invite Macobeba to become the president? He is there, under Pina’s bridge, according to Mr. José Mathias’

²⁴ “Macobeba era um flagelo, gigante antropófago, bebedor de água do mar”.

²⁵ A Brazilian town.

²⁶ “gente do inferno”, “demônios”, “bandidos”.

today's article"²⁷ (PERGENTINO, 1929: 4). This suggestion is related to the idea that the monster is a living creature circulating around the town.

Also in 1929, in May, in the newspaper *O Imparcial* from Maranhão, Brazil, Ernani Braga published the text: "About the beauty pageant. A record also about the musical life. 'Miss Maranhão' and the sacrifice of hearing a victrola that only holws". In a humorous way, the author comments a sort of disagreement about two local figures' ugliness, and he says:

There is no possibility of agreement. They should ask people's opinion. [...]. Shouldn't they? And Manoel Bandeira, the designer, is naturally indicated for this function. Because now he is very interested in ugly creatures. Let's remind horrible Macobeba, that came out of his pencil, so crooked and weird, that the monster, embarrassed, decided to hide under Pina's bridge²⁸ (BRAGA, 1929: 4).

As Ernani Braga blames Manoel Bandeira for the monster' ugliness – reason why Macobeba decides to live under Pina's bridge –, the author presents the monster as an autonomous creature that is so aware of his ugliness that decides to hide under the bridge. After, the monster autonomy is reinforced by the possibility of meeting him around the town: "If José Candido and João Alfredo asked me to interview, at midnight, Macobeba under Pina's bridge, to prove them my dedication, I would go there, dig the creature and make him say everything" (BRAGA, 1929: 4).²⁹

Also in *O Imparcial*, on April 5th, 1946, when commenting the newest book written by Austro-Costa, called *Vida e Sonho* [Life and dream], Camara Cascudo presents Pernambuco in the following way: "Read slowly. I can see myself, Austro with his pipe, huge sideburns, Joaquim Cardozo, Benedito Monteiro, Mariz de Barros street, pineapple from Goiana, hooch Black-Face, Manuel Baú pastoral, Claudino's electric light in Olinda, Macobeba living under Pina's bridge"³⁰ (CASCUDO, 1946: 5). Here

²⁷ "Por que o P.D. não recorre ao Macobeba para a presidência? Ele ali está às ordens, debaixo da ponte do Pina, segundo afirma em seu artigo de hoje, o sr. José Mathias".

²⁸ "Não há entendimento possível entre um e outro. Seria prudente afetarem a questão a um árbitro [...]. Não acham? E Manoel Bandeira, o desenhista, está naturalmente indicado para exercer essa função. Que ele anda, agora, bem enfronhado em matéria de bichos feios. Haja vista o tremebundo Macobeba que lhe saiu do lápis, tão torto e esquisito, que foi se esconder, com certeza envergonhado, debaixo da ponte do Pina".

²⁹ "Se José Candido e João Alfredo me encarregassem de ir entrevistar, em nome deles, o Macobeba na Ponte do Pina, à meia-noite, eu iria para lhes provar a minha dedicação, desencavar o bicharoco e puxar-lhe pela língua".

³⁰ "Leio devagar. Estou me vendo, a mim, Austro de cachimbo, de costeletas até o joelho, Joaquim Cardozo, Benedito Monteiro, rua Mariz de Barros, abacaxi de Goiana, aguardente Cara-Preta, pastoril de Manuel Baú, a luz elétrica de seu Claudino em Olinda, o bicho Macobeba morando debaixo da ponte do Pina".

Macobeba is a part of the local scenery. By mentioning his friends, Austro Costa, Joaquim Cardozo – the author of the play that presents the “macobebas” – and Benedito Monteiro, we realize that Camara Cascudo seems to make an affective choice of the items that compose the local scenery.

Also in *Jornal Pequeno*, in 1931, on June 30th, an advertisement called “If you are curious, come and see” was published, promising that Macobeba would appear:

It is something that has never happened in Recife, something really fantastic, an astonishment, a wonderment. If you are curious, come and see. Boys, girls, elderly and young ladies, all kinds of people. It's there, on Duque de Caxias street where the incredible Macobeba is going to appear. If you are curious, come and see the gigantic and most gorgeous silk's assortment that *A Graciosa* (a store in Santa Therezinha) has received to sell for the cheapest prices challenging its rivals³¹ (QUEM, 1931: 2).

It is only possible to present Macobeba as an advertising promise because of the monster's popularity and because he was recognized as an autonomous creature.

