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Literature of
the Saõ Paulo Week of Modern Art

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LITERATURE OF THE SÃO PAULO WEEK OF MODERN ART

The Brazilian modernist movement, from its early development circa 1917 through its first creative phase ending in 1929, encompassed the fine arts as well as literature in a broad attempt to renovate artistic and intellectual life. The Week of Modern Art celebrated in the Municipal Theater of São Paulo from 11 to 18 February 1922 was a focal point for the critical spirit seeking to redefine artistic values and stood as a symbol of a new expressive and interpretive tradition that would profoundly alter Brazilian writing.

Sixty-five years later, the guiding forces of modernism and its literary program are being increasingly studied by a circle of scholars who contribute to an understanding of this complex moment of impetuous revolt and ingenious invention. Inspired by an iconoclastic insurrection against the Parnassian ideals and theoretical models of the past, with their limiting views of national reality, modernist writers initiated a poetic rediscovery of Brazil and sought a new identity through popular language set in regional and folkloric detail, rich in music and magic, dance and myth. The movement aimed to produce a literature for export to replace the dominant imported literature.

Characteristic of modernism as a whole is the promotion of a critical consciousness of national reality, accompanied by an integration or incorporation of its most diverse elements: the Indian and the Portuguese, the piano and the *berimbau*, the jungle and the school. As a mode of cultural criticism, modernist essays shaped ideas on ethnography, sociology, and economics, among other topics, beginning with Graça Aranha and Paulo Prado and extending to Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, Gilberto Freyre, and Caio Prado, Jr. Modernism can also be viewed as an avant-garde movement that paralleled developments in European literature, its revolt against nineteenth-century norms, with particular attention to expressionism, cubism, and futurism for innovative methods of composition. While the modernists at first had no fixed aesthetic program or ideology, the Brazilian movement gained a structural referent from the European vanguard movements, through manifestoes, inventive shorter genres, critical experimentation, and literary events. One could say with some irony that the Brazilian modernists called on the European avant-garde when necessary for techniques with which they declared their independence from styles and ideas imported from Europe, at the same time that they developed national or folkloric themes that were not at all vanguardist in themselves.

An evaluation of modernist works must consider two essential directions: first, the critical nationalism resulting from a rediscovery and more comprehensive observation of Brazilian life; and, second, the modernists' search for innovative and contemporary styles of writing in which to express their new awareness of reality. The strength of this synthesis will form the basis of the movement's most innovative legacy, its serene and corrosive modernity.

What are the fundamental theoretical problems posed by modernism? The problem of form and content, previously outlined, can be integrated into a larger dialectic of what Antônio Cândido terms "local versus cosmopolitan."¹ Literary nationalism vies with universality in the treatment of themes or subjects. Concomitantly, Brazilian writers, with their European cultural heritage, were isolated from the miscegenated tropical population with its primitive, Amerindian or African roots. The urban modernist writers' debt to this second culture begins with the ironic twist that the primitivism so in vogue in the European vanguard movements to which the modernists turned for their aesthetic role models could be claimed as a natural component of their own magical environment at home. What is exoticism in Europe becomes the working clay of modernist art, at the same time retaining a certain in-house alien enchantment.

It can also be noted that modernism's definitive break with the past and proclamation of artistic independence is the work of a local elite with ties to the rural aristocracy. Although undergoing rapid change, this urban nature of modernism probably assured that the popular Brazilian traditions valued through its poetry, fiction, and folkloric research would remain the province and purview of urban, literate models of cultural diffusion. Composer Gilberto Mendes also reminds us, paradoxically, that experiments with artistic form could be considered ultimately more Brazilian than use of popular themes, some of which are strictly tied to foreign models and origins, such as the *cordel* literature or the *samba*.² Swept away in the breadth of their undertaking, modernist writers were perhaps not aware of how peculiarly theirs was the social portrait and the literary style that emerged from the Modern Art Week. It is nonetheless a tradition that has shaped both a theory of Brazil and the subsequent literature of six decades.

The assimilation of the European vanguard by aspiring modernist writers can be described through two contacts, separated by eleven years, and by two modes of experience. Oswald de Andrade's direct contact dates from his arrival in Europe as a youth of twenty-two in 1912, when he first discovered avant-garde movements in the arts, although he would wait some ten years before employing any of their techniques. In his memoirs about Paris, Oswald remembers learning of Erik Satie, Alfred Jarry, Cocteau, Picasso, along with Stravinsky and Marinetti. He read the Italian futurists in French, Apollinaire's *Cubist Painters*, and Jarry's novels, with their absurd and iconoclastic humor. During these years, Mário de Andrade was following European trends from São Paulo. His later essays mention the postsymbolist aesthetics of Paul Dermée and Apollinaire's *esprit nouveau* as influences, along with cubist and futurist practices of simultaneity and juxtaposition. Mário's insatiable reading included futurist, dadaist, and surrealist poetry, and he quoted from such figures as Breton, Cendrars, Tzara, and Maiakovsky. After returning to Brazil, Oswald tried to practice free verse and documentary or cinematographic techniques as applied to literature. His sense of geographic trends in poetry could

have been influenced by Blaise Cendrars' *Transsiberian Prose* of 1913, although Oswald's extended contact with the Swiss writer did not begin until 1923.

