

**THE EARLY SHORT STORIES**  
**OF**  
**MACHADO DE ASSIS**  
**1858 - 1878**

*Thesis submitted in accordance with the  
requirements of the University of Liverpool  
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## ABSTRACT

Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839-1908) has long been regarded as the most important Brazilian author of the nineteenth century. In the genre of the novel *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1880) was his first recognised masterpiece and many of the tales that appeared from the publication of *Papéis Avulsos* (1882) are considered as some of the best examples of modern short fiction in any language. But although much has been written on the quality of Machado's mature short stories, the earlier tales are generally ignored by critics. The reasons for such silence lie, no doubt, in the mediocrity of much of Machado's early work. But just as the novels that precede *Brás Cubas* have been shown to reveal the tensions that existed between Machado's personal view of Brazilian society and his adoption of conventional narrative formulae, so also do the early short stories contain definite signs of ideological and literary conflict.

Previous theses on the early short stories have tended to concentrate on specific themes and apparent autobiographic details rather than stress the aspects of Machado's fiction which speak of his literary development and his attempt to break away from convention. The result has been a confirmation of the idea that Machado suddenly changes style in 1880, in a dramatic rejection of the romantic models he had used for so long. This argument is only partially true. If the changes that occur in *Brás Cubas* and *Papéis Avulsos* are drastic and fairly swift, they are not without their warning signs. The stories published at regular intervals in several magazines and two collections (*Contos Fluminenses* (1870), *Histórias da Meia-Noite* (1873)) between 1858 and 1878 provide us with the most consistent and accurate account possible of Machado's evolution as a writer.

The first chapter of the present thesis is devoted to an outline study of the kind of short fiction with which both Machado and his readers would have been most familiar. The aim of Chapter Two is to show how, even in his earliest works, Machado was determined to create a different kind of reader and a different kind of story. In the third chapter it will become apparent that in the early 1870s Machado steers his fiction in the direction of psychological analysis and social and literary satire. Chapter Four confirms the increasing tendency towards cynicism that can be traced from very early on in Machado's career and ends with an account of the philosophical, literary and social considerations that led to Machado's final departure from the conventions of popular romantic literature.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CAv	<i>Contos Avulsos</i> , R. Magalhães Jr. ed., (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1969)
CdasM	<i>Correio das Modas</i>
CEsp	<i>Contos Esparsos</i> , R. Magalhães Jr. ed., (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1966)
CEsq	<i>Contos Esquecidos</i> , R. Magalhães Jr. ed., (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1966)
CF	<i>Contos Fluminenses</i>
CF. II	<i>Obras Completas de Machado de Assis</i> (Rio: W. M. Jackson Inc., 1957), vol. XXI
Chr	<i>Chronista</i>
CRec	<i>Contos Recolhidos</i> , R. Magalhães Jr. ed., (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1966)
Cruz	<i>Cruzeiro</i>
CsemD	<i>Contos sem Data</i> , R. Magalhães Jr. ed., (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1966)
Cubas	<i>Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas</i> (São Paulo: Ática, 1982)
Disp	<i>Dispersos de Machado de Assis</i> (Rio: INL)
Est	<i>A Estação</i>
Gab de L	<i>Gabinete de Leitura</i>
HistR	<i>Obras Completas de Machado de Assis</i> (Rio: W. M. Jackson Inc., 1957), vol. XI
HMN	<i>Histórias da Meia-Noite</i>
INL	Instituto Nacional do Livro
JdasF	<i>Jornal das Famílias</i>
JdoC	<i>Jornal do Comércio</i>
J.22 (etc.)	<i>Obras Completas de Machado de Assis</i> (Rio: W. M. Jackson Inc., 1957), vol. XXII (etc.)
Marm	<i>Marmota</i>
OC.I (etc.)	<i>Obras Completas</i> (Rio: Aguilar, 1962) vol. I (etc.)
RdaS	<i>Romances da Semana</i> , 4th ed., (Rio: Garnier, 1902)
ReliqCV	<i>Obras Completas de Machado de Assis</i> (Rio: W. M. Jackson Inc., 1957), vol. XVII
Ress	<i>Ressurreição. A Mão e a Luva</i> (São Paulo: Cultrix, 1965)





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# Introduction

## Fiction in need of reassessment

The early stories of Machado de Assis (i.e. those written before the appearance of his first universally recognized masterpiece *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* in 1880) constitute one of the least discussed and least understood areas of Machado's output.<sup>1</sup> And this despite the fact that the stories as a whole have provided material for four so-far unpublished university theses over the past thirty years.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, however, none of the said dissertations makes any attempt to analyse the evolution of Machado's style through the stories, tending instead to trace the development of certain themes, to concentrate on their supposed autobiographical content and to repeat old prejudices about the author's "romantic" period. Both Maria Duke Dehn and Carmello Virgillo opt for the thematic approach, with the latter in particular stressing the apparent link between life and fiction in Machado by discussing the themes of self-consciousness, death, love and friendship, and social consciousness. Such an approach tells us very little about Machado's art and has the disadvantage of blurring distinctions of tone and purpose in stories written at different periods of Machado's career. For example, Machado's frequent parody of after-dinner speakers, political orators, etc., is interpreted by Virgillo as evidence of a personal sense of inadequacy rather than as a sign of the author's preference for satire:

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<sup>1</sup> Which explains my infrequent reference throughout to relevant scholarship.

<sup>2</sup> Carmello Virgillo, *Some themes in Machado de Assis' short stories* (Indiana University, 1963); Maria I. Duke Dehn, *Análisis e ilustración de ciertos tipos de personaje que se encuentran en los cuentos de Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis* (Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1969); John Hyde Schmitt, *Machado de Assis and the modern Brazilian short story* (University of Wisconsin, 1973); Roy Edward Cravzow, *Four collections of short stories by Machado de Assis: Romantic Narratives and New Directions* (City University of New York, 1984).

Mário Matos claims that Machado de Assis made only two or three speeches in his entire lifetime; this, too, is perplexing when one considers that he was a public figure for a number of years! Our personal views on the subject lead us to deduce that Machado either refused to speak at dinners or declined many invitations to them when he as much as suspected that he might be forced to expose his handicap publicly. From this stems a very pronounced dislike for anything or anybody connected with dinner parties.<sup>3</sup>

Even more dubious is the suggestion that Machado's consistent reference to noses in his short fiction<sup>4</sup> is proof that he had "an honest-to-goodness phobia for noses. He must have seen them in the large ones that typified the people of his race, and we feel sure that his fear of possibly possessing such a treat himself may very well have haunted the writer subconsciously".<sup>5</sup> Machado may well have had many personal fears which he voiced subconsciously in his fiction. But such speculations by their very nature can never be conclusive and, furthermore, ignore the important question of artistic purpose. Machado's mention of noses is a case in point. The "Ernesto de tal" example is not particularly striking. More important is the kind of reference made by the narrator of the *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* in the chapter entitled "A Ponta do Nariz" (XLIX). Here Brás equates the contemplation of one's nose, "cujo efeito é a subordinação do universo a um nariz somente" (Cubas, pp. 65-66), with the necessary self-esteem of the individual. Clearly, what is important here is not the phobia that may or may not have sparked Machado's interest in noses but the fact that a serious message is conveyed via an apparently frivolous comment.

The importance of frivolity in the stories that almost immediately precede *Brás Cubas* is a point that is ignored by all four of the Machado scholars mentioned above. Schmitt makes the mistake of supposing that contemporary dress code is the real object of Machado's satire in "Uma visita de Alcibíades", and by stating that "the fantasy in this story is highly contrived" (Schmitt, p. 38), he misses the most important aspect of Machado's irony in the tale. Only Roy Cravzow makes any comment on the distinctive *Cruzeiro* works of 1878:

With the exception of "Na Arca" and some very wry humor in "O Califa de Platina" and "Filosofia de um Par de Botas," Machado, in *O Cruzeiro*, once again seems to be writing hastily to meet deadlines and to be creating a specific literary style under his

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<sup>3</sup> Virgillo, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Virgillo points to, amongst others, the character in "Ernesto de tal" (JdasF Mar-Apr 1873) who is simply referred to as "o rapaz de nariz comprido".

<sup>5</sup> Virgillo, p. 26.

pseudonym Eleazar. "Elogio da Vaidade" and "Um Cão de Lata ao Rabo" appear to be pointless stories and simply fillers of space in the newspaper.<sup>6</sup>

Cravzow's remarks highlight one of the major limitations of his particular approach. His decision to embark upon a comparative study of the stories that Machado included in and omitted from his first four collections is not without its advantages.<sup>7</sup> However, it cannot be taken for granted that anything contained in *Contos Fluminenses* (1870) or *Histórias da Meia-Noite* (1873), for example, is *ipso facto* superior to other contemporary material. A story could, after all, be included or omitted purely for reasons of space. Also, the assumption is made that because a tale is mediocre, it is of no value to the critic. On the contrary, many of Machado's least appealing stories speak volumes of his development as a thinker and a writer if we apply critical techniques similar to those pioneered by Roberto Schwarz.<sup>8</sup> In his discussion of the early novels (*A Mão e a Luva*, *Helena*, *Iaiá Garcia*), Schwarz shows how narratives that were previously regarded as simply romantic and immature clearly reveal an increasing tension in Machado's work between conventional literary practices and the realities of Brazil's patriarchal society. Similarly, it is the contention of the present thesis that there is more to the early short stories than immediately meets the eye. For example, when one looks at the *Contos Fluminenses*, it is easy to agree with John Hyde Schmitt that:

the majority are bland love stories, moralistic narratives in which sincere and honest behaviour is rewarded and the opposite punished. Machado carefully delineates the moral poles of Good and Evil, and his plots are based on contrived, far-fetched and implausible coincidence. These early stories are long, wordy and repetitive, revealing a predominance of inartistically wrought, precious descriptive summary over a direct presentation of characters and scenes. His heroes and heroines are overidealized upper class individuals who are almost invariably handsome, wealthy, polished, impeccably dressed, and endowed with all the social graces.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cravzow, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> Cravzow's intentions are clearly stated in his introduction:

Previous studies of the short stories of Machado de Assis have alluded only to differences in pre- and post-1879 collections. The critics have never demonstrated the dissimilarities in the collections by a detailed analysis of each story. Furthermore, there has never been a study of the volumes themselves to show the superiority of the stories selected to those discarded and to demonstrate the unity within each collection. This study of four collections of short stories by Machado de Assis will contribute to a more complete understanding of them. (Cravzow, p. vi)

<sup>8</sup> *Ao Vencedor as Batatas: Forma literária e processo social nos inícios do romance brasileiro* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Schmitt, p. 19.

Schmitt's judgement is true in certain respects and is perfectly understandable given his intention to deal primarily with the stories of the 1880s. Nevertheless, his words ignore the fact that several of Machado's earliest tales betray a tension between the conventional love story and a vision of life which is far from romantic.

From almost the very beginnings of his career, Machado placed himself in a position of conflict with his readers.<sup>10</sup> He was very much aware of their expectations and often made certain concessions. But on a number of occasions it becomes very clear that there is a world of difference between the story Machado wants to write and the one his audience wants to hear. For this reason, I have found it imperative that my analysis of Machado's stories be prefaced by an outline of the work produced by his Brazilian predecessors in the genre. It is only once one is conscious of the literary excesses (e.g. sentimentality) that Machado was keen to avoid that it is possible to evaluate the non-romantic content of his work as detailed in the second chapter. As the years progressed and Machado became more confident of his audience and his writing, he began to explore the possibilities of parody, psychological analysis, social satire - much of this within the framework of the romantic plot. A particularly important example of Machado's tendency to mix romance and satire is "A parasita azul" (JdasF Jun-Sep 1872), which is given extensive coverage in Chapter Three. The latter sections of the third chapter and much of Chapter Four deal with the increasing cynicism and philosophical disillusionment reflected in Machado's fiction as he approached the writing of *Brás Cubas* and the stories that would comprise *Papéis Avulsos* (1882).

Neither Machado's first major novel nor his most distinctive collection of tales emerge from a vacuum. They are the result of many years of effort and experiment by Machado. 1878, however, is particularly significant for the development of Machado's literary technique. It is the year when, having reached the peak of his disillusionment, he searches for a completely new mode of expression. The result is a series of eight works that were published in the *Cruzeiro* magazine in the early part of the year. Their unshamed frivolity provides us with a definite precedent for the free style that is a characteristic feature of *Brás Cubas* and *Papéis Avulsos*.

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<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of tales written between 1858 and 1878 were written for the magazine, *O Jornal das Famílias*, whose title gives us some indication of kind of audience at which it was aimed.

Throughout my study, I have used the publication dates of Machado's first two collections, *Contos Fluminenses* (1870) and *Histórias da Meia-Noite* (1873) as convenient chronological divisions for his work and have concluded with the closure of the *Jornal das Famílias* at the end of 1878. Although Machado published a couple of tales for *A Estação* between 1878 and the appearance of *Brás Cubas* in 1880,<sup>11</sup> neither of them contributes significantly to his fictional technique. For Machado, 1878 was effectively the end of an era. In 1880 he would make a new beginning with *Brás Cubas*. Subsequently, the crystallization of a unique story-telling style would emerge in 1881/2, when the majority of the *Papéis Avulsos* were written, confirming Machado's mastery of the short story as well as the novel. It is not the intention of this study to deal with either *Brás Cubas* or *Papéis Avulsos* in any depth. If, by its conclusion, it is clear that Machado's twenty year apprenticeship as a producer of short fiction made a crucial contribution to the development of his work as a whole (and to a much greater degree than the early novels), the present thesis will have achieved its objective.

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<sup>11</sup> "Um para o outro" (Est Jul-Oct 1879) and "A chave" (Est Dec 1879-Feb 1880).

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# Chapter One - Outline of the short story before Machado

1836 - 1861

## Machado and the newspaper

In one of the most youthfully enthusiastic articles he ever wrote, Machado referred to the daily press in the following terms:

O jornal é a verdadeira forma da república do pensamento. É a locomotiva intelectual em viagem para mundos desconhecidos, é a literatura comum, universal, altamente democrática, reproduzida todos os dias, levando em si a frescura das idéias e o fogo das convicções.<sup>1</sup>

However grandiose and hopelessly idealistic such words may sound to us now, it is scarcely surprising that the press, which was still very much in its infancy in mid-nineteenth century Brazil, should hold special significance for a young liberal. Writing briefly on the consequences of Independence in 1822 for Brazilian intellectuals, Brito Broca has said:

Na verdade pode-se dizer que a Independência, abrindo caminho amplo à atividade intelectual, deslocou-se logo para a praça pública. O jornalismo foi um instrumento de democratização da cultura, até então privilégio de pequeno número nos limites restritos dos favores da Metrópole.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "O Jornal e o Livro", *Correio Mercantil*, 10 and 12 Jan 1859. Reprinted in OC.III, p. 945.

<sup>2</sup> "Conseqüências Intelectuais da Independência," *Românticos, Pré-Românticos, Ultra-Românticos* (São Paulo: Editora Polis, 1979), p. 44.

Besides providing a medium for the spreading of culture and information, the newspaper was democratic in that it allowed everyone to have their say. It represented "a emancipação da inteligência" (OC.III, p. 945), as Machado puts it in the article referred to earlier, by which he meant no doubt that literate mulattoes like himself would at least be able to make their opinions known. What was more, the rising tide of journalism had now opened the way for all men of ideas to earn their living from their pen without being forced to compromise their principles. According to Machado:

O jornal, abalando o globo, fazendo uma revolução na ordem social, tem ainda a vantagem de dar uma posição ao homem de letras; porque ele diz ao talento: "Trabalha! vive pela idéia e cumpres a lei da criação!" Seria melhor a existência parasita dos tempos passados, em que a consciência sangrava quando o talento comprava uma refeição por um soneto?

Não! graças a Deus! Esse mau uso caiu com o dogma junto do absolutismo. O jornal é a liberdade, é o povo, é a consciência, é a esperança, é o trabalho, é a civilização. Tudo se liberta; só o talento ficaria servo? (OC.I, p. 948)

It would not, however, take long for Machado to correct this Utopian view point. In his "Aquarelas",<sup>3</sup> he would heavily criticize, almost to the point of satire, those individuals whose interest in the literature of the press was purely financial and therefore parasitic. Such men allowed what little talent they possessed to be propelled, machine-like, "pelas probabilidades financeiras do resultado" (OC.III, p. 951) thus making an industry out of intelligence. What Machado neglects to mention, however, is that the newspaper by its very nature, had always been an industry as well as a democratic mouthpiece and source of cultural enlightenment. It owed its very existence to the people who bought it. And regardless of whether what was printed was or was not worthy of the name "art", unless it corresponded to what was wanted no periodical would be able to survive. The realization of this simple fact, although conspicuously absent from Machado's early idealistic articles, is quite apparent in the narration of many of his early short stories, the large majority of which were written for popular magazines of his day. As shall become apparent in the subsequent chapters of the present study, Machado's early fiction more often than not reflects a fundamental conflict between the expectations of his audience and his own evolving aspirations as a serious writer, similar in nature to the kind of problems that Balzac, for example, had experienced in

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<sup>3</sup> *O Espelho*, 11 and 18 Sep, 9, 16 and 30 Oct 1859. Reprinted in OC.III, pp. 948-960.

previous years.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the practices of the primitive short story and serialized novel, immensely popular throughout the nineteenth century in Brazil, had already heavily influenced the literary tastes of the readership for whom most of Machado's earliest short stories were destined in the *Jornal das Famílias* and could not simply be ignored. Therefore, before looking in detail at the ways in which Machado reacts against the predetermined norms of the popular romantic fiction of his day, some account needs to be given of what those norms were, especially in relation to the short story.

## The press and popular literature

The serialization of fictional narratives as a regular feature of a newspaper or magazine occurred for the first time in Paris during the 1830s. The term *feuilleton*, referring to the section of the newspaper which was specifically devoted to science or the arts, had actually been around since the turn of the century but did not acquire that particular association with the serialization of novels and short stories for which it is now known until 1836:

C'est Emile de Girardin qui eut le premier idée de publier des romans découpés en morceaux. En juin 1836, dans le *Journal des Connaissances Utiles*, qu'il rédigeait alors, il trace le plan d'un nouveau journal, la *Presse*, qui doit paraître le 1er juillet. L'abonnement sera de quarante francs, au lieu de quatre-vingts, prix des grands journaux, et le déficit sera comblé au moyen d'annonces à la quatrième page, comme dans le journal anglais the *Times*. La nouvelle feuille va être "plus particulièrement littéraire que politique", et s'est assuré déjà la collaboration de Victor Hugo, de Lamartine, de Ballanche, de Tocqueville et de plusieurs autres illustrations du monde des lettres.<sup>5</sup>

Girardin's ploy, which was based on sound business sense, an awareness of the latest developments in printing and a perceived popularity in novelistic romantic fiction was an amazing success. Sales of romantic novels in book form fell dramatically but publishing entrepreneurs were not slow to jump onto the bandwagon. "In view of the public reaction", writes Albert George, "the papers did their best to attract writers of reputation. Certain specialists in the genre like Dumas, Sue, and Frédéric Soulié became the

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<sup>4</sup> See Christopher Prendergast, *Balzac: Fiction and Melodrama* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Nora Atkinson, *Eugène Sue et la Roman-feuilleton* (Nemours: Imprimerie André Lesot, 1929), p. 6.

first of a new kind of literary lion.”<sup>6</sup> Commenting on the elevation of the now almost forgotten Sue, George adds:

Most sought after of all was Eugène Sue. . . Such marked success earned the compliment of endless imitation. . . When Eugène Sue joined the *Constitutionnel*, circulation jumped from 3000 to 40,000. The first week of the *feuilleton* told the tale; if a success, the business manager could count on selling from 50,000 to 80,000 copies a day - or he could lose that many readers.<sup>7</sup>

Both the form and the content of the *feuilleton* were instrumental in its phenomenal success. By its very nature, it encouraged a literature of suspense as writers and publishers contrived to sustain their readers’ interest from one episode to another by means of what the nineteenth century satirist Louis Reybaud fittingly termed “a sort of umbilical cord that calls, that creates the desire, indeed the impatience to go on.”<sup>8</sup> Also, in the hands of various writers, the *feuilleton* quickly acquired a reputation for the fast action, melodrama and sentimentality that would appeal to a wide audience. Once again Reybaud was able to provide a broad but concise description of this kind of literature:

“You take for example, sir, a young woman who is unhappy and persecuted. You add to her a bloody and brutal tyrant, a sensible and virtuous hero, and a sly and perfidious friend. When you have all these characters in hand, mix them vigorously in six, eight, ten or more installments and serve hot.”<sup>9</sup>

Such a standard recipe did not make for particularly edifying reading but it definitely sold newspapers and very soon the *feuilleton* made its way into the magazines and journals of Europe, Russia and the American continent.

For a nation which as late as 1850 claimed to have an illiterate population of around 70 per cent,<sup>10</sup> Brazil responded amazingly quickly to the literary trends and publishing innovations that were going on in the Paris of the mid 1830s. Subscribers,

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<sup>6</sup> *The Development of French Romanticism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> George, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by James Smith Allen in *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers and Books in the 19th Century* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 204.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Allen, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> See Delso Renault, *Rio de Janeiro: A Vida da Cidade Refletida nos Jornais (1850-1870)* (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1978), p. 42.

consisting mainly of students and women of leisure, were relatively few in number and could not be expected to rise by the phenomenal degrees that were being witnessed in the French capital, but interest in literature for entertainment and instructional purposes was increasing, with the result that the late 1830s is a time of growth for periodicals orientated to literature.<sup>11</sup>

José Justiniano da Rocha's<sup>12</sup> *O Chronista* (1836-38) is a particularly good example of the increasing number of newspapers and magazines which were making a conscious effort to keep up with their readers' desire for literary entertainment and culture. "Werner", an episode from the Algerian war by Napoleon d'Abrantes, appeared on 13th June 1836, and can be regarded as one of the earliest translated stories to be published in a Rio paper. It was followed on 20th June by an adaptation of Balzac's *La peau de chagrin*, which contained an informative preamble by the editor on the kind of literature he was keen to introduce and how he was going to do so:

A literatura moderna é ainda assaz desconhecida entre nós, e todavia, fonte de gozos indefiníveis, devemos aproveitá-la . . . Querendo vulgarizar mais as belezas da moderna literatura, há muito tempo resolvemos inserir nas colunas do CHRONISTA alguns pedaços, traduzidos das melhores obras que se vão multiplicando, mas lembrando-nos que traduções sempre desmerecem dos originais, achamos melhor resumir em mais breves quadros, onde reunissemos o que há de mais notável e elegante nas principais obras de Hugo, Balzac, Sue, Lacroix, &c.

