

# Is there a theory of peripheral postmodernism? Tropicália and the art criticism of Mário Pedrosa in the 1960s

[ *Existe uma teoria do pós-modernismo periférico? A Tropicália e a crítica de arte de Mário Pedrosa dos anos 1960*

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This work was carried out with support from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq – Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) – Brazil.

**ABSTRACT** · After Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil performed at the 1967 MPB Festival, there was a change in Brazilian culture. From 1966 to 1968, Mário Pedrosa outlined in his *Correio da Manhã* columns what he understood by postmodernism by analyzing contemporary visual arts. Despite the contemporaneity between Tropicália and Pedrosa, his analysis is not used to understand the intervention of the two musicians in the Brazilian culture of the 1960s. Thus, we will reconstruct Pedrosa's concept to investigate Tropicália as a manifestation of postmodernism in the periphery. · **KEYWORDS** · Mário Pedrosa; postmodernism; center-periphery; Tropicalism. · **RESUMO** · Após Caetano Veloso

e Gilberto Gil se apresentarem no Festival de MPB, de 1967, evidenciou-se uma mudança na cultura brasileira. De 1966 a 1968, Mário Pedrosa delineava em suas colunas do *Correio da Manhã* o que entendia por pós-modernismo analisando as artes visuais contemporâneas. Apesar da contemporaneidade entre a Tropicália e Pedrosa, a análise dele não é usada para compreender a intervenção dos dois músicos na cultura brasileira dos anos 1960. Assim, reconstruiremos o conceito de Pedrosa para investigar a Tropicália enquanto uma manifestação do pós-modernismo na periferia. · **PALAVRAS-CHAVE** · Mário Pedrosa; pós-modernismo; centro-periferia; Tropicalismo.

Recebido em 4 de abril de 2019

Aprovado em 27 de julho de 2020

DI CARLO, Josnei. Is there a theory of peripheral postmodernism? Tropicália and the art criticism of Mário Pedrosa in the 1960s. *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, Brasil, n. 76, p. 18-33, ago. 2020.



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-901X.v1176p18-33>

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The III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music, held by TV Record about 50 years ago, marks the emergence of Tropicália. When Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil took the stage at the Paramount Theater, being booed by the audience because they were accompanied by rock groups – Beat Boys and Os Mutantes, respectively –, they launched a *new cultural cycle*. The singers brought together radical artistic manifestations, from cinema to literature, through theater and visual arts, which aimed at authoritarianism, populism and customs.

By incorporating all those aspects in a period when music was marked by rigid political positions, with the guitar symbolizing alienation from the newly established military dictatorship, Tropicália was ambivalent as a principle. Was its ambivalence political? No, and the military also understood that not when arresting and exiling Caetano and Gil in 1968, shortly after the Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5 – Ato Institucional Nº 5) came into force; was structural, the Tropicalist aesthetic had an anthropophagic nature: without the fear of incorporating disparate elements, Tropicália allows to experience contemporaneity in a synchronous way, with the archaic and the modern integrated in an inapprehensible whole.

Tropicalist ambivalence produced an immediate interest ever since its manifestation: between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, Campos (1967a, 1967b, 1967c, 1968a, 1968b, 1968c), Chamie (1968), Schwarz (1978), Sant’Anna (1968), Santiago (1978), Vasconcellos (1977), among others, wrote founding texts about Tropicália. As an ever-renewed interest, in the late 1970s Favaretto (1979) chose it as the object of study for his dissertation. Just a decade after they came on the scene, Caetano and Gil were analyzed in depth by music and literary critics, and by sociology of culture<sup>2</sup>.

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2 We sought to consult the original publishing sources – in the *Estadão* Collection (AE – Acervo Estadão) and in the National Library Foundation (FBN – Fundação Biblioteca Nacional). In cases where this was not possible, even when consulting the sources published for the first time in books, it is necessary to explain its origin: Schwarz’s article was originally published with the title “*Remarques sur la Culture et la Politique au Brésil*” – 1965/1969, in *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 288, 1970; Santiago’s piece, with the title “*Caetano Veloso, os 365 Dias de Carnaval*”, in *Cadernos de Jornalismo e Comunicação*, Jan.-Feb, 1973; the articles assembled by Vasconcellos in his 1977 book were published in *Debate e Crítica*, No. 6, July, 1975, *Cadernos Almanaque*, No. 2, 1976, *Movimento*, 29 March, 1976 and *Opinião*, No. 196, Aug 6, 1976 and No. 199, Aug 17, 1976.

