

The modernist legacy: Reception and developments in the 1960s and 1970s

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MODERNISM, either in its experimental and destructive form – associated with the initial phase of the movement, in the 1920s – or in its rational and constructive face – formulator of a great cultural project for the country –, left deep marks in Brazilian culture that last to this day. This influence was especially noticeable between the 1950s and 1970s, a period in which, claiming their memory, several renewal movements broke out in the artistic field – stimulated, in principle, by the developmentalist wave and, later, in the most acute phase, attacked by the military regime’s conservative and authoritarian modernization. In the first phase, from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, an optimistic and constructive modernism flourished in the country, enunciating great promises, in movements such as Bossa Nova, Poesia Concreta and Cinema Novo, which were consistent with the progressive impetus of our Modern Architecture, also called New Architecture. In the next phase, characterized by the political defeat of the left wing and the emptying of the projects, what we have, on the contrary, is a pessimist and destructive species of modernism, tending toward derision and violence, of which Tropicalism, Marginal Cinema and Marginal Poetry serve as examples. In the denomination of the above movements, the replacement of the term “new”, usual in the 1950s, with the adjective “marginal”, which predominated in the last phase, demonstrates the extent of the profound transformations that occurred in the political and cultural context.

In the literature, the influence of Modernism has been observed since the 1930s, a period in which – according to Antonio Candido – there was a “routinization” of the achievements of the 1922 generation. In addition to being a movement of destruction and rupture – attitude that defines, after all, the program of the vanguards –, Modernism was, essentially, a “movement continuing the formative process of the Brazilian culture”, as defined in 1969 by Ferreira Gullar (2002, p.191, our translation). Therefore, it was natural that its “lesson” – a term emphasized by Mário de Andrade, at the conclusion of his celebrated conference, presented in 1942 in Rio de Janeiro, on the twentieth anniversary of the Week of Modern Art – became fruitful and thought-provoking for generations to come. In the 1930s, the authors of northeastern novels, which were prominent in the period, oscillated between recognition and refusal as to the

modernist contribution, considering themselves simultaneously as continuers and opponents of Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade. The incorporation of the formal and thematic innovations of Modernism was paradoxically followed by a strong “anti-*Macunaíma*” spirit, which prevailed in the 1930s. According to Luís Bueno (2006, p.59), the euphoria of the “national project” of the modernist generation, confident in the future of the “new country”, was replaced with the dysphoric awareness of underdevelopment.

In the 1940s, for various reasons, the modernist legacy was called into question. On the one hand, there was the burden of the accusation of political alienation and irresponsibility, of which the very leaders of Modernism accused themselves. In the aforementioned conference of Mário de Andrade (1974, p.241), self-criticism assumed a bitter tone, turning against individualism, aristocratism and the absence of reality of that “time of celebration” in which, according to the author of *Macunaíma*, his generation acted. On the other hand, Modernism was rejected by the poets of the Generation of 45, for having downgraded poetry with a too spontaneous and colloquial writing, which disregarded the seriousness of the great poetic themes in favor of the “joke poem” and other desecrations. In 1945, Mario de Andrade died, and many believed that the modernist cycle would have ended there. However, Oswald de Andrade would still live almost a decade and would even affirm, in his last years, that, after the generation of 1922, no great novelty had appeared in the Brazilian culture and that Modernism remained alive, not for its past, but for its continued presence both in the works of its members and in the recent literary production of authors such as Guimarães Rosa and Clarice Lispector. In 1952, on the thirtieth anniversary of the celebrated event of 1922, Oswald published an article in the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper saying that the Week “has not been”, but rather “is being” (apud Coelho, 2012, p.88), a phrase that summarizes, as Frederico Coelho observed, the catalytic role of the movement in the Brazilian cultural history.

Despite the criticism suffered on several fronts, in the 1930s and 1940s, it should also be remembered that the modernist ideology had a decisive role in the cultural policies of Getúlio Vargas, at a time when several writers linked to the movement – starting with Mário de Andrade and Carlos Drummond de Andrade – were coopted by the government. The modernist cultural project was enthroned and made official by the Estado Novo – similarly to what would occur later, in the military regime, and to what was conducted, in the two dictatorial periods, with the oeuvre of Machado de Assis.

During the Estado Novo, the Brazilian architecture underwent its phase of greatest development – a case that is curious and exemplary. In less than two decades, Brazil, a malformed and unfinished country, saw a world-renowned modern architecture flourish – an extraordinary feat called a “miracle” by Mário Pedrosa and a “phenomenon”, without comparison with other countries, by Italian critic Giulio Carlo Argan (apud Xavier, 2003, p.99 and 170). Such histo-

riographical miracle, according to Otilia Arantes (1997, p.126), is presented as a “symmetrical pair of modernist utopia”, providing good material for reflection on the missteps of the national formation. The construction of Brasilia shows the mismatch between the new architecture and the social reality of the country, concurrently making explicit the illusions of abstract avant-gardism and the authoritarianism of the Brazilian modernization (see Schwarz, 1999, p. 200).

