

From São Paulo to Paris and Back Again

Tarsila do Amaral

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At the closure of Tarsila do Amaral's retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Art of São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP) at the end of July 2019, a total of 402,850 visitors had viewed the exhibition (fig. 1). *Tarsila Popular* thus fittingly became the most visited show in the museum's history, displacing a 1997 Monet blockbuster.¹ The show had followed shortly upon the well-received *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, the first monographic exhibition of the painter in the United States, which was co-organized by the Chicago Art Institute (October 8, 2017–January 7, 2018) and the Museum of Modern Art in New York (February 11–June 3, 2018). This recent spotlight on the Brazilian artist joins a series of institutional efforts to make modernism more global by emphasizing previously overlooked geographies and artists' mobility between different parts of the globe.²

As part of this expansion of modernism, scholars from both hemispheres have often cited Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973) as the quintessential example of a transatlantic Latin American artist.³ As histories of her career inevitably point out, she would study in Paris in 1923 with such masters of cubism as Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Albert Gleizes (1881–1953), and André Lhote (1885–1962)—influences that both she and her critics have identified as fundamental to what would become her modernist style.⁴ The painter herself further singled out the year 1923, when she produced the cubist work *A Negra* in Paris, as the most important of her career.⁵ What most accounts fail to note, however, is that do Amaral, or Tarsila, as she is often referred to,⁶ had been first exposed to modernism in São Paulo a year earlier, in 1922, when her peer and friend Anita Malfatti (1889–1964) introduced her to the modernist crowd in the most populous city in South America.⁷ It was also during this time in São Paulo that the artist met the writer

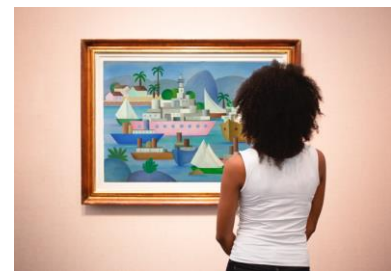


Fig. 1. Exhibition view of *Tarsila Popular* at the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP), April 5–July 28, 2019. Photo: Victória Negreiros. Courtesy of MASP Research Center and Tarsila do Amaral State.

Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), who would become her husband. In Brazil, she and Oswald would start the Anthropophagic movement in 1928, which has since been widely recognized as inaugurating a postcolonial approach toward culture in the country.

Anthropophagy, whose origins can be arguably traced to one of Tarsila's canvases, *Abapuru* (1928), was inspired by the country's colonial history. Just as the indigenous natives had allegedly cannibalized European colonizers, its proponents claimed, so should Brazilian intellectuals "devour" Europe, taking what was most culturally nutritious from the old continent. By purposely self-representing local intellectuals as cannibals, anthropophagy granted greater agency to South American artists and thus inverted power relations between center and periphery. Tarsila's production of the 1920s, which comprises her celebrated *Pau-Brasil* (1924–1928) and *Antropofagia* phases (1928–1930), and was inspired by native topics and childhood memories, was extremely successful in her home country and abroad. It clearly pleased an audience eager to consume images of "Brazilianity" on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit for different purposes. While European modernists appreciated depictions of locality that could fit into the broader umbrella of primitivism, Brazilians were interested in creating a national modernity that could be viewed as authentic and freestanding.

This article's analysis of Tarsila's 1920s transatlantic travels is intended to redirect our understanding of modernism, which is normally presented as radiating from Europe to America. To do so, it will first focus on the close collaboration between Tarsila and Oswald in the shaping of anthropophagy as a national and international cultural insertion strategy. As the first two sections argue, a careful look at the influence of the couple's transatlantic mobility on their vision of "Brazil" forces us to reconsider predominant understandings of primitivism and persistent concerns about the derivativeness of Latin American art. Finally, the last section examines how the subsequent international promotion of cultural cannibalism in the late 1990s has also made it a contemporaneous tool for the global insertion of southern perspectives into canonical art history.

From São Paulo to Paris: Modernization

Born to wealthy coffee plantation owners two years before the abolition of slavery in Brazil, Tarsila do Amaral spent the first years of her childhood on her family's farms in the interior of the state of São Paulo. As expected for a woman from the Brazilian elite, she was later sent to a Catholic boarding school in Barcelona to complete her education. Back in São Paulo, in 1917 she studied with the Brazilian painter Pedro Alexandrino, famous for his naturalistic still-lives, and two years later took lessons with George Fischer Elpons, a figurative German artist based in São Paulo. She then returned again to Europe, living in Paris from 1920 to

1922, where she studied at the Académie Julian and under the painter and engraver Émile Renard. Coming back to Brazil at the age of 35, she had produced only a few postimpressionist paintings, one of which—*Portrait of a Woman* (1922), which presents its sitter with broad brushstrokes in a tamed bluish palette—had been exhibited at the conventional 135th Salon of the Société des Artistes Français.⁸

Arriving in São Paulo in June of 1922, she missed by a few months the groundbreaking *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week). Although that three-day gathering of poets, musicians, and artists was in many ways a notorious fiasco, it operates as a self-ascribed benchmark in the intellectual history of Brazil's modernist movement.⁹ Missing the experience but not its repercussions, Tarsila rapidly mingled with the modernist crowd and joined fellow painter Anita Malfatti and three writers, Oswald de Andrade, Menotti Del Picchia (1892–1988), and Mário de Andrade (1893–1945), in what became known as *O Grupo dos Cinco* (the Group of Five). All four other members of the group had taken part in the *Semana* and were involved in the publication of the vanguard magazine *Klaxon* (1922/23), which printed poems, texts, artworks, and music, embracing the dynamism of the city of São Paulo visually and thematically. As part of their entourage, Tarsila gained her first sustained contact with modern art and avant-garde artists, collaborating in the pages of *Klaxon* and painting portraits of the local modernist intelligentsia.