Ambivalence has always made Tropicália current and contemporary. With each new theory and with its concepts and categories used to examine certain phenomena of social reality, Tropicália is analyzed. In an interview with newspaper *Zero Hora* in 1990, Caetano argued that “tropicalism was an action by the people who worked with entertainment for the masses at the end of the 20th century, after all *avant-garde* were already aged. So it was already a *post-modern situation*” (LUCCHESI; DIEGUEZ, 1993, p. 250 – emphasis added). In 1994, Sovik (2012) presented a thesis on Tropicália arguing that Tropicalists produced a postmodern aesthetic in Brazil. Since the previous decade, the idea of postmodernism was already present in Brazil: two books sought to introduce the term, one written by Santos (1986) and another by Coelho (1986). While the former did not mention Brazilian thinkers who used the term before the French philosophers in the 1970s, the latter recognized Brazilian precursors, notably Mário Pedrosa, an art critic aware of the impact of new information technologies on culture and sensitivity.

Between 1966 and 1968, Pedrosa began talking about *postmodern art* in his *Correio da Manhã* columns when referring to visual arts. We analyze Tropicália as a postmodern cultural style, considering the Pedrosian concept. D’Angelo (2011, p. 101 – emphasis added) observes that “the scope of the postmodern notion in Mário Pedrosa has a similar extent to that of Jameson, because it *articulates the changes in art to the transformations of capitalism and culture*”. When bringing Tropicália closer to postmodern aesthetics, Dunn (2009) and Brown (2007) have Fredric Jameson as their main reference. If the first alerts that the postmodern interpretation of Tropicália in dominant countries loses sight of its impact and intention in Brazil, the second affirms that Schwarz (1978), in his analysis of culture in the 1960s, described a postmodern cultural production without realizing it. Employing Pedrosa in our analysis of Tropicália indicates that the use of a concept thought in Brazil to apprehend postmodernism is a path to be explored: it was the transformations in the field of national and international arts, caused by the historical development of mass society, that led the critic to address postmodern art. We will first articulate aesthetic and political questions posed during the emergence of Tropicália, and then, when reconstructing Pedrosa’s understanding of postmodern art, we will analyze to what extent he may help us understand Tropicália, assembling, preferably, authors immersed in the context, in order to demonstrate that their appraisals regarding Tropicália described features present in the Pedrosian concept.

## TROPICÁLIA ON NEWSSTANDS

In October 1967, the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music took place in São Paulo. TV Record had created its festival in the previous year as a commercial strategy, taking advantage of their musical shows’ audience and planning a new one with the distinction of staging the main singers in Brazil, many of them hired by the company, competing against each other (TERRA; CALIL, 2013). The competitive atmosphere had been accentuated by the audience’s engagement, by applauding or booing the competitors. By exploring this aspect, Paulo Machado de Carvalho, director of TV

Record, leased the Paramount Theater, tripling the audience of the 1967 festival in comparison with the one of the previous year, which had been held at the Record Theater, with a capacity of 700 people.

The efficient commercial strategy of the television network (NAPOLITANO, 2007) combined with the excellence of the songs presented, has made the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music a landmark of our history. For Brazilian music, the composers took over their songs, presenting them to the public and recording discs; if at the previous festival Edu Lobo, Gil and Caetano had not defended their compositions, with the exception of Chico Buarque de Hollanda, who sang *A banda* alongside Nara Leão, in the current Festival they all interpreted their own lyrics, classifying their songs among the first ones (TERRA; CALIL, 2013). For Brazilian culture, it was the genesis of Tropicália, with popular music synthesizing experiments from cinema, theater, literature and visual arts, whose insertion in the market was critically worked on. For Brazilian politics, it represented the expression of a crisis, by opposing the populist rhetoric through the fragmentary construction of lyrics, valuing allegory and behavioral criticism (HOLLANDA, 1980). As Veloso (1997, p. 165) evokes the decision was made, and at the 1967 festival “the revolution” would be triggered by the presentation of *Alegria, alegria*, by him and Beat Boys, and *Domingo no parque*, by Gil and Os Mutantes.

