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# A View on Brazilian Literature: Eating the *Revista de Antropofagia*

KENNETH DAVID JACKSON

The Brazilian Modernist movement from its early development (c. 1917) encompassed many of the fine arts as well as literature in different genres, in a broad attempt to renovate and redefine artistic and intellectual life.<sup>1</sup> The movement developed in gatherings of small groups of artists in salons or *garçonnières* [attic studio] through their conversations, discoveries, and theories of national art and culture. Literary production matched this intimate, personal style in the predominance of shorter literary and sub-literary forms: the letter, journalistic articles, vanguard columns, manifestoes, synthetic and fragmentary prose and poetry, critical essays, speeches, even the joke. This kind of expression was integrated with art and music on the theme of modernization and showed little of the iconoclasm or absurdity of European vanguardist works, even while imitating them formally. Many traditional critics who do not interpret Modernism as a vanguardist movement have pointed to the lack of "great" novels and poetry, the alleged gap between Modernist impact and production.<sup>2</sup> By concentrating on the humor and inventiveness of shorter forms, one comes closer to the aesthetic intention and spirit of early Modernism, as well as to its principal contribution to Brazilian literature. Numerous Modernist magazines served to emphasize different schools, approaches, or tendencies and to further the polemics on which the movement thrived. Oswald de Andrade, who founded the magazine *O Pirralho* [The Rag] in 1912, used journalism to develop his penetrating and subversive wit and to launch his literary and cultural manifestoes.<sup>3</sup> In the *Revista de Antropofagia* [Cannibalist Magazine] (1928-29) Oswald de Andrade published his *Manifesto Antropófago* [Cannibalist Manifesto] and attempted to illustrate its principles in a creative coupling of journalism, ideology, economics, and cultural criticism. Through the metaphor of cannibalism, colonial cultural values would be transformed in the light of authentic indigenous expression.

The *Revista de Antropofagia* itself was published in two phases and financed, according to Geraldo Ferraz, by contributions taken up among its

staff.<sup>4</sup> The first ten monthly numbers of the magazine appeared between May 1928 and February 1929, directed by Antônio de Alcântara Machado and managed by Raul Bopp. Oswald de Andrade, in a letter dated March 1929 on stationery of the “Clube de Antropofagia” (“Cannibal Club”), wrote to poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade soliciting contributions to the second phase: “...não houve transformação e sim ortodoxia. O Alcântara não entendeu o sentido do movimento. Pensou que era troça e publicou durante meses inutilidades amenas. Evidentemente errei em tel-o convidado para dirigir a Revista.... Agora a coisa é outra. Estão à frente Bopp e Oswaldo Costa...”<sup>5</sup> (There was orthodoxy instead of change. Alcântara did not understand the sense of the movement. He thought it was a joke and for months published useless trifles. I evidently erred in inviting him to direct the magazine. Now everything is different. Bopp and Oswaldo Costa are in charge.) The “2a dentição” (second “dentition”) of the *Revista* was launched as a special page of the “Diário de São Paulo,” then published by Rubens do Amaral. Sixteen pages appeared between 17 March and 1 August 1929, edited by Jaime Ardour da Câmara with Geraldo Ferraz as “açougueiro”-editor. This rare magazine, standing at the vanguard of a revolution in literary form and ideology, has been a collector’s item for 48 years, during which time a few “great” novels and poems have made up the literary history of Modernism. Now, as a continuation of the re-evaluation of Oswald de Andrade begun by São Paulo concrete poets, the *Revista de Antropofagia* has been republished, although not offered publicly for sale, by the ex-Secretary of Culture of the State of São Paulo, Dr. José Mindlin. The publication stands newly to document the ingenuity and dynamism of Modernism’s first phase.<sup>6</sup> The simultaneity and discontinuity of journalistic form, the slogans, advertisements, quotations, poems, and doctrinaire editorials amount to an anti-magazine espousing a different idea of Brazilian culture. Poet Augusto de Campos, in his article-introduction to this edition, “Revistas Re-vistas: Os Antropófagos,” explains the purpose of *antropofagia* to be the re-establishing of radical and revolutionary lines of Modernism and laying the bases for an ideology directed toward creation of an American utopia. Augusto suggests that the contemporary reader eat the *Revista*, in solidarity with the cannibalistic banquet, to arrive at a creative interpretation of its instructive potential.<sup>7</sup>