Less than a year after she had been introduced to *modernismo* in São Paulo, however, Tarsila decided to return to Europe to hone her newly acquired modern identity under the aegis of the Parisian avant-garde. She was imitating the historical route of intellectuals from the colonial periphery to cultural capitals, reflecting the position of many Latin American artists in the twentieth century—unsure of their own cultural background, feeling compelled to catch up with and be validated by the center. Like much of Latin America in the 1920s, Brazil was eager to create a cultural nationalism of its own. Despite gaining their independence in the nineteenth century, postcolonial republics in Latin America still faced economic and cultural dependence on colonial powers. In this precarious cultural position, artists and writers had no obvious alternative forms of national self-expression they could embrace, especially because, unlike European nations, heterogeneous ex-colonies like Brazil lacked unifying cultural myths in their folklore, literature, and visual arts.¹⁰ Attempting to build a national culture in a former colony still reliant on foreign nations politically, economically, and culturally, local modernist artists thus faced a dual challenge: how to create an art that would visually represent Brazil while simultaneously being accepted as modern by the European avant-garde.

Arriving in the French capital in 1923, Tarsila and Oswald cunningly deployed their families' fortunes and a self-ascribed exoticism as part of their transformation into

representatives of this new modern Brazil. Smoking cornhusk cigarettes while dressed by the French couturier Paul Poiret (1879–1944), Tarsila carefully fashioned herself as a sophisticated version of Brazilianity.¹¹ The couple, baptized “Tarsiwald” in an eponymous poem by their friend Mário de Andrade, epitomized the Brazilian high bourgeoisie of 1920s, who, due to their influence, were in a position to consolidate both national and international perceptions of Brazil. As part of the couple’s modernization project, Tarsila rented a studio in Montmartre, where she mingled with artists and intellectuals, started to offer “Brazilian dinners” to a select crowd, and gathered a collection of modern masterpieces, including works by Robert Delaunay (1885–1941), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), that she would later bring to Brazil as examples of the modern art she advocated.¹²

Consciously aware of the challenge of fashioning an image of Brazil that would resonate on both sides of the Atlantic, Tarsila described her new career ambitions in a letter sent to her family from Paris, dated April 19, 1923. In it, the painter presented an updated version of her modernist identity:

*I feel myself ever more Brazilian. I want to be the painter of my country. How grateful I am for having spent all my childhood on the farm. The memories of these times have become precious for me. I want, in art, to be the little girl from São Bernardo, playing with straw dolls, like in the last painting I am working on.... Do not think that this tendency is viewed negatively here. On the contrary. What they want here is that each one brings the contribution of his own country. This explains the success of the Russian ballet, Japanese graphics, and black music. Paris has had enough of Parisian art.*¹³

As Tarsila noted, a particular vision of Brazil, one more akin to a rural heaven than to the urban São Paulo extolled in *Klaxon*, was at the time highly valued in Paris, a city that had fallen in love with primitivism in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, to be accepted as a modern artist in Europe required a reconfiguration of her ideas of modernism first acquired in São Paulo. The adoption of primitivism meant that, once in Paris, Tarsila would embrace aspects of Brazilian culture associated with the countryside and the mixed-race population that were not representative of either the culture of the urban elite or the rural aristocracy.¹⁴ Primitivism became an essential cultural strategy for many cosmopolitan members of the Latin American diaspora, because it did not represent something from their local cultures that had to be rejected from their work to be valorized by the Parisian avant-garde.¹⁵ While European artists interested in primitivism had to resort to foreign appropriations filtered through colonialism, Tarsila could draw inspiration from her native country, as her memories of a rural childhood had the potential to be avidly consumed in Paris, and to make cultural interchanges among vanguard artists more symmetrical.¹⁶ As Tarsila and Oswald would soon realize, the same images of Brazil were also likely to be welcomed in their homeland by an urban elite who associated folklore with a more accurate and authentic

representation of Brazil than urban depictions of the country.¹⁷

In the painting *A Negra*, produced in what, as noted, she later identified as the watershed year of 1923, Tarsila combined modernist aesthetics with a Brazilian theme legible to the European avant-garde (fig. 2).¹⁸ The simplified but still easily recognizable figure of a black woman dominates the canvas, resembling an African mask.¹⁹ The avant-gardism of the work can also be seen in its background, which is flattened into horizontal colored stripes, and in the geometrizing of the banana leaf that appears in the preparatory drawings of the work into a green diagonal in the painting (fig. 3).²⁰ Although the nakedness, passivity, and exhausted expression of the figure signal the violence of slavery, until recently most interpretations of the work examined it simply as an abstraction, resulting in historically and culturally decontextualized readings.²¹ By de-emphasizing the representational aspects in *A Negra* that Tarsila herself suggested by saying that the work was inspired by her recollections of ex-slaves, such readings were consistent with the then-dominant interpretation of the African art that inspired it as an embodiment of primeval forces,²² or with the theory promoted by members of Tarsila and Oswald's circle in the 1940s, that Brazil was becoming a racial democracy through the process of *mestiçagem*, or racial mixing.²³

Filtered through these theories, *A Negra* could be praised as modern in Paris while representing a new vision of Brazilianity at home—a vision that was consistent with ongoing efforts to fabricate a myth of a racially inclusive country, erase the experience of slavery, and assign a mostly symbolic cultural role to Afro-Brazilians. Read through a formalist vein that overlooks the representational aspects of the work, the painting epitomizes a modernist Brazil and anticipates the style that Tarsila would develop in close collaboration with Oswald as part of the anthropophagic movement later in the decade, and can be seen as the start of their mutual influence. Indeed, uncritically viewed through the lenses of primitivism and *mestiçagem*, the canvas appears to complement Oswald's "L'Effort Intellectuel du Brésil Contemporain," a talk he delivered on May 11, 1923, at Sorbonne University, shortly after he followed Tarsila to Paris.²⁴