Júlio Medaglia, *Alegria, alegria*'s arranger, highlights that Brazilian Popular Music (MPB – Música Popular Brasileira) was the center of Brazilian culture at the period (TERRA; CALIL, 2013). Popular music mediated the debate, with its composers having the role of opinion makers (NAVES, 2010). The musical issue was not the only aspect on trial at the festival, but also the political concern, with MPB being a weapon against the military dictatorship. The Tropicalist revolution questioned about the limits of music in the dictatorial context. The “author-singer”, as Galvão (1976, p. 112) mentions, did not translate the “fair general will”, but comforted the listener. A diagnosis present in *Alegria, alegria*, whose verse “and a song consoles me” dared to confess that the predominant rhetoric in MPB was comforting. According to Veloso (1997, p. 467), Tropicalists, “unlike many of our more naive leftist friends, who seemed to believe that the military had come from Mars, we were always willing to face the dictatorship as an expression of Brazil”. Questioning the consolation made the oppressive present uncomfortable and the future redeeming, where the composers placed their hope after the 1964 Coup.

Strongly associated with popular music, Tropicália transcends it. Its power of synthesis leads Naves (2001, p. 47) to speak of a “cultural movement”, due to the predisposition of Caetano and Gil to critically ponder over Brazilian art and culture, making popular music “the *locus par excellence* of the debate between different languages: musical, verbal and visual”. Wisnik (2005, p. 44) considers Tropicália the result of the ruptures that broke out in 1967 in cinema, theater, literature and visual arts, emerging “as an intervention movement organized by artists in the field of Popular Music” in 1968. The expression movement is problematized by Sússekind (2007, p. 31), for supposing an absent program and organization within Tropicália, who prefers to use the term “Tropicalist moment”, for providing a scope that “would go well beyond the strictly musical field [...] or further than an overly rigorous time

limitation” and capturing “the forms of creation, convergence and intense mutual contamination within the scope of Brazilian cultural production in the late 1960s and early 1970s”. Caetano and Gil’s intervention at the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music marks a new cultural cycle, raising awareness among a fraction of the artistic class to a common language and, later enabling the arrangement of their works as if they were part of a “movement” or “moment”.

Towards *Alegria*, *alegria* and *Domingo no parque*, the cultural radicalism present in cinematographic, theatrical and visual works confronting the military dictatorship, while focusing on national-popular culture, deeply centered in Brazil<sup>3</sup>, converged. “It is likely that *O rei da vela*, by José Celso Martinez Corrêa, was watched by Caetano when he had already composed *Tropicália* and *Alegria, alegria*”, Maciel’s (1996, p. 194) hesitation points to the confluence of goals and feelings present in cinema, theater and visual arts. When Caetano affirmed that he had composed *Tropicália* a week before watching *O rei da vela*, José Celso acknowledged that he had been influenced by *Terra em transe*, by Glauber Rocha (BAR, 1968). In October, at the end of the 1967 festival, the *Nova objetividade* exhibition had already been held in April, with the installation of Hélio Oiticica’s *Tropicália*, which would lend the title to the song composed by Caetano in May, the month of the *première* of *Terra em transe* and the staging of *O rei da vela*.

For Tropicalists, the movie made by Glauber represents a critical awareness of the populism collapse. Veloso (1997, p. 99-105) affirms that the protagonist of *Terra em transe* had “a bitter and realistic view of politics, which contrasted sharply with the naivety of his comrades in resistance to the newly established military dictatorship”; giving a “blow to Left populism”, it freed “the mind to frame Brazil from a broad perspective”; therefore, “if Tropicalism is, to any measure, due to my actions and ideas, then we must consider the impact that the film had on me as a trigger for the movement”. Glauber’s importance to Veloso (1997, p. 242) is central to the point that his appreciation of *O rei da vela* is by analogy: “Zé Celso became, in my eyes, a great artist like Glauber” after the play was performed, which “contained the elements of mockery and the anthropological look of *Terra em transe*”.

Caetano did not know *Tropicália*, he had borrowed the title of Oiticica’s work for his song at the suggestion of Luís Carlos Barreto, photography director for *Terra em transe*. “Tropicalism was influenced [...] by the exhibition of Hélio Oiticica, called *Tropicália*, from which he got the name and theoretical foundation”, Maciel’s (1996, p. 194) mistake points out a path to be followed. The *Esquema Geral da Nova Objetividade*, Oiticica’s manifesto displayed at the exhibition that presented its installation, adopts Pedrosa’s concept of postmodern art, who began to employ it when referring to

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3 National-popular culture was formed between the 1950s and 1960s, when intellectuals aligned with the nationalist movement sought to make national development viable. The ideas influenced sectors of civil society. Among them, linked to the arts, with artists and intellectuals aiming to nationalize the artistic language of visual arts, Popular Music, cinema, literature and theater, which, influenced by international culture and aesthetics, were considered strange to the Brazilian reality. Present in Brazilian artistic production since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this concern was manifested in the Tropicalist context through the construction of a national-popular art, privileging the representation of the “Brazilian people” (GARCIA, 2007).

contemporary art from *Arte Ambiental*, *Arte Pós-Moderna*, *Hélio Oiticica*, published on June 26, 1966<sup>4</sup>.