Providing abridged versions of works by well-known authors was one way of introducing literature to a largely ignorant public. Another increasingly popular practice was to simply import the idea of the *feuilleton* to the Brazilian scene using translated works that had already proven themselves successful in France. The first *folhetim* of this type

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Se a parte mais numerosa do público era constituída pelas moças casadouras e pelos estudantes, e o tema literário por excelência devia ser, por isso mesmo, o do casamento, misturado um pouco com o velho motivo do amor, a imprensa e a literatura, casadas estreitamente então, seriam levadas a atender a essa solicitação premente.

Nelson Werneck Sodré in *História da Imprensa no Brasil* (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1966), p. 227.

12

José Justiniano da Rocha não tipifica apenas o jornalismo áulico, em que tanto se destaca, tipifica também a conjugação entre imprensa e literatura, que se firma então e vai dominar até quase o nosso tempo.

Sodré, p. 210.

was Alexandre Dumas' *Le Capitaine Paul* begun by the *Jornal do Comércio* in October of 1838.<sup>13</sup> The task of simply educating the Brazilian public in the habit of reading was also undertaken by such lightweight magazines as the *Gabinete de Leitura* (1837), part of whose opening article on 13th August reads:

O que será o GABINETE DE LEITURA, - jornal? - O mesmo que aquele: aqui por modico estipêndio haverá artigos talhados por todos os gostos; não será um foco de instrução; que tanta filáucia não temos nós que queiramos instruir, mas ao menos com artigos divertidos irá preparando o gosto da leitura longa e refletida.

Their "amusing articles" would consist of a mass of short undemanding stories, anecdotes and interesting titbits extracted mainly from French, English and German magazines as well as some scientific items. Alongside the dominating presence of translated works, it was in magazines like the *Gabinete de Leitura*, the *Museo Universal* and the *Correio das Modas* "Jornal Critico e Literário das Modas, Bailes, Teatros, &c", and the more serious and news-orientated papers *O Chronista*, the *Jornal dos Debates*, the *Seminário do Cincinnato* and the prestigious *Jornal do Comércio* that Brazilian authors would try their hand at producing short fictional narratives that reflected contemporary literary fashions.

## Writers and themes of the early Brazilian short story

With very few exceptions, the earliest providers of the Brazilian short story were content to concentrate upon the literature of romantic melodrama with which their audience would be most familiar.<sup>14</sup> In general terms, it was a literature which, basing itself firmly in a make-believe world of strange coincidences and violent emotions, attempted to cater to its readers' continual thirst for dramatic incident, sentiment, and the confirmation of moral absolutes.

The principle that there should be plenty of incident, regardless of whether it led to a general feeling of incoherence and lack of verissimilitude, is faithfully adhered to

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<sup>13</sup> See Marlyse Meyer, "Voláteis e versáteis, de variedades e folhetims se fez a chronica", *Boletim Bibliográfico Biblioteca Mário de Andrade*, Vol 46, 1-4 (1985), p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> See Marlyse Meyer, "O que é ou quem foi Sinclair das Ilhas?" *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 14 (1973), pp. 37-63, for a concise review of early nineteenth century popular literature in Brazil.

by most of the stories to which I was able to gain access. In "À missa do galo!!" (CdasM, 5 Jan 1839), for example, Maciel da Costa somehow manages to cram the stock ingredients of adultery, murder, a ghostly apparition, penitence and madness into just a few columns of his magazine. The story, set in 1775 in a fazenda just outside São Paulo, concerns the vengeance of a loving husband, Carlos, on Adolfo, his wife's secret lover. The lovers were due to meet at the time of the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, but Isabel is greeted instead by the repentant and bloody ghost of Adolfo ("mostrou seu peito ensanguentado"), who brands her right cheek with his fingers as an eternal reminder of their crime. By the final scene Isabel has also reached a state of penitence, but poor Carlos is beyond salvation:

Dois anos depois havia uma religiosa em um Convento da Cidade: era o modelo de todas as virtudes; trazia sempre a face direita para esconder o sinal de cinco dedos nela estampados.

Era Isabel.

Ao pé da porta do convento ouvia-se, alta noite, uma voz rouca gritar: À missa do galo!! - Era Carlos que andava doido.

Whether or not it leads to madness, murder as a result of adultery or jealousy is a frequent aspect of the early Brazilian short story and is sometimes described in terms that seem unnecessarily violent and sadistic. Francisco de Paula Brito's "O enfeitado" (JdoC, 28-29 Mar 1839), for example, contains a brief scene in which the unfortunate but adulterous wife of a cruel husband is forced to watch her lover being chopped into little pieces, and is then forced to kiss the bits of flesh. On an only slightly less gruesome note, Luís Carlos Martins Pena in "Um episódio de 1831" describes in graphic detail the abuses inflicted on one poor man by a group of undisciplined soldiers in a tavern:

Uma baioneta atravessa o peito do infeliz, e o faz cair morto sobre a mesa!!!... seu sangue mistura-se ao vinho, que não deixa por isso de ser bebido!!!... Era uma orgia! uma completa orgia!!!...

Similarly, at the end of the story, emphasis is placed on the dramatic horror of the situation as Mariquinhas avenges the death of her beloved Júlio, carried out by the drunken soldiers but engineered by the jealous José:

Frenética e furiosa, lança-se como um raio sobre José, e enterra seus dentes de pérolas en suas faces!... Dois gritos se ouviram...

Um grito de morte, o outro foi um rugido de hiena, no inferno!!!... depois uma gargalhada! uma gargalhada seca, anhelante, estridente, uma gargalhada como dão as fúrias quando terminam uma obra de mal!!!!...

Era Mariquinas!

Horror!!!

Ela estava doida!!!!...

Physical violence was regarded as the inevitable consequence of the powerful emotions which were constantly being placed into conflict in this kind of literature. The potency of passion is never questioned and no attempt is made to justify the extreme reactions of the individuals involved. Even when, as in "O aniversário de D. Miguel em 1828" (JdoC, 16-22 Jan 1839) by João Manuel Pereira da Silva, the story is set within the larger perspective of political rivalry in Lisbon, the execution of the virtuous hero is motivated rather more by romantic jealousy than by matters of state.

Together with the drama of violence, drama of "the unexpected" was also a common source of excitement. "Angelino. 1549-1550" (CdasM, 26 Jan 1837) by Maciel da Costa is a case in point. Set in Italy, it concerns the fated life of a young and melancholy orphan boy, Angelino, who falls in love with the beautiful daughter of his guardian, Count Spallazi. To cut a short story even shorter, Angelino turns out to be the son of an elderly hangman, and after inheriting the position, ends up executing Spallazi for alleged crimes against the authorities. Júlia, the daughter, literally drops dead when she realizes that her father has been killed by her childhood companion, and Angelino's suicide prompts the following trite but irresistible ending:

Dois meses depois de tão lúgubre história, lia-se na porta do Conselho dos Dez um decreto nomeando outro algôz. Quando os habitantes de Veneza lembravam-se de Angelino, diziam: *Coitado! enforcou-se, foi o carrasco de si mesmo!*

To give another example, the revealed identity of the "orphan" in Paula Brito's "O enjeitado" is of a very different nature, but the result is just as tragic for a blossoming love affair. The discovery that Júlio is the illegitimate son of Emília's mother's elder sister puts an end to their relationship and marks the beginning of a life of religious solitude for them both.



In a literature dominated by confused relationships and broken love affairs it is scarcely surprising that sentimentality should make its presence felt alongside the more sensationalist features indicated so far. If love was pictured as a catalyst of violence it was also seen as a delicate but forceful emotion capable of producing both deep tragedy and sublime bliss. The final recorded exchange of the two lovers, following the usual obstacles and misunderstandings, in "O poder da música" (CdasM, 23 Feb 1839) by Martins Pena is a good example of the latter:

Eu juro, diz ele; eu juro pelo Criador do Universo, de te amar até o meu último momento! Eu juro pelos teus belos olhos de nunca mais desconfiar de teu amor.

- Carlos!!!.....

- Henriqueta!!!.....

Os dous amantes lancam-se nos braços um do outro, e esqueceram em um instante tantos dias de dor.

Um mes depois, Carlos uniu-se à bela Henriqueta, e um terno e sincero amor acompanhou sempre estes dous esposos por toda a sua vida.

Tragic sentimentality was, however, much more common and is a particularly distinctive feature of the work produced by the most prominent of all the Brazilian prose writers of the late 1830s - Pereira da Silva. He chose to write mainly about the problems of young, unrequited love. For example, there is "Luisa" (Gab de L, 15 Sep 1837) set in a solitary place by the river Iguaçu, in a forest of cypress-like trees whose branches and leaves will never wither "ainda que tenham um aspecto melancólico e misterioso, ainda que pareçam ser caracterizados por uma dor profunda, como um primeiro amor que não é correspondido". Amongst these trees there is a solitary rose bush, which according to the old women of the area, marks the grave of the young and beautiful Luisa, "arrancada a este mundo por uma paixão delirante, que a devorava . . ." The re-telling of this *legenda brasileira* is just as melancholy as its introduction, ending in a mysterious death by drowning for the lovesick maiden. The importance of a first love is stated quite simply in the aptly entitled "Um primeiro amor" (Gab de L, 5 Nov 1837): "Um primeiro amor jamais se apaga da lembrança", and in "Amor, ciúme e vingança" (Museo Universal, vol. II 1838-39) we see the extent to which adolescent love is idealized:

Um amor destes não se extingue... Foi o alimento da infância, cresceu e progrediu com os anos, sancionou-se com os primeiros ósculos e os primeiros carinhos que balbuciam dois entes, apenas encetando a carreira da vida; amor puro, sincere, veemente, profundo, eterno, que sobrevive a própria existência no mundo.<sup>15</sup>

Needless to say, their love is frustrated when Maria's father, in debt to an unscrupulous slave-dealer ("alma de bronze, habituada ao infame tráfico da carne"), is forced to cede her hand in marriage. But the continuing existence of their love, despite the separation of her marriage, causes Maria to commit suicide by poisoning, with Adolfo dying less than a year later following a grave illness and near madness. In the stories of Pereira da Silva then, the tragic power of love provides the main point of interest.

Whether stories were primarily violent or sentimental in nature they were almost all invariably constructed according to a simplistic manicheism and strict moral guidelines. Villains were evil and acted out of pure malice; only the virtuous were capable of true love and they always carried the sympathy of the audience. The sin of adultery, for example, was presented as a major crime which led to either punishment or penitence. "Isabel! o Céu perdoa todos os crimes menos o adultério.", says the ghost of Adolfo to his lover in "À missa do galo!". The fact that it was forbidden meant, paradoxically, that adultery, together with murder, was perhaps the most frequent act to be committed by the characters of popular romantic fiction, since it aroused a morbid expectation in the reader who was looking for action as well as moral reassurance. As Christopher Prendergast remarks:

in melodrama we simultaneously pay homage to the idea of moral order and yet secretly enjoy the violence which threatens it. . . it partially gratifies an impulse to destruction, but at the same time, through its insistence on triumphant virtue, represses any acknowledgement of that gratification.<sup>16</sup>

The ambiguous moral aspect of melodramatic fiction becomes especially apparent when one reads through stories of the kind that were published anonymously by the *Seminário do Cincinnati* in 1837. After promising to provide the reader with "algumas curiosidades" on a regular basis, the 'paper decided to publish "O vil seductor" on 25th February, which concluded with the following thoughts:

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<sup>15</sup> Reprinted in the anthology organized by Alexandre Barbosa Lima Sobrinho: *Panorama do Conto Brasileiro Vol. 1: Os Precursores do Conto no Brasil* (São Paulo: Civilização Brasileira, 1960), p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> Prendergast, p. 11.

Oh! se as donzelas aprendessem neste exemplo a não se deixarem vencer por seus falsos adoradores, muito lucrariam elas, muito lucraria a sociedade inteira . . . Moças, não vos deixeis traír por vossos corações, não sejais fáceis em iludir-vos para não serdes desgraçadas, para não causardes pesares às vossas famílias.

É vós, inconsiderados moços, não abuseis da fragilidade da donzela: Ponderai que um dia sereis pais, e teréis filhos; e que vos doeria ver vossa filha seduzida e abandonada.

Several other such stories follow, with romantic-type themes and dramatic plots but each claiming to be true and each teaching a "valuable" lesson. For instance, the inevitable consequences of a father's bad example in "Um mau pai de família" (11 Mar 1837) are seen in his own ruinous state, the adultery of his long-suffering wife and the dissipate lifestyle of his son. "O casamento constrangido" (18 Mar 1837) criticizes those parents who would condemn their daughters to either an early death or a life of misery by forcing an unloved husband upon them. The dangers of pursuing a sexual relationship outside of marriage ("Fugi de abomináveis paixões") are taught and learnt in "O desengano de um amante" (29 Apr-6 May 1837). All of which is very much the stuff of which popular Romantic fiction is made, with the added bonus of a moral message.

Although the *Seminário do Cincinato* is unique amongst the newspapers I was able to consult in proclaiming an explicit moral purpose for its short stories, there can be no doubt that the principle of using brief true-life or fictional narratives as a basis for moral instruction was a very widely held one at the time. In the introduction to the first issue of the *Gabinete de Leitura* we read:

O que é um gabinete de leitura? é a casa, em que cada um vai, por modico estipendio, entregar-se á lição dos livros que mais convêm a seus gostos; é um foco de instrução...

As was mentioned earlier, in another part of the same introduction the writer claimed that the prime purpose of that particular *gabinete* was not to be a source of moral guidance ("não será um foco de instrução; que tanta filáucia não temos nós que queiramos instruir"), but it is clear from his general comments that the stories contained in other magazines of that type were expected to teach as well as to entertain.

## Exceptions to the rule

In their undisguised preoccupation with providing their audience with what they wanted, it is doubtful whether any of the initiators of the short story in Brazil ever saw any artistic merit in the works they produced. On the whole, they were happy to repeat the same tried and tested literary formulae, but there are just a few exceptions in the work of Josino do Nascimento Silva and Martins Pena which are worth looking at briefly.

Although he was also quite capable of producing a romantic narrative Nascimento Silva's writings show him to be more of a humorous critic of Brazilian customs than a creator of melodramatic short fiction. In the main, his *contos* are only stories in the sense that they are extended personal anecdotes from which the maximum amount of both good natured humour and sharp criticism is extracted. Thus in "Fui ao baile" (Chr, 29 Apr 1837), he speaks of "o que passou nesse dia de mau agouro e que certo entrará na lista dos dias nefastos de minha vida", not failing to mention the agonies of choosing the correct garb for a social occasion, the laughter with which his choice of clothes is received, and the utter disaster of the dance itself. In "Sou escritor dramático" (Chr, 16 Aug 1837), he comments ironically on the conventional tastes and practices of the Brazilian theatre. We read how, after being inspired by some Romantic drama, he manages to write his own play in a mere eight days:

No meu drama havia tudo o que podia produzir efeito na cena:- salteadores, guerrilhas, fidalgos, incendios, combates e mortes. Oh! não sabe o que é prazer quem nunca escreveu um drama.

After several rejections, the play is finally accepted by one theatre company, but when they attempt to get it re-written, with one of the actresses refusing to play a part she does not like, the frustrated dramatist tears up his manuscript in despair.

Nascimento Silva's most serious short narrative is, however, "Um enforcado - o carrasco" (Chr, 25 Feb 1837), in which he heavily criticises the existence of the death penalty in Brazil. Telling the story once again in the form of a personal account, the author details the impatience of his neighbours to observe the execution of a slave who had murdered his master's accountant. No one wants to miss the occasion, with mas-

ters shouting at servants not to dilly-dally and young women preparing themselves as they would for a glittering social event. For the author, however, the hangman, that designated instrument of justice, is devoid of all humanity ("aquele homem é tanto ou mais criminoso do que o padecente, e porque já não tem sequer um atributo de homem é carrasco"), and when the act is done all that is left in him is a feeling of numbness and disgust.

If not as critical or as ironic as Nascimento Silva, Martins Pena also contributed to the casual and anecdotal variety of the *conto*. "Minhas aventuras numa viagem nos ônibus" (CdasM, 25 Jan 1839) and "Uma viagem na barca de vapor"<sup>15</sup> (CdasM, 13 Apr 1839) are both humorous, *costumbrista*-like accounts of the characters and situations encountered by the author whilst on public transport in Rio. His most original story, however, is "A sorte grande" (CdasM, 12-19 Jan 1839) which employs a clever, quirky type of humour even though it deals with the very serious subject of attempted suicide. It concerns the vicissitudes of life suffered by Júlio, a rich and lazy carioca dandy who sells off his late father's estate in order to avoid working the land. Unfortunately, he is robbed before he can marry his beautiful beloved, and after contemplating suicide, decides to hitch a boat-ride to India, living as a rough seaman. Before he sets off he takes pity on a poor old woman by giving away his last few coins in exchange for a lottery ticket. Two years of hardship at sea make a real man of him, but as he nears the shores of his native land ready to start afresh, they suffer a shipwreck from which he is the only survivor. Thoughts of suicide enter his head once more. But as he rushes to throw himself in the sea the forgotten lottery ticket falls out of his pocket, sparking off thoughts both mad and sane:

Em um momento passou lucidamente diante de seus olhos toda a sua vida: os primeiros, e felizes dias de sua infância, seus amores, suas desgraças, o naufrágio, e enfim o bilhete que parecia um lençol cobrindo toda a sua vida. Ele duvida de sua existência, suas idéias se confundem, e de sua confusão surge uma idéia clara, e lúcida. Ele se julga um bilhete de loteria.

Whilst still in a state of delirium, he discovers that his ticket has drawn the "big prize". Six months after he is cured of his strange mental illness he is able to marry the girl he left behind and all ends happily, except for one remaining disturbance of the spirit:

e isto acontece todas as vezes que ele lê no Jornal do Comércio algum noticia da loteria; e ainda corre ao espelho para verificar que os seus olhos não são números de bilhete.

Stories of this nature, in which the romantic plot merely forms a backdrop for other considerations, would appear to be scarce at this period, with most writers simply repeating the emphasis on frustrated love adopted by Pereira da Silva. True, the degree of sentiment or violent description might vary, but whether a story was set in Rio or some European city; whether it was designed to impart a specific moral message or simply presented as a provincial tale or legend, the trials of love were the order of the day. And they would remain so for a long time to come, judging by Machado's frequent references to contemporary popular fiction.

## The rise of the serialized novel in Brazil

Despite its popular appeal for the newspaper reading public of the late 1830s, the short story was soon to be eclipsed by the amazing demand for the serialization of French novels experienced in Brazil towards the middle of the century. The 1840s saw the appearance of Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and *Le Juif Errant*, and Alexandre Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, to name just a few of the works whose popularity in translation was quite astonishing:

Estrondoso sucesso aqui, traduzido pelos anúncios de página inteira, repetidas chamadas, retomada em fascículos, re-edições dos mesmos, imediatamente esgotados, filas para comprá-los, etc.<sup>17</sup>

The story is a similar one for the 1850s:

O fluxo não esmorece na década de 50: com poucas exceções, todas as honras do FOLHETIM, o famigerado da primeira página, são prestadas aos autores franceses, com o coroamento em 1859: a entrada avassaladora, que ultrapassa as fronteiras e do *Jornal do Comércio* e da Corte, e vara século adiante, do irresistível *Rocamboles*.<sup>18</sup>

The phenomenal rise in popularity of the serialized novel noted by Marlyse Meyer and the consequent decline of the short story until the late 1850s was confirmed by my in-

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<sup>17</sup> Marlyse Meyer, "Voláteis e versáteis, de variedades e folhetims se fez a chronica", p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Meyer, p. 30.

vestigations into Paula Brito's *Marmota* (1849 - 1861), the most important and enduring literary magazine of the period.

First of all with reference to the novel, the *Marmota* is a particularly interesting example of a periodical which, having started off with a very distinct editorial policy, was obliged over the years to make significant concessions in order to accommodate popular demand. In its first issue, the *Marmota* advertised itself as a jocular magazine which hoped to gain both "a estimação das simpáticas meninas que honrarem a *Marmota* com as suas mãosinhas macias e assetinadas" and the support of "Rapazes, patuscos, estudantes, caixeiros, todos, todos, cheguem para mim" (Marm, 7 Oct 1849). It intended to publish:

"máximas muito apreciáveis, que ainda não foram publicadas, charada, logogrifos e receitas curiosas, etc., etc. Admitiremos anúncios de comércio e fazendas novas da moda, redigidos por nos de um modo influente aos fregueses para protegerem aos logistas. Em suma, tudo faremos para que a folha agrade a gente de todas as classes, e nos tornaremos um periódico estimado por todos sem sustentar nenhum partido nem nutrir intrigas. (Marm, 7 Oct 1849)

In its attempt to appeal most kinds of reader, a typical issue of the *Marmota* would contain a lucky bag of articles, both humorous and moralizing on certain aspects of society and the arts, as well as a full of page or more of poetry and short maxims. But it drew the line (at least in earlier issues) at publishing serialized novels and stories. Paula Brito, who had just taken over the role of editor from the paper's founder, Próspero Diniz, firmly states in his first editorial column:

Folhetims cheios de massadas imitando aos Francezes; tal estylo não pode agradar senão à gente ociosa que não tem outro officio senão ler novellas, e aos pedaços, como se publicam no rodapé das gazetas. (Marm, 21 Dec 1849)

Evidently, the *Marmota* did not advocate a wholly frivolous approach to literature. As if to emphasize the point, a front page article on "O bom gosto moderno" in May 1850 included a denunciation of popular literature amongst its criticisms of modern social habits. The writer, presumably Paula Brito, begins by establishing a link between the increasing level of literacy and education in Rio and a decrease in standards of moral responsibility:

No velho tempo de nossos bisavós de calções, em que não haviam tantos doutores, tantos literatos, e tantos escritores improvisados; o bom gosto, ou o verdadeiro gosto fundava-se nas acções de caridade, no cultivo da nossa religião, na propagação da moral, nos bons exemplos de amor ao próximo exercido nos actos de filantropia e doce humanidade: hoje em dia ao contrário o gosto da civilização moderna vai conforme à moda ou febre das cabeças e exaltadas, a mania de apresentar variedade, seja ela qual for (...) (Marm, 17 May 1850)

Amongst the numerous bad habits of modern Rio society listed by the editor is that of writing "romances e folhetins, seja qual for o motivo, seja embora bom ou mau o assunto". As he sarcastically goes on to explain:

Um tiro dado em uma infeliz moça é motivo para um romance, porque a doutrina é boa e deve-se propagar; mata o marido a mulher, ahí vem outro folhetim para ensinar ternura aos casados!!! Finalmente, só falta aparecer um romance decantando as virtudes do Lucas, e utilidade de papel falso no nosso país; graças ao bom gosto das cabeças modernas.

