

THE MACHADIAN TURNING POINT ¹

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the evolution of the works of Machado de Assis and stresses their exceptionality within the Brazilian postcolonial literary context, focusing on the author's thematic and formal volte-face with regard to the novels of the first phase. From *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* – The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas, often subtitled as the Epitaph of a Small Winner – (1880) on, Machadian fiction takes on a new composition principle, which challenges the conventions dictated by realism and whose uniqueness lies in the narrator's arbitrary and transgressive development. While the narrative sets a tone that is both cosmopolitan and universalizing in dealing with local matters, it takes on the perspective of the lordly class. By identifying the events that constitute this procedure, the author highlights the literary genius and the scope of the Machadian view on the particularities of social relations in Brazil.

Keywords: Machado de Assis; Brazilian literature; literature and society.

Between 1880 and 1908, Machado de Assis wrote four or five novels and a few dozens of short stories. The brilliance of the works was way above the level of Brazilian fiction – including Machado's own previous works – at the time. The books distant themselves from the romantic blend of local, romantic colors and patriotism – the easy and infallible formula enjoyed by the young nation's readers. The difference – not a matter of level – has a wide scope and is worthy of reflection.

The distancing did not exclude the continuities, which it needed – though it transfigured them. As observed well by a critic, Machado de Assis "meticulously absorbed the work of his predecessors". He was well aware of their successful depiction of customs and analytical endeavor², though he also knew the limitation and inconsistency of these very models. In his noteworthy spirit of enhancement, he tried to correct them and – discreetly – use his irony, reviewing in a less innocent manner the thematic and formal nuclei developed by his predecessors and even by himself in previous works. The accuracy of the rectifications is the result of a witty judgment on the country's social mechanisms and particularities, both of which serve to write satires.

European models and the marks of recent decolonization embedded in a brief, local tradition thus resulted in a set of masterpieces. Machado's rearrangements of matter and form raised a modest and second-hand fictional universe to the complexity of the most advanced contemporary art. To highlight the importance of this evolution, let us say

that, in literature, it translates into the surpassing of the alienation characteristic of the colonial legacy.

The Machadian audacity was timid at first, limited to the scope of family life, in which he analyzed the perspectives and inequities of Brazilian paternalism – supported by slavery and ashamed of itself due to liberal ideas. In a respectful tone, he brought to light the unacceptable powerless status of dependents against the other pole – the arbitrary actions of landowners, though equally unacceptable, covered by the veil of civilization. As for the genre, it was well reasoned realism, destined to families. As for matter, Machado observed and examined with sharp wit a characteristic complexity of relationships, due to the appropriation of the colonial inequities in the sphere of the independent nation committed to liberty and progress.

From 1880 onward, the audacity becomes broad and spectacular, *insulting the presuppositions of realist fiction*, that is, the 19th century's foundations of bourgeois normality. The novelty is in the narrator, humorously and aggressively arbitrary, working as a *formal principle*, subjecting the characters, the literary convention, and even the reader, not to mention the authority of the narration function, with periodic displays of boldness. The intrusions range from slight impertinence to fierce aggression. The very deliberate infractions neither ignore nor cancel out the norms they challenge. These norms, however, are mocked and seen as inoperative, depreciated as semi effective, a status which admirably captures the position of modern culture in peripheral countries. All kinds of transgression – a necessary part of this *composition rule* – are repeated with the periodicity of a universal law. The devastating sense of Nothing it leaves behind is worthy of the capital 'N', because it is the true summary of an experience, anticipating other rules still to be broken. As for the artistic atmosphere of the time, this ending in Nothing is a reply, under different skies, to what the French post-romantic did – described by Sartre as the “Knights of Nothingness”³

At first sight, Machado replaced a shy and provincial sphere with one that was emphatically universal and philosophical, given to inquiring, interruptions and Hamletian doubts. However, cheap metaphysical notes were added to the second sphere, bringing the provincial tone to a more literate level (a splendid and *modern* finding). It is noteworthy that, in this second manner, the manner of masterpieces, the universe of the first was still present, in the form of humorous substance – but not only.

In its most conspicuous aspects, the Machadian provocation recycled a fine, academic range of pre-realist resources, in open disobedience to the 19th century sense of reality and objectivism. According to the author's own warning, he adopted "the free form of a Sterne, or a Xavier de Maistre"⁴, referring to, more than anything, the *digressive arbitrary acts* of European novels of the 18th century. However, and unlike the suppositions that might arise from rule breaking, the spirit was incisively realist, convinced both of the harsh social logic and of the task of capturing its Brazilian form. And it was also post realist, interested in painting a black picture of the bourgeois verisimilitude, whose implicit opposite was open to the public, in line with the modern and unmasking positions of the end of the century. The historical paradox of the combination is strong, though functional in its own way, as we shall see. No matter how it is seen, this combination presupposed a new kind of literary and intellectual culture in the country.

Irony in dealing with the Bible, the classics, philosophy, and science; continuous formal experimentation, fed by advanced ideas on the dynamics of the unconscious, by the daring, sharp wit vis-à-vis material interests and by his own social reflection, aware of the particularities of his country and of the questionable aspects of nationalism; independence while inspired in others, seeking inspiration outside the contemporary

French-Portuguese mainstream, besides adapting it to the Brazilian circumstances with memorable skill; competition with Naturalism, whose simple determinism – so convincing and mistaken in the context of the tropical former colony – was challenged by complex causation, not less powerful (but free from racism); confidence in the strength of the “free form”, whose effects the narrator either does not gloss in their essential aspects or gloss with intent to confuse readers, forcing them to establish or reflect on these effects. All of this was more or less novel. If we add to this the cosmopolitan gesture and the superior intellect of the articulation, in a country that still does not seem to have included intelligence among artistic faculties, we will have elements to imagine that there is no common denominator between this universe and the previous fiction.

Before *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* – which marked the Machadian turning point – Brazilian novels had been narrated by a compatriot worthy of applause, whose speech was fueled by the beauty of our beaches and forests, of young women, and of popular customs, not to mention the amazing progress of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Besides being an artist, the person who boasted about the country was an ally in the civic campaign for national identity and culture. But the narrator of *the Memórias póstumas* is a different one: He has no credibility (since he presents himself in the impossible condition of a dead person), Brás Cubas is a provocative, partial, nosy person, absurdly inconstant, given to mystification and unworthy insinuations, capable of low tricks against the characters and the reader, besides being highly educated – a kind of elegance standard - and writing the best prose in town. The internal disparity is uncomfortable and very problematic, making up a figure that is inadequate in the previous national convention.