To apprehend the social dimension of Tropicália, we could affirm that it is the emergence of postmodernism during postmodernity. Based on Eagleton (2011), we refer to a form of contemporary culture whose origin lies in a specific historical period. In the case of Brazil, in *Alegria*, *alegria* and *Domingo no parque* postmodern art converges, while it is apprehended by Pedrosa in several of his columns on visual arts of *Correio da Manhã*, from 1966 to 1968.

## **WALKING AGAINST THE WIND, UNDERSTANDING TROPICÁLIA FROM MÁRIO PEDROSA**

In the first paragraph of his second column on visual arts from that period, Pedrosa employs the term “postmodern art” to emphasize the end of modern art, due to the new stage of capitalism. The concept was being empirically constructed by him, as a privileged observer of the artistic production in the 1960s<sup>5</sup>. Although his analysis focused on visual arts, he shed light on the culture of his time. The critic identifies a qualitative shift happening in the artistic field from the 1950s onwards, apprehending postmodernism at the beginning of postmodernity. “Today, when we come to the end of what has been called ‘modern art’ [...], the criteria for analysis are no longer the same”, begins Pedrosa (1981, p. 205). They are not the same because they were products of modernism. “We are now in a different cycle”, continues Pedrosa (1981, p. 205), “which is no longer purely artistic, but cultural, radically different from the previous one and initiated [...] by pop art”. Pedrosa (1981, p. 205 – emphasis added) concludes by launching for the first time the concept explored by him until 1968, “I would name this new cycle of anti-art vocation, ‘*postmodern art*’”. For the critic, the changes were so significant that they were not exclusive to visual arts<sup>6</sup>. Within the argument that we have previously developed, the awareness of the new cultural cycle in process is acquired from the intervention of Caetano and Gil at the 1967 Festival, since it synthesized the artistic experiences that marked populism and national popular culture. The awareness of this process, however, did not lead a

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4 After recognizing that the structure of Tropicália by Oiticica is similar to Tropicalists’ songs, Favaretto (2000) points out that the comparison between them presents the coincidence of language and proposal, with the same critical intention. However, the present work does not aim to compare them, but to demonstrate how the Pedrosian concept, formulated to think contemporary art, helps us to understand Caetano and Gil’s intervention at the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music as the moment when a fraction of the artistic class becomes aware of a new cultural cycle - that of postmodern art.

5 Pedrosa had taken his first steps in art criticism during the 1930s, but it was from November 1946 that he became an art critic professional, when he created the Artes Plásticas column at *Correio da Manhã*, remaining there until 1950. From 1951 to 1964, he wrote to *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *Tribuna da Imprensa*, *Jornal do Brasil*, among other newspapers, returning to *Correio da Manhã* in 1966 (DI CARLO, 2019).

6 We did not find the original publication of the column in the researched collections. In this case, as mentioned above, we consulted its first book edition.

fraction of the artistic class to organize the artistic field to the point of designating it as a cultural movement.

For Pedrosa, the cycle has two origins. The transition from modernism to postmodernism is given, internationally, by pop art and, nationally, by the neo-concrete movement. An understanding of the new cultural style identified by the critic emerges following his comprehension of modern art, pop art and by the neo-concrete movement provided by him in his columns from 1966 to 1968.

He identifies three movements in the history of modernism: the first is related to the destruction of naturalism, which paved the way for modern art; the second marked its consolidation, by destroying objectivism; so to make their forms of expression self-sufficient in the third one. Modern art is characterized, according to Pedrosa (1967b), as a process in which naturalism, predominant in the visual arts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is systematically destroyed. In this movement, modern art establishes itself as radically distinct from traditional art, replacing extroversion with introversion, when artists break down, dissect and dissolve the object when representing it. In seeking to systematically destroy naturalism, modern art ceases to be concerned with representing nature. Introvert, it turns within itself. When deepening the experiences with language, it becomes language itself, with artists creating freely without being grounded in objective reality. Pedrosa (1967b, p. 3) indicates that “now we are watching the pendulum return from the extreme edge of subjectivism and seek to reach the extreme tip of objectivism”, art rises in a “constant, univocal direction – from itself outwards”.