Paradoxically, however, within a space of two months the *Marmota* would be making its own contribution to the highly melodramatic serialized novel. On 5th July 1850 Paula Brito began printing *O Abuso da Autoridade Paternal ou As Paixões Violentas* - "romance histórico do ano de 1850, sucedido na cidade de Ceará (provincia do Brasil): escrito em espanhol pelo Dr. D. José Lopes de la Vega, e traduzido por - F.B. Brito". In the issue previous to the first installment of this novel the readers are given a lengthy announcement (taking up the whole of the left hand column of the first page) which, besides giving the apparently factual background to the work, puts a large question mark over the sincerity of Paula Brito's previous words concerning the moral responsibilities of popular literature:

A *Marmota* principiará no número seguinte a publicação de um romance histórico do Snr. *José Lopes de la Vega*, formado em ciências e letras, baseado no facto recente, e digno de ser aproveitado, qual o de que deram conta os nossos jornais, e que teve lugar na provincia do Ceará.

Para que os nossos leitores, antes de começarem a leitura do romance do Snr. *Lopez de la Vega*, fiquem bem ao facto de todas as circunstâncias d'esse fatal acontecimento, aqui publicamos o que a respeito diz o *Correio Mercantil* de 16 de junho:

"Certo sujeito *furtou uma moça*, com quem pretendia casar-se, e a depositou em casa visinha à do pai dela: este, aproveitando-se da ausência do *roubador*, dirige-se a essa casa, arranca daí a filha, e liga-a immediatamente pelos sagrados laços do himenêu a outro homem, que escolhera para marido, mas que ela não amava. Informado da retomada da amante, mas não sabendo do seu consórcio, o moço, como desesperado e todo iras, reúne amigos e apaniguados, distribue-lhes armas, e acompanhado de numeroso séquito vai conquistar a sua bela presa: esta lhe era disputada vigorosamente; mas após renhido conflito, durante o qual morreram o pai e um irmão do infeliz, bem como tres pessoas da comitiva agressora, pode tomá-la nos braços e levá-la consigo.



“Terrível e penosa foi certamente a situação da moça durante essa escena, toda de luto e dor. Ela sentia-se ligada para sempre a um homem por quem lhe não palpitava o coração, e a quem votava indiferença, senão ódio; presenciava a luta encarniçada entre aquele que adorava, o autor de seus dias, e um irmão; testemunhou o assassinato destes dous entes que lhe deviam ser caros, e por último viu-se nos braços do mancebo que adorava, e cujos afagos já não podia receber sem constituir-se criminosa. Entretanto ainda isto não era tudo: golpe mais fatal do que os outros, se é possível, apressadamente se lhe preparava, e dentro em pouco ser-lhe-ia desfechado!.. Sim, já o furor havia sido espancado do peito do amante, e solícito liberalisava ele afectuosos cuidados àquela por amor de quem cometera loucuras e crimes, quando soube que a misera já não podia pertencer-lhe; pois que obedecendo à vontade paterna se votara ante o ministro de Deus a outro, que não ele. Então com o desespero nos olhos, as imprecações nos lábios e a raiva no coração, esse homem, ainda há pouco todo meigüices, saca do punhal, e quer embê-lo no coração da mulher por quem arriscara reputação e vida, e certo realisara seu desesperado instinto, se os individuos que o acompanhavam lhe não sostivessem o braço, e não lhe itrassem a vítima das mãos!..” (Marm, 28 Jun 1950)

The pure sensationalism and dubious moral value of *O Abuso da Autoridade Paternal* must surely represent exactly what Paula Brito was referring to in his criticisms of “O bom gosto moderno”, and yet the novel still managed to find its way into the pages of the *Marmota*. No doubt the editor had decided that it was more important to maintain or even increase subscriptions than adhere to a matter of principle.

The reasons behind Paula Brito’s dramatic U-turn in editorial policy with regard to the serialized novel become even more obvious when he makes the decision to print works by Teixeira e Sousa (one of Brazil’s earliest and most forgettable novelists) and Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, whose *Moreninha* in 1844 marked the beginning of his lasting popularity with the Brazilian public. In August 1852 the editor himself admits to printing Teixeira e Sousa’s highly melodramatic novel *Maria ou A menina roubada* “para empenharmos todas as pessoas de diferentes gostos na leitura deste jornal” (Marm, 10 Aug 1852). More significantly the appearance of Macedo’s *Vicentina* in March 1854 under the title of “O nosso folhetim” is presented as a major financial coup for the *Marmota*, giving rise to the following bargain offers:

Para darmos à - VICENTINA - o número de apaixonados de que ela de certo será digna, aceitamos assignantes por 4 meses - março, abril, maio, e junho - pelo preço de 3\$000 rs., ficando eles com direito a todos os figurinos, músicas, desenhos, etc.

As pessoas que, em vez de assignatura, tomarem uma acção de 100\$ rs., serão obsequiados com - VICENTINA -. (Marm, 7 Mar 1854)

Needless to say the offer is repeated in the next issue and on 6th June Paula Brito kindly reminds all those who took up offer to renew their subscriptions for the remaining seven months of the serial. By all accounts *Vicentina* was an astounding success and other Macedo novels would feature prominently in the magazine for several years to

come. Without the lure of serialized fiction it is doubtful whether the *Marmota* could have survived for so long.

By way of contrast, the fate of the short story in the *Marmota* is one of almost total neglect until the late 1850s and early 60s when they become a fairly regular feature. (Prior to 1859 a mere half dozen items by Brazilian authors were printed in the bi-weekly magazine). As far as quality and originality are concerned, they are all very mediocre, and regardless of whether they appear at the beginning or the end of the *Marmota*'s lifespan they generally repeat the clichéd romantic fiction of earlier writers, with a definite preference for scenes of gushing sentimentality as opposed to murder and violence. In "As primeiras inclinações" (Marm, 13-31 Dec 1850), for example, by Conceição, the idea of young love is still very much alive, as are the other ingredients of first love, the drama of an enforced separation, desperation, love-sickness and the final, inevitable happy ending ("Deus os tinha feito um para o outro - FIM"). Ten years later, Rodrigues Proença's "Olímpia" (Marm, 11 Dec 1860) informs us that not a lot has changed in popular Brazilian short fiction. It is the Pereira da Silva-like story of two young lovers living "na solidão dos campos, como Paulo e Virginia. . . nesse enleio agradável de dous corações que se entendem, de duas almas que se nivelam, casando os sentimentos"). Destiny, however, has determined that they do not enjoy further happiness on earth since Olímpia's mother has decided to marry her off and in a final gesture of true love the frustrated couple manage to seal their eternal future together by dramatically drinking the same deadly poison at the same time. They are therefore buried in the same grave and a simple cross is placed over the soil:

Junto à cruz, como emblema da celebração daquele amor, dois arbustinhos nasceram e viçosos cresceram, então, todos os que passavam não ousavam tocá-los.

Chamavam-nos: - Olímpia e Carlos.

E quando as aves pousavam ali e soltavam seus trenos sentidos, os crédulos filhos das matas, diziam que os anjos é que entoavam himnos, celebrando as núpcias dos dous amantes! (Marm, 11 Dec 1860)

As ever, there are a few comic exceptions - Machado's "Tres tesouros perdidos" in 1859 being one of them - but nothing that speaks of real change or innovation. Nevertheless, significant changes were occurring in the Brazilian short story, despite the fact that the *Marmota* fails to record them. In 1861 Macedo published under the title of *Romances*

da *Semana* a collection of stories he had written for the *Jornal do Comércio* over a period of about five years. None of them can be regarded as a work of art, nor do any convey a radically different attitude towards sentimentality, but in their emphasis on contemporary social themes they constitute a new direction for the short story in Brazil.

## Macedo's contribution to the Brazilian short story

The most interesting and (as far as one can ascertain from a reading of the short stories in the *Marmota*) original facet of the *Romances da Semana* is Macedo's continual reference to the social and moral matters of the day. His stories are not just entertainment, nor do they merely attempt to teach domestic morality (and when they do it is certainly not in the sensationalist manner practised by the *Seminário do Cincinnato*). Rather, Macedo uses the medium of the short story in much the same way as he used the novel (minus the plot): that is, to comment extensively on various aspects of Brazilian social morality, with an emphasis on attitudes towards love and marriage, the disadvantages of materialistic progress, the lure of money, the corrupt state of politics and the general lack of religious education in the country. But although these are criticized with great vigour and a certain amount of scepticism in "Inocência", "O romance de uma velha" and "O veneno das flores",<sup>19</sup> Macedo remains throughout a hopeful and positive moralist.

"Inocência" (RdaS, pp. 194-244) records the chastening experiences of a young man whose naivety with regard to politics and marriage in Brazil is reflected in his name and, consequently, the title of the story. Arriving at Rio with his head full of impossible dreams, he is met by his godfather and distant relative, Geraldo, a confirmed sceptic with an irrepressible sarcastic laugh that has earned him the nickname of "Risota":

Geraldo-Risota ri com efeito de todos e de tudo; mas o seu rir é triste e desconsolador: é um rir que faz mal. Uma longa e dolorosa experiência, uma série de desgostos e decepções, uma disposição natural do seu espírito, uma mania talvez, ou o quer que fosse, tinha alterado profundamente o caráter daquele homem, tinha-o tornado tão descrente das cousas deste mundo, que de todo se lhe apagaram a fé e a esperança no futuro da vida, da sociedade e do país; mas essa descrença, em vez de torná-lo melancólico e rude em seu parecer, emprestara-lhe esse rir de mofa, e o fazia

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<sup>19</sup> The remaining stories, "A bolsa de seda", "Uma paixão romântica" and "O fim do mundo" are minor ones in this respect, although the latter does contain several sarcastic comments on the state of commerce and politics in Rio.

soltar gargalhadas a respeito de tudo: era um Demócrito grosseiro, que parecia feliz e devia ser desgraçado. (RdaS, p. 196)

Needless to say, Geraldo scoffs heartily when Inocêncio expresses a confident hope in the imminent realization of three lifelong dreams: to be elected a deputy in his home province, to be given an important commission by the government, and to marry a beautiful young woman. Geraldo immediately attempts to disillusion his godson with regard to them all. In the eyes of the older man, local elections amount to no more than “uma comédia ou fantamagoria constitucional” (RdaS, p. 210), in which patronage is a more decisive factor than policy or talent. The same goes for the commission, since “o patronato é o quinto poder<sup>20</sup> do Império” (RdaS, p. 212). As for Inocêncio’s expected marriage to D. Cristina, Geraldo concedes that there is some hope, provided a richer suitor does not make an appearance. Geraldo is indeed proven right by the run of events and at the end of the story invites Inocêncio to join him in his scepticism. The young man, however, decides to reject that particular mode of thought in words that must surely represent Macedo’s own point of view:

- Não, meu padrinho; não: o cepticismo é a morte do coração, é a sua gargalhada, é o pranto da alma desfigurado em uma risada de escárnio lançado à face de todos os homens; o cepticismo é uma luz do inferno que conduz o homem ao desespero ou ao vício: eu nunca serei céptico; apesar do povo, do governo e da mulher, nunca serei céptico. (RdaS, p. 243)

Having said his piece, Inocêncio walks away “com toda aquela nobreza que nasce de um sã consciência e da virtude”, at which point the narrative ends and the reader is left with a clear idea of Macedo’s attitude towards the moral ills of his country. The political system was corrupt<sup>21</sup> and marriage had taken on the character of a profit making venture, but to give up hope as a result was, according to Macedo, to renege on one’s moral responsibility to attempt to change such matters.

In “O romance de uma velha” (RdaS, pp. 79-132) Macedo centres his criticism on the lure of money in the marital situation. And as in “Inocêncio” he does not allow the

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<sup>20</sup> The four officially recognized Powers of State were: the Moderating Power of the Emperor, the Executive, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>21</sup> On falling down to earth in the fantastic story “O fim do mundo em 1857”, Martinho makes the following pointed comment:

Desci como um raio. É de regra que se desce mais depressa do que se sobe; até os ministros de estado conhecem a verdade deste principio de fisica, eles que de ordinário poucas verdades conhecem. (RdaS, p. 60)

undeniable presence of ulterior motive in some of the characters he describes to force him into a position of scepticism. It is the story of D. Violante, 61, a spinster and prematurely dead to the world on account of her ugliness ("é horrível!"). But her fortunes are revived in more ways than one when she unexpectedly inherits a huge sum of money. Suddenly she is transformed from a fury into an angel for three money-grabbing suitors, who have also shown an interest in the old woman's beautiful but poor niece, Clemência. The whole story is in fact an object lesson in contemporary morality for the young girl who by the end of the episode is forced to relinquish her naive belief in the power of love over financial considerations. D. Violante maintains all along that "a civilização e o progresso<sup>22</sup> mataram o amor" (RdaS, p. 84). She says in effect that love has become too easy in today's society. In her day, the difficulties that had to be overcome with regard to parental opposition, restricted movement of women etc., actually encouraged an atmosphere of romance. "Havia enfim receios, esperança e temores, sombra e mistério, e portanto havia amor." (RdaS, p. 85) Absence and distance in romantic affairs have disappeared with the railway system; gas lighting has destroyed the atmosphere of mystery in the streets; the openness of the press has done away with the secret love-letter. "Minha sobrinha, agora não há mais amor, *há cálculo*; não há mais amantes, *há calculistas*; não há mais amadas, *há calculadas*". Love has become an mathematical formula and marriage a business. She decides to prove the point by accompanying her niece on her society outings to see whether any of Clemência's three suitors will succumb to the possibility of marrying into wealth. The old woman even bets that her niece will be left with none of the three. Whoever loses will have to move into a Convent. Of course, D. Violante is right. Since all of her niece's male attendants regard Clemência as a passing amusement they are easily attracted by D. Violante's added incentive. The three suitors are a businessman, a would-be politician and an inveterate gambler who regard D. Violante's fortune as a means of attaining their personal dreams. When this becomes painfully clear to Clemência she

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<sup>22</sup> Macedo's antipathy towards the effects of materialistic progress in general is also evident in this brief comment from "O fim do mundo em 1857":

O cometa era sem dúvida partidista exclusivo do progresso material, porque destruiu todos os homens e todos os animais, respeitando, porém e deixando ileso tudo quanto era puramente material, tudo quanto tinha existência sem ter vida. (RdaS, p. 61)

suffers a night of tears and heartache, but she nevertheless contrives to receive a concrete proposal of marriage from all three men (thereby winning the wager) by anonymously publicizing in the local newspapers the lie that her aunt has given her a substantial amount of money. Whilst D. Violante maintains that the moral victory belongs to her and that marriage for the sake of love no longer exists in Rio de Janeiro, Macedo leaves the final word with Clemência:

- Não, minha tia: em todos os tempos houve sempre homens nobres e generosos, e homens indignos e vilmente interesseiros, e o que toda a senhora deve pedir ao céu é que lhe depare por marido um dos primeiros, e que a livre e guarde dos segundos. (RdaS, p. 132)

In the final and most serious story of the collection, "O veneno das flores" (RdaS, pp. 247-360), Macedo addresses the problem of scepticism head on by giving us the background to a young girl's suicide.<sup>23</sup> The whole romantic episode, in which Juliana decides to kill herself after allowing herself to be seduced by a false suitor, is based on the thesis that inadequate moral education produces a despair that can lead to premature death. In his preceding comments to the story, Macedo maintains that it is not enough to say that suicide is simply the result of madness:

Admitindo mesmo em hipotese que o suicídio seja sempre um acto de loucura, é facil de provar que a depravação dos costumes e uma educação defeituosa e ruim podem levar o homem, por um caminho em cujo termo não poucas vezes a razão chegue a alienar-se, e o abismo do suicidio abra-se para receber o desesperado. (RdaS, p. 249)

Macedo further argues that in certain situations suicide is seen as the only way out for those who do not possess a firm faith and hope in God. Such is the case with Juliana, whose father ("homem ilustrado, mas discípulo da escola de Voltaire" (RdaS, p. 259)) provides her with an education that, though brilliant in many ways, signally fails to cater to her moral needs. The events leading up to Juliana's death need not concern us. Suffice it to say, they are narrated in the best traditions of tragic romance with Jorge (rich and villainous), Fábio (poor but virtuous) and an amazing coincidence playing their

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<sup>23</sup> Included in Macedo's preliminary remarks is an indication that the story may have been prompted by a spate of suicides in Rio that had occurred immediately prior to the time of writing:

Lastimais a repetição dos casos de suicídios que ultimamente se têm observado?... Não há lastima que mais justa seja; não sei porém o que mais se deva lastimar, se os suicidas, se a sociedade. (RdaS, p. 248)

appointed roles. And at the end of the story the all-important moral is repeated in a short exchange between Fábio and Juliana's mother for the benefit of the reader:

- Oh! minha desgraçada filha teve um acesso de loucura.

- Não teve um acesso de loucura, disse Fábio: sua filha era incrédula... a descrença levou-a ao desespero, e desespero levou-a ao suicídio. (RdaS, p. 360)

Due to the inaccessibility of relevant materials, the exact status of Macedo's originality in the Brazilian short story is difficult to quantify. But it seems reasonable to suggest that the same man who pioneered the romantico-realist portrait of Brazilian high society in his novels<sup>24</sup> made a similarly decisive contribution to shorter prose fiction. Unlike his predecessors, Macedo concentrated on specific Brazilian social themes and set each of his *Romances da Semana* in the Rio of his day. His use of melodramatic technique is surprisingly economical (in contrast to his novels) and, in any case, is totally subservient to the message. Macedo thus appears to have been the first Brazilian writer to consistently put forward a definite personal philosophy with regard to social morality within the context of the short story. What he lacked, however, was that sense of artistic purpose which Machado began to show at a fairly early stage in his short story career and which he gradually developed in line with his general maturity as a thinker and a writer.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Antônio Soares Amora's comments on Macedo in *A Literatura Brasileira Vol. II: O Romantismo (1833-1838/1878-1881)* (São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1967), pp. 213-240.

## Chapter Two - The Education of the Reader

1858 - 1870

### The short story "professional"

Apart from being a time of growth for the short story in general, the late 1850s and the decade of the '60s is a period of tremendous literary activity for Machado de Assis. So much so that one is obliged to agree with the biographer and critic R. Magalhães Jr. when he says:

Impressionante é o qualificativo mais adequado para a capacidade do jovem Machado de Assis. Parecia, na verdade, ansioso para afirmar-se e determinado a não deixar escapar qualquer oportunidade que lhe fosse oferecida, ainda que suas obrigações se tornassem cada vez mais pesadas.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly, the period with which we are now dealing, from the appearance of Machado's first sketch of a story to the publication of his first short story collection, is one in which the young author seems eager to prove himself in several literary disciplines. Poetry was his first love (stretching back as far as 1854), the fruit of which would be seen in two early books: *Crisálidas* (1865) and *Falenas* (1870). Possessing also an undeniable passion for the theatre in his formative years, it would not be long before Machado was writing a regular "Revista de Teatros" for the short-lived *Espelho* in 1859. By 1861 he had written his first play, *Desencantos*, and, although it was never staged, it was followed in 1862 by the comedies *O caminho da porta* and *O protocolo*, which were. 1863 and 1865 also gave light to two verse comedies: *Quase ministro* and *Os deuses da casaca* respectively. Several critical articles, his activity as a censor for the

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<sup>25</sup> *Vida e obra de Machado de Assis*, Vol. I (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1981), p. 182.



*Conservatório Dramático* between 1862 and 1864 and his repeated translations of French drama for the Brazilian stage,<sup>26</sup> all point to the fact that for a while at least, the theatre had become an obsession for Machado. His preoccupation with political affairs was also obsessive as Magalhães Jr. has shown<sup>27</sup>, with Machado proving himself capable of using both poetry and prose to further the Liberal cause. Starting off as an anonymous contributor to political journalism in 1860, he moved on to act as *cronista* for the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, speaking out on political topics besides making the comments on social events, the arts and items of interest that would be the main feature of his other regular articles for *O Futuro* and *A Semana Ilustrada*.