Oswald's presentation addressed the origins of modern art in Brazil and emphasized the influence of African and indigenous elements in Brazilian culture. By underscoring these features, the writer simultaneously endorsed the Parisian valorization of so-called primitive cultures and of national specificities. What is more, he also participated in the ongoing Brazilian attempt to assign a positive value to miscegenation. The two Brazilian artists who Oswald explicitly identified as representatives of primitivism in the visual arts were Tarsila and the sculptor Victor Brecheret (1894–1955), who had taken part in the *Semana* and was also in Paris at the time. Oswald's assertion that these

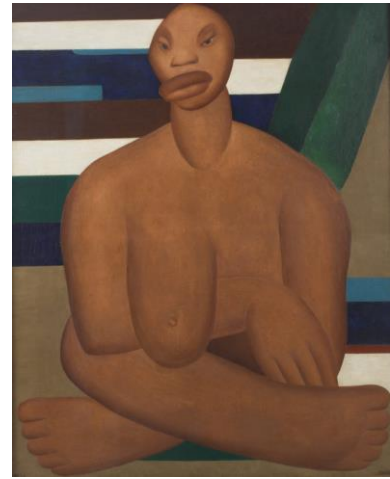


Fig. 2. Tarsila do Amaral, *A Negra*, 1923, oil on canvas, 100 x 81.3 cm, collection Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP). Photo: Romulo Fialdini. Courtesy of MAC-USP and Tarsila do Amaral State.



Fig. 3. Tarsila do Amaral, Sketch of *A Negra I*, undated (ca. 1923), graphite and watercolor on paper, 23.4 x 18 cm, Coleção de Artes Visuais do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo. Courtesy of Instituto Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo and Tarsila do Amaral State.

artists possessed such qualities of primitive artists as vigor and intuition, intended to qualify both as modernists in Paris, in fact obscured their actual origins. Tarsila, whom Oswald identified as the painter of *la force nègre*, belonged to the rural aristocracy, whose fortunes had been based on slave labor, and Brecheret had incorporated African influences into his work only after meeting the European sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), who was a frequent presence at Tarsila's Montmartre dinners. As Oswald realized, it was by stressing Brazil's primitive qualities rather than its growing urbanization that Brazilian modernists would be able to contribute to and partake in modernism abroad.

From Paris to São Paulo: *Pau-Brasil* and *Antropofagia*

Tarsila and Oswald returned to Brazil in December 1923. The main purpose of this homecoming was to search for inspiration for her next paintings, which should emphasize the local qualities of the country.²⁵ Tarsila stated this goal in a letter to her family: "I hope to spend as much time as I can at the farm and to bring in my return a lot of Brazilian themes."²⁶ Whereas during her 1922 trip to Brazil the artist had discovered modernism while immersing herself in the cultural life of urban São Paulo, after briefly training under the Parisian avant-garde her purpose now was to depict the local with the techniques she had learned in Paris. Besides stays at her family's farm, this 1924 sojourn included visits to Rio de Janeiro to experience Carnival and to historic colonial cities in the state of Minas Gerais.

During this nine-month stay, which Oswald called their "discovery of Brazil,"²⁷ Tarsila's work included a few urban landscapes rendered in a cubist style that incorporated distinctively local elements, like the colonial church, some colored huts, and the palm trees at the far right of *E.F.C.B. (The Railway Station, 1924)*, which portrayed São Paulo's main train station.²⁸ The majority of her new productions, however, represented a more vernacular Brazil. The work *Morro da Favela (Hills of the Favela, 1924)* is typical of these new works and was a key element in securing Tarsila's Parisian exhibition at the modernist Galerie Percier in 1926 (fig. 4).²⁹

Morro da Favela presents a romantic view of Rio's first shantytown, located in downtown Rio on a hill close to Valongo, the former slave market. This setting was inhabited mostly by a destitute black population that had been removed from the rapidly gentrifying city center. Yet nothing in the painting associates these ramshackle houses with the consequences of rapid modernization or suggests poverty, racism, or violence. Tarsila animates the provincial-looking landscape composed of colorful huts and tropical plants with six figures and two animals. Although the figures' facial elements are absent, the blackness of their skin connotes their Brazilianity. Like her cubist masters, Tarsila constructed the landscape by juxtaposing elements vertically



Fig. 4. Exhibition view of *Tarsila Popular* at the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP), April 5–July 28, 2019. The canvas *Morro da Favela (Hills of the Favela, 1924)* is on the left. Photo: Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy of MASP Research Center and Tarsila do Amaral State.

and avoiding linear perspective. The predominant pinks and greens of the canvas were inspired by Brazil's countrified taste and are rendered flat, serving as an index of locality and modernity at the same time.³⁰

Writing about her participation in the creation of Brazilian modernism in 1939, Tarsila named this body of work, painted in Brazil to be shown in Paris, *Pau-Brasil* (*Brazilwood*).³¹ She intended this not as a direct reference to the precious wood for which the country was named but to Oswald's "Manifesto de Poesia Pau-Brasil," which he published in a Brazilian newspaper shortly after experiencing Rio's Carnival.³² This poem, written in a telegraphic, modern style, called for a new poetry that would be naïve like a child, which he termed "Pau-Brasil Poetry, for exportation." In this attempt to recruit local artists to participate in this movement, Oswald argued that the intelligentsia should invert the traditional route in which ex-colonies supply natural resources and import industrialized goods by not merely providing "raw material" to be appropriated by Europe—as in Picasso's use of African art, for example—but by actively contributing to a transatlantic dialogue by producing form as well as content. Tarsila's new paintings that rendered Brazilian landscapes in sophisticated cubist style clearly fit this bill.

The "Manifesto de Poesia Pau-Brasil" and Tarsila's new work can both be seen as attempts to concretize the cosmopolitan Brazilianity that Oswald had first preached when he called Brazilian primitivism an "intellectual effort" at the Sorbonne. Just as Tarsila's *Morro da Favela* presented an idyllic scenario in which black bodies and cactus represented Brazilianity, Oswald's poetic call to action idealized shantytowns and tropical nature using the avant-garde literary genre of the manifesto. Therefore, both Tarsila's and Oswald's *Brazilwood* production resulted from a synthesis between local themes and avant-garde techniques—a hybrid style already demonstrated in *A Negra* that the couple would further develop during their anthropophagic period. The outcome of this fusion of vernacular theme and international style was a national and modern art that could be exported as a refined cosmopolitan and yet indigenous production.