In the year after the Modern Art Week, Oswald, accompanied by the artist Tarsila do Amaral, renewed his contact with Europe's atmosphere of artistic rebellion. Tarsila's studio was frequented by such diverse personalities as Léger, Cocteau, and John Dos Passos. Through the intermediary of Cendrars, Oswald entered into contact with powerful stimuli: Francis Picabia, author of his own "Cannibal Manifesto," and a wide range of provocative pamphlets, including *Nord-Sud*, *Sic*, and *391*. When Cendrars visited Brazil in 1924, his excursion into Minas Gerais accompanied by Mário, Oswald, and Tarsila, among others, was thus imbued with the ferment of the European aesthetic vanguard, via cubist theories, surrealist manifestoes, and dada humor. The modernists adapted what they knew of this impulsive and incoherent European avant-garde toward their own designs, as part of a broad tradition of modernity. In a retrospective account of modernism, Oswald attempted to place his ideas in a more traditional line of evolution in literary thought beginning with Mallarmé and passing to Apollinaire and beyond: "a new geometry/in the typographical form of the poem/A throw of the dice/Caligrammes/Futurism."³

An important contact with Portuguese futurism came through the 1922 tournée in Brazil of the young writer António Ferro, a participant with Fernando Pessoa and Mário de Sá-Carneiro in the magazine *Orpheu* (1915), author of several books of decadent aphorisms and of one influential manifesto titled *Nós*, which the modernists printed in their magazine *Klaxon*. Ferro's conference at São Paulo's Municipal Theater in July of 1922, titled "Age of the Jazz Band," was accompanied by a live jazz band that interrupted him at prearranged moments. Ferro's visit is celebrated in articles by Guilherme de Almeida, Ronald de Carvalho, and Oswald and through *Klaxon* camaraderie. Ferro himself describes the atmosphere: "Conducting raids, assaulting weak reputations, striking all the high hats that passed within reach, I spent almost four months with these good companions in a twenty-four-hour intimate comradeship, in a spiritual bohemia that I will never forget."⁴ Ferro's manifesto *Nós* celebrates the new age with a sensational and burlesque tone that constitutes a point of reference for Brazilian modernism: "A passing streetcar is an advancing century... death to the etceteras of life...let's be rebels... free men affixing billboards to the walls of the Hour."

Another source for modernist ferment can be found in the bohemian, aesthetic, and decadent atmosphere of São Paulo's premodernist years. Social nonconformity and literary theories were rehearsed through gatherings of small groups of writers and artists in salons or attic studios, art exhibitions, and bookstores. Modernist scholar Jorge Schwartz reminds us of the cosmopolitan tradition in which the vanguard developed, a literary system striving for totality and universality expressed through the urban cultural axis.⁵ In São Paulo, as in Fernando Pessoa's Lisbon,

coffeehouses served as the locale for bohemian youths to share their cultural anarchy and plan literary magazines. Oswald kept a diary titled "The Perfect Cookbook of the Souls of This World" and coined the pseudonym "João Miramar" (John Seaborne) as a literary and cultural alterego. While Pessoa was reading about Europe's decline in Max Nordau's *La Dégénérescence*, the Brazilians were discussing Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud. Graça Aranha's idealization of the new Brazilian man in his theories about the revitalization of the cosmos probably made more of an impact on the future modernists than they would have admitted on the occasion of his talk at the Modern Art Week. As early as 1912, Oswald's magazine *O Pirralho* caricatured and satirized political, social, and literary figures. Juó Bananere began a review based on São Paulo's Italian dialect, later taken over by Oswald and Antônio de Alcântara Machado. The influential *Revista do Brasil* and the magazine most closely associated with the Week, *Klaxon*, culminated in the radical *Revista de Antropofagia* of 1928.

The influences of the circus and of the cinema houses, an echo of the *belle_époque*, touched the modernists' imagination, as did the society soirées where they toasted their verses with champagne. There, novice poets rehearsed for such hosts as Paulo Prado and D. Olivia Penteadó, who actively promoted a literary revolution. Nothing so stimulated the young artists as their discovery of each other, a diversion that Mário captured in poetic verse: "in the gentle blue-green Cadillac of illusion, Oswald de Andrade passes by hunting geniuses in the midst of the throng."⁶

As important as the modernists' readings in the European *isms* were technically, the interior world of their poetry and fiction after 1922 is full of the premodernist years in São Paulo, with its ferment under the signs of festivity, youth, euphoria, and humor. "Do you want to know for sure how the Modern Art Week of '22 came about," wrote Oswald de Andrade. "I'll tell you: Anthony went to Paul's house, who took him to Joe's room, who showed him Peter's verses, who told him that John was a genius and that Carlos painted. And they all went out to discover Maricota. The only thing is, these individuals were named Mário de Andrade, Menotti del Picchia, Di Cavalcanti, Villa Lobos, Anita Malfatti."⁷

Mário de Andrade later formalized modernism's aesthetic creed as a right to aesthetic research, bringing Brazilian artistic intelligence up to date, and formation of a national creative consciousness. This program was put into practice with cosmopolitan yet unrepressed vitality. Typical of this unorthodox energy was the reading of Manuel Bandeira's poem "Os sapos" (The Toads) at the Municipal Theater, where the audience echoed the amphibian chorus of *yeses* and *nos*: "foi, não foi, foi, não foi, foi."