Against the background of his other commitments we have the less than thirty short stories written before 1870, which both in terms of quantity and in view of the relatively minor standing of the genre, would seem to form an insignificant portion of Machado's total output. And yet, from the whirlwind of activity witnessed by the 1860s, it is the short stories which emerge by the end of the decade as the most consistent expression of Machado's literary creativity. Poetry and original theatre are prominent in Machado until 1865, but in succeeding years the production of both becomes sporadic. With regard to his poetry, it is noticeable that, whereas *Crisálidas* contains a selection of the many pieces Machado composed over a number of years, the vast majority of poems leading up to and included in *Falenas* were written in the year previous to its publication, as if in response to a definite commission. After a meagre start, on the other hand, for the short stories, the appearance of "Frei Simão" in the *Jornal das Famílias* in June 1864 marked the beginning of a fruitful association for Machado with some of the most popular periodicals of his day. He would remain with the *Jornal das Famílias* for fifteen years after which the majority of his stories would make their regular appearance in another fashionable magazine, *A Estação*, and the well-established newspaper, *A Gazeta de Notícias*, until the end of the century. Whether Machado's lifelong attachment to the *conto* was due primarily to personal preference or to the obvious financial considerations is impossible to determine. What can be said,

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<sup>26</sup> See Jean-Michel Massa, Philippe François Pinel & Léon Gozlan, *Machado de Assis, traducteur* (Rennes: University of Poitiers, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> See Magalhães Jr., *Vida e Obra* Vol. I and *Machado de Assis Desconhecido* (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1957).

however, is that having established himself as poet, critic, columnist and general man of the arts, Machado's commitment in the mid 1860s to the short story is an important milestone both for himself and for the genre. For Machado it was the beginning of an emphasis on prose fiction as opposed to poetry, which would lead eventually to the production of several classic stories and novels. For the short story it meant that Brazil had at last produced a serious author who was prepared to spend time and energy perfecting his technique within the genre.<sup>28</sup>

## An unorthodox beginning

But Machado's position as the major contributor of prose fiction for a popular periodical was not without its disadvantages. It would take him many years before he was consistently producing works of lasting quality, due in large part, I believe, to the nature of the audience for which he was writing. For whilst the *Jornal das Famílias* gave Machado a splendid opportunity to produce prose fiction on a regular basis, it may also have stifled his creative personality, forcing him to work within the format of popular romantic literature. Prior to his 1864 debut for the family magazine Machado had only written two stories for two different literary 'papers, with "Tres tesouros perdidos" appearing in the *Marmota* (Jan 1858) and "O país das quimeras"<sup>29</sup> in the short-lived *O Futuro* (Dec 1862). Both stories were predictably mediocre but nevertheless represented an interesting and unorthodox beginning for the young writer, who at that point showed no inclination towards the conventional love story.

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<sup>28</sup> As Alexandre Barbosa Lima has noted, the writing of the Brazilian short story was never regarded as a major activity by its earliest providers, all of whom were very quickly drawn to other things:

Que se não tratava de vocações espontâneas ou irreduzíveis para a ficção, prova-o o fato de que não persistiram no cultivo do gênero. Uns se entregaram de todo ao jornalismo, como Justiniano da Rocha; outros se deixaram arrastar inteiramente pela política, como Firmino Rodrigues da Silva e Josino do Nascimento - Silva. Paula Brito não teve no conto senão uma experiência, numa vida literária dispersiva. Pereira da Silva optou pela historiografia, pela vida parlamentar e pela política. Martins Pena se dedicou ao teatro.

*Panorama do Conto Brasileiro Vol. 1: Os Precursores do Conto no Brasil* (São Paulo: Civilização Brasileira, 1960), p. 22. A similar comment can be made about Macedo's contribution to the short story which is dwarfed by his theatrical and novelistic works.

<sup>29</sup> Later republished in the *Jornal das Famílias* with an extended preface and other minor alterations under the title "Uma excursão milagrosa" (Apr-May 1866).

"Tres tesouros perdidos" is a funny little tale which begins *in medias res* with a jealous husband warning an unknown man to stay away from his wife, giving him a day and a large sum of money to leave Rio. The stranger gratefully obliges and heads immediately for Minas Gerais to seek his fortune. But the husband's joy is cut short when an insulting letter from his wife informs him that she had really been having an affair with his best friend, with whom she has now left for Europe. The sudden loss of everything he holds dear proves too much for the mind of the unnamed husband. And in his madness he repeats the following pathetic refrain:

Perdi tres tesouros a um tempo: uma mulher sem igual, um amigo a toda prova, e uma linda carteira cheia de encantadoras notas que bem podiam aquecer-me as algibeiras. (PagR, p. 224)

The lighthearted reference to money invites us to laugh at the irony of the situation rather than cry at the personal tragedy of a loving husband. Furthermore, in his decision to avoid violence, sentimentality and morality and concentrate upon sarcasm, deceit, self-interest and cruel humour in "Tres tesouros perdidos", Machado gives us a fore-taste of certain aspects that will only gradually become characteristic of his short stories in the *Jornal das Famílias*.

Similarly, the value of "O país das quimeras" (sub-titled "conto fantástico") lies in the expression of a particular approach which Machado does not develop for several years. In a lengthy opening section we are introduced to the unfortunate Tito who, having become disillusioned with the disappointments of love and the fact that he has been forced to produce poetry on demand in order to survive, cannot decide whether to end it all or take a long journey. He does not remain long in this state of indecision:

Já o poeta abandonava o primeiro por achá-lo sanguinolento e definitivo; o segundo parecia-lhe melhor, mais consentâneo com os seus instintos de conservação. (ReliqCV, p. 424)

But as Tito is about to leave the room he is approached by a sylph who takes him on a miraculous journey to the Land of Illusions, "país onde viaja tres quartos do gênero humano". He thereby enters a frivolous and patently allegorical world of coquettish young women and vain young men who represent the foolish utopian ideals entertained by mankind. Their king is the epitome of conceit and their queen the embodiment of high fashion. During a swift guided tour round the royal palace Tito sees a large group

of people shaping a light, white, fluffy material which he fancies must be some regal delicacy. But he is wrong:

- Não, senhor; estes homens estão ocupados em preparar massa cerebral para um certo número de homens de todas as classes: estadistas, poetas, namorados, etc.; serve também a mulheres. Esta massa é especialmente para aqueles que, no seu planeta, vivem com verdadeira disposições do nosso país, aos quais fazemos presentes deste elemento constitutivo. (ReliqCV, p. 435)

On his return to the real world Tito discovers that he has benefited greatly from his amazing experience. Not only can he tell at a glance whether a person's head contains real grey matter or the so-called "massa quimérica", but he is also able to affirm that those who possess the latter are very much in the majority. As far as Machado's later work is concerned, the most important aspect of "O país das quimeras" is his vision of the world as being driven by vanity. There is the vanity of human wishes and of philosophy, of physical appearance and of self-interest, all of which will become major themes in Machado's mature short stories. One wonders how Machado's stories might have developed had he been able to continue writing for 'papers like the *Marmota* and *O Futuro*<sup>30</sup> in the mid '60s.

## A family magazine

As it is, when he joined the *Jornal das Famílias* Machado immediately adopted an approach that was more in keeping with the nature of a magazine which in one of his *crônicas* he himself would refer to as:

o *Jornal das Famílias*, verdadeiro jornal para senhoras, pela escolha do gênero de escritos originais que publica e pelas novidades de modas, músicas, desenhos, bordados, esses mil nadas necessárias ao reino do bom-tom.<sup>31</sup>

One could compare it to the *Correio das Modas* of 1839-40, with the short stories justifying their existence by providing a little extra incentive for readers to buy the magazine. Any moralizing stories it contained would generally be limited to the domestic sphere, and would be unlikely to reflect serious political or social issues. On the contrary, for the readers of such a magazine, the short story section represented an un-

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<sup>30</sup> The *Marmota* collapsed at the end of 1861 with the death of Paula Brito and *O Futuro* folded in 1863 after only 20 issues.

<sup>31</sup> *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* (3 Jan 1865). Reprinted in J.23, p. 265.

demanding literary diversion whose message did not offend the principles of conventional morality. Machado does not disappoint them, with his frequent references to the reader indicating that he is writing for a prescribed audience of whose tastes and expectations he is very much aware. On the question of morality, the opening paragraphs of "O anjo das donzelas" (Sep-Oct 1864) give us some indication of the standards Machado intended and was expected to maintain:

Cuidado leitor, vamos entrar na alcova de uma donzela.

A esta notícia o leitor estremece e hesita. É naturalmente um homem de boas costumes, acata as famílias e preza as leis do decoro público e privado. É também provável que já tenha deparado com alguns escritos, destes que levam aos papéis públicos certas teorias e tendências que melhor fora nunca tivessem saído da cabeça de quem as concebeu e proclamou. Hesita e interroga a consciência se deve ou não continuar a ler as minhas páginas, e talvez resolva não prosseguir. Volta a folha e passa a coisa melhor.

Descanse, leitor, não verá neste episódio fantástico nada do que se não pôde ver à luz pública. Eu também acato a família e respeito o decôro. Sou incapaz de cometer uma ação má, que tanto importa delinear uma cena ou aplicar uma teoria contra a qual protesta a moralidade. (CAV, p. 21)

And on a more relaxed and intimate note, Machado goes to great lengths to identify with the leisurely world of his audience in the rambling introduction to "Questão de vaidade" (Dec 1864-Mar 1865):

Suponha o leitor que somos conhecidos velhos. Estamos ambos entre os quatro paredes de uma sala; o leitor assentado em uma cadeira com as pernas sobre a mesa, à moda americana, eu a fio comprido em um rede do Pará que se balouça voluptuosamente, à moda brasileira, ambos enchendo o ar de leves e caprichosas fumaças, à moda de toda a gente.

Imagine mais que é noite. A janela aberta deixa entrar as brisas aromáticas do jardim, por entre cujos arbustos se descobre a lua surgindo em um límpido horizonte.

Sobre a mesa ferve em aparelho próprio uma pouca de água para fazer uma tintura de chá. Não sei se o leitor adora como eu a deliciosa folha da Índia. Se não, pode mandar vir café e fazer com a mesma água a bebida de sua predileção. (HistR, p. 7)

In other stories Machado specifically indicates that whilst the male reader would be content to have simply whiled the time away "entre o charuto e o café"<sup>32</sup> with the help of the short story, his female reader would be continually obsessed with the romantic potential of the plot.<sup>33</sup> But regardless of which sex you belonged to, the two most im-

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<sup>32</sup> From the introduction to "Cinco mulheres" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1865), CRec, p. 273.

<sup>33</sup> In "Não é mel para a boca do asno" (JdasF Mar 1868) we read:

Imaginamos que a leitora já está curiosa por saber o que queriam dizer os repetidos olhares de Meneses atravessando a praça da Constituição, olhares que não estão de acordo com a recusa de não ir ver as moças.

Para satisfazer a curiosidade da leitora convidamo-la a entrar conosco em casa de Pascual Azevedo, pai de Luisa e Hortênsia, dois dias depois da cena que narramos

portant qualities of a typical *Jornal das Famílias* story would be light entertainment in the form of a romantic tale and an adherence to moral propriety. The statement of the female narrator of "Confissões de uma viúva moça" (JdasF Apr-May 1865) in her introduction neatly sums up Machado's classic approach in some of his earliest stories: "Dou-te a minha palavra de que hás de gostar e aprender" (OC.II, p. 744).

In the *Jornal das Famílias* stories, then, we should not expect to find Machado writing primarily for socio-political motives, despite his other political and artistic interests. As a short story professional Machado was obliged to provide his audience with a fiction they could recognise and appreciate, which meant that he had to work within the well-established romantic and moral patterns of the short story. Nevertheless, apart from two very early examples, Machado rarely indulges in what could truly be called romantic melodrama. On the whole his plots tend to avoid the excessive sentimentality, violence and unnecessary complications of popular romance. For a while at least, Machado advocates a thoroughly responsible approach to courtship and marriage by jettisoning the idea of love as passion and stressing the value of emotional self-control. But it soon becomes apparent that Machado wants to write about other things besides conventional domestic morality. In particular, he finds the short story a useful vehicle for the realistic analysis of psychological motive, albeit within the restrictions of the love plot. And as Machado spends more and more of his time unveiling the negative factors of human nature (vanity, pride, greed) he begins to neglect the ideal of disinterested love, with the result that his stories start to lose their sense of positive moral purpose. Whilst this development is not strictly chronological in order, it is sufficiently linear to suggest that Machado is steadily shaking himself free of the short story's traditional and simplistic romantic format. It is not a format he can ignore entirely (on account of his audience) but by the time he published the *Contos Fluminenses* in 1870 Machado had already begun to transform the Brazilian short story by ridiculing the concepts of the romantic plot, manipulating its framework and denying love its position as a major motivation for action.

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no capítulo anterior. (CEsp, 74)

## The silent critic

In contrast to the humour with which he wrote for the *Marmota* and *Futuro* 'papers, then, Machado chose to make significant concessions to the conventions of popular romantic literature in his first two contributions for the *Jornal das Famílias*. But the unusual melodrama that we find in "Frei Simão" (JdasF Jun 1864) and "Virginius" (JdasF Jul 1864) ought not simply to be dismissed as the temporary aberration of a young author, anxious to please his new audience. Nor should it be thought that the stories are totally devoid of serious critical intent. On the contrary, "Frei Simão" and "Virginius" are the only stories of the period in which Machado addresses himself primarily to the authoritarian nature of Brazil's patriarchal social structure, and the role played by melodrama is crucial to the expression of his comments and criticisms. Ultimately, however, both the sense of unreality that is inevitably conveyed through the use of melodrama and Machado's understandable reluctance to confront his readers directly with certain key issues have the effect of destroying the critical impact of each story.

"Frei Simão" is presented as the faithful reconstruction of a monk's personal memoirs which tell of how the once wealthy Simão is cruelly prevented from marrying his poor childhood sweetheart by his socially prejudiced parents. After taking her in as an orphan and raising her up in their household they marry Helena off to a man of suitably low status whilst their son is sent away on a false business errand, telling him she has died in the hope that he will consider a more sensible match. He confounds their carefully laid plans by becoming a Benedictine friar and several years later he sees Helena in a village church during a short preaching mission. The surprise encounter leads to emotional collapse and a swift death for Helena, and to the onset of madness for Simão. When he eventually dies a premature death in the monastery Simão dramatically curses the whole human race ("Morro odiando a humanidade") and in a final twist to the story Simão's repentant father also becomes a monk and dies in a similarly unbalanced state of mind. Clearly, "Frei Simão" is riddled with the practices of popular romantic fiction. The idyllic upbringing of the two young lovers (one rich, one poor), their separation at the hands of insensitive parents, Simão's decision to become a monk, the fatal chance encounter that leads to death and madness, and even the ar-

tifice of the "true memoirs"<sup>34</sup> But we would be wrong to conclude that Machado intended it as just another tragic love story. Despite its lack of definite geographical pointers, "Frei Simão" is firmly set in the context of nineteenth century rural Brazil, where the father's word was law and he was answerable to no-one.<sup>35</sup> It is the father who exercises his total authority in the story, insisting that Simão leave "voluntarily" for a distant province, and making sure that he does not return until Helena has been disposed of. Amaral, the contact who is to look after Simão during this period and who also happens to be an ex-novelist, is instructed by the father to invent "circunstâncias e ocorrências imprevistas, de modo que o rapaz não me torne cá antes da segunda ordem" (OC.II, p. 155). Later on, the father shows he is capable of spinning his own yarns when he sends a mournful letter to his son concerning the supposed death of Helena, complete with "algum dos últimos necrológios que vira nos jornais" (OC.II, p. 155). But in spite of the fact that he highlights the father's irresponsible and ultimately counterproductive manipulation of people and events by the use of melodrama, Machado does not allow him to receive explicit criticism from any character in the story. Simão's mother is a silent accomplice to the actions of her husband. Amaral is quite happy to keep the young man detained in the unnamed province. Helena does not utter a single word during the whole narrative. And Simão, whose unpolished eloquence was in evidence during the early part of his final sermon, is simply at a loss for words when the sight of Helena reveals the full extent of his father's scheming:

Era Helena.

No manuscrito do frade há uma série de reticências dispostas em oito linhas. Ele próprio não sabe o que passou. Mas o que se passou foi que, mal conhecera Helena, continuou o frade o discurso. Era então outra cousa: era um discurso sem nexos, sem assunto, um verdadeiro delírio. A consternação foi geral. (OC.II, p. 157)

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<sup>34</sup> According to James Smith Allen, the frequent pretence to historical authenticity in the popular novel was "as much as to anticipate the reader's disapprobation as to mimic the romantics' search for a poetry of history". *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers and Books in the 19th Century* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 51.

<sup>35</sup>

In patriarchal Brazil the authority of the father over a minor son - and even one who was of age - was carried to its logical conclusion: the right to kill. The patriarch had absolute power in the administration of justice in the family, some fathers reproducing, in the shade of the cashew grove, the severest acts of classic patriarchy: killing and ordering killed, not only Negroes, but white boys and girls, their own children.

Gilberto Freyre, *The Mansions and the Shanties: the Making of Modern Brazil*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 59.



In silencing Simão especially, it is as if Machado is saying that the authority of the father cannot even be questioned, let alone challenged by those under his jurisdiction. And since, like Simão, it would be improper for Machado (who, after all, is writing for a *family* magazine) to make serious criticisms of a society which has placed so much power in the hands of the father, what we see in this particular story and others is "a series of reticences" in which Machado merely hints at the problem of misguided authority and refuses to be drawn into confrontation.<sup>36</sup>

Machado's other melodramatic story, "Virginius", is an especially blatant example of his unwillingness to directly confront his readers with the problems that are inherent in a society run along patriarchal lines. On the face of it, the story even appears to be an apology for the system of dependency and authority as practised on the typical nineteenth century *fazenda*, and demands a careful reading if we are to discover Machado's real motives for writing. Based on an incident in Livy's Roman histories,<sup>37</sup> "Virginius" is the account of a lawyer who, after being summoned by an unknown client to defend a labourer by the name of Julião, becomes involved in the most disturbing case of his career. It transpires that, faced with the possibility of a violent abduction at the hands of Carlos, the arrogant son of the local *fazendeiro*, Julião has chosen to kill his own daughter in order to preserve her honour. Carlos and Elisa were once childhood companions, but time has had the unfortunate effect of emphasizing the social divide that separates them. When the matter finally goes to court, the glaring injustice of the situation inspires the narrator to make a passionate defence of the labourer's action, and instead of receiving the death penalty Julião is sentenced to ten years

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<sup>36</sup> Pointing to the metaphorical implications of Simão's sermon and Amaral's inventions for the later work of Machado, John Gledson has said:

Faced with a straightforward abuse of paternal authority, language has two alternatives. The simple language of Christ is impossible. Either the writer invents stories to disguise that abuse - the function of the ex-novelist *correspondente* - or he cannot express himself at all, except in a truncated, delirious fashion. It can be seen that Machado took both routes, disguise and delirium. His plots disguise the completeness of paternal power (which very nearly imposes silence), and after *Brás Cubas* adopt delirium in one form or another (truncated, interrupted discourse, madness, obsession) to convey their point.

In *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1984), pp. 62-63.

<sup>37</sup> The story of Verginius can be found in *Livy*, Vol II, Trans. by B. O. Foster (London: Heinemann, 1922), pp. 143-161.

imprisonment. Carlos is forced to join the army by his father, and when Julião has completed his term in prison he is taken in by the kindly landowner. By the end of the story, then, we are meant to feel that a degree of poetic justice has been achieved. Nothing can bring back the life of Elisa, but at least villainy and virtue have been rewarded accordingly:

No momento em que escrevo estas páginas, Julião, tendo já cumprido a sentença, vive na fazenda de Pio. Pio não quis que ele voltasse ao lugar em que se dera a catástrofe, e fâ-lo residir ao pé de si.

O velho fazendeiro tinha feito recolher as cinzas de Elisa em uma urna, ao pé da qual vão ambos orar todas as semanas.

Aqueles dois pais, que assistiram ao funeral das suas esperanças, acham-se ligados intimamente pelos laços do infortúnio.

Na fazenda fala-se sempre de Elisa, mas nunca de Carlos. Pio é o primeiro a não magoar o coração de Julião com a lembrança daquele que o levou a matar sua filha.

Quanto a Carlos, vai resgatando como pode o crime com que atentou contra a honra de uma donzela e contra a felicidade de dois pais. (OC.II, pp. 747-748)

Despite the sentimental balancing of the scales in the final chapter, however, "Virginus" is a story that leaves us with many more problems than it solves. If, as was illustrated in "Frei Simão", Machado was conscious and critical of the dangers of patriarchal authority, why should he present us with an idealized picture of the prevailing social conditions? Pio and Julião are portrayed as paragons of benign authority and grateful dependency respectively, who end the tale in much the same way as they began:

- A fazenda de Pio é o asilo dos orfãos e dos pobres. Ali se encontra o que é necessário à vida: leite e instrução às crianças, pão e sossego aos adultos. Muitos lavradores nestas seis léguas cresceram e tiveram princípio de vida na fazenda de Pio. É a um tempo Salomão e S. Vicente de Paulo. (OC.II, p. 738)

Julião fora um daqueles a quem a alma caridosa de Pio dera sustento e trabalho. Suas boas qualidades, a gratidão, o amor, o respeito com que falava e adorava o protetor, não ficaram sem uma paga valiosa. Pio, no fim de certo tempo, deu a Julião um sítio que ficava pouco distante da fazenda. Para lá fôra morar Julião com uma filha menor, cuja mãe morrera em consequência dos acontecimentos que levaram Julião a recorrer à proteção do fazendeiro. (OC.II, p. 740)

Is Machado attempting to justify the *status quo* by showing us how it could and should operate? This certainly appears to be the case, especially when we look at the incredibly utopian version of slavery practised by the *fazendeiro*:

O negro foi caminho, e nós saímos da janela.

- É escravo de Pio?

- Escravo é o nome que se dá ; mas Pio não tem escravos, tem amigos. Olham-no todos como de fôra um Deus. É que em parte alguma houva nunca mais brando e cordial

tratamento a homens escravizados. Nenhum dos instrumentos de ignomínia que por aí se aplicam para corrigi-los existem na fazenda de Pio. Culpa capital ninguém comete entre os negros da fazenda; a alguma falta venial que haja, Pio aplica apenas uma repreensão tão cordial e tão amiga, que acaba por fazer chorar o delinqüente. Ouve mais: Pio estabeleceu entre os seus escravos uma espécie de concurso que permite a um certo número libertar-se todos os anos. Acreditarás tu que lhes é indiferente viver livres ou escravos na fazenda, e que esse estímulo não decide nenhum deles, sendo que, por natural impulso, todos se portam digno de elogios? (OC.II, p. 739)

It is difficult to believe how Machado possibly could have envisaged a situation in which the transformation of slavery into an humane institution would render abolition unnecessary. The reference to "instrumentos de ignomínia" indicates that he was well aware of the wide variety of whips, sticks and restrictive grills and stocks that were used by masters to administer punishment on the offending slave. He was well aware too, no doubt, that in a system which was based on forced labour and which thrived on violence, a verbal reprimand would carry no weight whatsoever. As Emilia Viotti da Costa has stated:

O castigo físico impunha-se, na opinião do tempo, como única medida coercitiva eficaz. Generalizara-se a convicção de que muitos escravos não trabalhavam se não fossem devidamente espancados.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, it is clear from certain references in the early *crônicas* that at the time that "Virginius" was being published, Machado had a personal involvement in the freedom of slaves which does not tally with his apparent apology for the system in the *Jornal das Famílias*. Less than a year after the appearance of the story, Machado would refer to a contemporary slave drama as "ainda um protesto contra a escravidão. . . para mostrar que na guerra feita ao flagelo da escravidão, a literatura dramática entra por grande parte".<sup>39</sup> And on 13 March 1864 in the *Semana Ilustrada*, only four months prior to the serialization of his romantic tragedy, Machado had found it impossible to contain his anger when he chose to discuss the reasons that lay behind the disappointing results of a charity concert organised for a slave who was attempting to buy her freedom:

No Ginásio houve uma rēcita em benefício de uma pobre escrava. Pouco gente lá foi, e talvez bem pouco tirasse essa infeliz.