The theory of cultural devouring, an autonomous re-elaboration of cultural materials in terms of philosophic value, is what best defines Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago* and distinguishes his ideas from the European vanguard which had been imbued with primitivism, African art, and the cannibalistic metaphor.<sup>8</sup> French playwright Alfred Jarry and Dadaist Francis Picabia, for example, exploited cannibalism as an exotic theme which shocked and frightened bourgeois minds. For Oswald, “Antropofagia” was both more concrete and more philosophical: his manifesto is dated from the eating of

Bishop Sardinha by the Caetés Indians.<sup>9</sup> The structure of his idea involves civilizations in conflict, challenges the noble savage of Rousseau, and condemns the colonial, political, and religious structure of Latin American society. At the same time, “Antropofagia” theorizes one of the first movements of liberation in terms of the flexibility of American thinking, its power of assimilation. The slogans of Oswald’s manifesto exemplify the humor and cordiality of his idea: “A alegria é a prova dos nove.” [“Happiness proves the equation”] “Tupy or not Tupy that is the question.”

In his essay “Antropofagia ao Alcance de Todos” [“Cannibalism Made Easy”], Benedito Nunes explains how as a symbol of devouring “Antropofagia” cuts through many levels of meaning.<sup>10</sup> It is at once a metaphor, a diagnosis, and a therapeutic for Brazil. As a provoking and irreverent metaphor, it refers to the Tupi Indian rite of consuming a valiant enemy warrior, ingesting his qualities toward the preservation of their own autonomy. “Antropofagia” diagnoses the trauma of a repressed patriarchal and colonial society, with its messianism, rhetoric, and imitation of foreign models. The *Manifesto Antropófago*, through its verbal aggression, satire, and criticism also opens a therapeutic 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, as exemplified in Oswald’s novel *Serafim Ponte Grande*.<sup>11</sup>

The European ingredients of “Antropofagia” which Oswald transformed can be traced in the *Manifesto*: Montaigne’s *Essais*, reinforced by Rousseau, paint the stable and unrepressed virtues of savage society, its matriarchal pleasure principles. From Freud, Oswald absorbed the transformation of tabu into totem and blended the concept with Nietzsche’s metaphor (in *A Genealogy of Morals*) of man as an animal that assimilates interior and exterior conflicts. From Keyserling the idea of technological savagery would be mixed with Spengler’s conclusion about the victory of the machine and lead Oswald to the theory of a “revolução caraíba” [“supernatural and indigenous revolution”]. This Brazilian revolutionary synthesis would replace indigenous originality and *pau-brasil* [Brasilwood] simplicity with the cannibalistic instinct of rebellion. The exoticism of a Brazilian reality created in Europe would surrender to this instinct of revolution, a final step in the transformation of society toward the service of man. Such an assimilation of revisionist philosophy, psychology, and sociology from the European vanguard naturally contributed in the Brazilian movement to the union of journalism and criticism which characterized Modernism’s first phase. By 1929 the attacks on established interests led the *antropófagos* toward economic and political positions drawn from their hunger for authenticity. Liberation from colonial domination signified the democratic distribution of goods and the extension of power to the masses. Utopia could be realized through the unrepressed and uncensored expression

of instinctual possibilities and the free criticism of all values.

The first phase of the *Revista de Antropofagia* did not take a position commensurate with the *Manifesto*'s revolutionary ideas. Only one article, "A 'Descida' Antropophaga" ["The Cannibalist 'Descent' "] by Oswald Costa, could equal Oswald's theory. Costa proclaimed, "Nós queremos o homem sem a dúvida... nu, natural, antropófago," ["(We want man without doubts... naked, natural, cannibalistic) and coined one of the movement's slogans"], "Quatro séculos de carne de vaca! Que horror!" ["Four centuries of cow meat! Horrors!"] Yet despite the lack of theoretical and poetic resolution, the *Revista de Antropofagia* included some basic works in the evolution of modernist language: Oswald's *Manifesto*, the first fragment of *Macunaima*, Carlos Drummond de Andrade's radical poem "No Meio do Caminho" ["In the Middle of the Road"], Manuel Bandeira's "Noturno da Rua da Lapa" ["Rua da Lapa Nocturn"], "República" from the *Historia do Brasil* by Murilo Mendes.

More authentic and irreverent in the spirit of *Antropofagia* is the column "Brasiliana," appearing in each number, in which ready-made texts taken from provincial journalism are gathered like "objets trouvés" to form a social mural. News items, fragments of popular novels, speeches, interviews, telegrams, greeting cards, and circulars themselves speak loudly to denounce the conventional imbecility of a colonial civilization. For example, this telegram from Fortaleza:

A bordo do "Itassussê passou por este porto com destino ao norte, S.A.D. Pedro de Orleans e Bragança, acompanhado de sua esposa e filho...