In 1950, Antonio Candido wrote the essay “Literature and culture from 1940 to 1945”, published in 1953 and later included in the book *Literatura e sociedade*. In this text, the critic from the *Clima* group – whose most significant influences, in addition to the French professors of USP, had been, due to his strong interest in the knowledge of Brazil, Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade – stated that there had been, in the Brazilian literature, “two decisive moments that changed the directions and vitalized all intelligence”: romanticism and modernism. The new university critique, of which Afrânio Coutinho was also a representative, in Rio, “as if it were the legitimate intellectual heir of the modernists, embraced its history. They were the ones who established the Week of Modern Art, irreversibly, as a milestone in the victorious history of our best literature” (Coelho, 2012, p.16, our translation).

The developmentalist utopia also found a powerful synthesis in João Gilberto’s Bossa Nova, which promoted a qualitative change in songs through the modernization of samba, by leveraging elements of jazz from the United States. Due to its remarkable balance between local tradition and external stimulus, Bossa Nova was also seen as “one of the miracles that occur in the Brazilian experience only a few times” (Garcia, 1999, p.122, our translation). According to Augusto de Campos, João Gilberto went on, together with João Cabral de Melo Neto (who, in turn, was deeply influenced by the rationalism of the new architecture), to be part of a constructive tradition built “a palo seco” in the country (see Süssekind, 2004, p.151). The concrete poets themselves, who inaugurated, at the same time, and also with international repercussion, the second avant-garde cycle of Brazilian poetry, also intended to be part of it. Similarly to the plastic arts, taken by the invasion of abstractionism – as opposed to the figurative painting of the modernist period – the Concrete Poetry movement rejected national themes. Nevertheless, against the neo-Parnasianism of the Generation of 45, the poets of *Noigandres* sought to resume dialogue with the poetry of 1922. In addition to international influences, the aesthetic project of Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari also recognized a national affiliation, which, according to the “Pilot Plan” (1958), comprised Oswald de Andrade, the first Drummond and João Cabral.

In a few years, other artistic movements also dialogued with the modernist ideology, either by claiming the right to experimentation or by valorizing the authentic Brazilian culture, in tune with the values of the “national-popular project”. In the 1960s, Modernism met with full recognition.

If in the 1940s the question at issue was the “overcoming of Modernism”, in this new historical context the talking point was the “updating” of that avant-garde spirit, without prejudice to the awareness of underdevelopment and in line with the horizon of the social revolution.

As in the case of the new architecture and Bossa Nova, Cinema Novo was also seen as a kind of “phenomenon” or “miracle”, a qualitative leap after a long and endless history of formation. One of the bases of this aesthetic revolution was found in Brazil’s modern literature, which engendered – in addition to titles and plots adapted to the screens – the “barbaric” imagination and the “miserabilism” that inspired the “aesthetics of hunger” proposed by Glauber Rocha. The filmmakers aimed to “decolonize” the production of films, portray the “truth” of Brazil, film the people using a language consistent with the reality of the country, exactly as proposed by Mário de Andrade. However, if the interest in popular culture echoed the ethnographic research of the author of *O turista aprendiz*, the desire of the members of the Centro Popular de Cultura to convert it into an ideological instrument, aiming at the dissemination of the political message, was very distant from the reflections on the problematic relationship of intellectuals with the people, carried out in several passages of the Marioandradian oeuvre. In cinema, the short circuit between “the creative resumption of Modernism and the political pedagogy” resulted, according to Ismail Xavier, in “the enormous positive balance of the movement”, as it was “the adoption of the principle of authorship that defined – in clear tension with the demands for the ‘correction’ of the urgent political message – the form of its best films, its aesthetics” (Xavier, 2007, p.7, our translation).

In the early days of Cinema Novo, also in tune with the experience of Italian neorealist cinema, the dialogue favored the realistic novel of the 1930s. Here is the well-known formulation of the Glauberian Manifesto:

What made *Cinema Novo* a phenomenon of international importance was precisely its high level of commitment to the truth; it was its own miserabilism that, previously written by the literature of the 1930s, was now photographed by the cinema of 1960s; and, if it was previously written as a social denunciation, today it is discussed as a political issue. (Rocha, 1981, p.16)

After the 1964 coup d’état, however, the failure of the political experiment and of the populist nationalism provoked in filmmakers a strongly self-critical and iconoclast movement, leading to the destruction of forms and reconsideration of the values initially defended. Only at this second time, there was for the first time a direct relation with the ideals of 1922.