The enduring literary legacy of Modern Art Week, its most innovative and unique works, are those that could be called vanguardist both because of their experimental designs or techniques, initiated by the European *avant-garde*, and because of their radical cultural platform within the Brazilian movement.

A theoretical basis for this synthesis of vanguardist technique and national themes is found in Mário de Andrade's "Very Interesting Preface" to his book of poems *Hallucinated City* (1922) and continued in his essay "A Escrava que não é Isaura." Oswald de Andrade deepens the cultural context with his 1924 "Manifesto da poesia Pau Brasil" and the suggestive, metaphorical "Manifesto antropófago" of 1928. In poetry, the rebellion of *Hallucinated City* is succeeded by the documentary, cinematographic *Pau Brasil* poems published by Oswald at Au Sans Pareil in 1925, and punctuated by Manuel Bandeira's syncopated *Ritmo dissoluto* of 1924. In prose, Oswald introduces the poetic cubist novel in the *Sentimental Memoirs of John Seaborne*, which is carried to the extreme of aggressive, cannibalistic humor in the antiliterary grandfinale of 1920s society, which is the non-novel *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*.⁸ Mário de Andrade, through myth and metamorphosis, primitivism and parody, creates the novel *Macunaíma*, the hero without any character, who paradoxically symbolizes the new Brazilian identity promised by Modern Art Week. Each of these works contributes to a dynamic collage of national reality while building a Brazilian modern library.

Written in 1921, the twenty-two poems of *Hallucinated City* are an attack on the middle-class sensibilities of São Paulo and the destructive self-satisfaction of the masses, in the midst of a lyrical communion between the poet and his tumultuous city, in which he wept, sang, laughed, and bellowed "I am alive!" As poetry, *Hallucinated City* stands between the vanguardist urge to shock and insult the reader, on the one hand, and the postsymbolist fragmentation of lyrical voice, the experimentation with poetic language, on the other. Although Mário amends Dermée's formula, "Lyricism plus Art equals Poetry," by clarifying art to be "Criticism plus Words," the basis for Mário's "Hallucinism" is freedom of the lyric impulse through the unrestrained unconscious. Exaggeration and simultaneity evoke poetic polyphony, which the poet compares to a nonmelodic arpeggiated structure of tones at the service of futurist aesthetics: the suggestive, associative, symbolic, universal, and musical power of the liberated word. *Hallucinated City* initiates the modernist vanguard through its intensity and vital inventiveness. "Ode to the Bourgeois Gentlemen" epitomizes the Modern Art Week's sense of revolt: "I insult the bourgeois! The money-grubbing bourgeois! I insult the cautious aristocracies [whose] daughters speak French and play the 'Printemps' with their fingernails. Hate and rage! Away with the good bourgeois gentleman!" The poet describes himself as a "Tupi Indian strumming a lute," like a native outcast lost in cosmopolitan gray mist, whereas his poetic stroll through hallucinated São Paulo finds literary parallels in Cesário Verde's phantasmagorical excursion through Lisbon of the 1870s in the poem "Sentiments of a Westerner," or Fernando Pessoa's illusory "Lisbon Revisited" of 1921. The unique contribution of Mário's *Hallucinated City* lies in its free manipulation of poetic language and the Brazilianizing of vanguard techniques through the exploitation of the sonorous possibilities of the Portuguese language. In particular, Mário employs assonance ("um longo som redondo"), paranomasia

("entes/frementes/de mil dentes"), and astonishing rhymes ("Pacaembús/tutús/luz") for parodic effect.

The most completely vanguardist poem of early modernism is the "profane oratorio" that ends *Hallucinated City*, titled "The Moral Fibrature of the Ipiranga." In expressionist hyperbole, 550,000 voices and 5,000 instrumentalists gather in the Valley of Anhangabaú, alongside the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, to act out the city's modernist drama. Conductors are brought from abroad. Parts are distributed to assembled forces of conventional writers and mentalities, millionaires and bourgeoisie, workingmen and poor, the green-gilt modernist youth, and the poet himself as coloratura soprano soloist. The poem/libretto spells out the social, cultural, and artistic conflicts in an allegorical dialectic of old against new. Confrontation produces madness and finally catharsis, as the young native artists are magically absorbed into the Brazilian soil to be reborn under the germinating light of the Southern Cross; while from windows of the city palaces, theaters, and hotels there comes an enormous derision of whistles, catcalls, and stamping of feet. Mário's grandiose theater of madness discovers Brazilian poetic language in modernism's own birth ritual, the personification of the dialectic struggle of vanguard against tradition, renewal versus stagnation, and the artist versus the bourgeois. *Hallucinated City* also strikes innovative notes in that Mário allows the reader to participate in the creative process by filling in some blanks with his or her own obscenities and through a reflection of the act of writing itself, as evidenced in the work's dedication to Mário de Andrade, the Master, signed by Mário de Andrade, apprentice, author, and disciple. *Hallucinated City* is thus cast as a manifesto, an experiment, and a declaration of lyrical freedom.