Mas o que há de novidade nesse espetáculo? Liga-se ele a um ato bárbaro e deshumano. Ouçam os brasileiros e tremam de indignação.

Mlle. Rissette havia prometido cantar nesse benefício; era a esperança de uma enchente; era a esperança de liberdade. Um tal de Sr. Arnaud, porém que dizem ser

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<sup>38</sup> *Da Senzala à Colônia* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1966), p. 282

<sup>39</sup> A reference to *Os Cancros Sociais* by Sra. D. Maria Ribeiro recorded in *O Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 16 May 1865. Reprinted in J.23, pp. 391-392.

empresário, ou coisa que o valha, do Alcazar, esquecendo de que tem enchido as algibeiras à custa dos brasileiros, esquecendo-se de que veio a ser gente e ter, quem sabe? pão para comer entre este hospitaleiro e sofredor povo, decidiu, como senhor absoluto, que a simpática artista não cantasse no benefício da pobre brasileira! Oh! parece incrível que um francês, que é recebido pelos brasileiros com os braços abertos, que ganha dinheiro aos punhados, impor leis e decidir *ex-cathedra* contra a felicidade de uma pobre e miserável brasileira, que honestamente pedia o óbulo da caridade para libertarse-se do jugo, que a oprimia.<sup>40</sup>

Machado's very definite feelings on liberty and oppression as expressed in the *crônicas* of the period should serve as a warning for the reader who is tempted to attribute everything that is said in "Virginius" to the personal opinion or wishes of the writer. It is doubtful whether Machado ever believed that slavery, or any other system of dependency could be reformed. The story itself, in fact, contains several indications that, as far as Machado was concerned, Pio's *fazenda* could only have existed in the world of fiction. Throughout the first chapter, the narrator makes repeated reference to the unreality of the case in which he has become involved:

Luzia-me um romance através daquele misterioso e anônimo bilhete. (OC.II, p. 737)

Creio que há um romance para deslindar. (OC.II, p. 738)

O meu amigo continuou a desfiar as virtudes do fazendeiro. Meu espirito apreendia-se cada vez mais de que eu ia entrar em um romance. (OC.II, p. 739)

Minha curiosidade estava excitada ao último ponto. Os autos não me tinham tirado o gosto pelas novelas, e eu achava-me feliz por encontrar no meio da prosa judiciária, de que andava cercado, um assunto digno da pena de um escritor. (OC.II, p. 739)

And at the end of the chapter we are given a clue as to the source of this fantasy world which seems to have escaped the disillusionment that both the narrator and his friend regard as being characteristic of life's experiences:

Entrou nova porção de café. Tomamo-lo entre recordações do passado, que muitas eram. Juntos vimos florescer as primeiras ilusões, e junto vimos dissiparem-se as últimas. Havia de que encher, não uma, mas cem noites. Aquela passou-se rápida, e mais ainda depois que a família toda veio tomar parte em nossa íntima confabulação. Por uma exceção, de que fui causa, a hora de recolher foi a meia-noite.

- Como é doce ter um amigo! dizia eu pensando no Conde de Maistre, e retirando-me para o quarto que me foi destinado. (OC.II, p. 739)

Pio's estate is exactly the kind of scenario that one could legitimately expect to have been thought up by the French magistrate and diplomat Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), whose political writings stressed the importance of authority and submission in human

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Magalhães Jr., *Vida e Obra de Machado de Assis*, Vol I, p. 231

institutions. Since God's rule over human affairs is absolute and yet non restrictive,<sup>41</sup> Maistre argued that we can do no better than follow His lead in the form of an enlightened monarchy and a hierarchical society. Any other model in fact (and here he was thinking primarily of ideals of the French Revolution) would be doomed to failure since it would lack the one ingredient that was essential to its survival:

l'oubli seul du grand Être (je ne dis pas le mépris) est un anathème irrévocable sur les ouvrages humains qui en sont flétris. Toutes les institutions imaginables reposent sur une idée religieuse, ou ne font que passer. Elles sont fortes et durables à mesure qu'elles sont divinisées, s'il est permis de s'exprimer ainsi.<sup>42</sup>

Maistre's words on the deification of human institutions find their echo in "Virginus", where we find that Machado is very definitely testing out the ideas of the religious monarchist. Pio is referred to on three occasions as an earthly god:

tudo o que não sei de certa ordem é decidido na fazenda de Pio, cuja sentença todos acatam e cumprem. Seja ela contra Pedro ou contra Paulo, Paulo e Pedro submetem-se, como se fôra uma decisão divina. (OC.II, p. 738)

Olham-no todos como se fôra um Deus. (OC.II, p. 739)

aquele deus da terra. (OC.II, p. 745)

In other words, the man who is also known as *Pai de Todos* is a perfect representative of Maistre's enlightened ruler. Unfortunately for Elisa, however, Pio is not in fact a god. He is just a man and, what is more, one who is powerless to prevent the tragedy which is caused by his own son. As Julião reminds his daughter when she pleads to Carlos for mercy:

- Não peças nada disse este. Só há um protetor para os infelizes: é Deus. Há outro depois dele; mas esse está longe... Ó *Pai de todos*, que filho te deu o Senhor!... (OC.II, p. 744)

So after setting up Maistre's utopian society in "Virginus", Machado proceeds to uncover the weaknesses of the argument. Pio's human status is one of them. The sup-

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<sup>41</sup> Maistre's best known work, *Considérations sur la France* begins as follows:

Nous sommes attachés au trône de l'Être suprême par une chaîne souple qui nous retient sans nous asservir.

Ce que'il y a de plus admirable dans l'ordre universel des choses, c'est l'action des êtres libres sous la main divine. Libremente esclaves, ils opèrent tout à la fois volontairement et nécessairement: ils font réellement ce qu'ils veulent, mais sans pouvoir déranger les plans généraux.

*Oeuvres Complètes de Joseph de Maistre*, Vol. I (Lyon: Vite & Perrussel, 1884), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Maistre, p. 56.

posedly ideal situation of authority and dependency is another. At several points in the narrative we are led to conclude that protection, no matter how generous, will always bring its own worries. For a start, it carries no security, and for all Pio's benevolence, Julião can never afford to relax in his labour. He is constantly haunted by the uncertainty of Elisa's future:

Laborioso por necessidade e por gosto, Julião bem depressa viu frutificar o seu trabalho. Ainda assim não descansava. Queria, quando morresse, deixar um pecúlio à filha. Morrer sem deixá-la amparada era o sombrio receio que o perseguia. Podia acaso contar com a vida do fazendeiro esmoler? (OC.II, p. 740)

Uma tarde, quinze dias depois do incidente que narrei acima, voltava Julião da fazenda do velho Pio. Era já perto da noite. Julião caminhava vagarosamente, pensando no que lhe faltava ainda para completar o pecúlio de sua filha. Nessas divagações, não reparou que anoitecera. Quando deu por si, ainda se achava uma boas braças distante de casa. Apressou o passo. (OC.II, pp. 742-743)

Moreover, the receipt of favour imposes a loyalty that is not always appropriate to the situation and severely limits the nature of Julião's reaction to Carlos' early threat to Elisa:

Julião estava atônito. Inquiriu sua filha sobre todas as particularidades da conversa referida. Não lhe restava dúvida acerca dos maus intentos de Carlos. Mas como de um tão bom pai pudera sair tão mau filho? perguntava ele. E esse próprio filho não era bom antes de ir para fora? Como exprobar-lhe a sua má ação? E poderia fazê-lo? Como evitar a ameaça? Fugir do lugar em que morava o pai não era mostrar-se ingrato? Todas estas reflexões passaram pelo espírito de Julião. Via o abismo a cuja borde estava, e não sabia como escapar-lhe. (OC.II, p. 742)

Of course, there can be no escape for a man of Julião's station once the mutual bond of service and respect is broken. If Carlos, having had a taste of how the real world works outside of his father's estate, is determined to enjoy the benefits of his position without looking to its responsibilities there is nothing anyone can do to stop him. Although Julião is puzzled by Carlos' dramatic transformation from "um bom menino" (OC.II, p. 740) to "tão mau filho", the reader ought not to be. It is to be expected that, "educado sob a vigilância de seu pai", Carlos should have developed a likeable nature in his early years. Once he moves away to further his education, however, he is bound to be shaped by other influences:

Trouxe o tempo as divisões, e anos depois, quando Carlos apeou à porta da fazenda com uma carta de bacharel na algibeira, uma esponja se passara sobre a vida anterior. Elisa, já mulher, podia avaliar os nobres esforços de seu pai, e concentrara todos os afetos de sua alma no mais respeitoso amor filial. Carlos era homem. Conhecia as condições da vida social, e desde os primeiros gestos mostrou que abismo separava o filho do protetor da filha do protegido. (OC.II, p. 741)

Despite the melodramatic simplicity Carlos' shifting role from innocent childhood companion to villain of the piece, his change of attitude towards Elisa is perfectly understandable and very nearly inevitable, given the prejudices of society as a whole.

In the final analysis, then, it is evident that "Virginius" is not so much an apology for the continued existence of a hierarchical society as an exposition of its inherent and unresolvable problems. Its message is essentially the same as that of "Frei Simão". For even in an ideal situation there can be no real sense of emotional or economic security for people like Julião, Elisa or Helena since they will always be subject to the favour or abuse of their "protectors". Machado's criticisms are tentative, his approach is melodramatic, and he stops far short of suggesting an alternative social structure, but his preoccupation with the dynamics of social intercourse in his first two stories for the *Jornal das Famílias* is undeniable and looks forward to a time in the mid to late 1870s when he decides to deal in greater detail with the problems of class mobility in both the novel and the short story. Prior to 1870, however, Machado's interest in the social consequences of authority and dependency is largely limited to "Virginius" and "Frei Simão" as far as his fiction is concerned. Admittedly, both "Casada e viúva" (JdasF Nov 1864) and "A Pianista" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1866) contain critical cameos of patriarchal mentality which are well worth considering briefly, but in neither story does Machado attempt to convey the tragic potential of social privilege or parental authority.

In "Casada e viúva", Machado's comments have absolutely no bearing on the main plot, but having already stated that Cristiana is not in love with Captain Nogueira, he insists on giving the background to their marriage. Machado's narratorial intrusion needs to be quoted in its entirety:

Cristiana, órfã de pai e mãe, vivia na companhia de um tio, homem velho e impertinente, achacado de duas moléstias gravíssimas: um reumatismo crônico e uma saudade do regimen colonial. Devo explicar esta última enfermidade; ele não sentia que o Brasil se tivesse feito independente; sentia que, fazendo-se independente, não tivesse conservado a forma de governo absoluto. Gorou o ovo, dizia ele, logo depois de adotada a constituição. E protestando interiormente contra o que se fizera, retirou-se para Minas Gerais, donde nunca mais saiu. A esta ligeira noticia do tio de Cristiana acrescentarei que era rico como um Potosi e avaro como Harpagão.

Entrando na fazenda do tio de Cristiana e sentindo-se influído pela beleza desta, Nogueira aproveitou-se da doença politica do fazendeiro para lisonjeá-la com umas fomentações de louvor do passado e indignação pelo presente. Em um servidor do Estado atual das cousas, achou o fazendeiro que era aquilo uma prova de rara independência, e o estratagemma do capitão surtiu duas vantagens: o fazendeiro deu-lhe a sobrinha e mais um bom par de contos de réis. Nogueira, que só visava a primeira, achou-se felicissimo por ter alcançado ambas. Ora, é certo que, sem as opiniões forjadas no momento pelo capitão, o velho fazendeiro não tirava à sua fortuna um ceitel que fosse.

Quanto a Cristiana, se não sentia pelo capitão um amor igual *ou mesmo inferior* [my emphasis] ao que lhe inspirava, votava-lhe uma estima respeitosa. E o hábito, desde Aristóteles todos reconhecem isto, e o hábito, aumentando a estima de Cristiana, dava à vida doméstica do Capitão Nogueira uma paz, uma tranqüilidade, um gozo brando, digno de tanta inveja como era o amor sempre violento do casal Meneses.

Voltando à corte, Cristiana esperava uma vida mais própria aos seus anos de moça do que a passada na fazenda mineira na companhia fastidiosa do reumático legitimista. Pouco que pudessem alcançar as suas ilusões, *era já muito em comparação com o passado*. [my emphasis]

Dadas todas estas explicações, continuo a minha história. (OC.II, pp. 249-250)

The manner in which the foolish and miserly old guardian decides the fate of Cristiana is arbitrary to say the least. And she obviously has no say in the matter, since the political absolutism of her uncle is also reflected in the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, Cristiana's enforced marriage is not presented as a tragic event, nor is it without its disadvantages. She may not be in love with Nogueira, but their marriage will survive on the basis of mutual respect. In any case, she much prefers the hustle and bustle of Rio to the boredom of life on a *fazenda*.

Class snobbery and a preoccupation with financial considerations are the distinguishing characteristics of the despotic father figure who is portrayed in "A pianista". Here we have a return to the basic format of "Frei Simão" with the rich and prejudiced Tibério Valença fiercely opposing his son's marriage to a poor piano teacher. What is particularly interesting about this story, however, is the amount of detail Machado is willing to provide on the reasons that lie behind Tibério's opposition. He begins by referring us to the attitude of Tibério's own father, Basílio, whose mania for the study of nobility had led him to actually welcome the demands made upon upper class Brazilians following the arrival of D. João VI from Portugal in 1808:

Darei uma prova da admiração de Basílio Valença pelas coisas fidalgas. Para alojar os nobres que acompanhavam o príncipe regente foi preciso, por ordem do intendente de polícia, que muitos moradores das boas casas as despejassem incontinentemente. Basílio Valença nem esperou que esta ordem fosse comunicada; mal soube das diligências policiais a que se procedia foi de motu próprio oferecer a sua casa, que era das melhores, e mudou-se para outra de menor valia e de mesquinho aspecto.

E mais. Muitos dos fidalgos alojados violentamente tarde deixaram as casa e tarde satisfizeram os alugueis respectivos. Basílio Valença não só impôs a condição de que não se lhe devolvesse a casa enquanto fosse necessária, senão que declarou peremptoriamente não aceitar do fidalgo alojado um mínimo real. (CEsq, p. 225)

Tibério is brought up to respect the same class values of as his father and tries to instruct his two children in like manner. But his son, Tomás, is attracted to the poor Malvina by her spiritual qualities, a development which is inevitably met by an ex-



plosive reaction from Tibério. At this juncture Machado points to a certain lack of logic in the father's social reasoning:

Tibério Valença não era lógico neste procedimento. Se não queria admitir em sua família um individuo que na sua opinião estava abaixo dela, como pretendia entrar nas famílias nobres de que ele se achava evidentemente muito mais baixo? Isto, que saltava aos olhos de qualquer, não era compreendido por Tibério Valença, a quem a vaidade de ver misturar o sangue vermelho das suas veias com o sangue azul das veias fidalgas era para ele o único e exclusivo cuidado.

Finalmente o tempo trouxe as necessárias modificações às pretensões nobiliárias de Tibério Valença, e em 1850 já não exigia uma linha de avós puros e incontestáveis, exigia simplesmente uma fortuna regular.

*Eu não me atrevo a dizer o que penso [my emphasis] destas preocupações de um homem que a natureza fizera pai. Indico-as simplesmente. E acrescento que Tibério Valença cuidava destes arranjos dos filhos como cuidava do arranjo de umas fábricas que possuía. Eram para ele a mesma operação. (CEsq, p. 226)*

Although he claims to be simply pointing out the failings of the father, Machado is, of course, expressing his opinion on the subject. Tibério is a tyrant and the reader is invited to condemn his approach to the marriage of his children. But again, as in "Frei Simão", neither the narrator nor the characters make any attempt to argue against the principle of parental authority. The wedding between Tomás and Malvina does eventually take place, but not without the dutiful son receiving his father's grudging consent, nor some noble hesitation on the part of the pianist. And after a period during which the ailing Tibério is first of all nursed back to health by Malvina and then given the opportunity to examine the simple lifestyle of the loving couple, we observe a dramatic change in the father's nature which forms the conclusion to the story:

Isto prova que a natureza pode comover a natureza, e que uma boa ação tem a faculdade muitas vezes de destruir o preconceito e restabelecer a verdade do dever.

Não pareça improvável ou violenta esta mudança no espírito de Tibério. As circunstâncias favoreceram essa mudança, para a qual o principal motivo foi a resignação de Malvina e de Tomás. (CEsq, p. 251)

So, by the end of the tale, Machado has shifted its emphasis from the criticism of an unjust father to the positive results of duty and self-control. The idea that filial obedience will inspire parental consideration, is a fitting moral for the *Jornal das Famílias*.

## The education of the reader

"A pianista" is, in fact, typical of the majority of the early stories in as much as it illustrates how Machado prefers to avoid the melodrama of "Frei Simão" and "Virginius"

even at the expense of social criticism. Indeed, the task of re-educating the reader who has been accustomed to tales of romantic frustration and desperation becomes Machado's most frequent preoccupation during the period. Beginning with the need to provide a moral literature that goes beyond the superficial (and to a certain extent hypocritical) ethics of the *folhetim*, Machado systematically destroys the romantic myths that his largely female audience have come to expect. Unlike that of his early predecessors, there is no room in Machado's world for the sentimentality of young love or the violent passions that lead to death or adultery. In Machado's opinion, an emotion that fails to obey the laws of commonsense and morality cannot be called love, since real love must possess the fundamental quality of self-control in all circumstances. Anything else comes under the category of self-interest and must be attributed to vanity, lust or financial considerations. As in Macedo, courtship as calculation is a regular feature of Machado's early stories, but the way in which each writer approaches the problems of scepticism and self-interest is totally different. Whereas Macedo openly deplored the cynical actions of his characters and refused to see all men as being egotistical, Machado's position is much more ambiguous. Romantic calculation is not always a serious matter in Machado, and by the time we arrive at "Miss Dollar" in 1870 there is enough evidence to suggest that he regarded self-interest (or personal vanity at least) as an inherent characteristic of human nature.

## **A moral fiction**

Before he decided to concentrate on the sceptical observation and analysis of personal motive that would become such a recognizable part of his style, Machado directed much of his writing against the dubious moral content of the conventional romantic tale. According to Machado, the traditional equation that love equals passion was both untrue and potentially harmful to the mind of the young female reader. As a result of this belief he wrote a number of stories that were obviously designed to redefine the reader's concept of love and counteract what Machado regarded as the immoral influence of melodramatic fiction.

"O anjo das donzelas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1864) contains Machado's earliest and most explicit condemnation of the moral value of popular literature. Here he introduces

us to Cecília, a beautiful young girl of fifteen whose one abiding passion is the reading of novels. She has read a hundred of them since leaving school and even as we watch her has just finished another which is still fresh in her mind:

Passou em revista na memória todos os sucessos contidos no livro, reproduziu episódio por episódio, cena por cena, lance por lance. Deu forma, vida, alma aos heróis do romance, viveu com eles, conversou com eles, sentiu com eles. (CAv, p. 23)

This would be all very well were it not for the fact that both the kind of novel she reads and her own superstitious nature have given her a perverted idea of the power of love.

As the narrator comments:

Se nessas obras ela visse, ao lado das más conseqüências a que os excessos podem levar, a imagem pura e suave da felicidade que o amor dá, não se teria de certo apreendido daquele modo. Mas não foi assim. Cecília aprendeu nesses livros que o amor era uma paixão invencível e funesta; que não havia para ela nem a força de vontade nem a perseverança do dever. (CAv, p. 24)

Cecília's extreme fears that she may fall prone to an ill-fated passion inspire her vision that night of the angel of damsels, come to protect her from the evil consequences of love. He promises her safety and peace of mind in exchange for complete faithfulness in him, giving her his ring as a sign of their pact. Next morning she awakens to find a ring on her finger and throughout her life regards it as a talisman to fend off the approaches of her many suitors. But although she never suffers the dangers of love, neither does she experience its joys. As the narrator puts it, Cecília struggles instead against "não sei que repugnância do vácuo, não sei que horror de solidão" right up to her old age. It is at this stage of her life, however, that the vision of her protective angel is shown to be pure fantasy when one of her earliest admirers, her cousin Tibúrcio, returns from his extensive travels. He had left Rio on that same fateful night, but not without first arranging for his ring to be placed on Cecília's sleeping hand by an obliging maid. His initials, engraved on the inside of the ring, are the final proof that Cecília's fantastic fears, induced by one aspect of popular romantic fiction, have ruined her life.