The assimilation of local motifs and avant-garde forms advocated in the couple's work suggested a method for the construction of a cosmopolitan mode of national production that Oswald would more radically theorize in his 1928 "Manifesto Antropófago." This manifesto ensured his position as one of the country's major intellectuals and created an indelible image of Brazil represented by Tarsila's *Antropofagia* phase. Indeed, the painter later described the anthropophagic movement as deriving from one of her canvases, *Abaporu*, which she had created for Oswald's birthday (fig. 5). In Tarsila's telling of this event, she explains that "abaporu" means cannibal in the Tupi indigenous language (ABA: man, PORU: eater), a term created by



Fig. 5. Tarsila do Amaral, *Abaporu*, 1928, oil on canvas, 85 x 73 cm, collection MALBA, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires. Courtesy of Tarsila do Amaral State.

Oswald and the poet Raul Bopp (1898–1984) with the help of a dictionary. She continued,

*The anthropophagic movement of 1928 had its origin in a work of mine that was titled Abaporu, anthropophagus. A solitary monstrous figure with huge feet sat in a green lane, a folded arm resting on the knee, a hand sustaining the weightless minuscule head. In front of this figure, a cactus explodes into an absurd flower. This canvas was drafted in January 11, 1928. Oswald de Andrade and Raul Bopp—the creator of the infamous Cobra Norato poem—stood in shock in front of Abaporu and contemplated it at great length. Imaginative as they were, they believed that from there could stem a great intellectual movement.*³³

Tarsila's narrative supports the important role her work played in the development of Oswald's intellectual trajectory and the strong and direct interconnection between anthropophagy and the visual arts. Indeed, a drawing of the monstrous figure was chosen to illustrate the 1928 manifesto that Oswald published in the first issue of the eponymous avant-garde journal he edited, *Revista de Antropofagia*.³⁴ Although the landscape of *Abaporu*, with its cactus exploding into an absurd flower, is definitely tropical, it does not portray the local vernacular through cubist forms as in her *Pau-Brasil* phase. Instead demonstrating a clearly surrealist inspiration, the work inaugurated the anthropophagic phase of the painter's work, which she would continue to develop until 1930.³⁵

Artfully constructing the concept of "native primitivism" to represent Brazil's original contribution to modern culture, the anthropophagic movement appropriated the figure of the cannibal to portray Brazilians as passionate, creative, spontaneous, and vital—thereby stressing their possession of characteristics already associated with the European avant-garde trope of the primitive.³⁶ Simultaneously, however, the figure of the cannibal also represented resistance to Europe's civilizing mission and a critique of the violence inseparable from the colonial process. For Oswald and Tarsila, cannibalism became a sign of agency, autonomy from Europe, and an intentionally adopted primitive identity. Concerned primarily with matters of legitimation of their art at home and abroad during this period, the couple attempted to dismantle the implicit cultural hierarchy contained in such binary tropes as savage/civilized that were commonly used to justify colonial enterprises, but without implying a blind rejection of Europe. To reassess these power relations, Oswald cunningly used modernist strategies to assert the primacy of the new Brazilian vanguard. On the occasion of a visit by the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, for example, he wrote in the *Revista de Antropofagia*,

Let us not forget that Surrealism is one of the best pre-anthropophagic movements. The liberation of men as such, through the utterances of the unconscious and turbulent personal expressions, was undoubtedly one of the most thrilling spectacles for any anthropophagous heart that followed the despair of

*civilization in recent years. [...] After Surrealism, only Anthropophagy.*³⁷

Here Oswald describes anthropophagy not as a derivative but superior version of a European movement, one better able to solve the problems of an over-civilized world from its subaltern vantage position in the Global South. By choosing the manifesto as a form to promote his ideas, Oswald also allied the Brazilian avant-garde with their foreign peers on equal terms. Tarsila, by using cubist and surrealist vocabularies to compose her work, similarly guaranteed that she would be viewed as a modern representative of Brazil, nationally and internationally. Indeed, she exhibited *Abaporu* in Paris in 1928, under the name of *Nu (Nude)*, during her second solo exhibition at Galerie Percier, and later in Brazil under its original indigenous name.³⁸ In 1929, shortly after the creation of anthropophagy, the painter and Oswald separated, ending their artistic and amorous partnership but not the lasting influence of their work on Latin American thought and art.

From São Paulo to the World: Anthropophagy as a Method

By constituting a method that could be systematically applied and then exported, anthropophagy had provided Brazilian cultural production with a new status as modern. The metaphor of the intellectual as a cannibal allowed artists and critics to understand hybrid artworks as national and original. This affirmation of hybridism as symbolizing a modernist Brazil, while very much a product of its times, also made anthropophagy relevant to several later moments in the country's cultural history. It was cited, for instance, to support Hélio Oiticica's statement against purity in his 1968 *Tropicália* installation and the use of electric guitars in Brazilian popular music in the movement of the same name, as well as alluded to in the title of Lygia Clark's 1973 performance *Baba Antropofágica (Anthropophagic Drool)*, which blended art and therapy.³⁹

The notion of anthropophagy was inserted into the larger global art world by Paulo Herkenhoff in 1998, when he chose it as the curatorial theme of the 24th São Paulo Biennial. Anthropophagy, which had by then become widely recognized in Brazil as a means of creating a modern cultural identity, offered a fitting strategy for a biennial whose historical mission had been to modernize the local arts and make transatlantic exchanges more symmetrical.⁴⁰ By employing anthropophagy as a curatorial method, Herkenhoff's intention was to present a non-Eurocentric version of art history in the most important exhibition in South America, and thereby end the lingering implication that artists in Brazil and other non-European countries still needed to catch up with the latest artistic trends.