The analysis regarding the history of modernism indicates that one of the reasons for postmodern art for the critic is *objectivism*, with artistic creation based on everyday objects. Pedrosa (1966a, p. 12 – emphasis added) is emphatic in maintaining that “we are facing a *capitulation open to the immediate objectivity of everyday life*”, with artists trying to represent the object itself, without mediating it by its subjectivity and its mastery of pictorial technique. “Artists take objects from everyday life, from mass consumption”, highlights Pedrosa (1966a, p. 12), “and isolate them, present them as they are, or slavishly copy them, so there is no doubt that they do not want to ‘transfigure’ reality, let alone transcend anything”. The critic’s words are embodied in *Alegria, alegria*, when political issues and cinema icons are summarized by their narrator as everyday objects: “O sol se reparte em crimes/ Espaçonaves, guerrilhas/ Em cardinales bonitas/ Eu vou” (“The sun is divided into crimes/ Spaceships, guerrillas/ In beautiful cardinals/ I will”). For Favaretto (1979), Tropicalist summarization places the represented objects on the same plan. From a Pedrosian analytical perspective, the narrator of *Alegria, alegria* openly capitulates to the immediate objectivity of his daily life – summer, violence, high technology, political resistance, cinema. When taking the commonplace of the daily life of an urban youth in a context marked by national-popular culture, which privileged the description of the agrarian and poverty, Caetano criticized this culture, emphasizing the multiplicity of national identity. Although *Domingo no parque* has characters identified with *Brazilianness* – “Um trabalhava na feira/ Ê, José!/ Outro na construção/ Ê, João!” (“One worked at the fair/ Ê, José!/ Another in construction/ Ê, João!”) –, it narrates a passionate crime without the heroic treatment of national-popular

culture. Tropicalist objectivism, however, is not neutral. Neutrality in Tropicália is apparent because “it submits a system of reserved and prestigious notions to a language from another circuit and another date, an operation from which it derives its demystifying and leftist strength”, observes Schwarz (1978, p. 75). The way *Alegria*, *alegria* represents everyday objects and *Domingo no parque* treats the characters is similar to that of pop art, only in a society of unequal development, which does not strips them of their meaning. Even with a negative reading of Tropicália, Schwarz – in the passage we highlighted – recognizes social criticism at the center of the Tropicalist ambivalence. Placing the objects provided by unequal development on the same plan, Caetano emphasizes that the archaic and the modern are synchronously experienced in contemporary Brazil. Objectivism in Tropicália is critical. With it, developmentalism (modernization does not presuppose a linear progress) and national-popular culture (national identity is not univocal) are problematized.

For the critic, another reason for postmodern art is the *expanded support* of the artwork. The frame for traditional art is a representational support of nature, while for modern art it is an autonomous support in which language expresses itself free from any external conditioning. Pedrosa (1967a) observes that the painting in postmodern art is marked by the loss of its integrity as the artists take it out of its isolation implemented by the frame. The boundaries of the rectangle represented a taboo, which were overcome as the art painting was torn and leaked, with new things being hammered into it, and so on. Caetano and Gil amplified the musical support at the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music by introducing the electric guitar to accompany their compositions. “For Tropicalists, the meaning of the electric guitar does not end in the mere question of musical arrangement”, remarks Naves (2001, p. 50); combined with the clothing, hair and a scenic posture on stage, the electric guitar extended the limits of MPB, leading to the loss of the song’s autonomy. In the amplification of musical support by Tropicalists, we understand its cultural radicalism as “criticizing the musicality of the past and criticizing the low engagement of protest music”, being, in the words of Vasconcellos (1977, p. 45), “the first formulation, in terms of MPB, of foreign aesthetic absorption and the consequent overcoming of traditional musical nationalism”. Therefore, the work of art support is expanded to deconstruct its hegemonic form. In visual arts, it was provided by the frame; in MPB, it occurred by the limited backing of Brazilian instruments. By amplifying the musical support, Tropicália puts in check the rigid demarcations between national and international, and the integrity of the song.

If the concept of postmodernism was being empirically constructed by Pedrosa, he captures objectivism and the expanded support of postmodern art when investigating pop art and the neo-concrete movement, respectively. Postmodernist *extroversion* is historically determined, it is not a reaction to modernity in order to recover the traditional values of art. Extroversion has two dimensions for the critic: when it appropriates everyday objects and when the art work support is expanded. When investigating how the history of modernism appears in Pedrosa’s critical thinking between 1966 and 1968, we outlined both dimensions, however in order to understand how they structure postmodern aesthetics, we must dwell on pop art and the neo-concrete movement.