From 1964 onwards, and after the establishment of the new political order that decreed the end of illusions, the dialogue with Modernism was not interrupted. On the contrary, it was intensified and radicalized. With the ideals of constructivism, developmentalism and engaged art having been historically overcome, a new outbreak of artistic proposals was developed, among which

Tropicalism, a movement inspired by Bossa Nova and Antropofagia. The staging of *O rei da vela*, Oswald's play that had not been presented on stage since the 1930s, directed by José Celso Martinez Corrêa; the work *Tropicália*, by Hélio Oiticica; the songs of the Bahian group led by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil; the allegorical films made by the directors of Cinema Novo, highlighting the adaptation of *Macunaíma* by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade – everything seemed to be contaminated by the influence of Mario de Andrade and, especially, Oswald de Andrade, seen then as the most anarchist, “Dadaist” spirit of the generation of 22. In 1969, Glauber Rocha considered “Tropicalism, Anthropofagia and their development the most important thing in Brazilian culture”. Despite his previous preference for the regionalist novel of the 1930s, he came to see in the Week of 22 “the beginning of a cultural revolution in Brazil”, with Oswald, in his view, having been the main exponent of Modernism, with his work being “truly genius” (apud Paranaguá, 2014, p.157, our translation).

In the new historical situation, marked by the “crisis of historical totalizations” – expression of Ismail Xavier (2001, p.64-5) to define the inflection of *Terra em transe* –, in which the discussion about the relations between art and politics was redefined, the modernist legacy proved even more alive and current. If after 1964, in an adverse context, the use of this heritage became even more evident, this is not due to any nationalist flag or ideals of national communion, at that time overcome, but due to the fact that the belief in the future and myth of identity were also questioned by the generation of 1922, especially by the author of *Macunaíma*.

As observed by Frederico Coelho (2012, p.99, our translation): “It was contradictorily in the rise of a dictatorial government that the Week of Modern Art and its iconoclast character against an established order gained prominence”. In the film *O desafio*, by Paulo César Saraceni, the first reflection on the failure of the left wing, one of the characters rants: “We are destroyers like the writers of the Week of Modern Art”. Destruction, this drive so associated with Modernism (although the movement was also constructive), now imposed itself as something dominant, returning to the scene because the films mentioned were avant-garde works that were born “hindered, constrained”. According to Sylvie Pierre (1993, p.22, our translation), “all true modernist dynamics is a dynamics of explosion of forms”, which would have been installed in Cinema Novo as a result of the violence of the dictatorship, present in films such as *Terra em transe*, *Macunaíma*, *Os inconfidentes*, *Azyllo muito louco*, among others.

In fact, although they have been considered realistic and pedagogical, the initial works of Cinema Novo show a pronounced use of allegory, as can be observed in seminal films such as *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, by Glauber Rocha, and *Os fuzis*, by Ruy Guerra. As observed by Robert Stam et al. (1995, p.419), Cinema Novo was always allegorical, a fragmented discourse that, through microcosmic situations, evokes the entire country. Before *Terra em transe*, the

diagnosis of the “problem-nation” is already present in *Deus e o diabo*, a film that precedes the military coup d’état. Thus, from the first phase – called optimistic – of Cinema Novo, there is the embryo of the characteristics that will be radicalized after the historical disillusionment, namely, the tendency to allegorical, fragmented discourse and the problematization of the national destiny.

Between the histories of Modernism and Cinema Novo, we can say then that there is an important difference and a noticeable inversion: the Modernism that came before, that of 1922, remained for later in the history of Cinema Novo, for the most torn and acute phase of the movement. The turn of the young directors, leaving “neorealism” in favor of a frankly avant-garde discourse, reverses the meaning of the historical evolution of Modernism between the 1920s and 1930s, making experimentation succeed the realistic mimesis of the 1930s novels and the “routinization” (institutionalization) of Modernism appear before the recovery of its “heroism”, of its spirit of rupture.

The major happening came in 1967: the aggressive and ravishing staging of the Teatro Oficina theater company, with its “shock aesthetics”, which aimed to confront everyone and the group itself, with a view to destroying their bourgeois prejudices, put the play *O rei da vela* and anthropophagia in the agenda, making Oswald de Andrade the great popular reference of the movement. It was in Teatro Oficina that Caetano Veloso came to know the Oswaldian oeuvre, which became one of the foundations of musical Tropicalism. According to him, Oswald was the link that united the various groups in activity at the time, from the “irrationalists” (José Celso, José Agrippino de Paula, Jorge Mautner) to the “super-rationalists” (the concrete poets, the dodecaphonic musicians). Tropicalism, in his view, would be a “neoanthropophagism”: “The idea of cultural cannibalism fitted us, the tropicalists, as a glove. We were ‘eating’ the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix” (Veloso, 1997, p.245-7, our translation).