In the same newspaper, in 1949, there was a text called “We are like sponge cake”, part of a discussion composed of some publications in different newspapers. On this dialogue, Macobeba is used as name-calling: “The mentioned chronicle is or intends to be an answer to the text published in *Jornal Pequeno*, whose writer is called ‘Macobeba’. There must be a mistake here, because ‘Macobeba’ isn't one of our journalists, it is, indeed, the lack of imagination of your coworkers”³² (SOMOS, 1949: 3). Later, when criticizing a political happening, the narrator says: “Yesterday, in ‘Macobebacy attorney's job’, ‘Macobeba's procurator’ said: ‘– They insist we owe them some money, but we don't know this debt’. As we don't know ‘Macobeba's procurator’, we might not affirm that he doesn't know the mentioned debt. Although, if ‘Macobeba's procurator’ comes here bringing the checkbook, we may show him the mentioned debt”³³ (SOMOS, 1949: 3). In this citation, the word Macobeba appears as an adjective,

³¹ “É um caso que nunca se deu em Recife, uma coisa mesmo fantástica, um assombro, uma maravilha. Quem quiser pode ver. Meninos, meninas, velhas, moças, toda espécie de gente. É ali, na rua Duque de Caxias que vai aparecer o formidável Macobeba. Quem quiser pode ver o gigantesco e mais deslumbrante sortimento de sedas que *A Graciosa* (casa Santa Therezinha) recebeu para vender pelos mais baixos preços desafiando competência em durabilidade e garantia”.

³² “A tal crônica é ou pretende ser uma resposta ao *Jornal Pequeno*, cujo comentarista é classificado de ‘Macobeba’. Neste ponto deve haver engano, pois o ‘Macobeba’ não é gente daqui e sim produto da falta de imaginação e pobreza de espírito dos seus amigos e correligionários da folha”.

³³ “Na ‘macobebada procuratória’ de ontem, o ‘Macobeba procurador’ exclama: – ‘Que diz lhe deverem, vejamos bem, pois o fato é que desconhecemos semelhante débito’. Como não conhecemos ‘Macobeba procurador’, não podemos afirmar que ele desconheça ou não o débito citado. Entretanto, se o ‘Macobeba procurador’ vier aqui aos nossos escritórios trazendo o livro dos cheques, podemos mostrar o aludido débito”.

qualifying the procurator and as the noun Macobebacy. Even though they don't mention Júlio Bello, i.e., the monster's creator, the different usages of the word Macobeba, and the neologism Macobebacy, somehow maintain the monstrous original characteristics.

In the same newspaper, in 1949, on July 29th, in a political criticism, called "The 'innocent's club'"³⁴, Macobeba is again a name-calling: "The 'innocent's club' has a new partner. And the illustrious partner is a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and a governor 'honoris causa' of a relevant state. We think it's Pernambuco... [...]. He has joined the club using the name Macobeba and he has already received the titles of Grand Master and Grand Chancellor" (O CLUBE, 1949: 3). It's also in *Jornal Pequeno* that there are several political criticisms calling Pernambuco's government as "Macobeba's government", something that starts in 1949, and lasts for almost one year.

Therefore, when someone suggests Macobeba for being the president of the Democratic Party, when the monster appears as an important part of the local scenery, and when it is a name-calling, Macobeba seems to have his own life, once Júlio Bello is not even mentioned. We recognize the monstrous characteristics without even mentioning his author. According to Carlos Reis, as in all these occurrences we realize "the prolongation of its distinctive attributes as a fictional figure"³⁵ (REIS, 2018: 485), they "give autonomy to the character, transcending its fictional universe in which it has appeared",³⁶ in other words, the monster's *survival*. The mentioned examples seem to present a growing autonomization of the creature. Macobeba is first a Júlio Bello's creation, then he becomes part of the local scenery and, finally, it is a name-calling commonly used.

Finally, we consider that the differences between the authorial refiguration, the one in which the character is related to its author, and the autonomous refiguration, the one in which the monster becomes part of the popular tradition, allow us to distinguish, in the discursive praxis, the literature and the myth. According to Lévi-Strauss: "to achieve the status of myth, the created work must cease precisely to be individual and, in the process of generalization must lose the essential part of those factors [...] which

³⁴ "O 'clube dos inocentes'".

³⁵ "o prolongamento das suas propriedades distintivas como figura ficcional".

³⁶ "concede[m] à personagem uma existência autônoma, transcendendo o universo ficcional em que ela surgiu originariamente".

could be attributed to the particular author's temperament, talent, imagination and personal experiences" (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1981: 626).

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