In principle the need to respect the reader, the verisimilitude, the continuity of place and time, the coherence, etc, is above geographical and language borders. The same applies to the transgressions against reason from which the Machadian narrator derives great pleasure, which also operate in the abstract and supranational sphere of social rules, where the *universal* questions of civilized men are posed (as opposed to the Brazilian ones). Whether right or wrong, for or against it, this was how the critics of the time assessed it. For them, the literary loops of Brás Cubas – a disrespectful figure – lie in an area between the metaphysical and the cosmopolitan, away from the *local* matter, on which, however, they are based. According to an adversary, Machado sought refuge in philosophical and formalist affectations – of English origin – to steer clear of Brazilian writers' struggles. Others, sick and tired of the picturesque and the provincial and eager for proper civilization (European, that is, with no remorse for the primitive standard around), praised him as our first writer in every sense.

In short, the arguments would be more or less the following: Changing the rules right in front of the reader, only to change them again later, the narrator takes pleasure in demoralizing jokes of poor taste, not worthy of a serious Brazilian man, which hardly cover the lack of intellect and of narrative rhythm. To the other party, the same offensive remarks point to the artist of the form, the skeptical and civilized spirit, for whom the world is full of doubts and cannot be reduced to the national short-sightedness. Both friends and foes of Machado thus thought he was distancing himself from the Brazilian peculiarities, whether by questioning the human condition, or by giving room to “superficial humor, cheap pessimism, which absorb only a few naïve individuals who find all of it wonderful.”⁵ The idea that the Brazilian matter could not comprise universal problems and vice-versa was common to both sides, *reflecting the persistence of the colonial segregation*.

*The instability I am mentioning is derived from the fact that the landscape, the life, the horizon, the architecture, and everything that surrounds one in America lacks historical background; whereas in Europe it is the nation that we lack, that is, the shape into which each one of us was poured when we were born. On one side of the ocean feels the absence of the world; the other feels the absence of the country*⁶.

The dissonance between the local note and the ostensible universalism was uncomfortable, though characteristic. If one had ears, the mutual strangeness formed both an incongruity and a necessary and representative chord, which formalized – to some extent – alienations of global and historic proportions. Machado realized the comedy and the difficulty of this disparity of timbres and, instead of avoiding it; he used it as a central element of his literary art. Thus, the narrator – most skillful – the humanist contemptuous of the foolishness and inconsequence on which our humanity sits, displaying intimate knowledge of the Bible, of Homer, Lucian, Erasmus, Shakespeare, French moralists, Pascal, etc., is only one half of the picture, hesitating less than it would seem. The other half appears when we consider him to be one of the characters, defined by traits of the local malformation, those traits which the narrative twists and the associated atmosphere of metaphysical farce turn into irrelevant details. One look at the two halves together and the case is different; we then see that the talented individual who makes literary-philosophical contributions is in *real life* (fictional) a typical Brazilian landowner – slaveholder, experienced in clientele relationships, devoted to European progress and a member of the post-colonial model of domination.

This makeup is quite unpredicted, but it transforms the elements that are put together, bringing to focus a noteworthy social type, with repercussions of a noteworthy radius and profound historical implantation. The transgressions against narrative equity are reshaped by means of the narrator's own character. They seem to become a *sui generis* set of landowner prerogatives, typical of the *national* hierarchy of classes, quite diverse from the universalistic terrain of rhetoric art and discrepant in regard to civilized standards. From the European liberal point of view, whose authority could not be ignored, the prerogatives were insulting. They were not prevented, however, from being associated to the *douceur de vivre* – a legacy of the Colony and, on the other hand, from echoing the new unceremoniousness nurtured by Imperialism. The insults against literary fair play created, in their own way, a rhythm with its own rules, and they make up the metaphor of the mixture of privilege and illegitimacy the 19th century associated to direct personal domination. Within the sphere of international inequities, the coinage power was now used at a pole which had not used it before, a *peripheral pole*, which reverses the perspectives and measures the measuring standards. The western literary tradition is requested and deformed to manifest delights and moral contortions or simply the differences associated to this historically reprovved form of class domination, which sets on this very tradition, along with vitality, the seal of contravention. The flexibility with which high culture plays this role is an important critical result, which lets it see in a less honorable light, or a more sarcastic one. At the same time, a social type which would be described as exotic and remote – more an operetta cliché than an actual problem – is brought to the plenitude of its effects in the present world culture, to become a discrete pivot on which it turns⁷.

In other words, the freedom from formal convention represents, besides the rhetoric twist, a grey area in the contemporary scene. This freedom brings to the domain of culture and of 19th century civility the uncivil power exercised by Brazilian landowners

with regard to their poor dependents or slaves. The literary accent is placed on the irresponsible and arbitrary aspects, as well as on the connivance of elite members, which is its complement. There is an association between the licenses of imagination and the command that does not report to anyone or yet, at the same time, between the disrespectful forms and the ill-treated dependents, setting an extraordinary game of mirrors. It is as if Bras Cubas were saying that culture and civility – both of which he praises and in which he includes himself – could operate the way he chose and that would not prevent him from maintaining his privileges. Or, moreover, as if he showed – by scandal and in practical terms, on the stage of widely accepted universal culture, – the consequences of those very privileges. In this manner, far from replacing an irrelevant little world (though ours) with the prestigious universality (though fake) of the *to be or not to be* of the forms, Machado associated both terrains in order to unblock, in a display of critical exhibition, the hostage universe which had been his initial point – a heterodox example of universalizing the individual and individualizing the universal, or, rather, of dialectic.

The intellectual performance of the narrator, disproportionate to the faltering world of the characters, works as a means of compensation for their historic isolation. This combines picturesque situations or those with colonial settings with anecdotes from classical tradition, philosophical arguments, religious dogmas, bourgeois principles – paradoxical or cynical – recent European manners, scientific novelties, news on the imperialist competition, etc. *making up a peculiar blend and tone* which became the Author's mark. Always slightly out of place – and here lies their grace – the comparisons bring out the local matter. This literally makes provincial matters universal. The result – entirely successful – becomes an artificial and ridiculous note, because the surroundings of what history forgot expose the dissonance of the spheres. In any case, we saw the introduction of the country into modern humanity – a move made under blows of narrative insolence, sometimes strident, sometimes extremely subtle. As for models, apart from our digressive 18th century prose, there is another one that is closer – the daydreams of the weekly French *feuilleton*, whose Parisian frivolousness Machado wanted to paint in "American color", that is, the poison of local class relations⁸.