Pedrosa (1966b, p. 10) affirms that pop art had as its main stimulus the “object nostalgia”, whose works consolidated the “aesthetic of waste, rejection, garbage”, made possible by the “civilization of waste, the essence of American civilization”. Waste is a product of consumer society, with pop art being, for Pedrosa (1967h, p. 3), “the first artistic expression to emerge in the whole and in the detail of industrial civilization”. Postmodern art is more than a term for the critic, it is a concept under construction by an observer of the social conditions generated by the contradictions of modernity. It is not accidental, therefore, that pop art is the most representative art in the United States, due to the fact that its society was the first to be set within mass production, bringing “a new conditioning to that society. Forcing it to change its daily habits, its way of living, its cuisine, its eating, its dressing, its leisure, its initiation rites – being born, getting married, dying”, mentions Pedrosa (1966a, p. 12). If the consumer society changed the daily habits of individuals, it created the conditions for the transition from modernity to postmodernity, with its new sensitivity.

Two principles of postmodern aesthetics are revealed in pop art’s exacerbated search for objectivism. The first one is bricolage, which manifests itself among artists merging commonplace things. The second principle is revealed when they become familiar with advertising language, for doing bricolage “not for lyrical purposes or with dreamlike intentions of the first surrealism, but to produce new objects within themselves”, inferred Pedrosa (1967f, p. 1). The concern of pop art, therefore, is about becoming communicative, in virtue of “abandoning the old and noble artisanal traditions of painting and sculpture in order to reach the level of comics, posters, and other mass communication processes”, considers Pedrosa (1967i, p. 1). In seeking to be communicative, pop art does not fear banality and accepts “the powerful competition of the vulgar and kitsch”, as it is “about calmly, without drama, examining what is there, and producing not for aesthetes but for normal ‘consumers’”, concludes Pedrosa (1967i, p. 1).

In order to understand pop art, the critic begins from the social conditioning of the United States of America. Portraying, then, the objectivism as a mark of postmodern art. Being surrounded by everyday objects, which, in postmodernity, are consumer goods and images from the mass media, artists appropriate them through bricolage and advertising language to produce art for consumers. Bricolage, the basis of language, and kitsch, a pillar of aesthetics, are both present in *Alegria, alegria* and in *Domingo no parque*. Despite being unanimously pointed out by those who proposed to analyze them, as the authors mobilized throughout the present work, it is Santiago who summarizes the evidence of postmodern objectivism in Tropicália, by reflecting on the importance of Chacrinha for Tropicalists since the beginning, just remember that Caetano’s composition is titled with one of his many catchphrases:

[...] Since 1967, Caetano was already concerned with a new type of personality, of appearance, that he needed to create in order to face the TV and the record. He had realized that musical talent is not everything, it is not enough. Now, not only would there be an active audience in front of him, in the crowd, but also another, much wider and more demanding, sitting in the armchairs of living rooms and who would fill the minutes of silence in the advertisements with comments and homemade jokes. To

please these two audiences, he chose the image of Chacrinha [...] as a figure, without, however, idealizing the image of the man with the horn, taking it in all its promotional ambiguity. [...]

[...] Chacrinha's image and the discovery of TV were accompanied by a significant movement for the valorization of Brazil, [...] a movement that, ultimately, was responsible for a strange and unprecedented cultural movement. Suddenly, Brazilian culture was *decentralized from the institutionalized* culture, from the culture accepted and applauded by "intellectuals" and universities, by academies of letters and literary supplements. Interest was transferred to the humble and marginalized until then by the sophisticated culture of large cities. (SANTIAGO, 1978, p. 148-149 – emphasis added).

The quote seems to follow Pedrosa's description of pop art, but with particularities regarding another context. Instead of making an exclusive use of disposable objects from the consumer society, Tropicália also makes use of the popular imagination, with *Alegria*, *alegria* implicitly referring to Chacrinha and *Domingo no parque* narrating a passionate crime. For Tropicalists, it was not a matter of selling music only to students and engaged intellectuals, it was essential to sell it to the general public, who did not attend shows, knowing their idols through television images and radio waves, purchasing their records. The procedure is the same, changing only the objects to be represented: while in an industrialized society like that of the USA the social imaginary is marked by the residues of mass consumption, the social imaginary in Brazil is sedimented by *clichés*, referring to archaism and modernity, abundant in a society of unequal development. Veloso (1997, p. 165) expresses that he composed *Alegria*, *alegria* wishing "that it would be easy to grasp by the spectators of the festival and, at the same time, unequivocally characterized the new attitude that we wanted to inaugurate". Easy, because it is a *marchinha* mimicking *A banda*, by Chico Buarque. With the same intention as Gil, mimicking Capoeira songs in *Domingo no parque*. The new attitude, the postmodernism emphasized by us.

