**PG1/3**

**Introduction to Brazilian Modernism:**

**Manuel Bandeira ‘ o poet do humilde cotidiano,’ o poeta menor**

* Later generations have repudiated it, identified with it and often sought in it their own legitimation, but first and foremost they have found it necessary to define themselves in relation to the Modernist movement. (Mike González and David Treece, *The Gathering of Voices*: 66)

**Brazilian modernism: 1922- 1945**

* The movement is “heterogenous movement, ecompassing a multiplicity of aesthetic, cultural and political proposals” (…) Nevertheless, modernists were “all united with the common concern of creating a new and modern culture for and in Brazil” (Johnson, Out of Place Ideas 88).

**Brazilian Modernism: Heroic Period = 1922-1930**

**Objectives:-**

1. **To map the historical context in which Brazilian modernism arose and to which it responded**
   1. **the social, economic and political context**
   2. **literary context**
2. **To outline key concerns and traits of the Modernist Movement by analyzing the work of Manuel Bandeira**

**Aims:-**

1. To see how the work Bandeira, o poeta do humilde cotidiano e menor, was representative of broader transitions in Brazilian culture as they relate to Brazilian modernism.
2. **The Historical Context**
3. **The Social, Economic and Political Context**

* *Modernism was the cultural expression of the transformation and modernization of Brazilian society* (Johnson, Our of Place Ideas 190).
* *país mudou bastante a partir de 1889. (…) A estrutura social vai sendo modificada (…) ao mesmo tempo que vai ganhando consistencia uma burguesia industrial. O Brasil de 1922 não é o mesmo de 1889* (Afonso Avila. O Modernismo)

1500: Colonization of Brazil by Portugal (name from Brazil Wood)

1822: Independence from Portugal but start of Empire with Portuguee monarchs on the throne

Maintenance of past structures: landed aristocracy, rural plantation society divided between masters and slaves, economic dependency on Europe.

* 1888: Abolition of Slavery

1889: End of Portuguese Imperial monrachy, start of Republic (1889-1930) -> transformations and end of formal ties with Portugal

* **Industrialization**:-

World War One (1914-1918): the scarcity of imported manufactured goods leads to the intensification of industrialization in Brazil.

São Paulo particularly emerges as the center of Brazil’s industrial growth.

# Urbanization

- internal migration (Brazilians leave the country’s rural areas in search of work in Brazil’s cities)

* + massive immigration from Europe
  + new cultural landscape, new politics

1. **Literary and Cultural Context**

Literature was “stale, musty and out-of date” (John Nist).

# Poetry still dominated by forms that had characterized work in the 1890s.

# Forms and styles used by poets still showed an allegiance to Europe.

* Dominant style of the day was Parnsassianism, imported from France
* Examples are Alberto de Oliveira and Olavo Bilac

# Language used by poets was an official form of Portuguese: it emphasized grammatical correctness and was extremely ornate and verbose, bearing little resemblance to spoken Brazilian.

# Poems adhered to strict rhymes and meters.

# Poems relied on thematic conventions that showed an obsession with classical antiquity and myths.

# Poems were emptied of real life experiences and merely transformed poetry into a play with words for its own sake – art for art’s sake.

# Brazilian Modernism

**a) Social and aesthetic concerns**

* February, 1922 marks ‘official inauguration’ of Brazilian Modernism with the Semana de Arte Moderna (12th –17th February), held at São Paulo’s municipal theatre.
* The week was organized by a group of young artists, intellectuals and writers.
* Bandeira did not participate although he is part of the movement and his poetry did figure in the event.
* Why 1922? Centenary of Independence -
* It emphasized the need to break away from the past and create a new independent art for a new Brazilian society – dual movement: destruciton of past, construction of new art.
* Contact with European avant-garde (Futurism, Cubism, Surrealism, Dada, promitivism).

This contact was “a critical and regenerative process rather than a blind adherance, something that would help them to move away from past academicism of parnassianism and construct a modern Brazilian culture” (Johnson, Out of Place Ideas 196).

**b. Key Formal and Aesthetic Concerns and Traits in Bandeira**

# Bandeira “the most important voice in Brazilian modernism” (John Nist)

# “the most important figure in the Modernist movement” (Mário de Andrade)

* **An Attack on modernism, through parody as in Os Sapos**
* **Rejection of strict and formal structures of past** traditional literature and experiments with language, **using free verse**, colloquial forms and an oralidade and **fala brasileira**, as in the poem that is deemed the most important summary of Modernism, *Poética* and also referred to in *Evocação do Recife*.
* There’s a sense of **trivializing poetry** – poemas piadas - see *Porquinho da índia* and *Poema tirado de uma notícia de jornal* but at the same time these lowly forms communicate universal themes and topics – merging the particular with the universal.
* Prosaic rather than poetic
* Child-like vision of the world, innocent and novel view of world, free from weight of past/ tradition
* Bandeira as ‘um poeta menor’ – he often observes and **depicts everyday social reality**, focusing on urban street scenes, as in *Meninos carvoeiros* and *Rua do Sabão* (this one merges his own personal life with the social).
* Use of everyday linked to incorpration of everyday language – fala brasileira
* Shows a desire to **include aspects of modern Brazil** – but more that a reflection these shape poetic forms and language – as in *Trem de ferro* – note the language of the train is merged with colloquial forms of speech.
* He turns to past traditions that had been repudiated or ignored in the attempts to mimic European literary forms – such **Afro-Brazilian and Indian traditions** – as in *Berimbau*.

This phase of Bandeira’s work is characterized not only by his own personal transition but also by broader cultural and historical transitions – like other modernists his work was destructive and constructive – aiming to actualizar and nacionalizar.