Na volta para bordo, um preto catraeiro, de nome Vicente Fonseca, destacando-se da multidão abraçou o príncipe dizendo: "Fique sabendo que as opiniões mudaram mas os corações são os mesmos."

['Passing through this port on board the 'Itassussê' heading north, His Highness Pedro de Orleans e Bragança, accompanied by his wife and son...

When again on board, a black sailor, named Vicente Fonseca, came out of the throng to embrace the prince and said: 'Opinions have changed but our hearts are the same.']

Or this funereal necrology, exemplifying colonial rhetoric:

O dr. Daniel de Oliveira Barros e Almeida nasceu num dia e morreu em outro, de doença de quem trabalha, coração cansado antes de tempo.

Entre os dois, correu-lhe a vida.

['Dr. Daniel de Oliveira Barros e Almeida was born one day and died another, of a workingmans's sickness, his heart tired

before its time.

Between the two, his life ran on.”]

Or an interview with a carioca actress in “Para o Povo” [“For the Family”]:

O meu ideal é ter o applauso das famílias.

[“My ideal is to have families’ approval.”]

Even an advertisement, under the title “Música”, with Machadian resonances:

A CRUZ DA TUA SEPULTURA ENCERRA UM  
MISTÉRIO-

Valsa com letra; foi escrita junto a uma campa,  
Vende-se à rua do Teatro, 26.

[THE CROSS ON YOUR TOMB ENDS A MYSTERY-

Waltz with words; written next to a grave,  
For sale at 26 Theater Street.]

The “*Brasiliana*” column is a journalistic equivalent to the critical method of *Pau-Brasil* poetry.<sup>12</sup>

The magazine’s first phase documents the progressive irritation between Mário de Andrade and Oswald which also illustrates the ideological divergence of contributors as *Antropofagia* solidifies its critical position. Mário published two articles of regional musical research, “Romance do Veludo” and “Lundu do Escravo,” the poem “Lundu do Escritor Difícil,” and a veiled attack titled “Antropófagos?,” which Oswald viciously answers in the second phase. In No. 7 Oswald limits himself to an announcement:

#### SAIBAM QUANTOS

Certifico a pedido verbal de pessoa interessada que o meu parente Mario de Andrade é o peor critico do mundo mas o melhor poeta dos Estados Desunidos do Brasil. De que dou esperança.

JOÃO MIRAMAR

#### [TO ALL IT MAY CONCERN

I certify upon the oral request of an interested party that my relative Mario de Andrade is the worst critic in the world but the best poet in the Disunited States of Brazil. To which I sometimes swear.

JOÃO MIRAMAR]

Mário would complain in the article “Elegia de Abril” [“April Elegy”] part of the 1941 conference which evaluated Modernist achievements, that the move-

ment never took a position or compromised its literary purity with a social program.<sup>13</sup> He criticized the new conventionalities of Brazilian intellectual life and commented, “Nem mesmo o nacionalismo que praticávamos com um pouco maior largueza que os regionalistas nossos antecessores, conseguira definir em nós qualquer consciência da condição do intelectual, seus deveres para com a arte e a humanidade, suas relações com a sociedade e o estado” [“Not even the nationalism which we practiced with a little more breadth than regionalists before us was able to define any consciousness of the intellectual condition in us, our duties to art and humanity, our relationship with society and the state.”] In a devastating and practically unknown criticism of Mário, written from the hindsight of the 1940s, the young artist and poet Patrícia Galvão, active in the magazine’s second phase, accuses Mário of himself betraying the Modernists’ need for social consciousness by his own evasion after 1928:

Politicamente mais atrasado do que todos, como militante, Mario de Andrade realizou a sua evasão na poesia, dedicando-se também a objetivos pedagogicos, que era o seu meio de se tornar um “chefe”, um “duce” da juventude. Sua intensa atividade de missivista, equivale a um apostolado. Por ser a figura com maiores possibilidades de uma unificação do movimento modernista, ele simboliza o recuo sofrido com a fragmentação verificada desde 1928. Suas responsabilidades são enormes, e ele o confessa ao único agrupamento com possibilidades que surgiu desde a Antropofagia; o grupo que produziu a revista “Clima”. Leia-se a sua “Elegia de abril”, que é um balanço e precariamente feito, da “inteligencia nova” do Brasil. Veja-se como ele culpa a inteligencia de ter sido a “mais facil de se perverter a si mesma”, transformando-se numa justificação dos atos, derivados do “enfraquecimento da sensibilidade”, reduzida a “costume”... Há sete anos, exatamente, em maio de 1941, Mario denunciava o tema da desistencia, mas não via que ele fora o primeiro que desistira....<sup>14</sup>