In "O anjo das donzelas", then, Machado establishes a direct link between the excesses of romantic literature and their moral effect. And since the kind of fiction that was so damaging to Cecília's development depicted love as an all-consuming, unstoppable passion, several of Machado's own stories emphasize instead the counterbalancing factors of "a força da vontade" and "a perseverança do dever". For example, the basic thesis of "Questão de vaidade" (JdasF Dec 1864-Mar 1865) is that

affairs of the heart must always be accompanied by a sense of responsibility. Eduardo claims to be hopelessly in love with two women at the same time, but his wise friend, Pedro Elói, is under no illusions as to the true nature of Eduardo's feelings:

"Reflete, entra em ti mesmo, envergonha-te do erro em que estás. Vê bem que não amas nem a viúva, nem a donzela. Amas a uma só criatura, és tu mesmo. É o amor dos sentimentos que se pode dividir, que se divide, que se prostitui, que se desvaira." (HistR, p. 16)

Despite repeated warnings from Elói, Eduardo continues to flirt with the emotions of two innocent women until the younger and more delicate of the two becomes aware of his two-timing game and dies of a broken heart. The unhappy consequences of his selfish actions effect a moral reform in Eduardo, but if only he had heeded Elói's earlier words when he wrote:

"Sou moço como tu; sou apto, como tu, para as paixões; mas há uma diferença: eu as domino, porque as paixões não são invencíveis, só uma moral interesseira e egoísta pode dá-las como tais." (HistR, p. 47)

Machado's more virtuous characters on the other hand, are fully aware of the need to maintain a sense of duty and self-control in a romantic situation. Refusing to be drawn down the path of adultery or tragic frustration, they make the best of a bad job and are often rewarded accordingly. Like the married woman in "Francisca" (JdasF Mar 1867), Machado's heroines are permitted to feel the strongest of passions in the presence of a grieving ex-lover, but an even stronger sense of duty must always prevail:

O primeiro movimento da moça foi arrancar-lhe as mãos do rosto e animá-lo com uma palavra de afeição. Mas a idéia do dever apresentou-lhe ao espírito; Francisca pôde conter-se. Era já muito o que dissera. A moça amara ardentemente Daniel, agora mesmo ela sentia que se lhe abriam no coração, com o frescor primitivo, as flores cândidas do antigo amor. Mas Francisca podia sofrer no interior; não era escrava das paixões ao ponto de esquecer as leis do dever. Ora o dever fazia de Daniel naquele momento um homem estranho. (CRec, p. 27)

Such tension is exactly what the typical *Jornal das Famílias* reader would be looking for, and Machado was more than willing to oblige, provided, of course, the outcome was suitably moral. In this case, Francisca's eventually happy relationship with the man she has been forced to marry comes as the seemingly inevitable reward for her virtue. Similarly, Fernando of "Fernando e Fernanda" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1866) manages to shrug off the disappointment of not marrying his childhood companion and is able to find someone who has also been forced to suffer in love:

A identidade das situações e dos sentimentos foi o primeiro elo da simpatia de Fernando para com Teresa. O canto confirmou e desenvolveu a primeira impressão. Quando Teresa

acabou, Fernando não se pôde ter e foi prestar-lhe o apoio do seu braço para voltar à cadeira que ficava junto de sua mãe.

Durante a noite Fernando sentiu-se mais a mais impressionado pela desdesnhada. No fim do serau estava decidido. *Devia* [my emphasis] amar aquela mulher e fazer-se amar por ela. (CRec, pp. 90-91)

So as he continues to develop his thesis on the importance of the use of the will in amorous relationships, Machado reaches the stage where he sees true love as being more of a deliberate decision than an unconscious sentiment. Fernando finds himself emotionally and spiritually attracted to Teresa, but their future is determined not so much by his heart as by his head. The same is true of the relationship between Hortênsia and Meneses in "Não é mel para a boca do asno" (JdasF Jan 1868). Whilst Hortênsia is being courted by the worthless Marques (who later abandons her before the marriage), the love-stricken Meneses proves himself to be the perfect model of self-control. His virtues do not, however, go unnoticed by the unfortunate young woman, and they form the basis of her affection for him:

A moça compreendeu a delicadeza de Meneses; viu que era amada, mas que, diante da sua dor, o rapaz procurava esconder o mais que pudesse a sua pessoa.

Hortênsia, que era capaz de delicadeza igual, apreciou aquele no seu justo valor.

Que havia de mais natural que uma aproximação de duas almas tão nobres, tão capazes de sacrifícios, tão feitas para se compreenderem? (CEsp, p. 87)

O que ela já sentia por ele era estima e simpatia; nada disso, nem isso tudo forma o amor. Mas Hortênsia tinha um coração delicado e uma inteligência esclarecida; compreendia Meneses; podia vir a amá-lo. (CEsp, p. 88)

Contrary to the message conveyed by popular romantic fiction, love for Machado is an act of the will and does not correspond to passion or even sentiment. It involves being in control of one's emotions and adapting oneself to the restraints of unfortunate circumstances and social conventions. As far as Machado is concerned, love can never be used as an excuse for his readers to indulge in the dangerous pleasures of adultery or filial disobedience.

## **A dubious moral story**

The closest Machado ever came in his very early years at the *Jornal das Famílias* to writing a story that could possibly be read as an excuse for immorality was "Confissões de uma viúva moça" (JdasF Apr-May 1865), in which he used the technique

of first person narration to reveal the weak moral nature of a woman who is tempted to be unfaithful to her cold and indifferent husband. Interpreted as an example of Realist literature, the story provoked a heated polemic in the Rio press between its defenders and a moralizing critic who chose to refer to himself as "O Caturra" ("The Faultfinder"). The accusations made against Machado and his editor at the *Jornal das Famílias*, B.L. Garnier, were so fierce that some critics have ventured to propose ulterior motives for the debate. Magalhães Jr. argues that the whole affair was a media hype, concocted by Garnier in order to raise flagging sales in the magazine,<sup>43</sup> whilst Brito Broca puts forward the idea that Machado was being persecuted for the temerity of his political comments in the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*.<sup>44</sup> Neither of these suggestions is conclusive and in any case, it is not difficult to see why a tale that promised to divulge the secret thoughts of a young widow should have provoked such a reaction.

Central to the argument of "O Caturra" is the idea that the story was unsuitable for the impressionable young female minds for whom a paper such as the *Jornal das Famílias* was destined. What would they be learning from the intimate confessions of this frank but obviously vain woman who seems at times to be trying to justify her temptation to adultery? The partial blame she places on her inferior husband for their dead marriage and her subsequent actions could even be seen as a subversion of traditional family values. And the fact that Eugênia is finally humiliated by the desertion of her would-be lover following her husband's sudden death matters little to "O Caturra", since the expression of her weak moral character will already have left its mark on the reader:

Que importa que o autor afinal faça fulgurar a virtude, se esta penosamente fez o seu trajeto pelos flóridos vergéis do vício, cujos embriagantes perfumes atordoarão a suscetível imaginação da leitora em sua idade de ilusões? A virtude fulgurará decerto ante os espíritos já formados, mas naturalmente chegará pálida e desmaiada ante os olhos juvenis, ofuscados pelos relâmpagos das grandes paixões, e que encararão distraídos como insípida. O veneno então já está inoculado, e os antídotos mal contendo a explosão do mal, a ação destruidora, não restituirão intacta ao enfermo a sua saúde perdida. (Disp, p. 213)

Ironically, it would seem that Machado is now being condemned for writing the kind of fiction he criticised so roundly in "O anjo das donzelas", although there can be no doubt

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<sup>43</sup> *Vida e Obra de Machado de Assis*, Vol. I, pp. 318-328.

<sup>44</sup> "Entre a política e as letras" in *Machado de Assis e a Política mais Outros Estudos* (São Paulo: Editora Polis, 1983), pp. 48-53.

that his objectives in painting such a vivid picture of Eugênia's romantic delusions were nothing if not honourable. As "Sigma", Machado's final defender in the polemic argues:

Eis uma cena que todos os dias se repete que nenhuma filha de família, por mais inocente e recatada que seja, ignora. Pensamos haver mais conveniência em revelar aos navegadores os paraisos submarinos do que deixá-los correr descuidados sobre ignotos precipícios, e insondáveis abismos.

Quem estas linhas escreve não morre de amores pela *escola realista*, que por mais de uma vez tem censurado em suas mais descabeladas produções; não deixa todavia de reconhecer que, respeitado o decoro, como no romance *Confissões de uma Viúva Moça*, e observada a decência, tanto na linguagem como na pintura dos quadros, são esses escritos de subida vantagem para as famílias, conselheiras íntimas, roteiros seguros na senda da virtude. (Disp, p. 216)

The Realist School from which the writer claims to disassociate himself is probably a reference to the Brazilian followers of Alexandre Dumas fils, whose *La Dame aux Camélias* had been hailed as a watershed in the history of French theatre by critics such as Janin in 1852:

Sa pièce est d'un ton si vrai, d'un accent si vif, d'une vérité si prise à point et sur le vif, que voilà soudain ce drame des faciles amours qui devient un événement littéraire (...) *Le réalisme!* ... il a fait ici son chef-d'oeuvre. *Le réalisme*, il règne en ces boudoirs corinthiens.<sup>45</sup>

When Dumas' play finally arrived at Rio in 1856 it provoked a storm of protest as well as spawning a host of imitators, the most famous of whom was José de Alencar. His contribution to the theme of the prostitute redeemed by love, *As Asas de um Anjo*, was banned after only three performances in 1858, and in an article written several years later, Machado himself would severely criticize the author for wasting his creative talents on such a controversial topic.<sup>46</sup> Also, in his earlier activities as a dramatic censor Machado had felt it necessary to condemn certain productions for their lack of attention to propriety,<sup>47</sup> and there is distinct possibility that "Sigma" is Machado in disguise. Machado never approved of the Realist tendency to concentrate on the degrading aspects of society, even when it was accompanied by the desire to reform. Nevertheless, there is something of the Realist in most of Machado's early work, which the polemic surrounding "Confissões de uma viúva moça" serves to highlight. For apart from being

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in the introduction to *La Dame aux Camélias*, ed. by Roger J.B. Clark (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> In the "Semana Literária" section of the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, March 1866. Reprinted in OC.III, pp. 869-879.

<sup>47</sup> See Magalhães Jr., *Vida e Obra de Machado de Assis*, Vol. I, pp. 174-181.

a moralist, Machado saw himself as an observer of social realities and individual motivations, whose job it was to reveal the truth about characters and situations. As the narrator states somewhat apologetically at the end of "Casada e viúva" (JdasF Nov 1864):

Quanto ao que há de vulgar em tudo o que acabo de contar sou eu o primeiro a reconhecê-lo. Mas que querem? Eu não pretendo senão esboçar quadros ou caracteres, conforme me ocorrem ou vou encontrando. É isto e nada mais. (OC.II, p. 758)

Although the reality that he chose to record was strictly limited to the romantic sphere, Machado found plenty of opportunities to uncover the hidden vices of society and of the individual. In "Casada e viúva", for example, he considers the all too common spectacle of how an innocent and loving wife, having discovered the adultery of her husband, is obliged to conceal the break-up of her marriage for the sake of appearances:

Eulália mostrou ao princípio grandes desejos de separar-se de seu marido e ir viver com Cristiana; mas os conselhos desta, que, entre as razões de decoro que apresentou para que Eulália não tornasse pública a história das suas desgraças domésticas, alegou a existência de uma filha de casal, que cumpria educar e proteger, esses conselhos desviaram o espírito de Eulália dos seus primeiros projetos e fizeram-na resignada ao suplicio. (OC.II, p. 758)

By attempting the largely sympathetic self-portrait of a vain and frivolous young woman in "Confissões de uma viúva moça", however, he laid himself open to the charge of justifying the infidelity that is very nearly committed by his protagonist. As Brito Broca has noted, the accusation of immorality was almost inevitable, and, like Flaubert before him (who, together with his lawyer Senart, had had to make a legal defence of *Madame Bovary* before a scandalized public) Machado played himself into a situation where he was forced to give an account of his artistic principles:

ao escrever esse "romancito" Machado de Assis colocava-se na linha do Realismo, mas do Realismo de Dumas Filho, que pretendia expor os vícios e os males da sociedade contemporânea para mostrar os danos que acarretavam. . . Ora, a "viúva moça", de Machado de Assis, guardadas as devidas proporções, era uma Emma Bovary para o uso do *Jornal das Famílias*. E através das declarações do "Sigma", ter-se-ia Machado defendido ante os juizes, pela palavra do advogado Senart. De qualquer maneira, fora uma ousadia a apresentação dessa Bovary-mirim brasileira, mesmo com a decência na linguagem e na pintura dos quadros, num periódico que devia penetrar em todos os lares e andar em todos os mãos, como o *Jornal das Famílias*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Entre a política e as letras" in *Machado de Assis e a Política mais Outros Estudos* (São Paulo: Editora Polis, 1983), p. 53.



## Love versus the ego

"Confissões de uma viúva moça" is the first of the early stories to indicate that Machado would be prepared to exercise his artistic and analytical skills at the risk of presenting his readers with an ambiguous moral viewpoint. His sense of morality may well have coincided neatly with that of the *Jornal das Famílias*, but there can be no doubt that artistically he felt the burden of having to provide a positive moral message to his stories. For example, when he decided to publish the prose version of a former play, *As Forças Caudinas*,<sup>49</sup> under the title of "Linha reta, linha curva", (JdasF Oct-Dec 1865) he added a long and badly fitting conclusion which clearly illustrates the extent to which he thought a moral was needed:

Tal é a narração que me propus a fazer. Faltam-lhe lances e situações novas, mas posso garantir que fui fiel à exação histórica. Se o leitor me leu com atenção verá que é uma narrativa esta de que resultam certos princípios de moralidade. Assim, as minhas personagens são: um casal, o casal Azevedo, dando o mais belo espetáculo de paz e de bem-aventurança conjugal, de modo a infundir bons sentimentos nos dois heróis do conto. Uma mulher vaidosa que põe em jogo a sua beleza e os seus recursos, para vingar uma ofensa ao sexo, mas acaba por apaixonar-se de veras, donde resultam dois princípios: 1º, que não se brinca impunemente com fogo, 2º, que ninguém pode dizer: deste copo não beberei. Um rapaz apaixonado repellido uma vez no seu amor, que tem a constância de guardar através dos tempos o amor dos primeiros anos, para vê-lo depois coroado. Enfim, um velho gaiteiro, gastando os dias reservados a uma constância mais austera, manietar a sua dignidade aos pés de uma mulher, e encontrando nisso mesmo então a punição dos seus ridículos, como, por exemplo, servir de carteiro às comunicações dos dois futuros noivos. De que resulta: a apoteose do amor, o abatimento da vaidade e a punição da velhice ridícula. Tantas vantagens não andam a roda. É bom mencionar o fato. E agora, leitoras e leitores, invejai a sorte de Emilia e de Tito, mas não lhes imiteis nem a pretensões de uma, nem a exageração cruel do outro. Uma só coisa deveis imitar-lhes: - o amor.<sup>50</sup>

The passage was later omitted from the story when it was reprinted in the *Contos Fluminenses*, and little wonder. Machado's attempt to extract a suitable moral from what was simply intended to be an entertaining comedy on the battle between the sexes seems forced to say the least. This becomes especially apparent when Machado finally warns the reader not to imitate his characters in what is after all the story's main focus of attention - the deceptive cynicism of Tito and Emilia's haughty female pride - but in their love, which is scarcely made evident before Machado decides to end the story. Clearly Machado's interests here do not lie in the presentation of a love ideal, as in

<sup>49</sup> Undated but presumed to have been written between 1863 and 1865. See section 2.5, "Nota do Editor do Texto" in *Machado de Assis - Teatro Completo*, ed. Teresinha Marinho, (Rio: Ministério da Educação e Cultura/Serviço Nacional do Livro, 1982).

<sup>50</sup> Quoted by Magalhães Jr. in CsemD, p. 20.

some of the other stories we have considered, but in the analysis of two protagonists whose experience and character prevent them from expressing their love in a straightforward manner. Tito is in love with Emília but dares not reveal the fact because he has been slighted by her in the past (although she has forgotten). Instead he uses his cynicism both as a protection from the disappointments of life and as a weapon with which to destroy Emília's pride in her ability to attract a man. Emília, conveniently enough, responds beautifully to the negative stimulus of a seeming indifference to her charms by promptly falling in love for the first time in her life. The story is tedious in its development, conventional in format and extremely predictable, but against the background of Machado's much simpler and more obviously moral stories it constitutes an important shift of emphasis. The very title, "Linha reta, linha curva", tells us that the path to love is not always as direct as Machado suggests in other stories, but that human beings often behave in a complicated and sometimes perverse manner. This behaviour Machado is increasingly eager to investigate, even to the detriment of the positive presentation of morality.

Consequently, an interesting division develops amongst the stories from 1866 to 1869. In the same year that he produced "A pianista" and "Fernando e Fernanda", Machado also published "O oráculo" (JdasF Jan 1866), "O que são as moças" (JdasF May-Jun 1866) and "Astúcias de marido" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1866), all of which contain no edifying moral. In "Onda" (JdasF Apr 1867), Machado's portrait of a calculating and coquettish young woman is in stark contrast to the tale of "Francisca" in 1867. And in 1868, the ideal union of Hortênsia and Meneses in the aptly entitled "Não é mel para a boca do asno" is the exact antithesis of the marriage relationship depicted in "O segredo de Augusta" (JdasF Jul-Aug 1868). The only stories to appear in 1869 are both studies in self-interest. "Luís Soares" (JdasF Jan 1869) recounts the humiliation and eventual suicide of a lazy young man who, having squandered his inheritance, fails miserably in his attempts to get rich quick by marrying the cousin he had formerly despised. In "O anjo Rafael" (JdasF Oct-Dec 1869), however, Machado allows a similarly vain figure to escape death and marry into a fortune. "Ó amor! ó coração! ó egoísmo humano!" (C.Esp, p. 71), exclaims Machado at the end of the story, and in doing so



summarises his increasing preoccupation with the presence of the ego in romantic affairs.

## The use of ambiguity

Machado's interest in the calculating courtier begins with "O oráculo", which concerns the exploits of "um sujeito que era um exemplo de quanto pode a má fortuna quando se dispõe a perseguir um pobre mortal" (CRec, p. 37). As one of life's losers, Leonardo has failed miserably as a teacher, civil servant, businessman and publisher through no apparent fault of his own. After deciding eventually upon a marital solution to his financial embarrassment, he manages to ingratiate himself to a rich girl's father, even to the point of being given a position in the family firm. But just as the elusive prize seems within his grasp, he is cheated once again as his intended bride (Cecília) gets married secretly to a former suitor (Henriques), rejected by her father. And that is not all he loses as we learn in a very ambiguously toned epilogue:

### EPILOGO

Se perdeu a noiva, e tão ridiculamente, nem por isso Leonardo perdeu o lugar. Declarou ao velho que faria um esforço, mas que ficava para corresponder à estima que o velho lhe tributava.

Mas estava escrito que a sorte tinha de perseguir o pobre rapaz.

Dai a quinze dias Atanásio foi acometido de uma congestão de que morreu.

O testamento, que fora feito um ano antes, nada deixava a Leonardo.

Quanto à casa, teve de liquidar-se. Leonardo recebeu a importância de quinze dias de trabalho.

O mal-aventurado deu o dinheiro a um mendigo e foi atirar-se ao mar, na praia de Icarai.

Henrique e Cecília vivem como Deus com os anjos. (CRec, pp. 43-44)

The narrator's attitude towards his protagonist is uncertain. On the one hand, Leonardo is described as a poor mortal, struggling vainly against the forces of destiny; on the other, he is painted as the comic fall guy, whose repeated failures are meant to provoke laughter rather than tears. Is Machado saying he believes in fortune? or that the world is simply unfair? or is he having a laugh at Leonardo's expense? - we cannot tell from this story. The ambiguity of "O oráculo" exemplifies the general dilemma which must be faced by the reader once Machado moves away from inserting a positive moral bias

to his stories. Where, for instance, Macedo was straightforward in his condemnation of self-interest and serious in his discussion of suicide, Machado is frequently unclear in his attitude towards the calculations and predicaments of his characters. In "Onda", for instance, he sees nothing wrong in allowing his heroine the benefits of an advantageous marriage, despite her frivolous nature:

Mas enfim, se os namoros passavam, também passava o tempo, e um dia, estando ao espelho, Onda viu que a ruga se lhe desdenhava no rosto. Tinha ela então trinta e tres anos. A ruga era prematura, mas fosse ou não, existia, e esta descoberta deu sério descuidado à moça.

Esperar o amor que sonhara pelos romances era arriscarse, visto que à primeira ruga sucederiam outra e outras.

Era preciso achar marido.

Lançou as vistas à lista dos seus adoradores, já muito diminuída, não porque lhe faltasse a beleza, mas porque lhe sobrava travessura para os arredar.

Entre esses adoradores havia um que pela terceira vez depositava o coração aos pés da bela namorada. Da primeira vez era um simples tenente de cavalaria; da segunda era capitão; agora era já major.

Onda resolveu que lhe cumpria assentar praça ao lado do major. (CAV, p. 91)

And although the material ambitions of Vasconcelos and Gomes end in disappointment in "O segredo de Augusta", their failure is certainly not dependent upon the forces of morality. When the rascally Vasconcelos sees the marriage of his daughter to Gomes (an equally roguish friend whom he assumes to be rich) as a way out of his financial difficulties, he meets with surprising opposition from his spendthrift wife, Augusta. Only when he deliberately overhears a conversation between his wife and an intimate female friend does he discover the secret fear of Augusta:

- O que eu não compreendo, disse Carlota, é tua insistência. Mais tarde ou mais cedo, Adelaide há de vir a casar-se.

- Oh! o mais tarde possível disse Augusta.

Houve um silêncio.

Vasconcelos estava impaciente.

- Ah! continuou Augusta, se soubesses o terror que me dá a idéia do casamento de Adelaide...

- Por que, meu Deus?

- Por que, Carlota? Tu pensas em tudo, menos uma coisa. Eu tenho medo por causa dos filhos dela que serão meus netos! A idéia de ser avó é horrível, Carlota.

Vasconcelos respirou, e abriu a porta. (OC.II, p. 98)

It also transpires that Gomes is in as penniless a state as Vasconcelos and was looking to the marriage as a means of continuing his extravagant lifestyle. The story ends, therefore, with the cancellation of the proposed union, to the relief of all parties concerned. In "O oráculo", "Onda" and "O segredo de Augusta", then, there is no explicit criticism of self-interest and no attempt is made to reform or punish the offending characters. Machado leaves his audience to draw their own conclusions, and gives us further indication of his desire to expand his readers' experience of fiction beyond the appreciation of correct moral behaviour and conventional romantic motivation and introduce them to a broader range of literary possibilities.