At Mário de Andrade's house in 1923, Oswald de Andrade recited some of his brazilwood poems that were published in the *Revista do Brasil* in 1923 and as a volume in Paris in 1925. With *Pau Brasil* poems Oswald presents a different approach to poetic structure and text. His book is composed of 140 titled poems, each a fragment of a larger reality. Each poem-fragment is like a photograph in an album or a colored geometrical figure in a kaleidoscope, with which the reader may create his or her own design. These 140 units carry ironic or humorous titles, indicating an estrangement between the reader and the text, and between the levels of time and meaning inherent in the portrait of a slice of Brazilian reality. Parody and humor accompany the poet with his Kodak, in pursuit of invention and surprise, of a document or reality that will acquire poetic resonance when placed in a meaningful structure. Eleven macrounits assemble the fragments and orient our reading along the theme of a voyage through time and space, from the colonial "History of Brazil" through "Poems of Colonization" and "Carnival" to the contemporary "Light Posts of São Paulo" and cultural excursion to Minas Gerais. The finale, desanctifying the "Canção do Exílio" by romantic poet Gonçalves Dias, parodies the discovery of Brazil in a metaphor of decolonization by a traveler returning from Paris.

Oswald's experiments with form, more radical than *Hallucinated City*, are based on synthesis and a

poetic language often reduced to a process of signs given geometric, typographical meaning. In the "History of Brasil" section, Oswald reconstructs and deconstructs the literature of discovery by selecting twenty-three fragments from actual sixteenth and seventeenth-century chronicles, giving them ironic or humorous titles and interpretations and placing them chronologically under the names of their real authors, in one case using the original French of a Capuchin monk. This camera eye *bricolage* causes the reader to react to a formal and linguistic tension, a destruction of the original meaning presented as text and its substitution by a critical distance. In "country of gold," for example, the Portuguese colonizer writes, "all have a way of life/and no poor man walks by doors/begging as in our Kingdom"; or in "festival of the race," "there is a certain animal in these parts called the Sloth/that in fifteen days won't even cover the distance of a stone's throw"; or the theory of Brazil in "the prosperity of São Paulo," "around this city are four villas of friendly people/whom the fathers of the Company indoctrinate/besides many others/who daily descend from the backlands."⁹

The constructive innocence of *Pau Brasil*'s poetic flashes fulfills the precepts of Oswald's 1924 "Manifesto da poesia Pau Brasil": synthesis, equilibrium, invention, surprise. The macrosections on immigration and settlement document the developing reality of the nation. The poem "new iguaçu" is borrowed from the names of small business enterprises: "Three Nations Pastries/Import and Export/Ideal Butcher/Modern Milk/Parrot Café/Unity Grocery/In the country without sins." This last line interested Mário de Andrade, who noted in his copy the "lyrical murmur" that escapes from the final verse. Oswald, however, sought only to objectify and illuminate what passed near São Paulo's "Light Posts," as in the poem "aperitif": "Happiness goes on foot/through Antonio Prado Square/It's ten blue hours/the price of coffee is as high as the skyscraper morning/Tietê cigarettes/automobiles/the city without myths."

Echoing Oswald's "Manifesto of Brazilwood Poetry," Brazil's rich ethnic background--natural, picturesque, ingenuous--appears as an innocently discovered poetic object. The poem "pronouns" is a recipe for popular Brazilian speech: "Give me a cigarette/Says the grammar/of professor and student/and of the wise mulatto/But the good black and good white/of the Brazilian Nation/Say every day/Cut it out friend/Gimme a cigarette." More interesting poetically is the creation of a minimalist image, unifying concrete structure with thematic synthesis: "Along the line" fixes the poetic instants of a train passenger's observations of the landscape: "Coconut trees/By twos/By threes/By groups/Tall/Short." Cultural criticism becomes a matter of discovery, close reading, and participation by the reader in a poetic synthesis of reality. The reader and the strolling photographer are one: "Freezer of hearts/Underneath blouses/Autograph album/Your lens flutters-flirts/Courts/Captured smiles/You're a glory/Offering of poetry by the dozens/Tripod of public squares/Animal under a tree/The sun's silent cannon."

Radicalization of modernist ideology occurs in Oswald's theory of cultural devouring in the "Manifesto antropófago" of 1928, through which Brazilian artists absorb cultural values from Europe in a rite of prelogical primitive mentality and transform them into autonomous goods. Dated from the eating of Bishop Sardinha by the Caetés Indians, the manifesto coined the slogan, "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question." The structure of its idea involves civilizations in conflict, challenges the noble savage of Rousseau, and condemns the colonial political and religious structure of Latin American society. The exoticism of a Brazilian reality created by Europe would surrender to this instinct of primitive assimilation. Like Tarsila's painting *Abaporu*, the Tupi is oblivious to subtleties of rational discourse. Cannibalism is at once a metaphor, a diagnosis, and a therapeutic for Brazil. As a provoking and irreverent metaphor, it refers to the Tupi rite of consuming a valiant enemy warrior, ingesting his qualities toward the preservation of the tribe's own autonomy. Cannibalism diagnoses the trauma of a repressed patriarchal and colonial society, with its messianism, rhetoric, and aping of foreign models. The manifesto, through its verbal aggression, satire, and criticism, also opens an outlet for intellectual catharsis and revitalization. The ultimate consequences of its scandalous and deceptively playful attack on society create a spirit of complete and permanent rebellion, a transformation of ideas into a cultural point-counterpoint between colonized and colonizer, the particular and the universal: an ex-centric appropriation and expropriation of imported models, altered for local consumption in a rebellion of the periphery against the center. Shakespeare is tropicalized. Oswald's wit becomes fable through the incantation of original cultural material from the metropolis in the style of baroque transmutation. To quote Brazilian critic Benedito Nunes: "For Oswald de Andrade, above all, it was primitivism that would enable us to encounter in foreign artistic discoveries and inventions that mixture of ingenuousness and purity, of instinctive rebellion and mythical constructions that formed the psychological and ethnic foundation of Brazilian culture."¹⁰ Cannibalism's ignoble savage, devourer of ideologies and religions, totemizer of taboos, founds an antitradition by altering the codes of language, domination, and catechism, thus preparing the way for modernism's three most characteristic and creative novels: *Miramar*, *Seraphim*, and *Macunaíma*.