In a recent interview, the Bahian composer stated that, at the time, he even read and reread Oswald’s modernist novels, *Memórias sentimentais de João Miramar* (1924) and *Serafim Ponte Grande* (1933), but that he still “couldn’t stand” *Macunaíma*” (Leal; Sombra, 2017). Mario and Oswald de Andrade then came to be seen as representatives of two opposing traditions. While Mario inspired the pursuit of identity that had moved the engaged art of the previous period, Oswald, symbol of rebellion, became the guru of the arts, poetry and cinema that emerged from the late 1960s, linked to the cultural production that was called by different labels: “marginal”, “udigrudi”, “alternative”, “antiartistic”, “post-tropicalist”, etc. The various artists who were part of this Brazilian countercultural scene, to which the expressions “desbunde” [off the rails] and “estética do lixo” [trash aesthetics] were also linked, made a point of highlighting their connections with the iconoclast aspect of the modernist movement. A good example was Torquato Neto, who incorporated the Oswaldian poetics in the lyrics of the songs “Geleia geral” and “Marginália II”, both composed

in partnership with Gilberto Gil. The modernist legacy was also claimed by the poets Waly Salomão, Cacaso, Francisco Alvim, Chacal, among other names associated with the so-called Marginal Poetry.

In 1967, the year of Teatro Oficina's staging, Hélio Oiticica, in his text "Esquema geral da nova objetividade" [General schema of the new objectivity], said he observed in the country a "general constructive will", according to him, anchored in Modernism, due to our formation still in process (see Bosi, 2018, p.48). Five years later, however, in protest against the official celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Modern Art Week, the artist presented the installation "Nada" [Nothing], a three-meter-high square with metallic floor. The celebrations conducted by the marginal artists were intended to prevent the anniversary of the Week – whose legacy was being updated by the new avant-garde movements – from being totally appropriated by the State's official vision, characterized by the military regime's ufanismo [overoptimistic patriotic attitude towards one's country].

In 1972, at a conference presented in the United States, Antonio Candido emphasized two characteristics of the Brazilian literature that had risen at the beginning of that decade, amidst acute political and cultural repression. One was desacralization, of which he gave as an example the "violently unconventional literature" of *Me segura qu'eu vou dar um troço*, by Waly Salomão, a book made with "scrap of culture" and based on the confusion of genres: "It is anti-literary literature, translating a sort of nonconformist eruption" (Candido, 1981, p.25, our translation), noted the critic. The other characteristic that caught his attention was the "renewed influence of the great modernists". According to Antonio Candido, the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Modern Art Week, in addition to highlighting the aged and archived aspects of the movement, had also revealed the curious "presence" of Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade "as major living and active figures, being part of the literary panorama". The reason for this, according to him, was the fact that Modernism, half a century later, was considered "the starting point of a permanent literary revolution, which has not yet ceased to shake and transform genres and their language" (Candido, 1981, p.26, our translation).

The connection between the two features observed by the critic was evident in the presentation to Waly Salomão's own book. Published in 1972, *Me segura qu'eu vou dar um troço* had in its back jacket flap the following commentary: "Long live the Living Band/ of Brazil/ Food for/ The new generations/ On the occasion of the/ Retrospectives/ Of the 22 Modern / Art Week / A prospective book/ increment for the/ New generations" (Salomão, 2014, p.466, our translation). If the explicit reference to the Week were not enough, marking a counterpoint to the official celebrations, the brief text also echoed the famous dedication of the book *Pau-Brasil*: "To Blaise Cendrars for the discovery of Brazil". Promoting a sort of double tribute, the Bahian poet also made

clear his objective of establishing an identification between the two times – the first modernist time, of the 1920s, and that of the “new generations”. With his “Rabelaisian humor” and an “almost circus joy”, borrowing expressions used by Antonio Cicero and Alexei Bueno (apud Salomão, 2014, p.486 and 494), Waly seemed to almost reincarnate the anarchic and anthropophagic spirit of Oswald de Andrade. “I am hungry to become everything I am not”, the poet would say in one of his most famous verses, from the book *Gigoló de bibelôs* (Salomão, 2014, p.123, our translation).

For the generation that, in the early 1970s, produced “aggressive forms of spectacle, song and even poetry”, in the words of Antonio Candido (1981, p.26), the staging of *O rei da vela*, in 1967, had a decisive influence, transforming Oswald de Andrade into a “avant-garde flag”. If in the 1950s the return to Oswaldian poetics, promoted by Concretism, had been restricted to poetry, now its projection extended to several arts. In the case of artists linked to Tropicalism, Silviano Santiago (2000, p.139) also pointed out, in a text dated 1972, the fact that the rejection of institutionalized culture follows “Oswald’s footsteps in the manifestos of the 1920s”.