In the original plan for the 24th São Paulo Biennial, the Brazilian curator had intended to employ anthropophagy only in the specific exhibition named *Historical Nucleus*.⁴¹ In

order to introduce invited international curators working in adjacent exhibitions at the biennial to the concept of anthropophagy, Herkenhoff distributed Oswald's 1928 manifesto and an institutional release describing anthropophagy as an ongoing "model for cultural practice" as well as an "open and dynamic" concept bearing multiple aspects: "non-Manichean, deconstructive, transcultural, and appropriationist."⁴²

One of these parallel exhibitions featured fifty contemporary artists coming from seven regions of the world, each of which was intended to be presented independently and thereby provide "areas of dialogue, clash, and friction among the several 'regional' exhibitions, thus integrating the entire segment globally."⁴³ The team of curators responsible for this collective show decided to also use the notion of anthropophagy to privilege the work of artists from underrepresented areas within their regions and named the show *Roteiros* (routes) repeated seven times, quoting from Oswald's 1928 manifesto.⁴⁴ In the context of the 24th São Paulo Biennial, therefore, anthropophagy came to signify the inclusion of marginal voices and to operate on the political behalf of peripheral geographical zones, including Latin America as a whole. In the context of the 1990s, following the advent of postcolonial and decolonial studies in academia, and after seminal publications like James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (1988) and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), art professionals thus engaged anthropophagy as a transnational method rather than as a national concept tethered to Brazilianity.

Born as a way to legitimize Tarsila and Oswald's production as both avant-garde and national, and later employed to present an alternative account of the sources and spread of modernism, anthropophagy thus also offers international curators a framework for actively incorporating previously peripheral local histories, political perspectives, and artistic contributions into the predominant art historical discourse. By so doing, anthropophagy proposes a way not only to make curatorial discourses more plural but also to expand current understandings of modernism. An anthropophagous perspective dictates that contributions of creators and thinkers outside traditional art centers not be marginalized or dismissed as "derivative," but digested together with canonical discourses to create a more vital and cross-fertilized art history. It also inverts the traditional view of primitivism by giving a dynamic and creative role to "cannibals," who now are responsible for artistic representation rather than merely the objects of it.⁴⁵ As an insertion strategy, therefore, anthropophagy reminds us that processes of artistic and intellectual influences are more bilateral than previously thought, and that modernism in the visual arts is a multidirectional, global phenomenon. As Tarsila herself declared in a 1928 interview, "The modern movement is global and cannot be otherwise, in an age of omnipresent life."⁴⁶

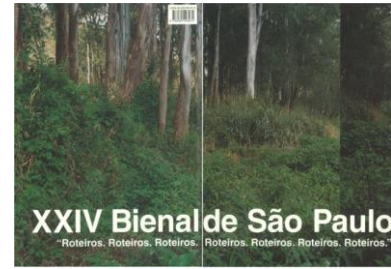


Fig. 6. Cover of the exhibition catalogue *Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros...* (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1998). Courtesy of Fundação Bienal de São Paulo / Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo.

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1. See Gabriella Angeletti, "Tarsila dethrones Monet as São Paulo museum's most popular exhibition," *The Art Newspaper*, August 26, 2019, accessed August 27, 2019, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/tarsila-topples-monet-as-masp-s-most-popular-exhibition>.
2. Over the past several decades the work of Latin American artists has become widely integrated into the collections of major institutions of modern and contemporary art in Europe and North America. In recent years those institutions have also showcased Latin American art with a number of major exhibitions. These have ranged in scope from *Modernités Plurielles de 1905 à 1970*, which rearranged the permanent collection at the Centres George Pompidou (Paris, 2013–2015) to give prominence to artworks from the Global South (including Tarsila do Amaral's 1924 canvas, *A Cuca*), to the retrospective *Hélio Oiticica: Organize Delirium* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 2017), which displayed the work of the avant-garde Brazilian artist under the broader umbrella of American art.
3. Brazilian critics unanimously consider Tarsila's work in the 1920s, when the painter was traveling between Paris and São Paulo, as the most important phase of her career. She is also prominently featured in the recently published *Transatlantic Encounters*, which presents the work *Carnaval em Madureira* (*Carnival in Madureira*, 1924) on its cover. See Michele Greet, *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris between the Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018). For a different perspective on Brazilian modernism, see Esther Gabara's critical work *Errant Modernism: The Ethos of Photography in Mexico and Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
4. Returning to Paris from Brazil in December 1923, Tarsila identified herself as a cubist painter and discussed her education in an interview for a newspaper in Rio de Janeiro. See "The Current State of the Arts in Europe: The Fascinating Brazilian Artist Tarsila do Amaral Gives Us Her Impressions," *Correio da Manhã*, December 25, 1923, 2. Translated in Stephanie D'Alessandro and Luis Pérez-Oramas, eds., *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, exh. cat. (Chicago and New York: The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Modern Art, 2017), 155–156. The MASP exhibition catalogue for the *Tarsila Popular* show explicitly stated in its introduction that it aimed to change the European focus of previous scholarly essays on Tarsila do Amaral. See Adriano Pedrosa, "Introduction," in Adriano Pedrosa and Fernando Oliva, eds., *Tarsila do Amaral: Cannibalizing Modernism*, exh. cat. (São Paulo: MASP, 2019), 31–37.
5. This article will refer to *A Negra* using its original title in Portuguese, as its meaning is different from the American usage of the term. In Brazilian Portuguese vernacular the noun "negra" is considered the politest description of Afro-Brazilians (as opposed to, for example, "preto," or black). Tarsila do Amaral underscored the year 1923 in a 1950 catalogue essay.