The *Sentimental Memoirs of John Seaborne* and *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, Oswald's two novels of the 1920s, developed an original expression of the vanguardist style because of their intrinsic experiments with language and form, in which Di Cavalcanti felt the "magical perception of a new world."¹¹ *John Seaborne* represents the first attempt to create a "new prose" through poetic and documentary techniques, while *Seraphim* is modernism's most radical attempt at parody of bourgeois society through use of synthetic, satirical fragments. The two novels radically enact principles of the two manifestoes: John Seaborne's qualities belong to the "Manifesto of Brazilwood Poetry," while *Seraphim* embodies some ideals of the "Cannibalist Manifesto." Both are memoirs that stem

ultimately from personal experience transformed into fiction; each novel is composed of fragments of prose, being ironic portrayals of experience, juxtaposed as in a cubistic design.

The *Sentimental Memoirs*, published in 1924, and *Seraphim*, in 1933, resulted from fourteen years of experimentation through three or four manuscripts each. *Seaborne* was begun about 1914 as the diary of Oswald's formative trip to Europe. In final form, it consists of a preface written by one of its own characters, followed by 163 titled fragments that flash significant impressions or moments in John's youth. The paired novel, *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, written on napkins in São Paulo cafés, resulted from at least three different manuscripts composed between 1924 and 1929. Its final form displays a juxtaposition of titled fragments that parody traditional novelesque styles and formulas while insinuating the adventures of a rebellious "transformed bureaucrat" and immigrant. One of the major characters is even expelled from the novel for gross insolence. Manuscripts of both novels evidence Oswald's attempt to refine a concise, synthetic, and expressive style to convey his acute observations on Brazilian society.

The particular qualities of this avant-garde prose include fragmentary, simultaneist, and documentary techniques expressed in short, dense sentences dominated by each word's expressiveness. The writing is elliptical, full of images that treat reality with poetic techniques: suggestion, allusion, metaphor, simile, paranomasia, onomatopoeia. The use of syntactic alteration and neologisms in a collage of images achieves a style that has been termed "poetry in prose," based on free association of ideas and images. Typographically, the material is divided into suggestive blocks that often lack rigorous logical ties but are not without a pervading organizational scheme, related to theme.

The metaphor of rediscovery has been suggested by Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda to be modernism's central theme, and Benedito Nunes more literally points out the theme to be inherent in *Pau Brasil*'s structure, through retracing stages of national life from early chronicles of discovery. In the composition of *Seaborne* and *Seraphim*, one can perceive three sections, or groups of prose fragments, that correspond to the hero's formative Brazilian background, his European travels, and a return to Brazil with new perspectives. Thus, within this central metaphor of modernism, *Seaborne* and *Grosse Pointe* may be read as rediscoverers, both through the explicitly critical portrait of their culture and the inherent organizational schemes of both novels.

The *Sentimental Memoirs* are set in modernist Brazil and re-create the first half of the hero's life in memoirs that the "young poet" has written at a symbolic midpoint. The "ingenuous Ulysses" John Seaborne is modernism's "hero in search of a character." Carlos Drummond de Andrade summed up Seaborne in 1925 as follows:

the best portrait of the modern Brazilian, son of the bourgeoisie, ingenuously dull, ambitious but not stubborn, lazy, indecisive--good. Let's agree that it's a

melancholy portrait. Still it's not a refined type, resulting from prolonged refinements and crystallizations, but rather the first valuable product of our civilization. For this very reason, John Seaborne has no defense against destiny. His philosophy consists of submission and laissez faire. No apriorisms. He attracts principally through the clear freshness of his impressions, the lack of maliciousness, and the absolute moral and intellectual virginity.¹²

Seaborne writes memoirs in order to reconstruct a critical consciousness of a re-created world, in a search for essential values. The chain of fragments creates an anthology of events, at once descriptive and critical, like the synchronic view of a photograph album. Individual fragments construct a montage in terms of the senses--using letters, dialogues, postcards, telegrams, quotations, and speeches. Seaborne's poetic collages, imbued with sexual and social license, were projected onto his own "sky movie screen":

St. Mark's was a turkish bath's electric night-light in absurdity of whirling worldwide elegance encircling concerts served with sherbets... An old Englishman slept with an open mouth like a blackened tunnel under civilized glasses. Vesuvius awaited eruptive orders from Thomas Cook & Son. (43. "Venice")

The scenes documented reveal the world around Seaborne with incisive humor, satire, and irony. His travels are constant discoveries, uniting fantasy and reality, that lead to an ironic reaction against his past, which *Cândido* calls "bourgeois and conformist."¹³ The critical consciousness that he gains marks the beginning of a new sense of character through principles of mobility, imagination, synthesis, and simplicity.