On January 8, 1972, in his column “Geleia Geral” [General Jelly], published by the newspaper *Última Hora*, when commenting on *Muito prazer, Ricardo* (1971), Chacal’s debut (mimeographed) little book, Torquato Neto considered him a legitimate heir of Oswald de Andrade. “I see more and more Oswald de Andrade becoming a heritage of the Brazilian civilization”, wrote the composer. According to Torquato, the poem “Papo de índio” demonstrated a great use of the “millionaire contribution of all errors”, praised in the Pau-Brasil Manifesto (1924). At the end of the text, he resumed the parallel: “Question of method: in 72 I see, I predict, we will see the restoration of the worst 22 Modern Art Week spirit celebrated in retrospect. Chacal is the best spirit: the one who knows that poetry is the discovery of things he has not seen” (Neto, 2004, p.343-4, our translation).

Among other young poets, having debuted shortly before, in the late 1960s, the influences of Oswald, Drummond and Manuel Bandeira were already noticeable. *A palavra cerzida* and *Sol dos cegos*, the first works of Antônio Carlos de Brito, aka Cacaso, and Francisco Alvim, according to him, were “both results of the modernist legacy”, based on the Brazilian tradition and not from a break with this tradition, as the concretists had done (apud Brito, 2020, p.421, our translation). On the one hand, Cacaso’s sly, ironic and unpretentious language; on the other hand, Alvim’s minimalist and seemingly non-artificial poems, *scenes* of everyday life revealing, with critical-realist notation, according to Roberto Schwarz (2001), “the modernist research of Brazilian peculiarity”. Also in the case of Armando Freitas Filho, initially linked to constructivism, the lowered colloquial tendency became predominant. Thus, Brazilian poetry sought to break with the higher style derived from the high Modernism, or re-classicized

Modernism, of the mid-century, “partially updating the first Modernism” (Bosi, 2018, p.41, our translation).

Between these two generations of poets, however, it would also be possible to point out significant differences. Based on the critiques by Iumna Maria Simon and Vinicius Dantas of the poetic production of the 1970s, the banalized expression of everyday life and the absence of a renovating or utopian project in the so-called Marginal Poetry should lead us to insert it in a field opposite to Modernism. “What is being socialized is an experience of poetry affected in the most intimate of its ability to formulate and reveal to the world the promises of the new”, wrote the authors (Simon; Dantas, 1987, p.106, our translation). Indeed, if the short poem, the synthetic prosaism and the taste for the joke reminded of Oswald de Andrade, the disbelief in progressive ideas and the loss of confidence in a promising future can be traced in poems by several authors. In the new historical circumstance, irony would have become even more negative, having become one of the principles of the poetry of the period. The case of Francisco Alvim is emblematic. According to Roberto Schwarz, the Minas Gerais poet would have been, in that generation, the one who most assimilated the lesson of the modernists, without prejudice to the finding that “the difference in horizons is total”. Instead of bedazzlement with the Brazilian potentialities, in his work we see “the encounter with the issue that was hidden in the picturesque” (Schwarz, 2012, p.142, our translation).

Rather than Mário de Andrade, the poets and artists of the period elected the work of Oswald de Andrade as the main reference, which is explained, according to Silviano Santiago, by the fact that the interest in researching the language was much greater than the concern with the national language. The projects of Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gramiro de Matos and Waly Salomão would be “theoretically closer to the Cubo-Futurist boldness of Oswald de Andrade’s prose” and far removed from the Marioandradinian discussions around a possible little gramatics of Brazilian speech” (Santiago, 2000, p.137, our translation).

In poets such as Antonio Carlos de Brito (Cacaso) and Ana Cristina Cesar, however, the identification seems to have been much greater with the lessons of Mário de Andrade, which evidently were not exhausted in the linguistic teaching. In the essays written by the author of *A teu pés*, there are frequent allusions to Mário’s aesthetic thought, highlighting topics such as the discussion of sincerity and pretension in the literary work and the distinctions between personal intention and aesthetic intention, lyricism and art. In 1976, at the launch of the anthology *26 poetas hoje*, organized by Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, instead of reading poems by herself or her generation colleagues, Ana Cristina caused surprise by choosing to read excerpts from Mário de Andrade’s “The Modernist Movement”.