The abrupt step – let us suppose – from Catumbi to metaphysics, from the latter to the punishment of a slave, and thence to the cosmos, to parliamentary Europe, to the dirty dealings of a war, or to the origin of time – is the work of the sudden twists and the intellectual skills of Bras Cubas. Although the latter are giant, they are entirely ambiguous, fueled by pettiness, exhibitionism, and impudence. Thus, the incorporation of the country into the contemporary world is carried out by a most questionable character, who abuses the credit the reader gives him. The notion – a mixture of naïveté and hypocrisy – is destroyed according to which narrators are respectful men, not to say brilliant individuals, or that the readers, in turn, are respectful people. In this sarcastic picture, progress and the Colony's victory against isolation acquire an unexpected and perverse color. They do not cease to exist, but their use for the purposes of a modernized reproduction of the colonial inequities, with which they become compatible, prevents the feeling of advancement. It is impossible to deny the advancements, but they are inglorious ones – depending on the point of view - in the field of the dearest national aspirations. The critical and counter-ideological audacity of this anticlimax, this petty localism, which incorporated the decay of cosmopolitanism, is embarrassing even today. In my opinion, it is this audacity that makes Machado's books such masterpieces.

But let us go back to the contrast in regard to the novels of the first phase⁹. The search for modernity was also underway in those works, though with a different perspective. The aspirations to progress and freedom concerned the anxieties of the *dependents*, especially the most talented ones, whom a "natural mistake"¹⁰ had caused to be born under inferior circumstances. The narrative presents them in their struggle for personal dignity, in the arena of the families of landowners, which seemed to constitute all the civilization there was. In the center of plot, poor heroines – intelligent and beautiful, and also very susceptible – faced the injustices of which they were victims by acting with intent to be adopted by a wealth clan. They were sincere and did not allow others to disrespect them, insofar as their delicate situation allowed. The rebellion and the criticism – promoted from the other side of the Atlantic and by the Rights of Man – found their practical boundary in the lower status of ladies. Whereas the loyalty the latter owed to their godfathers and masters, under the veil of filial devotion and catholic observance, was a moral boundary and the idea of crossing it was indecent. All-inclusive, sarcastic, and demoralizing, the lordly suspicion that the heroines were moved by pecuniary interests obliged the poor women to countless displays of generosity. The ambiguities of this rear combat dictated sour questions, of a fierce conformism, always below the modern emancipation of individuals. How could one face without humiliation the inevitable oppression of patriarchs (who could be matriarchs) and that of their close relations? Why would it not be admirable, or better, why would it be covetous in the worst sense of the word that a girl with no means insinuates herself into the lives of her wealthy neighbors, without whom she would have no access to the world? Is a poor person who likes Sèvres porcelain and cashmere curtains a sign of insolence or, worse, does that make ones honor questionable? Could not the preference for luxury be spontaneous and natural, in a good sense, free from the vulgarities of money? How many sips of insults can gratitude take without a shock? In short, how can one disarm the prejudice of the well-to-do against those who have nothing? Though extremely dated, the social picture being respected is a taboo for the main characters and the narrator.

In a rough manner, the main adventures belong to the trivial romantic novel repertoire, in which love is put to the test by fortune and social distances, and where marriage is central. If we look carefully at the fabric of reasons, however, we will see that it is not quite about that, but the relationship between the *dependent* and the *family possessions*, under the oppressive sign of the protection – which may be withdrawn at any time. Love in this case matters less than dignity, which is always under the threat of oblivion (but why?) To understand what is latent in this plot, one must look from a distance. Let us say that Machado rearranged the romantic fiction paraphernalia so as to tune it to a real historical question, embedded in the characteristic lines of Brazilian society, which gave it its special mark. Bourgeois and slaveholder at the same time, Brazil gave material possessions a mercantile shape, but did not use wages for labor, and this is where a special problematic lies – one of *classes* – to which these novels refer. Based on slaveholding agriculture, whose influence was extended to urban life, the country placed free and poor men – neither landowners nor proletariat – in a particular kind of privation or semi exclusion. They could not refuse the shelter of the masters, on which they always depended, despite the fact that the liberal, romantic apparel of the century – the depository of up-to-date feelings concerning life - named this kind of dependency as degrading and a sign of primitiveness. If one is to explore this mark, one could say that when someone had no property, only their masters could prevent them from being a nobody, without, however, becoming an equal. *Relationships between masters and servants* were thus incompatible with the impersonality of the law or, on the other hand,

an inseparable part of a very personal world. Such relationships were mediators in the material reproduction of one of society's great classes, as well as of its access to modern civilization. A different modernity standard was invented, *far from the general benefits of rights*, with resources and problems that were also *sui generis*. The discrepant mark resulting there from would survive abolition and exist until our times, working at times as inferiority, and at times as originality. The opposite of dignity in this case would be less indignity than being in the condition of a marginal people.

In other words, Machado studied and reflected - in the conventions of romantic novels, on restricted terms - on a problem that was particular to the foundations of national life. As a matter of fact, despite the conventional genre and the moralizing attitude, which would look impermeable to effective social complication, the analytical accuracy makes these books serious and representative, committed to social causes in their own manner. They recommend replacing traditional and authoritarian paternalism - in which the owner uses his dependents without consultation, which naturally mutilates and humiliates - with enlightened paternalism, in which mutual respect civilizes the relationship, though without questioning the inequity and the slave labor that supports it. This is the modernization of paternalism, echoing from afar, within the country's anomaly, the increasing, formal equities underway in the model countries. More specifically, Machado was performing the pros and cons of an alliance case by case, by co-optation and based on the well-understood interest of the parties, between property and the poor who had the chance of being educated. Those involved would see a society emerge that would be more intelligent and partially less barbarian.

