

Gouveia, Saulo. *The Triumph of Brazilian Modernism: The Metanarrative of Emancipation and Counter-Narratives*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2013. 296 pp. Notes. Works Cited. Index.

Textbooks, literary histories, educators, and scholars frequently have made the same overarching claim about the Brazilian modernist movement of the 1920s: it constituted a liberating rupture from worn-out styles and themes. *The Triumph of Brazilian Modernism* challenges this assumption by arguing that, although the aesthetics of Modernism constituted a rupture, other aspects of the movement—such as its sponsorship, milieu, and glorification of the *bandeirantes*—maintained conservative traditions more than normally is acknowledged. Gouveia asks the following questions about the Brazilian Modernist movement of the 1920s (which from here on I'll refer to as Modernism): Who decided that Modernism stood for emancipation? How did this idea become normalized? In what ways does this definition of Modernism overlook conservative components of the movement? To answer these questions, Gouveia historicizes texts that have too often, in his view, been read primarily on formalist grounds.

The ampersand in the book's title marks the division between Part One and Part Two of Gouveia's study. Part One chronologically examines how Modernism became synonymous with the nation's cultural emancipation. Modernist writers in São Paulo were the agents of their own legitimization. They self-consciously crafted, financed, and wrote about a literary movement in a way that secured that movement's canonization while its founders were still alive and active. By the 1950s, thanks to changes in school curricula and to literary histories written during that decade, Modernism enjoyed a secure place in the Brazilian literary canon.

The "triumph of Modernism" is that it successfully made itself indispensable to Brazil by claiming responsibility for the country's authentic cultural identity: "The metanarrative of Modernism constitutes an aesthetic/philosophical manifestation of the narrative of emancipation. It defines Modernism as the pinnacle, the historical moment when the battle for an authentic national identity finally achieved its goals" (37). Part One examines Modernists' involvement in the key events and institutions that together secured its canonization: The Week of Modern Art, the cultural projects of the first Vargas regime (1930–1945), the founding of the Universidade de São Paulo (1932), and Minister Gustavo Capanema's promotion of Modernist anthologies. Gouveia notes that the "most important fact to consider with regard to the early signs of the canonization of the literature of Modernism is that modernist intellectuals (Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Sérgio Milliet) or intellectuals identified with the modernist movement (Alceu Amoroso Lima) were in the positions of arbiters," as educators, government employees, anthologists, and literary critics (73). The first chapter successfully argues how "Modernism became the hallmark of the state cultural and educational apparatuses during the 1930s and 40s" (79).

In the second and final chapter in Part One, the reader learns how the literary histories written during the 1950s, which secured Modernism's canonization, crafted the following overarching narrative: Modernism overthrew Brazilian literature's dependence on European forms, introducing a dramatic change in writing and a more innovative Brazilian style. Gouveia argues that literary criticism and literary history through the 1970s perpetuated this view of Modernism as a cultural revolution by underscoring its radical aesthetic innovation, while overlooking the ways in which Modernism also involved a continuation of tradition.

Gouveia offers a thorough analysis of the *Noigandres* group's argument that, through the Modernist *antropofagia*, dominated cultures devour the dominant culture inherited from Europe, thus creating new cultural exports and defying European values. This synchronic approach to understanding Modernism—which drew on Bakhtin's dialogism and carnivalesque—viewed Modernism for the first time beyond the confines of a linear literary history and a strictly national conceptualization (105). The *Noigandres* group, by lauding Oswald de Andrade's poetry, was instrumental in securing a place in the Brazilian canon for this work, which Oswald's contemporaries reviewed less enthusiastically. The remaining sections of Part One analyze how Modernism has been interpreted in terms of its use of parody, irony, and primitivism in the work of the *Noigandres* group, Antonio Candido, Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna, Silviano Santiago, and others. Gouveia provides a helpful literary review, but his repeated complaint that these literary critics had too formal an approach to Modernism remains underdeveloped.

However, Part Two provides three examples of how to historicize our understanding of Modernist texts. In three chapters, dedicated to Paulo Prado, Mário de Andrade, and Oswald de Andrade, respectively, Gouveia posits that Modernism was, in fact, more connected to tradition than is commonly acknowledged, especially in its implications about São Paulo's and *bandeirantes'* superiority. Gouveia argues that the reiteration of the *bandeirante* myth “hides (and indirectly affirms) the violence that was involved in the *bandeirantes'* deeds” (218).

Gouveia brings Paulo Prado, then one of the richest people in Brazil, to the foreground, arguing that his role in Modernism was more central than typically is acknowledged. The excellent section “Paulo Prado's Modes of Cultural Patronage” argues that Prado was a sort of “proto-minister of culture, in charge of promoting Brazilian culture at home, but also in charge of projecting an image of a modern nation abroad, much like Gustavo Capanema would do during the Vargas years” (150). The waning power of the coffee aristocracy (that the Prado family led) and Prado's acerbic (though hypocritical) critique of the government's intervention in the Brazilian coffee industry may have added to Prado's project of casting Modernism as “rebellious nationalism,” despite Modernism's reliance on the patronage of conservative benefactors (150). This chapter also explores Prado's views about the racial superiority of the *bandeirante*.

The final two chapters read the Andrades' poetry of the 1920s not purely as celebrations of the experience of modern life in São Paulo, but as texts that

contain mixed feelings about the city's transformations, as well as ambivalence regarding the rupture with or continuation of tradition. The chapter dedicated to Mário de Andrade notes how parts of *Pauliceia desvairada* (1922) and the poem "Noturno de Belo Horizonte" (1924) divulge anxiety about modernization and cannot be read as purely exuberant depictions of the urbanizing transformations of São Paulo in the 1920s. This chapter also analyzes Mário de Andrade's declarations that anonymous and collective Brazilian popular music is more authentically national than single-authored cosmopolitan art.

The chapter on Oswald de Andrade tracks a shift in how *Pau-Brasil* (1925) has been interpreted. Oswald's fellow modernists often had hostile criticism of the poetry book, accusing it of being superficial, exoticized, and too tied to the project of essentializing Brazilian identity. However, the preferred way of analyzing Oswald's 1920s poetry, by critics since the 1960s, has focused more glowingly on its rupture with formal and ideological constraints. This exaltation of Oswald's early work has deterred more nuanced and critical readings. Through an analysis of the "São Martinho" section of *Pau-Brasil* and of the references to *bandeirantes* throughout the poetry collection, Gouveia reveals the "projection of the paulista aristocracy elite's views of their own importance in history and in the process of modernization upon the rest of the nation" (261).

The Triumph of Brazilian Modernism challenges its reader to ask how and why Modernism has become so revered as a pivotal moment of rupture in the history of Brazilian literature. Drawing on cultural studies and intellectual history, Gouveia reminds us that to answer such questions one must understand the institutions, political priorities, and historical transformations in Brazil at the time, as well as the influential figures who conditioned common perceptions about Modernism.

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