When describing Pedrosa's understanding regarding the history of modernism, the central idea was that the dissolution of naturalism and objectivism led to abstractionism, although the plan was preserved. The radicalization of the process was assigned to the neo-concrete movement, paving the way for a new cultural cycle. According to Pedrosa (1967d, p. 1), Lygia Clark was "the first to take the implications from there, by trying to unmold the pictorial painting so that it could be identified, floating in real space" with the plan. Subsequently, she went "from the pictorial flat surface to the real space", continues Pedrosa (1967d, p. 1), "where, by giving articulation to the plans through a hinge, it came to motion with *Bichos*". Lygia liquidated the pictorial space of the plan, creating a "non-object", as it was named by neo-concrete artists. By reformulating the structural concept of the art work, the *Bichos* series broke the limitations imposed by the frame, which structurally plastered the work of art, limiting its social space of action and its relationship to the public.

The experiences initiated by the neo-concrete movement in Brazil prepared the way for art to move from closed spaces to open ones, with works taking over the streets and occupying the city. Pedrosa (1967c, p. 6) emphasizes that postmodern art

is “eminently urbanistic, it does not want to be confined to anything; it is extroverted, objective and life modernizing, wherever it arrives”. Popular Music, presented directly to the public, in auditorium programs, at festivals and shows, is, unlike visual arts, urban and extroverted par excellence. If the analysis does not take into account that their enjoyment is different, it loses sight of their specificities. Although the song discourse of *Alegria*, *alegria* permeates the urban space, the narrator affirms his ideological independence allowing himself to be carried away by the distractions offered in profusion by the city and by the consumer society – “Por entre fotos e nomes/ Os olhos cheios de cores/ O peito cheio de amores vãos/ Eu vou” (“Through pictures and names/ The eyes full of colors/ The chest full of empty loves/ I will”). The scene described in *Domingo no parque* follows the intoxicating rhythm of an amusement park – “Juliana girando/ Oi girando!/ Oi, na roda gigante” (“Juliana spinning/ Oi spinning!/ Oi, at the Ferris wheel”). Both songs are marked by the flow, which can be distracting or intoxicating, moving away from immobility that mark a part of MPB, whose mythology of the “day to come” took the weight off the listener’s shoulders on the ongoing historical process (GALVÃO, 1976).

In an urban manner, visual arts demand from the viewer more than an intellectual fruition, but also a sensorial one. Pedrosa (1967g) stresses that the transformation of aesthetic fruition marks a qualitative shift in contemporary art in relation to modern art, due to the viewer’s participation breaking the psychic distance in force until then. It is the specific feature, for him, of *postmodern sensibility*. Pedrosa (1967g, p. 1) reveals that artists “break the boundaries of ‘psychic distance’ from the inside, that is, on the side of the art creator”. By preventing art from being contemplated at a distance, “they invite viewers to, breaking the old traditional respect for the ‘work of art’, also violate the boundaries that separate them from it”, adds Pedrosa (1967g, p. 1). The previous reservation regarding popular music must also be considered when reflecting on its relationship with the viewer. In principle, this relationship exists, even considering the separation between stage and audience. However, the critic is referring to public intervention in artistic creation. The relationship he deal with structures the work. Both the song discourse of *Alegria*, *alegria* and that of *Domingo no parque* are not chained through cause and effect, because of bricolage. Chamie (1968, p. 4) states that Tropicália “enshrines ‘probability’, a codified disorder, and therefore grants the reader or listener the power for creative interference in the context of the text and music that are presented to them”. Its message is ambivalent, subject to diverse interpretations, it requires an active participation of the receiver.

If, for Pedrosa, postmodern art could be conformist, as in pop art, by denying the social commentary, postmodern radicalism was expressed in the neo-concrete movement. Already in the first column in which he talks about postmodern art there are signs of neo-concrete radicalism. Oiticica left the studio to join *Estação Primeira de Mangueira*. Leaving his ivory tower, he had left the reliefs and cores behind to continue his experiments, creating the penetrable, where the subject, after going through a sliding door, closes themselves in color, with all their senses being invaded by it. The critic links Oiticica to Lygia because the penetrable and the *Bichos* series take the viewer out of passivity before the work of art. In the two neo-concrete experiences, the viewer is attracted to an encounter that is not, according to Pedrosa

(1981, p. 207), “in the area of their conventional daily reflections, but in the area of the artist’s cogitations, and they participate in these, in a direct dialogue, through gesture and action”.