- See Tarsila do Amaral, "Full Confession," in *Tarsila 1918–1950*, exh. cat. (Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, 1950). Reprint in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 169–170. In addition, Stephanie D'Alessandro also highlights the importance of the year 1923. See, D'Alessandro, "A Negra, Abaporu, and Tarsila's Anthropophagy," in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 38–55.
6. This article follows the Brazilian fashion of referring to Tarsila and Oswald by their first name. In the case of Tarsila, this decision is also motivated by the fact that she signed her work with just her first name.
 7. Despite the fact that most scholars pinpoint Tarsila's education under the Parisian cubists as crucial to her contact with modern art, the painter herself underscores that it was in São Paulo that she familiarized herself with modern art: "It sounds mendacious... but it was in Brazil that I first came into contact with modern art (the same thing happened, actually, to Graça Aranha); encouraged by my friends, I enthusiastically painted some pictures that reflected a delighted use of violent color," do Amaral "Full Confession," 169–170. Although Tarsila apparently had some exposure to modern art while in Paris, her response to it could perhaps be best described as cool. On October 26, 1920, Tarsila wrote to her friend and fellow artist Anita Malfatti that she did "not approve of exaggerated Cubism and Futurism." Aracy Amaral, Haroldo de Campos, Juan Manuel Bonet, and Jorge Schwartz, eds., *Tarsila do Amaral*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2009), 236.
 8. Tarsila later renamed this work *Passport*, as it had given her entrance into the Salon.
 9. The *Semana de Arte Moderna* was an art festival that took place at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo during the nights of 13, 15, and 17 February, 1922. The *Semana* featured art exhibitions, lectures, concerts, and poetry readings. The impact of the *Semana* in Brazil can be compared to the International Exhibition of Modern Art (Armory Show) held in New York City in 1913. It was organized chiefly by the painter Emiliano Di Cavalcanti and the poet Mário de Andrade. Due to the radicalism of the pieces presented, the public pelted poets such as Manuel Bandeira and musicians such as Heitor Villa-Lobos with tomatoes. The press and art critics, in general, followed the audience's opinion. Cf. Aracy Amaral, *Artes Plásticas na Semana de 22* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998), 55. About the historicization of Brazilian modernism and the 1922 event's role in it, see Ana Paula Cavalcanti Simioni, "Le modernisme brésilien, entre consécration et contestation," *Perspective. Actualités de la recherche en histoire de l'art 2* (2013): 325–342, accessed on September 21, 2019, <http://journals.openedition.org/perspective/3893>.
 10. For more on cultural nationalism, see Leslie Bary, "The Tropical Modernist as Literary Cannibal: Cultural Identity in Oswald de Andrade," *Chasqui: Revista de Literatura Latino Americana* 20, no. 2 (1991): 11. It is interesting to note that in the same year of the groundbreaking *Semana de Arte Moderna*, Brazil was celebrating the first centenary of its independence from Portugal.
 11. Tarsila described her memories of this time in the article "Recollections of Paris," *Habitat—Revista das artes no Brasil*, no. 6 (1952): 17–25.
 12. Tarsila was forced to sell her art collection due to economic pressures during the 1930s and 1940s, after the 1929 economic crisis affected Brazilian coffee exports. Most of the collection is now in the Chicago Art Institute and the Contemporary Art Museum of the University of São Paulo (MAC-USP).
 13. Aracy Amaral, *Tarsila: Sua obra e seu tempo* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1975), 78. All the translations from Portuguese are mine, unless otherwise specified.
 14. Paulo Herkenhoff discusses this strategic adoption of primitivism once the couple was in Paris and uses the term "second-hand primitivism" to refer to the painting *A Negra* since, for the critic, the work is closer to Papuan art by way of

- Brancusi than to Afro-Brazilian influences. See Paulo Herkenhoff, "As duas e a única Tarsila," in *Tarsila do Amaral: pintora brasileira à Paris 1923-1929: Maison de L'Amérique Latine, 14 décembre/desembro 2005 a 20 février/fevereiro 2006* (Rio de Janeiro: Imago Escritório de Arte, 2005), 80–93. Although I agree with his interpretation of the adoption of primitivism as a way to be valorized by the Parisian avant-garde, I believe that Herkenhoff overlooks the impact that the purposeful adoption of a primitive identity has upon the idea of primitivism itself.
15. Vicente do Rêgo Monteiro is another example of a Brazilian artist who appropriated images of an indigenous Brazil, in particular the Marajoara culture, to be perceived as modern. See Edith Wolfe, "Paris as Periphery: Vicente do Rêgo Monteiro and Brazil's Discrepant Cosmopolitanism," *The Art Bulletin* 96, no.1 (March 2014): 98–119. For an analysis of the problems involved in the reception of images of indigenous sitters and motifs by a European audience, see Natalia Majluf, "'Ce n'esta pas le Pérou,' or, Failure of Authenticity: Marginal Cosmopolitans at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 868–893.
 16. Michele Greet discusses how both Parisian critics and the painter herself were eager to underscore this privileged access to primitivism due to her national origin. See Michele Greet, "Devouring Surrealism: Tarsila do Amaral's *Abaporu*," *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 11 (Spring 2015): 1–39, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal11/index.htm>
 17. There is a close connection between the modernist group, which included the artists that had participated in the 1922 *Semana* as well as intellectuals and politicians, and the preservation of historic colonial cities and folklore in Brazil. Mário de Andrade, who was a close friend of Tarsila and Oswald during the 1920s, the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who published in Oswald's *Revista de Antropofagia*, and Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade are identified as the founding fathers of the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute in 1933. The initial conversations about the necessity to preserve Brazil's artistic patrimony, however, started shortly after a 1924 trip to Minas Gerais spearheaded by Oswald and Tarsila and their close friend from Paris, the poet Blaise Cendrars. Carlos Zílio discusses how a regional vision of Brazil (depicted in rural folklore and centered on the northeast of the country) became officially representative of Brazil as a whole in the 1940s. See Carlos Zílio, *A Querela do Brasil: a questão da identidade brasileira na arte. A obra de Tarsila, Di Cavalcanti e Portinari 1922–1945* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1997).
 18. Tarsila and Oswald were well aware of the influence of primitivism, and had seen examples of African and Oceanic works in the homes and studios of their friends. Moreover, D'Alessandro has pointed out the influence of Brancusi's sculpture *White Negress* (1923), which Tarsila probably saw when visiting his studio on July 3. See D'Alessandro, "A Negra, Abaporu, and Tarsila's Anthropophagy."
 19. See Herkenhoff, "As duas e a única Tarsila."
 20. The drawing of *A Negra* was featured on the cover of Blaise Cendrars's book, *Feuilles de Route- I. Le Formose*, a collection of poems written during his travels in Brazil, for which he was invited by Paulo Prado, a close friend of Oswald de Andrade. In addition to providing the illustration for the cover, Tarsila created several drawings for the book. See Cendrars, *Feuilles de Route- I. Le Formose* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1924).
 21. Although Brazilian art critic Paulo Herkenhoff noted in 2005 that throughout her oeuvre Tarsila was inclined toward very naïve depictions of Afro-Brazilians, recent scholars have more openly acknowledged the problematic connotations of blackness in *A Negra*. See Herkenhoff, "As duas e a única Tarsila." For new readings of the painting, see Maria Castro, "Tanto paulista quanto parisiense: O pensamento racial em *A Negra*," in *Tarsila do Amaral: Cannibalizing Modernism*, 54–67. In this essay Castro discusses the figure as representing a wet nurse,