The conservatism of this idea of progress speaks for itself. Fabling and analysis will be driven by the structural uneasiness of dependents, whose aspirations to co-optation impose the strict perspective of personal filiation, as well as little room for displays of disagreement. The aesthetic price to be paid is established in the corresponding decency rule - sickening and anachronistic - according to which the family order of the slaveholding property is pure in essence and should not be discussed. Selfishness and materialism (modern faults) exist, as well as traditionalism and authoritarianism (primitive faults), but they are merely individual misbehavior. They are the diseases that well-intentioned observation must cure, without, however incurring dangerous generalizations, that is, without placing their core at the arbitrary and old-fashioned power of the patron. Artistically, in spite of the writer's evident talent, the monitored flight of dissatisfaction is disastrous and paralyzes the moments of spirit, which diminishes in their entirety the first Machadian novel attempts. On the other hand, the restrictions to criticism were themselves an instructive trait, mimetically accurate, because they turned into a literary figure the pressure on intelligence applied by the real powers, which left no room for modern liberties.

The respectful prose, of a high and anti-materialist tone, which never mentions the essential, expresses - for several purposes - the historic dead end where the dependent is. Somewhere between catholic discretion and aesthetic norm, the emphasis on decency aims to mitigate the ferocity of the colonial property. Without softening the disparity between the parties, it is the true reproach for disrespect against a person and for prioritizing money, both fatal for those in a weak position under a master. As for dependents, decency helps them stay in their place without incurring Gogolian indignities of resentment, of compensatory fantasy and of ignoble personal subjection, more or less involved in their condition of complete inequity. Good behavior also presupposes a doubtful common cause, making the relationship with the oppressive protector a contribution to the good state of affairs, which makes all nobler and is ultimately good for the nation. In these terms, progress would consist of the self-

reformation by landowners, converted to the enlightened attitude thanks to the civilizing pressure of a dependent full of merits, despite having nothing. In short, that would be a possible path to overcome our social unhappiness, or of a semi *Aufklärung*.

Modernization would be of a spiritual nature, related to the effort of the poor to be distinct and to the receptive will of the wealthy, i.e., a moment of understanding between the classes, far from the fight for any rights or from frank formulation. The not very plausible assessment of the conflicts, in turn, adds deceit to the dramatic sphere. The owners' offenses and material calculations are at the margin, like serious threats, which are, however, the exception. Whereas, in the center of the plot – dictating the rule – the encounter of the souls that elect one another, under the sign of reciprocal obligation, creates an idealized version of co-optation. Romantic and painful, almost melodramatic, the mutual adjustment remains superior to always unacceptable considerations of interest. As usual, the victory of exemplary manners over the others is not convincing, giving the narratives the tone of lost causes, from which they derive a touching effect.

Graphically, we might say that the beautiful "semi urban and semi wild"¹¹ country house in Rio is the general scene. In the background, slaves and dependents, as well as a few sparks of life in poor conditions; in the room and garden – politely talking – the property and its satellites: Baronesses, counselors, rich widows, factotums, beggars, self-seeking neighbors, honorable employees, etc. besides the youth at the age of courtship and the heroine with a "soul beyond her fate"¹², i.e., who was not born rich. Conventional fabling and a disguised style blur the disputes in the matter, i.e., leave unexplored the internal relationship between civility in the room and the *ancient régime* outside, which would generate the Brazilian density. Still, more or less by chance, the connection is felt and it generates the objective complexity of a romantic universe, making the books almost good.

On the other hand, this unity of the substance is the blind spot of the composition, because the emphatic dignity of the central figures and the narrator would not resist explicitness. Tethered to this idealized view of co-optation - necessary to its candidates - the narrative point of view may neither explicitly expose the antisocial interests of property, nor the not very romantic calculations of the candidate whose diffuse presence is, however, a spicy element of the prose. It would be an offense to the moralizing way people of value and candidates for people of value like to see themselves and their alliance. Note that the veto is extended to irreverence in general and, consequently, to the crucial operations of freedom of mind and of humor in a former colony: The illustrious and civilized trait of the elite should not be challenged, i.e., it should neither be faced with the semi colonial relationships from which it draws sustenance, nor profoundly compared with its metropolitan models, which give it the passport to a veil of modernity. *Well, intelligence does not climb to the time level, nor is it decolonized without such delicate and comparisons – in both directions – which were and still are the spark of a critical mind in peripheral societies.*

Progress would thus be measured by the respect owners had for their dependents, regardless of the mere new imports from the bourgeois civilization. The moral improvement of paternalism would be a substitute for free labor and for equal rights – a pious hope, in line with the situation of the poor, who had no belongings, at the same time different from the liberal selfishness, driven by the comparison to the goods and ideas of abroad. Therefore, the insistence on dignity did not only express the social vacuum in which the poor lived, who could not earn wages. It also expressed the suspicion of modernity imitated, or the fear that despite the progress – or with its aid – everything would be the same as it was. The fear was not baseless since the

Europeanization of society coexisted – with no trauma – with the colonial disqualification of part of its inhabitants. One could say that the moralist frown of these first novels challenged the local ways of the world with a thesis that was intense and conformist at the same time. It stated that there would only be progress should rigid *internal* dialectic reform the relationship between owners and dependents (though without getting to the bottom line – slavery), or that changes that took place without this reform, despite being brought from advanced countries, did not overcome that primitiveness.

In the preface to his first novel, Machado announced the fact that he wanted to *contrast* characters more than narrate customs¹³. In line with the dependents' self-esteem, he took the artistic moral duty of valuing the person's dispositions rather than external conditioning. However, while analyzing the options the characters had – complementary due to the circumstances – he reviewed the imposition whose weight he tried to smooth. Thus, possessed of intelligence and value, the heroine could not remain in poverty's no-man's-land. She should try to be *socially* accepted, but also defend herself from the fantasies of her benefactors, which ranged from recommending fiancés to attempting rape. The owner would choose, according to the situation, between treating her civilly, as an equal, or barbarously, as an inferior to whom nothing is owed (“Who was she to challenge him in that manner?”¹⁴). He would decide whether she was an inferior with no rights, like the rest of the colonial plebs, or a modern young lady whom he could even marry. The absurd disparity between the alternatives is a sign of the social insecurity of the poor, as well as of the social irresponsibility her masters are allowed – unbalancing in its manner. The country's indecent matter came back through the backdoor, creating involuntary irony with the dignifying narrative form, inspired in the diversity of the characters.