In *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, Oswald de Andrade constructs an aggressive parody of theme, which he directs at modernist society. Seraphim's adventures transmute Seaborne's alienation into rebellion against bourgeois values, through Seraphim's travels in the Middle East and return to Brazil in a spirited revolt against social restrictions. Andrade later called his work an "invention," "the grand finale of the bourgeois world among us." In his searing preface of 1933 rejecting much of his past thought and identity, Oswald offers the novel as an epitaph of modernism: "A document. A drawing.... Necrology of the bourgeoisie." *Seraphim* unifies the satire, the need to transform values, and the search for identity, which were principal concerns of John Seaborne and the "Manifesto of Brazilwood Poetry," with the uninhibited devouring of all values, which is the skeletal purpose of the "Cannibal Manifesto." *Seraphim* even parodies its own vanguardism and thus consumes itself, as a novel digesting its own structure.

In contrast to Seaborne's series of numbered fragments, *Seraphim* is composed of larger, titled sections portraying his life and adventures in a parody of different literary styles, such as the intimate

diary, cloak and dagger novel, children's novel, Portuguese realism, and poetry in prose. Structurally, as poet Haroldo de Campos points out, *Seraphim* is a nonbook made up of satirical fragments of possible books.¹⁴ Oswald's "invention" creates a mobile theater that, through hyperbole and satire, depicts the basic themes of rebellion, mobility, and utopia through the free expression and criticism of all values. Its acid parody and absurd humor have been compared to Jarry's *Ubu-Roi*, while some critics consider the novel important for its ideological and formal aggression. Cândido sees in its satire a "Rabelaisian explosion, a kind of *Suma Satirica* of capitalist society in decadence"; and Oswald describes his roguish hero as "the new Brazilian cast loose on the high seas of capitalism ... servile, opportunistic, and revolting."¹⁵

Seraphim's versatility lies in the deliberate indeterminacy of its satiric arrangement of styles, which include rhymes, dialogues, poetry, theater, first and third person narration, diaries, chronicles, journalism, essays, and letters. The comic spirit is also original to *Seraphim* in contrast to earlier prose. Clashing styles in parody create an open work that takes on the tone of a fantasy. *Seraphim* breaks away from the bureaucratic world in which he is a functionary in the "Colonial Press and Sanitary Service" to practice burlesque travels in which his "luxurious temperament, well-oiled mentality, and pornographic imagination" (as described by one critic of the 1930s) assault the reader with piercing metaphors. Social criticism on the one hand ("My country has been sick for a long time. It suffers from cosmic incompetence") is exceeded only by erotic license on the other ("Clarity awoke like a tomato in sheets").

What Cândido calls modernism's "spiritual libertinage" contributed here to the negation of the established order, without which the social rebellion and consequent political radicalization expressive of the advent of popular classes would not have developed. The novel's final fragment, titled "The Cannibals," provides a comic finish through the anarchical, utopian voyage of the steamship *El Durazno*. *The Peach's* society of cannibalistic tourists sailed in opposition to the mores of dictatorship or repression. In order to assure the ship's isolation and thus its independence, *The Peach's* passengers declared a plague on board and stopped only to take on food: "On *El Durazno* they only dock to stock avocado cases in tropical places." This timeless voyage thus concludes *Seraphim's* life on the level of myth, contrasting the imposed morality and culture imported from Europe with primitivist values of imagination, dreams, and freedom of expression.

The Amazon provided a powerful source of materials for the integration of Brazilian folklore into modernist writing. Raul Bopp and Mário de Andrade created poetic rhapsodies in two works that represented Brazil's most creative and original contact with its own interior during this period of conscious self-discovery. Written in 1928, after Bopp collected folktales in the interior of Pará, the poem *Cobra Norato* (1931) chose legend over description and poetry over science; the Amazonian

region, through its folklore and Indian myths, constituted the essence of Brazil's being. The legends incorporated into Bopp's folk epic were full of magic and metamorphosis, evoking an unknown world of exoticism and enchantment.

Cobra Norato invented a new musicality, with the rhythms and resonances of "land-without-end," a world outside history and geography: "Já-te-pego/já-te-pego; Pajé pato, boi queixume; Matim-tá-pereira, Tincuã; Jacarés, Urumutum, Tajá, Tarumã, Putirum, Seriguara, guara, guara." The Amazon allowed Bopp to create a medieval fantasy for Brazil, recounted in a spirit of innocence and utopia. Brazilian poetry gained a new vocabulary that coexisted with the avant-garde simplicity of cubist imagery: "Toads with sore throats study aloud"; "Here is a school of trees/Studying geometry"; "A tree telegraphed another/ Psi,psi,psi." At the poem's close, the poet returns to the Amazon with his fiancée, to mountains and clear water, a house with a blue penciled door in the shadow of the jungle, listening to the *jurucutu*, writing names on the sand for the wind to erase, and waiting for nightfall to tell the stories that nourished their imagination. In the 1931 conclusion, Bopp invites his urban, modernist friends by name to join him in the Amazonian house for artistic appreciation of nature.