- an argument echoed in Irene Small's "Plasticidade e reprodução: *A Negra* de Tarsila do Amaral," in the same catalogue. It is important to note that, just as the modernists employed Brazilian blacks as a "cultural option," the Tupi elements in anthropophagy constitute more of a cultural appropriation than a true indigenous practice, despite the indigenous knowledge that some modernist works contain. On the latter, see Lúcia Sá, *Rain Forest Literatures: Amazonian Texts and Latin American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). See also note 18.
22. On the painting, Tarsila commented: "One of the most successful paintings I exhibited in Europe is called *A Negra*. Because I have recurring memories of having seen one of those old female slaves, when I was five or six years old, you know? A female slave who lived in our fazenda, and she had droopy lips and enormous breasts because (I was later told) in those days black women used to tie tocks to their breasts in order to lengthen them, and then they would sling them back over their shoulders to breastfeed children they were carrying on their backs." Leo Gilson Ribeiro, "Interview Tarsila do Amaral," *Veja* 181 (February 23, 1972): 3–6. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 162–165.
 23. Two of the main theoreticians responsible for theorizing the identity of Brazil as a racially mixed country, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Gilberto Freyre, were key figures of the movement known as Brazilian modernism. In particular, Freyre's seminal book *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933) is widely credited with inspiring the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy. On the importance of miscegenation for Brazil and its resulting myth that the country does not discriminate against race, since all their citizens are mixed-race, see Lília Moritz Schwarcz, *The Spectacle of the Races: Scientists, Institutions, and the Race Question in Brazil, 1870–1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). It is important to note that although Tarsila displayed this painting at her Parisian exhibition of 1926, she only exhibited it in Brazil in 1933, the same year as Freyre's publication. Therefore, we can speculate that the painter believed that the work was suitable for a European audience in the 1920s, but not a Brazilian one. About the circulation and reception of this painting, see Renata Gomes Cardoso, "A *Negra* de Tarsila do Amaral: criação, recepção e circulação," *Vis: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arte da UnB* 15, no. 2 (July–December 2016): 90–110.
 24. Oswald's lecture was published in *Revue de L'Amérique Latine* 20 (July 1, 1923): 197–207. Although both the lecture and *A Negra* date from 1923, it is possible that the painting was not made until after the presentation. Tarsila showed the completed work on October 6, during a visit to Léger's studio before her lessons with him.
 25. Tarsila was hoping to have a solo show at Léonce Rosenberg's Galerie de L'Effort Moderne. Rosenberg visited Tarsila in the end of October 1923 and invited her to exhibit "when she was ready," an invitation that probably demonstrates his interest in the South American art market. See Amaral, *Tarsila, Sua obra e seu tempo*, 130.
 26. *Ibid.*, 95.
 27. Oswald de Andrade named the trip "the Brazilian discovery" in his *Brazilwood* book, which was an extension of his eponymous manifesto. He dedicated the book to the poet Blaise Cendrars, who accompanied him and Tarsila during their 1924 trips to São Paulo, Rio, and Minas, and played a key role in putting the couple in close contact with the Parisian avant-garde. See Oswald de Andrade, *Pau-Brasil* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1925). About Cendrars, see also note 17.
 28. These local elements also suggest the destination of Minas Gerais, as Tarsila and her travel companions used the train to travel to Minas in 1924.
 29. Tarsila noted that only after she showed *Morro da Favela* to Level, the director of the Galerie Percier, was she invited to exhibit in the gallery. See Tarsila do Amaral, "Pintura Pau-Brasil e antropofagia," *RASM, Revista Anual do Salão de Maio*,