[“Politically more backward than any, as a militant, Mario de Andrade practiced his evasion in poetry, also dedicating himself to pedagogic objectives, his means of becoming a ‘chief,’ a ‘duce’ of youth. His intense activity as a correspondent equalled religious vocation. As the figure most capable of unifying the modernist movement, he symbolizes the hesitation following the fragmentation of 1928. His responsibilities are enormous and he confesses that to the only group with a future that emerges since Antropofagia; the group that produced the magazine ‘Clima.’ Read his ‘April Elegy,’ which is a precarious summary of Brazil’s ‘new intelligence.’ See how he blames the intel-



lectuals for having been 'the easiest of all at self-perversion,' a justification of deeds derived from the 'weakening of sensibilities,' reduced to 'habit'... Exactly seven years ago, Mario denounced the theme of renunciation, but without seeing that he had been the first to renounce..."

Augusto de Campos points out that Mário was more dramatically attacked than others perhaps because the Modernist vanguard hoped for more from the author of *Macunaíma*. From his later article it seems Mário also expected more of himself, although it can also be argued that the vanguard group exaggerated its own earlier political commitment before "Antropofagia."

The second phase of the *Revista de Antropofagia* appeared as a brief and heroic experiment in São Paulo journalism, and must be viewed as most successful vanguard journalism. The dynamic layout and the collage effect of juxtaposed slogans, quotations, announcements, poems, and anthropophagistic exegesis pointed toward revolutionary form. At the same time, the authors search to define a new humanism in terms of a natural American mentality. The column "De Antropofagia" proclaims: "A descida antropofagica não é uma revolução literaria. Nem social. Nem politica. Nem religiosa. Ela é tudo isso ao mesmo tempo." ["The cannibalist 'descent' is not a literary revolution. Nor social. Nor political. Nor religious. It is all that at the same time."] The group's toothsome anarchy led it to condemn the "falsa cultura e falso moral do ocidente" ["false culture and false morality of the West while also rejecting any kind of political extremism"]: "Nós somos contra os fascistas de qualquer espécie e contra os bolchevistas também de qualquer espécie. O que nessas realidades politicas houver de favorável ao homem biológico, consideremos bom. É nosso." ["We are against fascists of any kind and against bolsheviks of any kind. In current politics whatever favors biological man we will consider good. As ours."] "Antropofagia" may be considered an original contribution to American pragmatist philosophy.

The biting humor of the criticism in the *Página* added to its aggressivity and efficacy. The series titled "Moquens" by Oswaldo Costa was divided culinistically into sections called "Aperitivo, Hors d'Oeuvre, Entradas, Sobre-mesa, and Cafezinho." In "Cafezinho" Costa attacks the false side of Modernism which, in the vanguard view, brought no new thought or spirit to poetry, rather trying to institute itself as the next academy. His attack is pointed at a future essay of Mário's since the conclusion reads, "Empalhados como pássaros de museu, vivem agora nas estantes acadêmicas, purgando o remorso da Semana de Arte Moderna" ["Stuffed like birds in a museum, they now live on academic shelves, purifying their remorse over the Modern Art Weeks."]

Accompanying the radical construction in the second phase was literature which advanced Modernism, such as two unpublished poems by Oswald,



selections from Raul Bopp's *Cobra Norato*, the "Canção de Exílio" by Murilo Mendes, regionalist poems of Jorge de Lima. It included drawings by Tarsila, Cicero Dias, and Patricia Galvão.

The radical program of the *Revista* in its second phase finally led to its rejection by the "Diário de S. Paulo" when the elite could not tolerate rebellious Indians in its ranks. The two final pages of "Antropofagia" proclaimed freedom of thought and sexual freedom; its editorials denounced the Church and the Jesuit role in forming Brazilian society. No. 15 advanced a political program with a platform including divorce, birth control, punishment to fit the crime, nationalization of the press, suppression of the academies, and organization of the state by classes. When the central editorial of No. 16 attacked not only religious education but also the elite itself for lack of character, "elite romântica, saudosista, que ainda crê na retórica, nos princípios de Aristoteles e nos bons sentimentos portugueses, que não tem olhos para ver a nossa realidade" ["romantic, sentimental elite, which still believes in rhetoric, the principles of Aristotle and in good Portuguese sentiments, without eyes to see our reality"], the *Revista de Antropofagia* came to an end. Tarsila remembered that "o jovem Geraldo Ferraz veio correndo alucinado dizendo que a revista acabara"<sup>15</sup> ["young Geraldo Ferraz came running in a daze to say that the magazine was over"]. Raul Bopp still writes of the "changé des dames" ["wife-swapping"] that followed an attack of libido in the "Paraíso Antropófago"<sup>16</sup> ["Antropophagistic Paradise"]. And the crash of 1929 definitively ended the vanguardist union of journalism, criticism, politics, and ideology which characterized Modernism and impelled the modernists toward the proletarian revolt of the 1930s. Oswald de Andrade could only reassemble the threads of "Antropofagia" as a philosophy after 1945. The "banquete antropófago" ["cannibal banquet"] had been postponed until its creative potential could be reviewed and reassimilated by contemporary criticism.<sup>17</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Mário da Silva Brito, *História do Modernismo Brasileiro: Antecedentes da Semana de Arte Moderna* [History of Brazilian Modernism: Antecedents of the Week of Modern Art], 3rd ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Wilson Martins' *The Modernist Idea* (New York, 1970) criticizes Brazilian Modernism for its alleged lack of great writers and works.