Sentimental plots must humanize this uncivil society. The confrontation between the heroines and their benefactors or benefactresses' arbitrary acts takes place under different influences in each of the four novels, which illustrates the experimental and systematic character of Machado's works. The moralization of patriarchal command towards the value of girls of poor origin was successively focused on confident frankness, self-seeking ambition – though civilizing, Christian purity, and severity with no illusions. Despite the different stories, the presumed equality, in all four cases, supported, above all, by love, coexists with humiliating indiscretion, which causes panic, where the social fate of the dependent relies solely on the owner's arbitrary acts. The decision of the latter may be made with negligence, “between two cups of tea”¹⁵, or in haste, amid suspicious confusions, in which protective imperatives are mixed with a lover's appetite or displays of grandeur.

These are unusual passages – undeniably good, quite surprising, actually, in books so tethered to decency. Away from the conventional frame, the dissociation between self-awareness and social rationale could be part of a Russian novel or of modern literature's audacity, about to discover the unconscious. By examining the intermittent sentiment of the rich, the writer was starting to enter the world of psychic wonderings and ideological reasoning which would later be the center of his greatest novels, adding spice to the daily life of our divided society. Nevertheless, the romantic adventure – with European characteristics – had a central part in the fiction, without avoiding conformist fiction's cheap clichés. But the other side, left in the background by the rules of the genre, gave room to daring observations and analyses, in which the unjustifiable and antiheroic realities of local privilege were challenged by an adult spirit, with an evident enhancement to the literary quality.

At the end of *Iaiá Garcia*, the last novel of the first phase, the heroine breaks away from the advantages and humiliations of dependency, "because her cup of gratitude was full"¹⁶. She escapes as a teacher, and moves to another region of the country, away from the influence of her benefactors. She asks her father to come with her and leave behind "the life [...] of servitude he had lived"¹⁷. The decision had to do with the possibilities granted to wage earners. These had an alternative to favoritism, and cast light on the always omitted relationship between the horrors of dependence and the slaveholding system. Exasperatingly delayed, the future had arrived. On the other hand, as far as the consistency of the plot is concerned, the decision had a retrospective range. It is as if the heroine considered as mistaken and useless the hundreds of pages in which she fought for a decent ending to the struggle between the protected and the protector, which would have no remedy. This lesson also retroceded to previous novels, in which the fair objectives and clarity of mind of the protagonists had tried to correct the disorientation of landowners – excellent people by definition, though sunk into a viscous world of family prevention, retrograde suspicions, satisfied indolence, unconfessed appetites, etc. In an abstract fashion, the confrontation between reason and obscurity, with the class connotations of the case, promised a good ending. The young ladies' eagerness for dignity was convenient for everyone; it was actually the result of the education they managed to get thanks to the proximity to the well-to-do. And the almost tyrannical trait of the latter was more part of the primitive status of Brazilian society in general than fierce conservatism. In other words, it could be solved with a touch of tolerance and good advice. In *Iaiá Garcia* the conflict becomes complicated and deeper. There are plenty of arbitrary acts and plenty of favors – arbitrary, likewise. Both are admitted with realism, because the routine of humiliations is part of the relationship with the master – inevitable before free labor is a reality. The new element, which interrupts the course of paternalist relationships and points to a more radical direction, though it seems like retrogression, is that the heroine now finds it unacceptable to marry above her conditions. Not because she finds herself inferior; on the contrary. It would be "a kind of favor"¹⁸, which her pride cannot accept or for which she sees no quality in her benefactors, – who, as famous representatives of dignity and reason, do not know what these mean.

On one hand, though it looks anti-romantic, there is nothing more romantic than this objection to unequal marriage. Against the owners of life, this is refusal to consent to degrade love, which needs to be safe from the system of favors and brutality that determine the Brazilian primitiveness. From afar, the heroine has satisfied what modern individuals from other regions have not. Apart from this, she makes concessions which do not concern her essence and are adequate to her environment's *modus vivendi*. Under the division of the individual, which distinguished between the impossible right and the possible primitive, some major traits of the international discrepancy and hierarchy were absorbed, transforming into a contemporary and moral problem, typical of the peripheral world, what seemed like a picturesque condition.

On the other hand, the objection represents the purification of a class experience. There is a huge gulf between the dependent, a small step from the condition of excluded riff-raff, and the established lady, participating in the guarantees and sinecures of modern civilization. Not impossible, migration from one condition to the other depended on the favor of a superior. But how could such a change of state – no less than the inclusion in the world's present – be owed to the fortunes of personal fondness? Because of the debt's high value, the corresponding hope hurts the dependent's self-esteem. If dependents get stung by the illusion, they forget what they owe themselves and are capable of subjecting themselves tethered and tied to the inconstancy of their masters, *who, in turn,*

do not need to do as they promised in a momentary caprice. Even in a favorable hypothesis according to which, let us say, the family's son does fulfill his promise to marry the obscure lady, the class humiliation ghost still haunts. The most legitimate impulse – the aspiration of dependents to dignity – is always under the threat of being treated harshly, which would widen the indignity, hence must be avoided at all costs. In other words, the object of the intellectual ideological aversion in these novels are the moments in which the mirage of individual emancipation, or the liberal and romantic values, brought about by the dreams of personal favor, works the other way round, as a tool for paternalist domination, making the dependent defenseless and libertine. For the sake of self-respect, dependents should not respect liberal promises made by their masters.

This historical conclusion reached in *Iaiá Garcia* is a class lesson, depersonalizing the issue. Notice that humiliation has moved to a different sphere; now it does not result from certain excesses by the master. It is now related to an irreversible duality of roles, of structural operation: The head of the family is also an owner in the modern sense, to whom the guarded owe loyalty, and to whom this order of obligations is a relative one. The dynamics of the paternalist involvement is only one side of the issue; the other side, dictated by property, belongs to a different sphere, to which the dependents' reasoning means nothing, and to which the latter has no independent access, *which consolidates the social division.* The systematization from the point of view of the lower class, rigorously performed by the novelist, sees as negative the promises of the relationship, whose seductions – a class mechanism that degrades – should be avoided. The moral debt is not worth the same on both sides of the divide. Brazilian landowners have two souls each.

