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| *Klaxon* (São Paulo, 1922-3) |
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| Klaxon (São Paulo, 1922-3) was the first and most important of Brazil’s avant-garde artistic journals. It comprised a total of nine issues, published on a monthly basis, which included an eclectic mix of poems, short stories, essays, visual art, fragments of novels, reviews and commentaries on music and theatre. In its third issue Klaxon incorporated film criticism in Brazil (No. 3, p. 11). The journal’s collective nature was emphasized both through the content of its pages and its masthead. Key contributors included the writers Sérgio Milliet, Menotti Del Picchia, Guilherme de Almeida, and Oswald de Andrade, but it was the impact of the ‘pope’ of Brazilian modernism, Mário de Andrade, that cemented Klaxon’s influence in Brazil. Anchored in São Paulo, Brazil’s largest and most industrialized city, Klaxon was read selectively throughout the country and in small foreign circles of Europe and Latin America; within five years of its publication, similar modernist journals had emerged in even the most peripheral regions of Brazil. Furthering this cosmopolitan orientation, Klaxon incorporated articles and images from Brazil’s burgeoning avant-garde scene as well as from France, Japan, Belgium, and Spain, and published selected works in French. Henri Bergson, Jean Epstein, Stravinsky, Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Chaplin, Guillermo de Torre, and Apollinaire were among the figures of international modernism to appear in its pages. |
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In its first issue, while defiantly declaring the journal ‘internationalist,’ the editors simultaneously affirm that the journal would ‘die for the integrity’ of the Brazilian nation: this tension between the national and the cosmopolitan runs through many Latin American modernist movements of the period. Retrospectively, *Klaxon* is often considered the most radical of its contemporaries in Latin America, not only for its irreverent, anti-academic, and often satirical tone, but also for its visual components, with influences from the Bauhaus and works by Brazilian modernist painters Anita Malfatti, Zina Aita Tarsila de Amaral, and Emiliano Di Cavalcanti.  *Cavalcanti\_Drawing.jpg*  Figure 1 Drawing by Emiliano di Cavalcanti in *Klaxon*  The journal’s graphic covers with their bold colours and disproportional, experimental typography have no parallel in the later modernist journals of Brazil. Its creative use of a similarly experimental visual aesthetics in its advertising, created by Guilherme de Almeida, anticipated later poetic experiments by the Brazilian poets known as the *Concretistas*, while also angering *Klaxon’*sadvertisers.  *Klaxon\_Cover.jpg*  Figure 2 Cover of an issue of *Klaxon*  Luckily for the journal’s creators, many were the scion of São Paulo’s wealthiest families, making advertising an option but not a necessity. In this sense, the journal shares some similarities with earlier Dadaist experiments with verbal and visual forms. In fact, its influences include a diverse range of ‘isms’ — Italian futurism (always tendentiously acknowledged: ‘KLAXON is not Futurist/ KLAXON is Klaxist,’ the first issue proclaims, coining a neologism), surrealism, and expressionism, as well as the concept of *Creacionismo* developed by the Chilean avant-gardist Vicente Huidobro.  The journal glorified elements of modern life, including synchronicity, jazz, agile and punchy prose, and media and machines. These include Luís Aranha’s futurist poetic ode, ‘The Airplane;’ frequent references to cinema, including comparing itself to the new medium, as ‘cinematographically dynamic’ (No. 1, p. 5); and the automobile horn that gave the journal its title and positioned it at the vanguard: the klaxon is what comes before the caravan or herd. In this sense, *Klaxon* is closely linked to the seminal Brazilian Modern Art Week, the most audacious happening of modernist art in Latin American during the 1920s. In its opening issue, the journal declares itself as the reflective mediator of this event.  Yet despite its defiant embrace of new forms, objects, and techniques, *Klaxon* also anticipates (in poems such as Mário de Andrade’s ‘São Pedro’ and his ‘Poema Abúlico’) Brazilian modernism’s long-standing interest in the encounter between the hyper-modern and ostensibly ‘older’ forms (economically eclipsed, or racially/ethnically distinct from Euro-America). Moreover, despite its triumphant language, it at times betrays its Romantic and Symbolist ancestry. *Klaxon*’s eclipse undoubtedly had many reasons, but the fact that the editors felt obligated to dedicate its last issues— the double issues 8 and 9—to the older and supportive (yet highly criticised for his traditionalism) writer Graça Aranha signalled the limitations of its radical project in the face of a Brazilian literary and artistic culture still fundamentally bound up with notions of ‘good families,’ respectability, and rigid economic disparities. Yet the journal’s short life also corresponds to the ephemerality of most avant-garde experiments. In the words of its opening manifesto, the journal strove to be ‘polymorphous, omnipresent, energetic, comic, irritating, contradictory, envied, insulted, happy’ (No. 1, p. 3), ensuring its ephemeral but lingering place in the history of Latin American modernism. |
| Further reading:  (Bosi)  (Brito)  (Lara)  (Schwarz)  (Unruh) |