- no. 1 (São Paulo, 1939): n.p., accessed September 20, 2019, <https://digital.bbm.usp.br/bitstream/bbm/6936/1/45000033262Output.o.pdf>.
30. As Tarsila herself explained, “Our own nature comes to its aid: intense colors, anti-impressionist landscape devoid of delicate colors. Our green is *bárbaro* [uncivilized]. A true Brazilian enjoys contrasting colors. As a proper *caipira*, I declare that I find certain color combinations to be beautiful, although I was taught to consider them in bad taste.” See “A Paulista Painter in Paris: Tarsila do Amaral’s Vehement Defense of Modernism,” *O Jornal* (December 9, 1928), 3. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 160.
 31. Tarsila wrote that “without any desire to form a school, I painted the picture they called *Pau-Brasil*,” without specifying who “they” were. See “Tarsila do Amaral: Pau-Brasil and Anthropophagous Painting,” in *RASM, Revista Anual do Salão de Maio*, no. 1 (São Paulo, 1939): n.p. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 167–169. Tarsila’s *Pau-Brasil* production constituted the bulk of her first Parisian exhibition, *Tarsila*, at the Galerie Percier (June 7–23, 1926).
 32. Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto de Poesia Pau-Brasil,” *Correio da Manhã* (March 18, 1924), 5. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 174–175.
 33. See Amaral, “Pintura Pau-Brasil e antropofagia.”
 34. Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago,” *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1 (May 1928): 3–7.
 35. For more on *Abaporu* and its connection to surrealism, see Greet, “Devouring Surrealism: Tarsila do Amaral’s *Abaporu*.”
 36. As several art historians have noted, Oswald could perform this transformation of local intellectuals into savages because the figure of the cannibal still retained its ideological force as an icon of primitivism among the international avant-garde. Indeed, the cannibal was a recurrent motif among Dadaists and surrealists, as Francis Picabia’s short-lived magazine *Cannibale* and homonymous manifesto demonstrate. The magazine, part of the internationalizing Dadaist strategy, had only two numbers, launched April 25, 1920, and May 25, 1920. Among the collaborators were Louis Aragon, Céline Arnaud, André Breton, Marguerite Buffet, Tristan Tzara, Jean Cocteau, and Marcel Duchamp. The “Manifeste Cannibale Dada” was read by André Breton at the third Soirée Dada at the Théâtre de la Maison de l’Oeuvre, March 27, 1920, and first published in the magazine *Dada* (March 1920). For an explanation on the difference of the cannibal trope in anthropophagy and in surrealism and Dada, see Dawn Ades, “The Anthropophagic Dimensions of Dada and Surrealism,” in *Núcleo Histórico: Antropofagia e histórias de canibalismos*, vol. 1 of XXIV Bienal de São Paulo (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1998), 242.
 37. This statement was published in the *Revista de Antropofagia* on March 17, 1929, on the occasion of the visit of Péret, who arrived in Brazil in 1929 and lived there until 1931. Although it was signed by “Cunhambebinho,” referring to a Tupi cannibal chief, the text was probably written by Oswald himself. The original article is available at: https://digital.bbm.usp.br/bitstream/bbm/7064/12/Anno.1_2_n.01_45000033273.pdf.
 38. The painter exhibited *Abaporu* in Rio de Janeiro in 1933, during a retrospective exhibition at Palace Hotel. Greet discusses the implications of its Parisian title, *Nude*, for the figure’s gender in “Devouring Surrealism,” 23. She also analyzes how Tarsila negotiated with gendered perceptions of modern art in creating her distinctive style.
 39. In the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, Hélio Oiticica declared the work *Tropicália* “the most anthropophagic artwork in Brazilian art history.” The installation consisted of a labyrinth using materials as diverse as parrots, sand, object-poems, plastic, television sets, music, capes, tropical plants, and cheap plywood. The term “Tropicália,” a word that Oiticica had coined and registered, was appropriated along with the artwork’s aesthetic by musicians such as Caetano Veloso to describe a

- musical movement characterized by the use of electric guitars and Brazilian popular references. According to Herkenhoff, Lygia Clark appropriated the term as a fusion between Brazilian cultural cannibalism and her experience with the French psychoanalyst Pierre Fédida, with whom Clark did psychoanalysis in the 1970s and who had published in 1972 the essay “Le Cannibalisme Mélancholique.” Cf. Herkenhoff, “General Introduction,” in *Núcleo Histórico: Antropofagia e histórias de canibalismos*, vol. 1 of XXIV Bienal de São Paulo, 45.
40. Inaugurated in 1951 and modeled after the international Venice Biennale, the São Paulo Biennial exhibition had the twofold mission of introducing the latest artistic trends to local art professionals and placing the city of São Paulo on the international art map. Cf. *1 Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 1951), 14–15.
 41. In the *Historical Nucleus* show, the modernist concept of anthropophagy provided a justification for exhibiting contemporary Brazilian art side-by-side with historical works related to a broadly defined history of cannibalism, from Albert Eckhout’s *Dance of the Tarairiu* (ca. 1641/43), which depicts Tapuya natives dancing while carrying batons used to sacrifice enemies to be devoured, to Frances Bacon’s *Triptych* (1976), which viscerally displays the human body. Cf. Herkenhoff, “General Introduction,” in *Núcleo Histórico: Antropofagia e histórias de canibalismos*, vol. 1 of XXIV Bienal de São Paulo, 35–48.
 42. “XXIV Bienal de São Paulo,” Institutional Release, 1997. Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Wanda Svevo Archive, Box 1385, folder 5. The 24th São Paulo Biennial had, besides the traditional display according to national representations, the exhibitions *Historical Nucleus*, curated by Herkenhoff with a team of international curators; *Routes, Routes, Routes, Routes, Routes, Routes, Routes...*, curated by an international curatorial team; and *One and/among Other/s*, a show featuring Brazilian contemporary art curated by Adriano Pedrosa and Herkenhoff.
 43. “Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros, Roteiros,” Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Wanda Svevo Archive, Box 1380. The areas displayed in this show were: Africa, curated by Lorna Ferguson and Awa Meite; Latin America, curated by Rina Carvajal; Asia, curated by Apinan Poshyananda; Canada and the United States, curated by Ivo Mesquita; Europe, curated by Bart de Baere and Maaretta Jaukkuri; Oceania, curated by Louise Neri; and the Middle East, curated by Ami Steinitz and Vasif Kortun.
 44. For example, describing his use of this curatorial approach, curator Poshyananda wrote to Herkenhoff, “I am keen to create this section as a Third/Fourth world section; these are the countries [Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma] hardly ever represented in biennales, but the works and contents are extremely strong.” Fax transmission, March 9, 1998. Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Wanda Svevo Archive, Box 1379.
 45. About the complicated relationship of the third world intellectual with Europe and primitivism, see Esther Gabara, “Facing Brazil: The Problem of Portraiture and the Modernist Sublime,” *The New Centennial Review* 4, no. 2 (2004): 33–76.
 46. Tarsila do Amaral, “A Paulista Painter in Paris: Tarsila do Amaral’s vehement defense of Modernism,” *O Jornal* (December 9, 1928): 3. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, 159–160.