<sup>3</sup> Many of these important magazines have been rediscovered and some published in book form. Studies have appeared on *Klaxon*, *Terra Roxa e Outras Terras* while magazines such as Oswald's *O Pirralho* remain lost.

<sup>4</sup>Geraldo Ferraz, who served as editor/butcher of the *Revista de Antropofagia*, spoke about those times in an interview with Albert Bork in April 1977 in Guarujá and with the author in August 1977 in São Paulo.

<sup>5</sup>See Raul Bopp, *Vida e Morte da Antropofagia [The Life and Death of Cannibalism]* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977), pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup>*Revista de Antropofagia* (São Paulo, 1975) was published by Abril S.A. Industrial e Comercial.

<sup>7</sup>The *Revista* can be said to initiate a tradition of radical thought, demanding a critical re-evaluation of cultural stereotypes for the purpose of stimulating social conscience – currently illustrated by the publication of Carlos Guilherme Mota's *Ideologia da Cultura Brasileira [Ideology of Brazilian Culture]* (São Paulo, 1977).

<sup>8</sup>Oswald de Andrade visited Europe in 1912. In his own artistic development after 1917 he applied vanguard techniques to themes drawn from Brazilian reality.

<sup>9</sup>The metaphor of cannibalist assimilation influenced other writers and thinkers, such as Graciliano Ramos, whose first novel, *Caetés*, juxtaposes indigenous habits with provincial bourgeois society.

<sup>10</sup>Benedito Nunes, "Antropofagia ao alcance de todos" in Oswald de Andrade, *Obras Completas*, Vol. 6 (Rio de Janeiro, 1972), pp. xiii-liii.

<sup>11</sup>For the relationship between Oswald's manifestoes and Serafim Ponte Grande, see the author's "Rediscovering the Rediscoverers: João Miramar and Serafim Ponte Grande," *Texas Quarterly* (Fall 1976), pp. 162-173.

<sup>12</sup>In 1925 Oswald de Andrade published a book of poetry, *Pau-Brasil*, which introduced a documentary style, similar to that of John Dos Passos and Blaise Cendrars, in which selected excerpts from documents of Brazilian civilization were given poetic value. Their humorous and ironic content makes them comparable to the "Brasiliana" selections.

<sup>13</sup>Mário de Andrade, "Elegia de abril," *Aspectos da literatura Brasileira [Aspects of Brazilian Literature]* (São Paulo, 1943), pp. 237-250.

<sup>14</sup>Patrícia Galvão, "Contribuição ao julgamento do Congresso de Poesia" ["Contribution to an Evaluation of the Poetry Congress"], *Diário de S. Paulo*, Sunday, May 9, 1948. Republished in *Através* 2 (S. Paulo, 1978), pp. 49-51.

<sup>15</sup>Tarsila do Amaral, "Pintura Pau-Brasil e Antropofagia" ["Brazilwood Painting and Antrophagy"], *Revista Anual do Salão de Maio*, No. 3, 1939. This unusual magazine was bound in tin, emphasizing its vanguardistic design.

<sup>16</sup>Raul Bopp, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup>Oswald de Andrade reconstructed the philosophical bases of "Antropofagia" in studies after 1945 such as "Uma Philosophia Perennis" ["A Perennial Philosophy"] and his thesis "A Marcha das Utopias" ["The March of Utopias."] Such studies place Oswald as a companion or predecessor of socially critical thinkers such as Aldoux Huxley or Herbert Marcuse. For a list of Oswald's unpublished manuscripts, see the author's *Vanguardist Prose in Oswald de Andrade*, Diss. U. Wisconsin, 1973.