### **The attack on reader expectation**

Although most of Machado's early stories contribute in one way or another to the literary education of the reader, "Astúcias de marido" and "O que são as moças" provide us with his most direct assault on the romantic expectations of his audience. In both stories Machado deliberately lulls the reader into a false sense of security by pretending to recount a conventional love story, only to disappoint him/her by developing the narrative in a manner that is far from romantic.

"Astúcias de marido" begins as the common-place story of two lovers (she is rich, he a poor poet) whose dreams are shattered by her enforced marriage to the rich Valentim. But just when everything seems set for the usual tale of passion and frustration, Machado destroys the readers' own illusions by stopping the narrative dead in its tracks and making a critical commentary on the story so far:

Aqui devo eu fazer notar aos leitores desta história como ela vai seguindo suave e honestamente, e como meus personagens se parecem com todos os personagens de romance: um velho maniaco, uma velha impertinente, e amante platônica do passado; uma moça bonita apaixonada por um primo, que eu tive o cuidado de fazer pobre para dar-lhe maior relevo sem todavia decidir-me a fazê-lo poeta, em virtude de acontecimentos que se hão de seguir; um pretendente rico e elegante cujo amor é aceito pelo pai, mas rejeitado pela moça, enfim os dois amantes à borda dum abismo condenados a não verem coroados os seus legítimos desejos e ao fundo do quadro um horizonte enegrecido de dúvidas e de receios. (CRec, p. 146)

Just as the story is getting started, the narrator interrupts its flow and reminds the reader of the sheer banality of the tale. What is more, Machado makes it clear that he expects us to continue reading for that very reason, as if the story's appeal were dependent on its adherence to convention:

Depois disto duvido que um só dos meus leitores não me acompanhe até o fim desta história, que apesar de tão comum ao principio, vai ter alguma coisa de original lá para o meio. (CRec, pp. 146-147)

A challenge, then, is being issued to the readers for them to read something different. The narrator has already insulted their intelligence by providing the mindless rubbish that most have come to expect, but then goes on to claim some originality and genuine interest for his story, despite its weak frame. The "originality" of the story as it develops from this point on is simply that it does not proceed as it ought to in romantic terms. The love of Clarinha and Ernesto, so apparently indestructible at the beginning, proves to be no match for Valentim's wits, as he plans a successful strategy to win his wife's affections:

Que meio escolheu? Um: o ridiculo.

Na verdade, o que há neste mundo que resista o ridiculo? Nem mesmo o amor. O marido perspicaz compreendeu que era esse o meio mais rápido.

Todavia, não tomou o ridiculo senão naquilo que ele é de convenção, naquilo que o mundo aceita como tal, sem que o seja muitas vezes. Clarinha não podia resistir a esse. Era mulher como as outras. (CRec, p. 155)

First of all, Ernesto is discredited as a competent horseman when he is thrown off a frisky young mount which Valentim is well able to control. Next, the would-be lover makes a fool of himself at a party after Valentim has mixed his drinks. Finally, Ernesto is unmasked as a coward when he publicly backs out of a duel with Valentim, deliberately engineered by the husband as a practical joke, a fact of which everyone else is aware. So, by systematically demolishing Clarinha's sense of pride in her admirer, rather than attempting a more romantic approach, Valentim achieves the complete victory stated by the sarcastic narrator at the end of the story:

Ernesto arranhou dai a dias uma viagem e nunca mais voltou.

Quanto aos nossos esposos, amaram-se muito e tiveram muitos filhos. (CRec, p. 162)

Machado's technique of using conventional love interest as a bait with which to attract and then fool the reader is employed just as cynically in "O que são as moças". After an apparently sincere introduction in which he stresses the extremely close friendship of the girls who are to figure in the story, he says:

Já estou a ouvir uma pergunta da parte das leitoras, pergunta que naturalmente dará mais interesse ao meu conto, pela simples razão de que não responderei a ela.

A pergunta é esta. Aquelas duas almas, tão irmãs, tão conformes, namoravam acaso o mesmo indivíduo? A pergunta é natural e lógica, adivincho mesmo os terrores a que pôde dar lugar o desenvolvimento dela; mas nada disso me demove do propósito de deixá-la sem resposta. (CRec, p. 237)

Evidently he is teasing his female readers, for the feared situation does eventually arise, at which point he poses the question:

vencerá o amor ou a amizade? É o que as leitoras vão saber se tiveram a paciência de passar aos capítulos seguintes. (CRec, p. 247)

The answer from the story is, however, that neither love or friendship but a sickening self-interest is finally triumphant in the hearts of Júlia and Teresa. When Daniel is the sole eligible suitor available, he is contested tooth and nail. Only when both girls manage to attract a more certain catch for themselves is each more than willing to sacrifice "love" for friendship by conceding Daniel to the other:

via-se que ambas haviam praticado o sacrifício no interesse pessoal; ou por outra: largavam um pássaro tendo outro em mão.

Mas as duas moças casaram-se e ficaram tão amigas como antes.

Não sei se no correr dos tempos houve sacrifícios semelhantes. (CRec, p. 255)

Once again the reader's concept of romantic love has been scorned by a cynical narrator who insists on providing his characters with less poetic (but in his mind, more realistic) motivations.

It ought to be added that the assault on reader expectations undertaken so sarcastically in "Astúcias de marido" and "O que são as moças" also occurs in less spectacular fashion in some of the more serious moral stories. In the opening paragraphs of "Fernando e Fernanda", for example, the Machado invites the reader to expect a typical sentimental romance:

Tinham os mesmos nomes. Cresceram juntos, à sombra do mesmo amor materno. Ele era órfão, e a mãe dela, que o amava como se ele fôra seu filho, tomou-o para si, reuniu os dois debaixo do mesmo coração. Eram quase irmãos, e sê-lo-iam sempre completamente, se a diferença dos sexos não viesse, um dia, dizer-lhes que um laço mais íntimo podia uní-los.

Um dia, tinham ambos quinze anos, descobriram os dois que se amavam, e mais do que se amam irmãos. Esta descoberta foi feita durante uma troca de olhares e um contato de mãos.

- Fernanda! disse ele.

- Fernando! respondeu ela.

O resto foi dito nessa linguagem muda e eloqüente, em que o maior ignorante faz prodígios de retórica, retórica do coração, retórica universal. (CRec, p. 77)

When Fernando is obliged to continue his studies in Europe and returns to discover that Fernanda has married the son of a rich capitalist, Machado appears to have prepared the ground for a classic tale of unrequited love. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fernanda turns out to be a vain and frivolous young woman who, in the absence of Fernando, had freely decided to marry her most persistent suitor:

Finalmente, um dia declarou-se a vitória de Soares no coração de Fernanda, não sem alguma luta à última hora, e que não era mais do que um ato voluntário para tranquilizar a consciência e deitar a sua traição para as costas do destino.

O destino é o grande culpado de todas as más ações da humanidade inocente... (CRec, p. 84)

She even tries to rekindle her old relationship with Fernando in a perverse attempt to sabotage his recent love for Teresa. But Fernando stands firm, and the story ends with the former childhood lovers happily married to partners who share their respective strengths and weaknesses of character, to the surprise (and disgust, perhaps) of the reader who had been looking forward to a more dramatic conclusion.

A similar mockery of the reader's literary inclinations occurs in "Francisca", in which the heroine is forced to marry the rich César during the absence of her poet lover, Daniel. Against all the odds, César manages to win the affection of his wife, whilst Daniel, as a result of his contact with frivolous society, goes through a surprising change of character which prompts the following lengthy but insincere apology from Machado:

Sinto não poder conservar ao jovem poeta o caráter elevado e poético; mas não me posso furtar a dizer que Daniel sofrera a ação do tempo e do contato dos homens. O tempo fê-lo sair daquela esfera ideal em que o colocara o gênio da mocidade e o amor de Francisca; o contato dos homens completou a transformação; Daniel, sob a influência de outros tempos, outras circunstâncias, e outras relações, mudou de feição moral. Voltando ao lugar idílio e da catástrofe do seu coração, trouxe dentro de si novos sentimentos. Certa vaidade, certa altivez davam-lhe outro ar, outras maneiras, outro modo de ver as coisas e tratar os homens.

Bem sei que seria melhor para o leitor que aprecia as ilusões do romance fazer acabar o meu herói no meio de uma tempestade, lançando ao mundo a última imprecisão e ao céu o último suspiro do seu gênio.

Isto seria mais bonito e seria menos verdadeiro.

Mas o que se dá com o nosso Daniel é coisa inteiramente oposta, e eu prefiro contar a verdade que lisonjear o gosto poético dos leitores. (CRec, p. 35)

Life is not a poetic experience for Machado. In real life, unrequited love and forced marriages do not generally end in death and tragedy. Nor is it common for young lovers, separated by time and space, to overcome every obstacle in their pursuit of ro-



mantic bliss. So even when he is providing a moral literature, Machado takes it upon himself to disillusion the reader with regard to the myths of popular fiction, and lays particular emphasis on the presence of self-interest in so-called affairs of the heart. Nearly all of the early stories contain some kind of criticism of the romantic attitude to life. The main difference, however, between "Fernando e Fernanda" or "Francisca" and a story like "Astúcias de marido" is that in the latter Machado does not provide a responsible alternative to the behaviour of his characters and apparently resigns himself to the fundamental egotism of human nature.

## A serious dilemma

In our study so far we have seen how Machado's search for literary realism in his own terms draws him away first of all from the sentiment and uncontrolled passion of popular romances towards an ideal of love which is restrained and ultimately moral. But from depicting love as it should be, Machado moves on to show us how pride, vanity and greed also play their part in the game of love, sometimes to an even greater degree than the heart. His denial of the basic motivation of romantic literature inevitably brings Machado into confrontation with his audience, whose hopes of settling into their traditional fare of passion and sentiment are often deliberately dashed by the narrator. Machado is an educator, and in the words of Maria Helena Werneck:

Trata-se de um mestre perverso, que, longe de fornecer fórmulas prontas, coloca o leitor em constante estado de descoberta, em freqüente posição de jogador prestes a ser derrotado pelo blefe do parceiro.<sup>51</sup>

Of equal importance, however, are the consequences that Machado's increasingly non-romantic stance will have on the development of his own fiction. In stories like "Confissões de uma viúva moça" he showed himself to be an author with serious literary intentions. But how would he be able to continue writing serious romantic stories for the *Jornal das Famílias* when he no longer accepted conventional ideas on the importance of love? No story of the period up to and including *Contos Fluminenses* illustrates the dilemma more clearly than "Miss Dollar".

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<sup>51</sup> Mulheres e literatura no século XIX: o poder feminino sobre a pena dos escritores" in *Forum Educacional*, 10(2) (1986), p.29.

## An experimental story

"Miss Dollar" was presumably the last of the *Contos Fluminenses* stories to be written, since it had not appeared in any previous publication and is certainly Machado's most ambitious attempt to construct a love story around his non-romantic ideas of characterization. The result is a strange but fascinating tale in which Machado seems to lose himself within the complicated psychological web he weaves for his protagonists, until he suddenly decides to end it all in the most unsatisfactory manner. But at the same time as he tries (and fails) to give us a coherent account of two very confused characters, Machado succeeds in distancing himself from the action through the comments of an ironic narrator. Before tackling the very interesting aspects of his narration, however, it is important that we explore Machado's unconventional approach to characterization and identify the shortcomings of his analysis.

The basic plot can be summarised in only a few lines. Mendonça finds a lost dog belonging to a young widow (Margarida), and on returning it "falls in love" with the owner. A slow and awkward courtship follows, during which they both seem to find it impossible to express the affection they evidently feel for each other. Eventually, she forces him into a painful marriage (for reasons which are unclear), but everything ends happily when they somehow manage to overcome all their previous psychological barriers. As a love story, it lacks the presence of strong emotions and a sense of the dramatic. But even as the story of psychological analysis that it claims to be, "Miss Dollar" falls short on at least two counts. First of all, Machado is unable to fully justify and explain the cryptic behaviour of his characters. It is all very intriguing, but there comes a point when we begin to ask exactly what is going on inside their heads. Secondly, Machado makes no attempt to harmonize the ending with the rest of the story. That Mendonça and Margarida should live happily ever after is unlikely to say the least. It is as if Machado finally concedes that the psychological riddle he has set himself cannot actually be resolved, and he decides to choose the easiest way out. This is the longest story of the period and, rather like "Linha reta, linha curva", its length is an indication of the convoluted path by which a perverse human nature will seek out love. But, unlike the earlier story, "Miss Dollar" is not a set piece, its ending is not a foregone conclusion and, despite its length, there is no real forward movement in the relationship between

the two characters. In "Linha reta, linha curva", no matter how cynically Tito speaks, we know his indifference is a deliberate strategy in the game of love. And Emilia, for all her haughtiness, is predictably heading for a fall. We are given no such assurances with the characters of "Miss Dollar". Both Mendonça and Margarida are presented as being not only perverse but also complex people, who, in varying degrees, are unable to face or to understand their own emotions and actions, let alone those of each other. Let us look at each character in turn.

Dr. Mendonça is introduced to us as a thirty four year old misanthrope with a passion for collecting dogs (his favorite is called Diogenes, after the most famous of the Cynics) and literary clichés. But it soon becomes clear to us that both of these things represent a thin layer of cynicism which, for some unknown reason, Mendonça has chosen to wear. It is important to note, however, that Mendonça himself is totally oblivious to his hypocrisy, a fact that is established very early on in the narrative. Having just met the beautiful Margarida, Mendonça leaves a little confused as to what to do next. He is impressed by her beauty, but her green eyes constitute something of an obstacle:

Mendonça nunca vira olhos verdes em toda a sua vida; disseram-lhe que existiam olhos verdes, e ele sabia de cor uns versos célebres de Gonçalves Dias; mas até então os tais olhos eram para ele a mesma cousa que a fênix dos antigos. Um dia conversando com uns amigos a propósito disto, afirmava que se alguma vez encontrasse um par de olhos verdes fugiria deles com terror.

- Por quê? perguntou-lhe um dos circunstantes admirado.

- A cor verde é a cor do mar, respondeu Mendonça; evito as tempestades de um; evitarei as tempestades dos outros. (OC.II, pp. 30-31)

According to the principles of his literary susceptibility, Mendonça ought to avoid all contact with Margarida, but he does not. Instead we find that Mendonça's mental prejudice against green eyes is conveniently removed by a friend who puts forward another theory to the effect that it doesn't matter what colour one's eyes are: "Podem ser azuis como o céu e pérfidos como o mar" (OC.II, p. 32) And although we are told that Mendonça is deeply affected by the poetic force of this statement, Machado's comments indicate that something else is going on beneath the surface:

A observação deste amigo anónimo tinha a vantagem de ser tão poética como a de Mendonça. Por isso abalou profundamente o ânimo do médico. Não ficou este como o asno de Buridan entre a selha d'água e a quarta de cevada; o asno hesitaria. Mendonça não hesitou. Acudiu-lhe de pronto a lição do casuista Sánchez, e das duas opiniões tomou a que lhe pareceu *provável*. (OC.II, p. 32)

The friend's comments are no more poetic than Mendonça's, and yet the narrator stresses the latter's willingness to embrace them. One cannot escape the conclusion that is really Margarida's beauty and the empathy which the doctor feels for her that makes him change his mind. There is even the suggestion of an explicit sexual motive to his sudden about face:

Adotando a opinião que lhe pareceu mais provável, que foi a do amigo, Mendonça disse consigo que nas mãos de Margarida estava talvez a chave do seu futuro. Ideou nesse sentido um plano de felicidade; uma casa num ermo, olhando para o mar do lado do ocidente, a fim de poder assistir ao espetáculo do por do sol. Margarida e ele, unido pelo amor e pela Igreja, beberiam ali, gota a gota, a taça inteira da celeste felicidade. *O sonho de Mendonça continha outras particularidades que seria ocioso mencionar aqui.* [my emphasis] Mendonça pensou nisto alguns dias; chegou a passar algumas vezes por Matacavalos; mas tão infeliz que nunca viu Margarida nem a tia; afinal desistiu da empresa e voltou aos cães. (OC.II, p. 32)

Like the casuists who were criticized by Pascal in his *Lettres Provinciales*,<sup>52</sup> Mendonça can be accused of adopting the philosophy of moral convenience. Words and ideas have a certain power over Mendonça, but only when it suits him. When he had lived purely for himself and his dogs he could afford to mouth cynical theories about the nature of green eyes. Now that he is in love and, what is more, determined to be so, he must adopt a different language.

But whereas Mendonça is at least able to forget his cynicism for the sake of love, Margarida seems totally incapable of dropping her show of indifference. Until her aunt reveals the contents of the personal diary to Mendonça, we are never quite sure whether Margarida is in love or not, since she does everything possible to avoid a close relationship with the doctor. She even proposes a move to the countryside, at which point her aunt decides to intervene. It is explained to Mendonça that Margarida had had an unhappy first marriage with a man who was only after her money, and has now despaired of finding anyone who will love her for herself. "Mas como convencer um coração desconfiado?" (OC.II, p. 43) - Mendonça asks D. Antônia, and the reader is entitled to ask the same question. Mendonça is already rich, he makes a point of not stopping to receive the promised reward money for finding Miss Dollar, and his character seems to complement Margarida's pretty well - what more does she want? Rather than provide us with answers, Machado makes Margarida into even more of an

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<sup>52</sup> Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters*, trans. by A. J. Krailsheimer, (London: Penguin, 1967). See Letter V in particular.

enigma by having her propose marriage to Mendonça following a curious night-time episode in her garden. This garden scene is the strangest part of the whole story and is crucially important for an understanding of the subconscious tensions that are at work in the minds of both characters.

Mendonça has not long received a note from D. Antônia announcing their imminent departure from Rio for several months and expressing the older woman's desire to speak with him beforehand. It is late, but Mendonça is restless after reading the note and decides to go for a walk. Almost unconsciously he arrives at the house of D. Antônia and Margarida. All is quiet and dark, except for the fact that Margarida's bedroom light is on and the garden gate has been left open...:

Mendonça sentiu pulsar-lhe o coração com força desconhecida. Surgiu-lhe no espírito uma suspeita. Não há coração confiante que não tenha desfalecimentos destes; além de que, seria errada a suspeita: Mendonça, entretanto, não tinha nenhum direito à viúva; fora repellido categoricamente. Se havia algum dever da parte dele era a retirada e o silêncio. (OC.II, p. 40)

What can Mendonça's suspicion be but that Margarida has left the gate open for some secret lover or, perhaps, for him? He tries to turn back but "havia um demônio que o impelia por aquela porta dentro" (OC.II, p. 40) and he enters the grounds. Could this devil be the force of sexual attraction, of jealousy, or merely of curiosity? We are simply not told. Approaching the side of the house where Margarida's window is, he discovers that the door of her room has also been left open. So he proceeds until Margarida sees him in the doorway. She is indignant, he shamefully aware of his action. Pleas for forgiveness from him and tears from her follow, after which Mendonça is ordered out by the widow. Neither of them sleep very well that night. Margarida, in fact, is ill for three days, after which she tells Mendonça that their marriage is inevitable, and he bows to her command. After spending so much time avoiding him, Margarida's cold proposal of marriage seems extravagant to say the least. But if we go back to the garden scene we find the suggestion that there are even deeper forces working in the mind of Margarida than there are within Mendonça. The garden gate and the door to her room have been left open - why? Could it be that subconsciously Margarida still desires to keep herself open to the advances of the doctor, despite her contradictory plans to leave Rio? Also, when she orders Mendonça off the premises "com um gesto misterioso", is she merely play-acting the role of the offended heroine? One recalls that

at the end of that scene the narrator makes a point of hinting that Margarida may not be feeling as much pain as she shows, and certainly not as much as Mendonça:

Ambos curvavam-se ao peso da vergonha; mas, por honra de Mendonça, a dele era maior que a dela; e a dor de uma não ombreava com o remorso de outro. (OC.II, p. 42)

Outwardly, Margarida marries Mendonça because of an acute sense of propriety, but her feelings of shame are exaggerated and we know deep down that she really feels an affinity with him. Could this strange outcome simply be the result of the irreconcilable and subconscious tensions she is suffering? In the absence of an explanation from Machado, this is the only way we can make any sense out of Margarida. Machado's shortcomings as a psychological analyst become most apparent, however, when, having married off his two main characters, he decides to impose a highly improbable ending to the romance:

Mas aquilo que o espírito do homem não vence, há de vencê-lo o tempo, a quem cabe final razão. O tempo convenceu Margarida de que a sua suspeita era gratuita; e, coincidindo com ele o coração, veio a tornar-se efetivo o casamento apenas celebrado. (OC.II, p. 44)

The idea that time can heal Margarida's scepticism is a ludicrous one. But, having bitten off more than he can chew, Machado really has no other alternative. For two lovers to remain in a situation of perpetual misunderstanding (which is the logical outcome) is something of a "non-ending" and an absurdity within a romantic story. So, faced with the possibilities of going on for another thirty pages, killing off one of the characters, or ending things quickly and peacefully, Machado cuts his losses by going for the last of these choices.

If we judge "Miss Dollar" in terms of how successfully Machado presents the ideas of psychology and motivation he sets out with, then it has to be said that the story is a failure. But, on the other hand, the simple fact that he was even thinking in terms of the subconscious shows us how far Machado had travelled in his journey beyond the simplicities of romantic motivation in search of a fuller explanation of our complex nature. In this sense, the experimental value of "Miss Dollar" is immense and would be developed upon in later stories.

## The beginnings of a distanced narration

There is a sense in which the shortcomings of plot and character analysis in "Miss Dollar" begin to matter very little once we start to look at how Machado goes about telling the story. In fact, it could be argued that the stance which the narrator adapts towards both his audience and the story he is recounting is the saving grace of "Miss Dollar". By refusing to take the reader seriously at the beginning, Machado challenges us first of all to forget about our literary preferences and read a non-conventional romantic story. At the same time, the seriousness with which we may be tempted to view the drama of Mendonça and Margarida is undermined by their peculiarities and the ironic humour that is inserted into various parts of the narrative.