Two years later, Cacaso published, in the journal *Encontro com a Civilização Brasileira*, the article “Currentness of Mário de Andrade”, motivated

by the appearance of the book *O banquete*. “In addition to being a mature and consequent synthesis of the modernist spirit”, the poet described this work as “a weapon, a living instrument of combat for the current day” (Brito, 1997, p.155, our translation). The highlights are the modernist attitude of “unofficialization of literature”, the spirit of research and innovation, the defense of the “right to err”, the “leap into the abyss”, the “dynamic techniques of the unfinished”, free expression – able to express the mixtures of the “country of contrasts”, according to the words of Antonio Candido, cited in the text. According to Cacaso, concretism, for having abolished the right to error and for not having a thematic relationship with local experience, had completed the liquidation of the modernist legacy initiated by the Generation of 45. On the other hand, the engaged poetry of the 1960s, due to its lack of concern as to form, would also have moved away from the modernist lesson, which the writer wished to incorporate. The task imposed on the new poets, according to Cacaso, was to maintain the fight against officialism, “harnessing the essentials of the modernist experience, as current today as yesterday”. At the end of the text, the poet stated: “Thirty years after his death, Mario de Andrade continues to grow” (Brito, 1997, p.172, our translation). In another essay, “Alegria da casa” [Joy of the home], Cacaso reiterates the open form of Mário de Andrade’s thought, which was redefined at each moment, without forming systems: “Mário gets things going, sets the questions in motion, triggers processes” (Brito, 1997, p.184, our translation).

Brazilian poetry, cultivating in that period an “aesthetics of the unfinished”, was thus very inclined to dialogue with the literary and artistic movement of the 1930s. According to Armando Freitas Filho (1988), “Modernism never dictated work formulas. That is why it was successful. Modernism summoned discourses”. The connection seemed so spontaneous and inevitable that, for Cacaso, the project of systematically studying the modernist movement was soon formed, while undertaking his essays on the poetic production of the 1970s, which he saw as a vast collective poem. The obstinate presence of Modernism was also significant in the “marginal” film production that rose in the late 1960s. In protest against the “commercial” directions taken by Cinema Novo, young directors such as Rogério Sganzerla and Júlio Bressane decided to resume the formal discussion and radicalize the proposal for an “auter cinema” or “invention cinema”. With the collapse of the political illusions of the previous period, the historical moment provided the reactivation of the “cursed language of Cinema Novo”, this time without the imperative of political militancy that was characteristic of the “content” cinema (Ramos, 1983, p.28-48; Coelho, 2010, p.165 e 236, our translation). In this phase of boom of forms and of the creation of a “new Cinema Novo”, in which the parameters of realism and didacticism gave way to aggressive derision and “profaning shock”, the “destructive” Modernism of the 1920s had a decisive weight, alongside the influences that came from the currents of the international vanguard. If the films of the first phase of Cinema Novo constituted “allegories of underdevelopment”, marginal

