

A few quick notes on Brazilian modernism:

In a 1986 essay by Haroldo de Campos & Maria Tal Wolff, cited below, a key issue is raised:

### 1. Avant-Garde and/or Underdevelopment

**The question of the national and the universal (especially the European) elements in Latin-American culture, a question which involves more specific topics, such as the relationship between a universal cultural heritage and distinctive local elements or, even more precisely, the possibility of an experimental literature, an avant-garde, in an underdeveloped country, is one I first addressed in an article written in 1962.<sup>2</sup> In that paper, I made use of**

Let's start with Oswald de Andrade's "[Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brazil](#)" (Brazil Wood Manifesto) (1924)

Andrade cites Cendrars and the Italian futurists ... In dialog with the European avant-gardes ....

& this remark is relevant to Williams (In the American Grain), once again the stress on the vernacular:

**Language without archaisms, without erudition. Natural and neologic. The millionaire-contribution of all the errors. The way we speak. The way we are.**

**The counter-weight of native originality to neutralize academic conformity.**

**Merely Brazilians of our time. The necessary of chemistry, mechanics, economy and ballistics. Everything assimilated. Without cultural meetings. Practical. Experimental. Poets. Without bookish reminiscences. Without supporting comparisons. Without ontology.**

**Barbarous, credulous, picturesque and tender. Readers of newspapers. Pau-Brasil. The forest and the school. The National Museum. Cuisine, ore and dance. Vegetation. Pau-Brasil.**

and so to his later Cannibalism manifesto, preferred translation:

[Anthropophagite Manifesto \("Manifesto Antropófago"\)](#) (1928)

Also Leslie Bary's [tr with full glosses \(JSTOR\)](#)

& see also de Campos /Wolff 1986 essay on Anthropophagy (cited above): [JSTOR](#)

This manifesto is satiric, rejecting Brazilian insularity, that is based on a fear of dilution of one's own culture as a result of premature export. In the "Brazil Wood" manifesto, Andrade specifically and critically targets this view:

**Never the exportation of poetry. Poetry went hidden in the malicious vines of learning. In the lianas of academic nostalgia.**

In other words, the fear of exportation led to a archaic, highbrow academism, the "erudition" he negatively sites in the quote above. But in the manifesto also plays on the import/export influence/autonomy self/other dialectic through the image of exchange: self-creation by cannibalization, to create a new and uniquely Brazilian culture that could be exported, like Brazil wood;

- But there came no crusaders. There came fugitives from a civilization we are eating up, because we are as strong and as vengeful as the Tortoise.
- The struggle between what one might call Uncreated and the Creature – illustrated by the permanent contradiction of man and his Taboo. Daily love and capitalist *modus vivendi*.
- Anthropophagy. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To turn him into totem. The human adventure. The earthly finality. However, only the pure elites managed to realize carnal anthropophagy, which carries inside the highest meaning of life and averts all the ills identified by Freud, the ills of catechism. What happens is not a sublimation of sexual instinct. It is the thermometric scale of anthropophagic instinct. Once carnal, it turns elective and creates friendship. If affective, love. If speculative, science. It deviates, it transfers itself. We reach vilification. The base anthropophagy merged into the sins of catechism – envy, usury, calumny, murder. Plague of the so-called cultured and Christianized nations, that is what we are acting against. Anthropophagi.

On the syllabus there are two statements on Brazilian poetry from *99 Poets/1999* by [de Campos](#) and [Bonvicino](#).

from De Campos:

Brazilian Modernism (Avant-garde) started in 1922, the year of Eliot's *Waste Land*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Vallejo's *Trilce*, under the influence of both Italian Futurism and French Cubism. In contradistinction to Spanish-speaking countries, French Surrealism had no significant influence on the Brazilian scene. In contrast, Brazilian Modernism's "philosopheme" by excellence was the Anthropophagy (Cannibalism) of Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954): a metaphorical proposal for devouring foreign influences and relaborating them from a Brazilian differential viewpoint.

and Bonvicino:

sibility of the structure." The first of these movements, Modernism, launched in 1922, by Mário and Oswald de Andrade, raised issues that remain alive even today. Oswald de Andrade's "Brazil-wood Poetry Manifesto" (1924) received some affirmative response in Concretism in 1956, and in Tropicalism in 1967. Oswald advocated an international Brazilian poetry open to exchanging ideas with other poetries on an equal basis and was interested in the incorporation and reconstitution of foreign influences into an active and original Brazilian poetry. Up to the '20s, the feeling was "never exportation of poetry," reflecting the idea that Brazilian poetry did not have a sufficient identity to create dialogue.

Oswald: "Only Brazilians of our time. Only the necessary chemistry, mechanics, economy, and ballistics. All digested. Without cultural meetings. We are practical. Experimental. Poets. Without bookish reminiscences. Without comparisons for support. . . ." Concentrated here are the issues that every Brazilian poet of each movement—and even the independent poets—have sought to address. Exporting Brazilian poetry meant—and still means—putting Brazilian poetry in active dialogue with the poetry of other languages so that it ceases to be only the passive receptacle of influences. Exporting Brazilian poetry disrupts the condition of "being peripheral." Still alive and essential, the challenges presented by Modernism, and not only by Oswald, found sound answers in the poetry of Raul Bopp, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Murilo Mendes, and later, in that of Vinicius de Moraes (creator of the Bossa Nova, a movement, from the musical viewpoint, richer than Tropicalism), and João Cabral de Melo Neto.

Later, these challenges were readdressed by Concretism, which restated the need for acting in an exploratory, experimental way as the

But De Campos/Wolff make the point more fully in 1986 essay:

universal. Oswald's «Anthropophagy»—as I have written elsewhere<sup>8</sup>—is the thought of critical devoration of the universal cultural heritage, formulated not from the insipid, resigned perspective of the «noble savage» (idealized within the model of European virtues in the «nativist» line of Brazilian Romanticism, by Gonçalves Dias and José de Alencar, for example) but from the point of view of the «bad savage,» devourer of whites—the cannibal. The latter view does not involve a submission (an indoctrination), but a transculturation, or, better, a «transvalorization»: a critical view of History as a negative function (in Nietzsche's sense of the term), capable of appropriation and of expropriation, de-hierarchization, deconstruction. Any past which is an «other» for us deserves to be negated. We could say that it deserves to be eaten, devoured. With this clarification and specification: the cannibal was a polemicist (from the Greek *polemos*, meaning struggle or combat) but he was also an «anthologist»: he devoured only the enemies he considered strong, to take from them marrow and protein to fortify and renew his own natural energies. For example, Oswald de Andrade was inspired, to a certain extent, by the poetic-itinerant cubism of Blaise Cendrars (on whom, conversely, he

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