In *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, this source of frustration and primitiveness is transformed into great literature, by means of a rearrangement of its elements. The stroke of genius consists of – in my view – moving the narrative function to the former class adversary – that same adversary who does not know, according to his enlightened dependents, the meaning of dignity and reason. Apart from being one *topic* among several, or a collection of anecdotes from the local anachronism, always reflecting somehow on the existence of those who have no rights, the moods of the two-faced landowners, civilized like the European and uncivil like a Brazilian, or cordial like a Brazilian and objective like a European – enlightened and arbitrary, distant and nosy, Victorian and best man, or *compadre* –, become the form of the prose, conditioning the world to its rhythm. The elegant-ignoble alternation of standards determines not only the relationship with dependents in moments of crisis, well into the twists of the plot, it is now ubiquitous and becomes the general ambivalence of life at all times, on an incredible scale, whose rhetorical establishment is a technical accomplishment. Vertiginous and encyclopedic, it applies to the foundations of literary representation, to the naïveté of honest readers, to the contemporary norms of decency, to the mini-summary of Western tradition, as well as to the trivial daily life of the former colony. Ultimately, nothing is safe. Admittedly, the inconstant narrator with no credibility, involved in a number of struggles with the reader, is part of an illustrious tradition of humor, not exclusive to Brazil. However, Machado polarized again his repertoire of maneuvers based on the class ambivalence of the Brazilian elite, which provides the realist connotation and, above all, suggests the formation of a society underway, limited to a fate of servitude, but a modern one.

From an evolutionist perspective, the perspective of the struggle against primitiveness, with its stages in a predicted order, the solution was unexpected. Free labor, which rearranges the picture in the conclusion to *Iaiá Garcia*, promised dependents that they

would have the independence they needed to truly review that dying society. Once slavery and the inconsiderable condition of the poor were over, there would be no humiliation and it would be the time for true freedom and progress. Well, Machado neither wrote such conclusive book, which seemed to be high on the agenda, nor did the country overcome those obstacles. Unlike what the abolitionist optimism expected, the end of slavery did not integrate the blacks and the poor into citizenship, a national task that would be postponed *sine die*. The prevailing system, aided by immigration, was one of labor near slavery and precarious wages, which gave new life to the former standard of authority. With some rearrangement, the dissonant combinations of liberalism and exclusion, of bourgeois property and tenderness towards the protected ("I did not find grandeur in being the manager of a bank and the father of a dog"), elegance and crude power ("because this is how I want it and I can have it"¹⁹) entered the new times without being threatened, and once more established its confidence in the future. One could say that in the short period between *Iaiá Garcia* (1878) and *Memórias póstumas* (1880), almost ten years before Abolition (1888), the writer might have been aware of the disappointing course of events, which would neither be guided by the secular providentiality of the doctrines of progress nor by the good advice the protected might give to their protectors. In this sense, assigning the narrative role to the satisfied classes was a change and it was a sign of the denial to insist on old perspectives.

Of course there would be no extraordinary artistic invention had everything consisted of replacing (moderate) criticism with apology, or the perspective of the oppressed with that of the oppressors. The shift to the opposite class perspective –to the stronger side, in fact, a *volte-face*, a blow to justice, etc., was in fact part – whether scandalous or discreet – of the new formal device, in which it combined with an uncomfortable amount of social-literary treason. Conducted with absolute skill, the latter brought balance to the whole by means of indirect truths that slipped from it against the wealthy and their society, in an organized and impressive rhythm – besides being humorous. In negatives, the narrator who stood at the top of the local system of inequities, in all its conditions and consequences, and in all the new and old theories that might help was a comprehensive conscience, which incites reading in reverse and the formation of an opposite super conscience, if I may say. Within ostensible conformism, provocation played an important role.

One could say that the Machadian narrator performed Brazilian upper class's aspirations to elegance and culture, only to expose and ridicule it. While performing his refinements, he acted with a gallery of national types, that is, a picture of class relationships that were not very beautiful, besides their distance from the norm – if the criterion applied is *demanding* and *imported*, or Anglo-French -, though familiar and usual – if the criterion is the Brazilian way of life, which could not be wrong, either. This illustrated the catalog of ambiguities that moved our honorable people away from modern standards – but not from standardless modernity. Almost didactic and sarcastic, the actions and thoughts of the narrator character are carefully chosen illustrations to authenticate the worst suppositions about him by the several categories of dependents, including slaves, as well as his paracolonial domination counterparts, whether relatives or not, liberals or slaveholders, whom civility did not mistake, and also the strict or hypocritical foreigner, to whom the whole business seemed barbarous –; the whole picture formed the system of relevant points of view under the circumstances. Thus, the new artistic formula did not forget the humiliations suffered by dependents – on whose behalf he spoke, tortuously. Unlike what it seems, they dictated the agenda hidden behind the histrionic performance of the narrator, whose role was to present them in their utmost severity, followed by reflections that were selfish, petty or ignoble, which

the victims – aspiring to co-optation – would not endeavor to imagine, let alone formulate.

The cunning of the procedure, which unites subtlety and obvious farce, class treason and disguise, intimacy and hostility, works more evidently in the novels written in the first person singular - *Memórias póstumas* and *Dom Casmuro* (1899). The method works equally, though more subtly, with impersonal narrative, in the third person, seen as objective, as capable of partiality and evil as the other²⁰. In any case, the accelerated verve of the prose should nurture and satisfy assessments that are opposite to each other. From the *spontaneous* point of view, the narrator enjoys, by chance, at a number of different levels, and with no remorse, the advantages and benefits offered by local injustice and by the unpunished possession of the word, without avoiding anything – from minor transgressions to atrocities - and without ignoring the fact that from the perspective of the European superego, he was laying himself open to ridicule, which spiced up the case. The highly educated boldness of the speech does not diminish the injustice, but provides urbanity and a special kind of poetry to it, which, according to the preference, improves or worsens the picture. As regards composition – carefully ruminated by the Author – with epic returns, the anecdotal and reflexive support of these audacious wanderings should draw a complete social picture. It should also instruct the disdain of his opponents, including the reader's, making the narrator character attract to himself and his elegance an insipid version of the universal disdain. This is due to the complacency with regard to historical troubles, a peripheral variation of the Baudelairean awareness of evil. Having said that, the elegance does not vanish into velleity, because beyond the semi colonial affectation, it is a valid display of civilized qualities as compatible with the transgressions they cover – a remarkable demonstration. The inexorable visibility it provides to these transgressions – another contribution to the truth – is unparalleled in Brazilian literature and is possibly rare in others.