With the folkloric idealization of the Amazon in *Cobra Norato*, Bopp combines an anthropologist's field notes of folk traditions with vanguardist literary techniques. The poem has retained its vitality over the years by virtue of this syncretism of modernist aesthetics and Amazonian legend.

In 1928 Mário de Andrade published his "rhapsody," *Macunaíma*, a major synthesis of the cultural program and artistic method of modernism.¹⁶ Written in six days, the novel attains an unusual virtuosity in the interplay between folkloric mythology and structural fantasy, that is, a reworking of the materials of composition through metamorphosis. *Macunaíma* is based on a work of anthropological research in Roraima and Orinoco areas by German ethnologist Koch-Grünberg from 1911 to 1913, later published as a volume of cosmic myths, heroic legends, and animal fables of the Taulipand and Arekuná Indians of the Brazilian Northwest. The word "Maku," meaning evil, with its suffix "íma," great, thus delimits the malicious and picaresque nature of Mário's "hero without any character."

Departing from the myth of *Macunaíma*, Mário used other collected legends to forge a kind of panfolkloric epic fantasy in the guise of what he called a "national rhapsody." *Macunaíma*'s adventures are a polymorphic voyage, a symbolic tale whose meaning is forged through the telling. A function of Mário's free variation of folk themes was to apply the principle of mobility to traditional lore by deforming indigenous legends and even transplanting them to an urban context, altering their content while retaining their structure. *Macunaíma*, born full-grown in the Amazon jungle, "son of the fear of the night," journeys to São Paulo in quest of a magic stone, the *muiraquitã*, stolen by the giant man-eater Piamã. Haroldo de Campos in his book *Morfologia do Macunaíma* has amply studied

Mário's text as a structural folktale in cultural metamorphosis, following Propp's theories. Mário bases his narratives on complete episodes from collections of native myths, fables, games, and legends, but altered in function to produce a destabilizing and desanctifying effect. Through the cannibalist metaphor, Piamã becomes the avaricious Italian-Brazilian industrialist Pietro Pietra, who meets his end by falling not into a jungle well but into a pot of boiling spaghetti prepared by his cannibal wife. His last words are "It needs cheese!" Macunaíma is cast between hero and antagonist in his own adventures, built around the erotic violation and transgression of norms and the quest for a magic elixir. His magical, erotic powers are evoked by transgressing the prohibitions of society and legend. In the telling of the tale, the world of fable is identified with the world of text, as the magic of myth becomes the magic of language.

The novel is constructed with the luxuriantly verbal world of flora and fauna of the Brazilian interior; its words are a primitivist incantation. The dimension of colloquial speech enhances the parody of colonial rhetoric, for example, in Macunaíma's "Letter to the Icamíabas" (or Amazons), written from São Paulo, in which he addresses his Amazon subjects in the Latinate language of Lisbon, relating the novelties of the city in a reversal of the chronicles of discovery. Macunaíma transmits a new speech, "half song and half bee's honey, possessing the treason of unknown fruits of the jungle." Composed of an amalgamation of regionalisms, mixed with indigenous and African speech, enriched by repetitive rhythms of popular poetry and spiced with the satire of stylistic parody, Mário's "dis-geographied language" corresponds as a syncretism on the linguistic plane to the agglutination of folktales on the structural level. Macunaíma's linguistic and thematic isomorphism makes of him a pan-American symbol, a picaresque, characterless hero who is as much Venezuelan, Caribbean, and Peruvian as Brazilian.

After the second and irreparable loss of the magic talisman, the action of Macunaíma's tale is transferred to a level of allegorical sublimation. Macunaíma decides to become a star in the constellation Ursa Major and carry his adventures, imbued with mortal nostalgia, into the vast field of the cosmos. In this way, the novel closes by merging into the cosmic origin of the Amazonian folktales themselves and archetypes derived from the apparently timeless metaphors of nature. In terms of Mário's writings, Macunaíma's own reentry into myth recapitulates the final delirium of "My Madness" in *Hallucinated City*: "the tender night with her starry fingers will close our eyes." Macunaíma is transformed poetically into a star. The dominant humor and criticism in the novel is conveyed through the form and function of the episodic adventures, subversion of the dominant social and linguistic codes through satire or humor, and the changing morphology of the tale itself.

If literary modernism can be summed up as renovation and innovation, its most characteristic and successful works must be those that rediscover and redefine Brazilian language and culture through an

iconoclastic, aggressive, inventive, and autonomous experiment with the tools of writing. The literary figures of the Modern Art Week, in breaking with the past, sought to portray a national character and spirit for the new century through documenting their own experiences and exploring the rich popular, folkloric, and primitive reality within their reach. As important an achievement as the construction of a Brazilian worldview would be for the modernists, the ultimate success of their efforts lay in their ability to establish an authentic contemporary form and artistic language. Only through research into form could Brazilian writing join the tradition of the contemporary, which universally has employed vanguardist techniques to express its individuality.