If Lygia took the viewer out of their passivity towards the work of art with the *Bichos* series, Oiticica opened the viewer’s sensory range with the penetrable and, later, with installation. For the critic, it is precisely in the neo-concrete experiments that a new essence resides, one that cannot be attributed to the modernist project. According to Pedrosa (1981, p. 208), “the artist now sees himself, for the first time, in the face of another reality, the world of consciousness, of soul states, the world of values. Everything must now be framed in a meaningful behavior”. The product of the cultural and technological alterations that led the subjects to struggle in a chaotic present, contemplates Pedrosa (1967e). The Tropicalist strangeness was caused by the bricolage of the archaic and the modern, through their *clichés*, in an eternal present, as if they were struggling in the anachronistic reality of our uneven development. It is the policy of Tropicália, which criticizes populism and the military dictatorship. Nevertheless, presentification is a product of the mass media: “the audiovisual and electronic instruments, connected to the formidable mobility of the time, spoiled the old world defined by the verb and designed by the vision”, thus continues Pedrosa (1967e, p. 3), “all the expanded senses fall on us, simultaneously”. Therefore, the postmodern artist creates with the intention of exploring the six senses of the public to the maximum. Writing in the early 1970s about Tropicalists, Santiago again seems to emulate the postmodern sensibility that the critic reveals to us:

Caetano brought his own *body* to the plaza stage and to the stage plaza [...]. The body is as important as the voice; clothing is as important as the lyrics; movement is just as important as music. The body is for the voice, as the clothes are for the lyrics, and the dance for the music. Letting the six elements of this equation *not* work in harmony [...], but contradicting each other in all its extension, in such a way that a strange playful, permutational atmosphere is created, as if the singer on stage was a puzzle that could only be *organized* in the minds of the spectators. Changing and recreating the image from number to number, Caetano unexpectedly filled in the six categories with which he basically worked: body, voice, clothes, lyrics, dance and music. The artist unfolds into creator and creature. Leaving him in the shadows of enunciation, he shows himself, creature, artifice, art, as enunciated. To read the creature is to read the artist. Reading is to penetrate the space of the intentions offered and the camouflaged propositions. (SANTIAGO, 1978, p. 150-151 – emphasis added).

The neo-concrete movement is a precursor of postmodernism for Pedrosa because it establishes sensitivity within modern rationality. Reason and emotion are combined in contemporary times because the senses are not restricted to postmodern sensibility. To awaken all of them at the same time, the artists expanded their support to the extent that the viewer no longer knew if they were in front of a painting or sculpture. In the deepening of aesthetic research, the installation would become the work of art par excellence of postmodernism. Since popular music was the center of Brazilian culture in the 1960s, the stance assumed by Caetano and

Gil from the moment they performed at the III Festival of Brazilian Popular Music, synthesizing the postmodern experiences, made the new cultural cycle identify itself with Tropicália. Recovering Pedrosa's concept of postmodern art is essential because it is this intellectual who understood that changes in the field of visual arts were products of the modernity crisis, perceiving the passage from one historical period to another and the manifestation of a new style of culture.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

At the 1967 festival, *Alegria, alegria* and *Domingo no parque* differed from the other compositions presented to the jury (CAMPOS, 1967a). Their defiance to those present was a song that raised awareness among artists and intellectuals of an ongoing process. It is understandable that Tropicália was not limited to Popular Music, making it difficult, even today, to understand it as a movement, as it was not organized by a common program. A year earlier, however, Pedrosa had stated that a new cultural cycle was beginning in Brazil, with the unfolding of the aesthetic research of the neo-concrete movement, and internationally with the emergence of pop art. The changes were so profound to him, that from then on he began talking about postmodern art. The precursor, yes, his understanding of the phenomenon is closer to the philosophers of the 1970s than to the intellectuals who used the term before – presented by Anderson's (1999) historical account. Tropicália is the consciousness of postmodernism in the genesis of postmodernity. It was because it belonged to a new cultural cycle already known as postmodern art by a Brazilian critic in the period; it was because its procedures are analogous to those identified by Pedrosa in visual arts. "It is customary to say that criticism arrives late compared to the innovations that are taking place in art", however Pedrosa, continues Arantes (1991, p. XVIII), "on more than one occasion, anticipated and provided the emergence of the brand-new in the field of plastic arts". Not only categories for thinking about culture: for example, postmodern art as a theory of Tropicália, a contribution we try to make in this work.

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