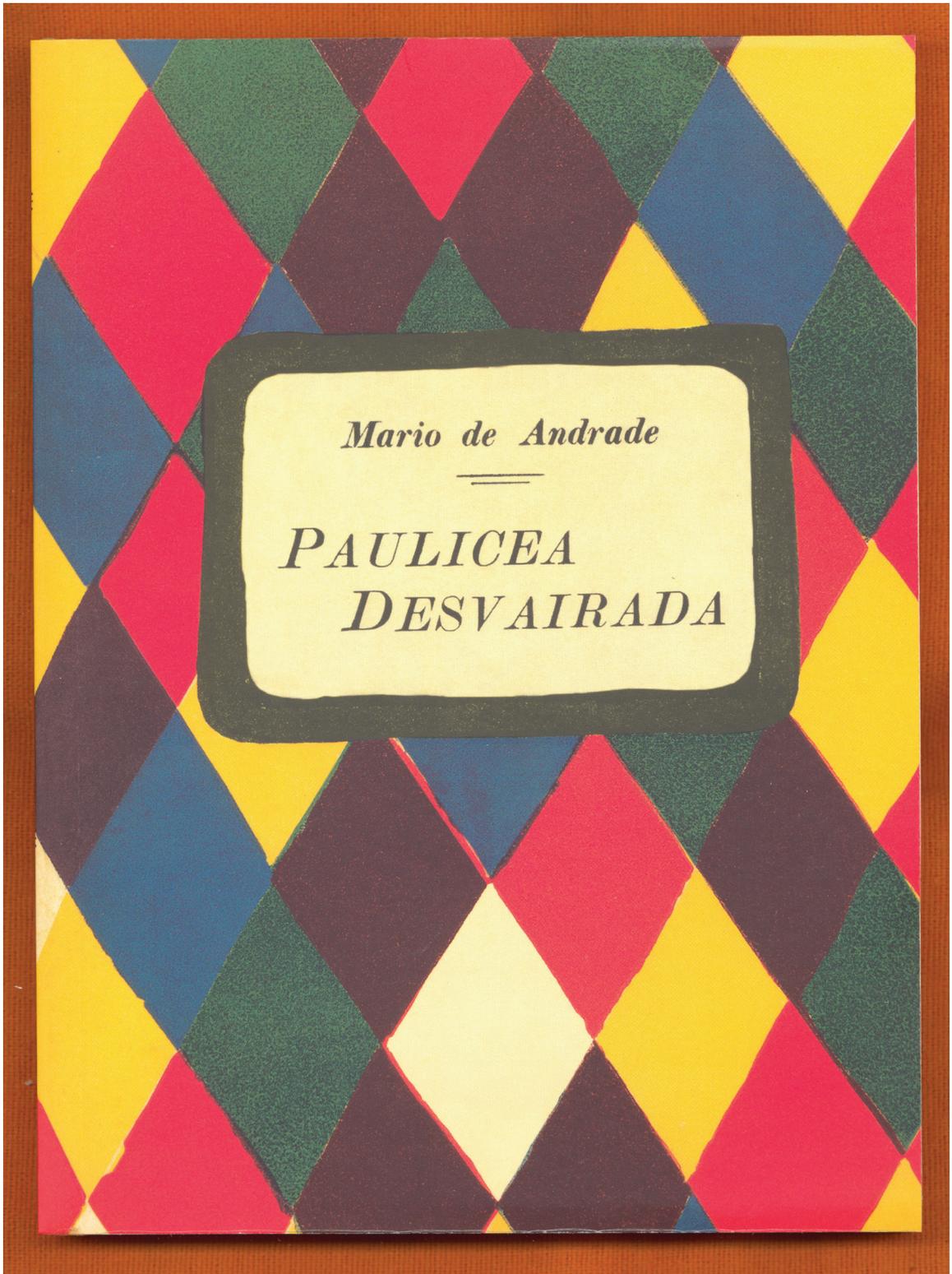


Photo courtesy of the Library of the Institute of Brazilian Studies at USP

Cover of the 1st edition of the book Pauliceia desvairada, by Mário de Andrade (1893–1945), published by Casa Mayença, in 1922.

productions, such as *O bandido da luz vermelha* (1968), proved allegorical in a more “modernist” sense, that is, as “fragmentary discourses” expressing a “crisis in representation” (Stam et al., 1995, p.394). The theme of violence was present both in Sganzerla’s film and in the first works of Júlio Bressane, *Cara a cara* (1968), *O anjo nasceu* (1969), and *Matou a família e foi ao cinema* (1969). The film *Cancer*, by Glauber Rocha, shot at the same time and very close to this marginal aesthetics, was defined by the director himself as an “essay on violence” (see Coelho, 2010, p.165). While the informality and instantness of 1970s poetry aimed at an empathetic approach to the public, the aggressive provocation of marginal films followed in the opposite direction.

“When we can’t do anything we make a mess and deride ourselves” – the comical line of the protagonist of *O bandido da luz vermelha* accurately summarizes the ironic and uncommitted attitude of these dissidents of Cinema Novo, who did not admit any link with constructive actions. On the other hand, in contrast to the previous generation, the new filmmakers exposed on the screens a sexuality free of sins and guilt and an attitude of aesthetic degustation, without prejudice, encompassing a wide range of high and low-culture references. All this can be associated with the mixed style and the parodic, irreverent and “carnavalesque” attitude of modernist artists, which was very distant from the seriousness of the Cinema Novo films of the early 1960s. Apropos, one of the voices on the radio that are heard throughout Sganzerla’s film mentions Oswald de Andrade – “o brasileiro à toa na maré alta da última etapa do capitalismo”, a quote from *Serafim Ponte Grande*.

Alongside Sganzerla, Júlio Bressane played a central role in this “rupture towards experimentation”, and his poetics, by incorporating through collage and montage the most varied repertoires – Godard, Brecht, Artaud, Machado de Assis, the American B-movies, the chanchada, and the popular songs, among others – constitutes, according to Ismail Xavier, a “renewed exercise of anthropophagia as a principle of creation”. As observed by the critic: “There was enormous impact caused by the ‘anthropophagia metaphor’ on that milieu of crisis of values” (Xavier, 2006, p.6, our translation). Driven by the artistic movements of the late 1960s, especially by the staging of *O rei da vela*, Júlio Bressane’s work had as its main foundation the understanding of “anthropophagia as a long-term driver within Brazilian culture, in effect as a milestone of invention to date” (Xavier, 2006, p.7, our translation).

The essential traits of Bressane’s cinema – the “disjunctive style”, the mixtures, the discontinuity, the ironic citation, and the various “structures of aggression” aimed at illusionist art – show a kinship with the lineage of Machado de Assis and Oswald de Andrade, writers who would not only provide the basis for some films, such as *Tabu* (1982), *Brás Cubas* (1985), and *Miramar* (1996), but would be present in the filmmaker’s oeuvre from the beginning. According to Ismail Xavier (2006, p.15), in *Tabu*, thanks to the imaginary encounter be-

tween Oswald, Lamartine Babo and João do Rio, “literary modernism approaches the mystery and power of samba, in a dialogue that Bressane’s work praises from beginning to end”.