While giving up the moralist, well-behaved narrator of his first novels – engaged in the cause of dependents – Machado was anticipating the not very edifying teachings of abolition, whose purpose would not be the social integration of the country. The accurate prognosis, which alone does not ensure literary quality, under the circumstance led to the intellectual revision of the effective forms and to the invention of new forms, in line with the times. Delineated from a critical distance by the Author, the admirable narrator, an example of civilization, but indulgent to himself and to the great injustices of his society, which support him, was one of such up-to-date inventions. There it was, with superior verisimilitude, a different version of the enlightened and generous guardianship our respectful men thought they performed.

The deepening similarity and historical judgment were noteworthy, though hardly noticed. With regard to the Brazilian context, there was an evident *progress of the mimesis*, supported by a daring set of formal operations, which presupposed a strong union between artistic and social criticism. This concatenation, if exact, has the merit of indicating the reflexive and constructive component of the mimetic effort, unknown by literary theory of last decades, which has viewed mimesis from the vulgar angle of photographic fidelity. It is obvious that the artistic value and truth of the work lie not in portrait resemblance, but in the new perspectives and rearrangements which the search for resemblance has caused. In this case, there are a number of perspectives.

As for priorities and proportions, the inversion was general: the new procedure stressed the dangerous oppression which was in the background in the first novels, although it was already the best part, and transformed into scorned illusion – “wipe up your eyes, sensitive soul!”²¹ – the romantic impetus, of personal accomplishment, which had been

stressed. Similarly, the emphasis on the injustice suffered by the dependents is replaced with the realization that they were *useful*, carried out in the first person singular by their *enlightened* benefactor, whose objectives are in a different sphere, but also in this one. The romantic fantasies of personal reparation give room to the somewhat cynical experience of a disconnected social gear. Offense did not cease to exist, but rather gained more solid foundations.

As for the country's desegregation, the limited universe of the semi-excluded, kept away from public existence, did not match the new developments of civilization. Recent philosophies, railroad projects, historical studies, financial operations, mathematical sciences, parliamentary politics, etc, were all there, but almost unnoticed, like conventional indexes of modernity and social class, just like fashion magazines, clothes, and cigars. With the new narrator, on the other hand, these and other innovations appear spectacularly, always framed by his own caprice, that is, to work according to a heterodox class regime, creating a special atmosphere of ostensible and cheap modernity, which is an extraordinary achievement, both mimetic and artistic. Landowners participate intensely in the contemporary progress, but *thanks* to the antiquated relationships that support them, not *in spite of* them, let alone *contrary to* them – which would be commonsensical.

Thus, we have reached the modern perplexity and truth of the new Machadian arrangement. The narrator – completely sophisticated and free, almost emancipated, he would say, master of his possessions and of tradition, restates in his thoughts and behavior our early stage of social formation, rather than overcoming it. Partly by premeditation, so we can regret its presence, which makes the feeling more nonsensical, partly because of missing it (another instance of premeditation?), to avoid breaking free from it, though it is obsolete, and partly because too much consciousness is functional to the whole – which has a path to follow, but no objective. Instead of illusions about the progress of a primitive society, we watch the reproduction of our early stage with the greatest clarity available.

A schematic summary would say as follows: At a founding time, romantic fiction saw the peculiarities of the Brazilian family life under the picturesque and the national identity signs, over which it laid some more or less feuilletonist fabling. The combination, in line with the needs of the young country, was very successful.

Although irreverent, the emphasis on mirroring and its somewhat regressive accomplice character formed a positive sign on our particular traits. One generation later, Machado used in a different manner the same thematic, ideological, and aesthetic complexity, this time without the covering mists of local color and patriotic self-congratulation. The large Brazilian family was now observed from the point of view of the enlightened dependent, who was part of it and transformed it into a *problem*. This is a special system of relationships, with its own structure, resources and problems, which needed to be analyzed. Its difference was a sign of primitiveness, because the tacit measure of the dependent was the Rights of Man, which were effective, in principle, in other regions. The narrator's fondness shifted to the heroine's struggles against injustice, which was also portrayed in a feuilletonist fashion. As for the opposing side, it was inevitable that the conflict arrangement, as it developed from book to book, made more visible the negative traits of the landowner. These traits absorbed and reflected precisely, as a *fault*, the absurd lack of balance between the classes. Using the consequences of this very lack of balance, which gave no signs of internal regeneration, Machado invented the formula that would characterize his mature works and make him a great writer. He did not surrender to the easy delights of romantic picturesqueness.

Likewise, he now renounced the unanimous fondness towards the moderate narrator and his good causes.

The new artistic device dealt indirectly with dependents' frustrations and directly with their abandonment by landowners – the peripheral society incapable of integration resonated. The scope of the formal arrangement, which challenged the secular spirit's superstitions, especially the trust in progress and in benevolence, is uncomfortable to this day. The insinuating personification of an elite narrator enviably civilized and deeply involved in oppressive relationships, which he arranges and judges himself, is a chess move that disarranges the narrative board, making the game more real. The process challenges readers in every line: it teaches them to think by themselves; to discuss not only the issues, but also their presentation; to consider the narrators and authorities – always the interested party – from a distance, even if they are eloquent; to doubt the civilizing and national commitment of the privileged, particularly in young countries, where this intention plays a major role; to feel an aversion to the imaginary consolations of romanticism, manipulated by the narrative authority to its own benefit. The process teaches, above all, that the combination of the cosmopolitan and the excluded spheres may be stable, without a feasible solution. This demonstration is a juicy one because it illustrates and examines the nation's "delicious" mechanisms – to use the Machadian term – of the non-bourgeois reproduction of the bourgeois order. However, the demonstration is also universal to some extent, because globally, unlike what it seems, this reproduction is the rule, not the exception.

The heroines of the first novels are not very interesting because their precarious social status is distorted by the romantic cliché. Their vicissitudes, however, stress the antagonistic class traits, whose figure has literary originality. In the novels of the second phase, once the angle is inverted, it is the poor who appear in the subjective mirror of owners, where the prisms are either that of bourgeois individualism or of paternalistic domination, according to the selfish convenience impudence. The dependent becomes extraordinarily relevant in that light. They are portraits of the powerless that get no recognition for the value of work, no rights protected, and no compensation by divine providence. It is the social vacuum generated by modern slavery to freedom without possessions, another issue that, *mutatis mutandis*, lives on.