Many analysts believe that by the 1930s modernism's rupture of language, its essential aesthetic lesson, had been nearly forgotten. The predominance of regional trends and the rise of the political and social novel, historical essays, and ideological poetry stressed cultural context at the expense of formal liberty, in a return to realistic narrative. Of the novels of the 1930s, only the recently republished *Parque Industrial*, by the important feminist writer Patrícia Galvão, stands out for its synthesis of modernism's creative, poetic language with political themes.¹⁷

Thus modernism's unique combination of linguistic inventiveness and social protest through humor, the carnivalesque, and what appeared to be formal anarchy, were sacrificed to increasing politicization and literary realism. In a sense, of course, all writers after the Modern Art Week would be affected by its conquests, which included liberation of the literary idiom, passion for folkloric detail, and search for the popular spirit through imagination and archetypal consciousness. Only after 1945, however, would Brazilian writing attempt to consolidate its own tradition of modernity through the magical, instinctive, or irrational; the elaboration of a critical reality through language; the transgression of cultural taboos; or the concentrated purity of a style of composition. In the linguistic experimentation and textual symbolism of Clarice Lispector or Guimarães Rosa, in the syntactical collage of Geraldo Ferraz's *Doramundo*, or the world-as-text in Haroldo de Campos' *Galáxias*, in the corrosive humor of Dalton Trevisan or Haroldo Maranhão, the Indianism of Darcy Ribeiro, the satire of Márcio Souza, or the magic of Murilo Rubião, the legacy of modernism begins to be recaptured and reenacted, after lying dormant for thirty or forty years. Carnavalesque extravagance, outrageous humor, and Rabelaisian rebellion in the Modern Art Week seem no longer to be excessive but rather necessary. As Mário de Andrade commented, "We are the primitives of a future perfection."

Many of the problems and paradoxes of modernism as a movement find their resolution in terms of the extraordinary individual talents maturing after 1922. If the nature of the modernist writers as creators--poets, novelists, critics, folklorists, and so on--remains largely a mystery, their presence nonetheless persisted and has been returned to us in literary artifice and cultural penetration. And their promise, as the spirited discoverers of twentieth-century Brazil through the rituals of modern art,

remains an ideal still to be fulfilled by today's Brazilian literary artists.

NOTES

- 1 Antônio Cândido, "Literatura e cultura de 1900 a 1945," *Literatura e Sociedade*, 5 ed. (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1976), pp. 109-138.
- 2 Gilberto Mendes, "A música," in *O modernismo*, ed. Affonso Avila (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1975), pp. 127-137.
- 3 Oswald de Andrade, "Diário confessional," *Invenção*, nº 4 (December 1964): 49-51.
- 4 António Ferro, "Modernismo português e modernismo brasileiro," in António Quadros, *António Ferro: Selecção, Prefácio e Comentários de António Quadros* (Lisbon: Edições Panorama, 1963, p.27; unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine).
- 5 Jorge Schwartz, *Vanguarda e cosmopolitismo* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1983).
- 6 Mário de Andrade, *Hallucinated City*, trans. Jack E. Tomlins (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 53.
- 7 Oswald de Andrade, "Informe sobre o modernismo," unpublished manuscript, Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem (Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, n.d.).
- 8 Oswald de Andrade, *Sentimental Memoirs of John Seaborne*, trans. Ralph Niebuhr and Albert Bork, *Texas Quarterly* (Winter 1972): 112-160; *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, trans. Kenneth D. Jackson and Albert Bork (Austin: New Latin Quarter, 1979). All quotes and references are taken from these translations.
- 9 There is no published translation to English of *Pau Brasil* at this date. The "Manifesto da poesia Pau Brasil" appeared in the *Latin American Literary Review*, 14, nº 27 (January-June 1986): 184-187, translated by Stella de Sá Rego. The "Manifesto antropófago" has not been published in English, although French and Spanish translations are available of both manifestoes.
- 10 Benedito Nunes, "Antropofagia e vanguarda--acerca do canibalismo literário," in *Oswald Canibal*

(São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1979), pp. 25-26.

¹¹ See Kenneth David Jackson, *A prosa vanguardista na literatura brasileira: Oswald de Andrade* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1978); also E. Di Cavalcanti, *Viagem da minha vida: o testamento da alvorada* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Civilização Brasileira, 1955), p. 111.

¹² Carlos Drummond de Andrade, "Nacionalismo literário," *O Jornal* (23 January 1925).

¹³ Antônio Cândido, "Oswald viajante," *O Observador Literário* (São Paulo: CEC, 1959), p. 91.

¹⁴ Haroldo de Campos, "Seraphim: A Great Nonbook," in *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, pp. 113-131.

¹⁵ Antônio Cândido, "Estouro e libertação," in *Brigada Ligeira* (São Paulo: Martins, 1945), p. 23. See Oswald de Andrade's preface to *Seraphim Grosse Pointe*, p. 5.

¹⁶ Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma* (São Paulo: Eugênio Cúpolo, 1928). The English translation by E. A. Goodland was published by Random House in 1984. Margaret Richardson Hollingsworth translated part of the novel and corresponded with Mário de Andrade in 1933. Fragments have appeared in the *Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature*, edited by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, translated by Barbara Shelby, vol 2 (New York: Knopf, 1977), pp. 656-659. Italian, French, and Spanish translations are available.

¹⁷ Patrícia Galvão (pseud. Mara Lobo), *Parque Industrial* (São Paulo: Edição do Autor, 1933; reprint, São Paulo: Editora Alternativa, 1981); See also *PAGU VIDA OBRA*, organized by Augusto de Campos (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982); Jayne Bloch, "Patrícia Galvão: The Struggle against Conformity," *Latin American Literary Review*, 14, nº 27 (January-June 1986): 188-201.

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