In the Academia, simultaneously, there was also a revalorization of Modernism, which led to in-depth investigations and important research, such as those carried out at the Institute of Brazilian Studies (IEB) at USP, under the leadership of José Aderaldo Castello, regarding literary journals of the 1920s. The modernist movement also occupied a central position in the cultural debate, and some voices emerged in favor of the anthropophagic ideology updated by the tropicalists, as were the cases of Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, Silviano Santiago, Gilberto Vasconcellos and Celso Favaretto. At the same time, the academia produced an abundant series of studies and articles that – in contrast to the several reinterpretations and citations that occurred in artistic production – problematized the modernist legacy and established its non-currentness. If at the time of *Clima* there was a respectful acceptance of the ideas of 1922, from the 1970s what proliferated in left-wing thought were the critical revisions of this legacy and of the “national-popular” project, which had been defeated in 1964. Incorporated by the authoritarian regime and the cultural industry, the nationalist ideas, for concealing the class struggle and social diversity, began to be emphatically rejected, in addition to the intellectual’s vision as a guide of the people and herald of the revolution – values that had predominated until the 1960s.

Today’s view of the modernist movement was built in this period, having as its origin both the resurrections it saw in the artistic field and the critical interpretations produced in the university setting. Therefore, it is also essential to examine, along with cultural productions, the interventions of literary, cultural and sociological criticism that elected the debate on Modernism as an object of focus. Roberto Schwarz, Nelson Werneck Sodré, Marilena Chauí, Sergio Miceli, Renato Ortiz, Alfredo Bosi and other names could be mentioned here. The class character of Modernism, sponsored by the elites, aligned with the “bourgeois revolution” and later coopted by the State, was one of the features emphasized. The overcoming of the modernist “utopia”, caused by the loss of its historical basis, has since been a recurring subject for consideration. Other criticisms have been directed at the positive view of cultural miscegenation and – on the part of intellectuals from other regions of the country – at the claim of São Paulo Modernism having a central, “decisive” role in defining the course of modern Brazilian culture. There was consensus according to which the modernist cycle would have ended – due to the officialization of Modernism and the expansion of the cultural industry, in addition to the definitive collapse of the great “national project” conceived in the 1920s and resumed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Since then, Modernism has been frequently associated with a constellation of outdated myths (Brazilian modernization, national identity, the role of intel-

lectuals, etc.), without considering the complex dynamics of the movement that also produced – between the poles of construction and destruction – critical reflections on the country. However, other voices have sought to find, in the very “failure” of the modernist movement, the reasons for its constant resumption in Brazilian culture. In 1992, at a commemorative event in Rio de Janeiro, Waly Salomão stated that Modernism had never been a “monolithic block” and that the Week “lives because it is not exhausted, it lives because it did not exist completely” (apud Coelho, 2012, p.133 and 139, our translation). Considering the appropriations and reinterpretations of Modernism that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s is a way of highlighting the richness and diversity of the contributions of the 1922 vanguard to the Brazilian culture and thought. And, interestingly, we are also led to reflect on its incompleteness, that is, its character as an open, plural and dynamic movement, always to be redone, rethought and updated.

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ABSTRACT— Over the last hundred years, modernist ideas have been the subject of numerous reinterpretations, updates and critical revisions. From the mid-twentieth century, artists from different fields – literature, theater, cinema, visual arts, and popular music, among others – took the vanguards of the 1920’s as matrices of invention and thought, and sought to update and radicalize them. In the toughest phase of the military regime, movements labeled as “marginal” sought in Modernism the sources of an experimental, ironic and subversive art. This article is a reflection on these “latter-day

modernisms”, without neglecting the critical studies, somewhat averse to the modernist tradition, produced in the Academia in the same period – which, according to different sources, simultaneously marks the peak and the end of the influence of Modernism on Brazilian culture.

KEYWORDS: Brazilian Modernism, Cinema Novo, Underground Cinema, Underground Poetry.

RESUMO– Ao longo dos últimos 100 anos, o ideário modernista foi objeto de numerosas releituras, atualizações e revisões críticas. A partir de meados do século XX, artistas de diversos campos – literatura, teatro, cinema, artes visuais e canção popular, entre outros – tomaram as vanguardas da década de 1920 como matrizes de invenção e pensamento, que buscaram atualizar e radicalizar. Na fase mais dura do regime militar, movimentos então rotulados como “marginais” procuraram no modernismo as fontes de uma arte de cunho experimental, irônico e subversivo. Este artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre esses “modernismos tardios”, sem desconsiderar os estudos críticos, um tanto avessos à tradição modernista, produzidos pela Universidade no mesmo período – que, segundo fontes diversas, marca simultaneamente o ápice e o encerramento da influência do Modernismo na cultura brasileira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Modernismo brasileiro, Cinema Novo, Cinema Marginal, Poesia marginal.

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