In the same line of advanced resonance of the primitiveness, notice how the extra bourgeois aspect of local issues works, and also the narrative relationship itself: at times it is only a shift in the rule; at times it is a movement in its own right, which escapes the dominating definitions and discovers unknown land. To give an idea, compare the part of authority in the definition and dissolution of characters, themselves or others; the relationships between personal separation and the experience of time, between command and insanity – often by the ones in charge; the extra scientific dimensions of science, with its authoritarian and sadistic roles; the overall difference that generates a point of view, etc. In this manner, Machadian fiction and the advanced literature of his time converged – both tried to release other realities under the bourgeois reality. As a mere indication, it is worth mentioning a few similarities, rather at random, in the innovative field, such as Dostoevski, Baudelaire, Henry James, Tchekov, Proust, Kafka, and Borges. Machado's classical derivations are countless and have led critics to find his merit there, which hinders the understanding of the up-to-dateness and advanced character of his experimentation.

The display of intelligence, technical sophistication and universal knowledge of the Machadian narrator is uncomfortable at first, though it soon proves to be invaluable. In a somewhat comic manner, it was a display of literary proficiency, in line with our patriotic effort of accelerated cultural formation. This was a highly educated narrator,

who did not embarrass anyone and contributed to the rise of national culture to another level, above the friendly modesty that had prevailed previously. Especially in its most spectacular moment, the first chapters of *Memórias póstumas*, this trait that was putting an end to provincialism, capturing the aspirations of a new country, can be sensed and it is in the interests of the *performance*. Its most substantial aspect, however, was another one. The universalistic program, which in its own manner was an ideal standard, presupposed the encyclopedic understanding about anything concerning the *generally human*. This included the Bible, philosophy, humanist rhetoric, the 18th century analysis of selfishness, the materialist scientism, old and recent historiography, the philosophy of the unconscious, etc. to which the insolent commentary on modernity and local notation was added. The result could not be more elating, socially speaking. Well, in a daring move within his art, Machado did not give this major accumulation a positive sign. Despite its cost, he transformed it into an internal part of the prestige and arbitrary acts of his narrator. Closely related to the local class domination, the Enlightenment process itself changed its character and started to work in an unpredicted agenda, which readers have to decipher – a question unanswered to this day.

(1) This essay will be part of vol. 5 of the collection *Il romanzo*, organized by Franco Moretti for the publisher Einaudi (Turin) and whose Brazilian translation is underway by publisher Cosac & Naify. An extract of the text was published in the “mais!” section of the *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper of May 23, 2004.

(2) Candido, Antonio. *Formação da literatura brasileira*. São Paulo: Martins, 1969 [1959], vol. 2, p. 117.

(3) Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'idiot de la famille*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972, vol. III, p. 147.

(4) Assis, Machado de. *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1880). In: *Obras completas*. Rio de Janeiro: Aguilar, 1959, vol. I, p. 413.

(5) Romero, Sílvio. *Machado de Assis*. Campinas: Unicamp, 1992 [1897], p. 160.

(6) Nabuco, Joaquim. *Minha formação*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1976 [1900], p. 26. The situation is so difficult that critic José Veríssimo, who insisted in the superiority of Machado, equally said Machado had little to do with Brazil. “The literary works of Mr. Machado de Assis may not be judged by the criterion I call, if you will excuse me, nationalistic. This criterion, which is the driving principle of the *História da literatura brasileira* and of all the work of Mr. Sílvio Romero, consists – in its simplest expression – of asking oneself how a writer contributed to the determination of the national character or, in other words, what is the writer's participation in forming a literature that because of a set of differential characters may be consciously called Brazilian. Such criterion applied by the aforementioned critic and by others to the works of Mr. Machado de Assis, would certainly place the latter in an inferior position in our literature” (*Estudos brasileiros – 2^a série*. Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1894 [1889-93], p. 198). Later, Veríssimo would change his judgment: “Although it does not seem, it was he who gave Brazilian soul its most exact and profound notation.” [...] And he portrayed it [Brazilian society] with a talent to summarize and generalize that takes his works to the category of the major general and human works” (*Estudos de literatura brasileira – 6^a série*. Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1977 [1901-07], p. 106). The romantic and dialectic

plan, according to which the authors are as universal as local, integrated Brazil to the civilized world. With an opposing assessment and at a higher level, Veríssimo agreed partly with Sílvio Romero's criterion.

(7) For the historic scope and the expansive effort of this kind of detour, please see this remark by Marx on the American Civil War: "As early as 1856-1860, what the political spokesmen, jurists, moralists, and theologians of the slaveholders' party tried to prove was not quite that black slavery is justifiable – the color does not matter in that case – but rather that the working class everywhere was created for slavery" (Marx Karl. "A Guerra Civil nos Estados Unidos" (1861). In: *Marx Engels Werke*. Berlin: Dietz, 1985, vol. 15, p. 344). I would like to thank Luiz Felipe de Alencastro for the indication.

(8) In one of his first works as a critic, Machado discusses the "acclimatizing" of the feuilleton, an "European plant" in the country: "Writing a fougillean and remaining Brazilian is, in fact, difficult./ However, just like all obstacles can be removed, it could get a more local color, it could look more American. Thus, it would hurt less the independence of the national spirit, so limited to these imitations, these parodies, this suicide of originality and initiative" (Assis, Machado de. "O folhetinista" (1859). In: *Obras completas*, loc. cit., vol. III, pp. 968-69).

(9) *Ressurreição* (1872), *A mão e a luva* (1874), *Helena* (1876) and *Iaiá Garcia* (1878). [N.E.: Below, all the quotations from the Author's novels refer to vol. I of the already mentioned *Obras completas*.

(10) *A mão e a luva*, p. 142.

(11) *Ressurreição*, p. 33.

(12) *Iaiá Garcia*, p. 315.

(13) *Ressurreição*, p. 32.

(14) *Iaiá Garcia*, p. 316.

(15) *Iaiá Garcia*, p. 402.

(16) *Iaiá Garcia*, p. 315.

(17) _____, p. 406.

(18) *Iaiá Garcia*, p. 402.

(19) *Memorial de Aires* (1908), pp. 1.068 e 1.047.

(20) *Quincas Borba* (1891), the second of the great Machadian novels, was written in the third person. *Esau e Jacó* (1904) is obscurely somewhere in-between: the narrative is in the third person but it was found among the notes of Conselheiro Aires, its central character. *Memorial de Aires* (1908) has the form of a diary, but it naturally benefits from being read against the opinions – invariably elegant – of its pseudo-author.

(21) *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, p. 456.

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