Before embarking on his psychological tale, Machado begins by making an indirect and humorous attack on the literary expectations of his audience. He admits to being in something of a dilemma. Should he or shouldn't he reveal the identity of Miss Dollar?:

Era conveniente ao romance que o leitor ficasse muito tempo sem saber quem era Miss Dollar. Mas por outro lado, sem a apresentação de Miss Dollar, seria o autor obrigado a longas digressões, que encheriam o papel sem adiantar a ação. Não ha hesitação possível: vou apresentar-lhes Miss Dollar. (OC.II, p. 27)

For some reason or other, the narrator is in no hurry to tell us who Miss Dollar is. But unless he does so, he is in danger of boring his readers. In the interests of these readers, then, he is obliged to tell all. But these words are negated by the next few paragraphs in which the narrator stalls for time by speculating on the identity of his heroine, suggesting the various literary types that would appeal to particular kinds of reader. Why the deliberate delay? It is not until we approach the end of the first chapter that we realize the exact nature of the narrator's predicament:

A Miss Dollar do romance não é a menina romântica, nem a mulher robusta, nem a velha literata, nem a brasileira rica. Falha desta vez a proverbial perspicácia dos leitores; Miss Dollar é uma cadelinha galga.

Para algumas pessoas a qualidade da heroína fará perder o interesse do romance. - Erro manifesto. Miss Dollar, apesar de não ser mais que uma cadelinha, teve as honras de ver o seu nome nos papéis públicos antes de entrar para este livro. (OC.II, p. 28)

Miss Dollar, the mysterious woman of the title, the supposed protagonist of the story, turns out to be a dog. An elegant greyhound she may be, but a dog nevertheless. Little wonder the narrator was reluctant to let her identity be known to readers whose very

definite ideas on a suitable heroine would surely make them close the book in disgust. As it turns out, all this talk of Miss Dollar is a huge red-herring on Machado's part. The dog has very little to do with the story, and could certainly not be regarded as its heroine. But this tease of an opening serves the useful, if very obvious purpose of preparing us for the unusual story we are about to read. By using a title that suggests a rich, exotic or beautiful heroine, and encouraging us to indulge in our individual preference, Machado makes the reader think about the various conventions he/she accepts (perhaps unknowingly) in popular literature. When we are finally told that none of our expectations actually corresponds to the real identity of Miss Dollar, we are made to question the validity of a stereotyped approach to reading. So there is a clear warning for us not to bring our ideas of what a romantic heroine should be like to this particular story. Furthermore, by the time Miss Dollar's identity is revealed, we realize that the narrator has kept our attention by those same "longas digressões que encheriam o papel sem adiantar a ação" he seemed so keen on avoiding at the beginning. Although from the very beginning Machado assumes that his audience wants action, he decides instead to delay the movement of the plot by prolonging his intrusive narration. This, again, is clearly a sign of things to come, since plot is of minimal importance to Machado in "Miss Dollar", and his style throughout can be correctly described as digressive. So by the end of the first chapter, Machado has conned us into reading his kind of story, and has fired out a humorous warning that the story we have begun may not be quite the one we expected or even want to read.

Although the humour with which Machado begins "Miss Dollar" does not continue throughout in such ebullient fashion, there are, nevertheless, several points in the narrative where we are made to wonder exactly how seriously Machado is taking his readers, his characters, and indeed, the story itself. The first instance occurs when we are informed of Mendonça's incredible passion for collecting dogs:

Tinha-os de todas as raças, tamanhos e cores. Cuidava deles como se fossem os seus filhos; se algum lhe morria ficava melancólico. Quase se pode dizer que, no espírito de Mendonça, o cão pesava tanto como o a amor, segundo uma expressão celebre: tirai do mundo o cão, e o mundo sera um ermo.

O leitor superficial conclui daqui que o nosso Mendonça era um homem excentrico. Não era. Mendonça era um homem como os outros; gostava de cães como outros gostam de flores. Os cães era as suas rosas e violetas; cultivava-os com o mesmíssimo esmero. (OC.II, pp. 28-29)



In referring to the reader as "superficial", Machado is patently being ironic because Mendonça is, if not exactly eccentric, then certainly an unusual romantic hero. Also, we learn later on, when Mendonça kicks one of his beloved dogs out of emotional frustration, that the rationalization given for his strange hobby ("gostava de cães como outros gostam de flores") is totally false, and thus constitutes a deception on the part of the narrator. The same ironic technique of effectively insulting the reader whilst attempting to excuse Mendonça's undeniable eccentricity occurs just after we learn the doctor's difficulty in accepting Margarida's green eyes:

Algum leitor grave achará pueril esta circunstância dos olhos verdes e esta controvérsia sobre a qualidade provável deles. Provara com isso que tem pouca prática do mundo. Os almanaques pitorescos citam até à saciedade mil excentricidades e senões dos grandes varões que a humanidade admira, já por valentes nas armas; e nem por isso deixamos de admirar esses mesmos varões. Não queira o leitor abrir uma exceção só para encaixar nela o nosso doutor. Aceitamo-lo com os seus ridículos; quem os não tem? O ridículo é um espécie de lastro da alma quando ela entra no mar da vida; alguns fazem toda a navegação sem outra espécie de carregamento. (OC.II, p. 32)

One could argue that Machado is making a serious point here and in the previous quote. Namely, that there is a danger of dismissing Mendonça out of hand, either because he does not conform to our idea of the romantic hero or because he does not seem a worthy subject for psychological analysis. But whilst it cannot be denied that Machado wants us to see beyond the usual romantic stereotypes, there can also be no doubt that in Mendonça he presents us with a faintly ridiculous character. Admittedly, Machado's attitude towards Mendonça acquires a large degree of seriousness as the story progresses, but in these early pages it is certainly ambiguous. To a lesser extent, Margarida also appears to be the object of Machado's humour. When she dismisses Mendonça after the garden scene "com um gesto imperioso", one gets the impression that she is merely play-acting the role of the offended heroine, especially when we learn that her sense of shame is nothing compared to Mendonça's. Also, the way in which the narrator refers to the diary in which D. Antônia discovers her niece's real feelings for the doctor betrays Margarida's capacity for theatrical imitation:

D. Antônia contou a Mendonça que, curiosa por saber a causa das vigílias de Margarida, descobrira no quarto dela um *diário de impressões*, escrito por ela, a imitação de não sei quantas heroínas de romances; aí lera a verdade que lhe acabava de dizer. (OC.II, p. 42)

Again it must be stressed that Machado's treatment of Margarida, like that of Mendonça, is apparently quite serious for the major part of the story. But the references

that have been pointed out are sufficient to make the reader wonder whether Machado is secretly laughing at the failings of his own creations.

Finally, the end of the tale contains elements of obvious and unexpected humour which tend to undermine the perfect conclusion to the affair. In the first place, the marriage is a farce, not so much because of the coldness shown by Mendonça and Margarida, but because we are told that "Jorge falou no Alcazar a um padre, seu amigo para celebrar o ato" (OC.II, p. 43). Throughout the story, Jorge has been portrayed as a frivolous dandy. The idea that he should ask a fellow frequenter of what was at the time the most notorious dance-hall in Rio to perform the wedding is either a straight-forward joke by Machado or an ironic comment on the state of the clergy. Also, even when Mendonça and Margarida finally achieve marital bliss, Machado seems to enjoy mixing the sublime with the ridiculous:

Os dous esposos são ainda noivos e prometem sê-lo até a morte. Andrade meteu-se na diplomacia e promete ser um dos luzeiros da nossa representação internacional. Jorge continua a ser um bom pandego; D. Antônia prepara-se para despedir-se do mundo.

Quanto a *Miss Dollar*, causa indireta de todos estes acontecimentos, saindo um dia a rua foi pisada por um carro; faleceu pouco depois. Margarida não pode reter algumas lágrimas pela nobre cadelinha; foi o corpo enterrado na chacara, a sombra de uma laranjeira; cobre a sepultura uma lápida com esta simples inscrição:

A MISS DOLLAR (OC.II, p.44)

The idea that Andrade, with his love of clichés and facile expressions, should become a politician conveys Machado's unflattering opinion of Brazilian politics; D. Antônia is made to look like the patriarchs of old - hastening her death now that she has seen her wishes for Margarida's happiness come true. As for Miss Dollar, she suffers cruelly from Machado's black humour, although she is accorded a sentimental burial by her owner. If Machado refuses to take these characters seriously, why should we not look upon the story of Margarida and Mendonça, their emotional struggles, their perfect union, as a parody of the characters, obstacles and happy endings of the conventional romantic tale?

In the final analysis, Machado's attitude is decidedly ambiguous, and deliberately so, because he wants us to laugh and be serious at the same time. He tries and, to a certain degree, fails to write a serious and convincing psychological tale. But at the same time, he distances himself from his main characters by pointing to their weakness for literary imitation and injecting his sense of humour into the rather forced romantic

ending. With the value of hindsight, we can regard this dual aspect of "Miss Dollar"'s narration, (remembering Machado's appeal to a readership that is both "grave" and "superficial"), as an early precursor to the impertinence of Brás Cubas, who in the prologue to his posthumous memoirs makes a similar division of his audience:

Acresce que a gente grave achará no livro umas aparencias de puro romance, ao passo que a gente frívola não achará nele o seu romance usual; ei-lo aí fica privado da estima dos graves e do amor dos frívolos, que são as duas colunas máximas da opinião. (Cubas, p. 12)

Also, the beginning and the ending of "Miss Dollar", in which Machado refuses to take either his audience or his story completely seriously, can be looked upon as a rather more tentative version of the take-it-or leave-it attitude expressed by Brás Cubas:

A obra em si mesma é tudo: se te agradar, fino leitor, pago-me da tarefa; se te não agradar, pago-te com um piparote e adeus. (Cubas, p. 12)

There is a world of difference between "Miss Dollar" and the novel that is generally regarded as the greatest watershed in Machado's writing. But in the context of the short stories, "Miss Dollar" is also a work of great significance. For in it Machado makes his first attempt at a non-sentimental psychological story, which, due to the narrator's irrepressible humour, very nearly becomes a parody of the romantic story itself.

# Chapter Three - Psychology, Satire and Cynicism

**1870 - 1873**

## **The development of cynicism**

In the short period of time that separates *Contos Fluminenses* (1870) from *Histórias da Meia-Noite* (1873), Machado's work goes through an enormous amount of change and evolution. On the one hand, the non-romantic, slightly sarcastic and extremely negative analysis of character and motivation seen in "Miss Dollar" moves a step further in Machado's first novel *Ressurreição* (1872) and the stories "Qual dos dois?" (JdasFSep 1872-Jan 1873) and "Nem uma nem outra" (JdasF Aug-Oct 1873). In all of these, qualities such as jealousy, mistrust and pride rule to such an extent that there is no room left for love. Consequently, Machado is forced to conclude all three narratives with the non-ending he simply chose to avoid in "Miss Dollar". On the other hand, however, this is also the period when Machado really begins to explore the potential of parody and satire. What he had threatened to do in "Miss Dollar" he finally achieves in "A parasita azul" (JdasF Jun-Sep 1871) and "Ernesto de tal" (JdasF Mar-Apr 1873), both of which manage to keep to the traditional happy ending without allowing the reader the satisfaction of assigning romantic motivations to the characters involved. The message of "A parasita azul" is particularly dubious, and its significance amongst the early short stories cannot be overstated. With its unusual combination of romance, satire and moral ambiguity, "A parasita azul" is the first real indication that Machado

is capable of constructing a narrative that is subject to a variety of conflicting interpretations. In addition to "A parasita azul", there are a number of stories which, although they cannot match its ambiguity, are equally critical in their presentation of a frivolous and morally corrupt society. From the good natured humour of "Tempo de crise" (Apr 1873), "As bodas de Luís Duarte" (JdasF Jun-Jul 1873) and "Aurora sem dia" (HMN 1873) to the harsher tones of "Aires e Vergueiro" (JdasF Jan 1871), "Almas agradecidas" (JdasF Mar/Oct 1871) and "Um homem superior" (JdasF Aug-Sept 1873), Machado seems determined to leave the reader with the idea that society functions according to the principles of delusion and deceit. The growing cynicism of Machado which finds its expression in his portraits of the individual and of society is also conveyed in more philosophical terms in "O rei dos caiporas" (JdasF Sept-Oct 1870) and "Rui de Leão" (JdasF Jan-Mar 1872). Whilst it is possible to regard the former as merely the funny but pathetic biography of a born loser (similar to "O oráculo"), the later story leaves us in no doubt as to Machado's ideas on the inevitable pains and ultimate pointlessness of life. A couple of other stories too, "O Capitão Mendonça" (JdasF May 1870) and "Decadência de dois grandes homens" (JdasF May 1873), indicate that Machado wants his fiction to extend to the treatment of philosophical matters. However, their eccentric and grotesque brand of humour demands that the effective discussion of these two tales be postponed until the following chapter.

When one looks at Machado's general mode of expression (i.e. his cynicism) in the early 1870s, there are only two stories which seem out of place, both of which remind us in their own way that Machado's rejection of romantic motivation is by no means complete. In "O caminho de Damasco" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1871) he returns to the positive moral purpose of earlier tales by recounting the spiritual conversion of a Rua do Ouvidor dandy. The story is weak and unconvincing and one wonders whether Machado had simply run out of ideas at that point. The case of "Mariana" (JdasF Jan 1871) is, however, a very different one, with its romanticism being more reminiscent of the kind that was noted in "Frei Simão" and "Virginius". This time Machado presents us with the sentimental story of how a servant-girl's impossible love for her master drives her to commit suicide after running away from home. But although it cannot be denied that once again Machado has found it necessary to use the elements of passion,

pathos and death in his approach to the problems of dependency, "Mariana" is a far more mature story than it appears on the surface and needs to be considered in some detail before we move on to the major tendencies of the period.

## An abolitionist story

There can be little doubt that Machado intended "Mariana" as a fictional contribution to the campaign for the abolition of Brazilian slavery. It was published at a time when talk of emancipation was very much in the air, and in the same year that Rio Branco's *Lei do Ventre Livre* (28th September 1871) was finally approved. By stating that all children born of slave mothers on or after that date would become free on reaching their 21st birthday, the bill signaled the inevitable disappearance of slavery in Brazil, and was welcomed by supporters of the slave cause as a positive, if cautious, step forward. Whilst he cannot be numbered amongst the ranks of active campaigners, there is evidence that Machado also greeted the law with a certain degree of enthusiasm. On 1st October 1876, in one of the series of *crônicas* entitled "História de quinze dias", Machado would refer back to the passing of the law with a mixture of pride and regret:

De interesse geral é o fundo da emancipação, pelo qual se acham libertados em alguns municípios 230 escravos. Só em alguns municípios!

Esperemos que o número será grande quando a libertação estiver feito em todo o império.

A lei de 28 de setembro fez agora cinco anos. Deus lhe dê vida e saúde! Esta lei foi um grande passo na nossa vida. Se tivesse vindo uns trinta antes, estávamos em outras condições. (OC.III, p. 352)

Machado obviously has high hopes for the law, but he is harbours no illusions about the amount of time needed for it to have the desired effect. Had it been passed thirty years ago, things might have been different. Now the damage has been done, and in the second part of his *crônica* Machado indicates that the campaign to change attitudes and abolish prejudices with relation to slavery has a long way to go:

Mas há 30 anos, não veio a lei, mas vinham ainda escravos, por contrabando, e vendiam-se às escâncaras no Valongo. Além da venda, havia o calabouço. Um homem do meu conhecimento suspira pelo azorrague.

- Hoje os escravos estão altanados, costuma ele dizer. Se a gente dá uma sova num, há logo quem intervenha e até chame a polícia. Bons tempos os que lá vão! Eu ainda me lembro quando a gente via passar um preto escorrendo em sangue, e dizia: "Anda, diabo, não estás assim pelo que eu fiz!" - Hoje...

E o homem solta um suspiro, tão de dentro, tão de coração... que faz cortar o dito.  
*Le pauvre homme!* (OC.III, p. 352)

In "Mariana" Machado addressed himself primarily to the prejudice of a society which, through years of abuse, had come to regard the slave as a commodity as opposed to a human being. The story exhibits an enormous amount of sympathy for the plight of the household slave and manages to avoid the insensitive approach to the problem of other Brazilian abolitionist writers, whose work tended to reinforce prevailing attitudes on the slave's sub-human status.<sup>1</sup> Macedo's *As Vítimas Algozes* is a case in point. Published in 1869, it contained three long and terrifying stories in which the slave was consistently depicted as a demonic and bestial figure who would some day avenge the injustice of his or her situation unless something was done about it. Any sense of fellow-feeling that Macedo may have had for the slave is definitely not expressed in these works, which exemplify David Brookshaw's statement that:

Abolitionist literature started from the premise that slavery was bad for slave owners because it brought them into contact with moral degenerates. Its purpose was to instil fear in the slave owners.<sup>2</sup>

Machado's story is of a very different nature, although it too makes use of a slave stereotype. Mariana is an example of the Pitiful Slave and the difficulties of her condition are designed to move the reader. But there is more to this tale than sentiment.

"Mariana" has two narrators, neither of whom corresponds to the "real" Machado. Returning to Rio after an extensive period of travelling, the first narrator (to whom we shall return later) bumps into an old friend, Coutinho, who in turn will tell the story in his own words to a group of acquaintances. Throughout the story Coutinho tries to present himself as a man who is sympathetic to the dilemma of Mariana, whom he finds both attractive and interesting. But his apparent sympathy does little to conceal or change the prejudices of his class. Despite her obvious beauty and intelligence, there is never any question of Coutinho regarding Mariana as anything other than a slave. We read at the beginning of Coutinho's account that Mariana was born and brought up

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<sup>1</sup> For a concise review of Brazilian abolitionist literature see "Abolitionism in Brazil: Anti-Slavery and Anti-Slave", by David T. Habery in *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. IX.2 (1972), pp. 30-46.

<sup>2</sup> *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature*, (New Jersey & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1986), p. 27.

at home, and although she is given an education not quite equal to that of the girls of the house, we are told that she knows more than others in a similar position. She can read, write, embroider - she even managed to learn French from Coutinho's younger sister - but she still remains a slave in everyone's eyes. When the suggestion is made that Mariana might be in love, Coutinho thinks immediately of the butler or the coachman, who would be on her level, and not of himself. When he tries to find out more, the young man of the house has the following conversation with the slave-girl, which serves to indicate the extent to which both parties are aware of their respective positions in society:

- Não falemos nisso, nhonhô. Não se trata de amores, que eu não posso ter amores. Sou uma simples escrava.

- Escrava, é verdade, mas escrava quase senhora. És tratada aqui como filha da casa. Esqueces esses benefícios?

- Não os esqueço; mas tenho grande pena em havê-los recebido.

- Que dizes, insolente?

- Insolente? disse Mariana com altivez. Perdão! continuou ela voltando à sua humildade natural e ajoelhando-se a meus pés; perdão, se disse aquilo, não foi por querer: eu sei o que sou; mas se nhonhô soubesse a razão estou certo que me perdoaria.

Comoveu-me esta linguagem da rapariga. Não sou mau; compreendi que alguma grande preocupação teria feito com que Mariana esquecesse por instantes a sua condição e o respeito que nos devia a todos. (OC.II, p. 776)

There is something chilling about Coutinho's unconscious presumption of privilege here. It is not as though he does not care at all for Mariana - he certainly does, after a fashion. In fact, Coutinho's attitude is extremely sympathetic when compared to that of two other people mentioned in the story. On the one hand we have Amélia, the cousin to whom Coutinho is engaged, who exhibits an extreme form of prejudice and resents the interest her fiancé is taking in Mariana. She is apparently of the opinion that slaves do not even deserve to be treated as human beings:

Extremamente leviana, Amélia não soube conservar a necessária dignidade, quando foi a minha casa. Conversou muito na necessidade de tratar severamente as escravas, e achou que era dar mau exemplo mandar-lhes ensinar alguma coisa. (OC.II, p. 779)

On the other hand, there is Coutinho's uncle João Luís whose apparent concern for Mariana contains definite sexual overtones. The first rather cryptic indication comes immediately after Coutinho has given us a physical description of the beautiful mulata:

Mariana era apreciada por todos quantos iam a nossa casa, homens e senhoras. Meu tio, João Luís, dizia-me muitas vezes: - "Por que diabo está tua mãe guardando aqui em casa esta flor peregrina? A rapariga precisa de tomar ar." (OC.II, p. 773)



And our suspicions are confirmed later on in another oblique statement by the uncle:

A situação da pobre rapariga interessara-me bastante, o que era natural, sendo eu a causa indireta daquela dor profunda. Falei muito nesse episódio em casa de minha prima. O tio João Luís disse-me em particular que eu fôra um asno e um ingrato.

- Por quê? perguntei-lhe.

- Porque devias ter posto Mariana debaixo da minha proteção, a fim de librá-la do mau tratamento que vai ter.

- Ah! não, minha mãe já lhe perdoou.

- Nunca lhe perdoará como eu. (OC.II, p. 779)

When we compare him to Amélia and *tio* João Luís, Coutinho does not make such a bad master. But that is precisely Machado's point. there may be degrees of presumption and prejudice, but in the end what we are talking about is a fundamental division between masters and slaves, between protectors and the protected. And whilst Coutinho appears to be elevating Mariana by referring to her as "escrava quase senhora", the point is that even he will never regard her as the equal of the guardians to whom she owes both respect and service. So, by speaking through the lips of a man of privilege, (who does not even realize the extent of his own social prejudice), Machado is making an ironic comment on the monumental change of attitude that must take place before there is any real freedom for the slave in Brazil.

Machado makes his cynicism doubly clear for the discerning reader via the words of his first narrator, which frame Coutinho's story. His opening remarks are worth quoting at some length, since they convey much about his character:

Voltei de Europa depois de uma ausência de quinze anos. Era quanto bastava para vir achar muita coisa mudada. alguns amigos tinham morrido, outros estavam casados, outros viúvos. Quatro ou cinco tinham-se feito homens públicos, e um deles acabava de ser ministro de Estado. Sobre todos eles pesavam quinze anos de desilusões e cansaço. Eu, entretanto, vinha tão moço como fora, não no rosto e nos cabelos, que começavam a embranquecer, mas na alma e no coração que estavam em flor. Foi essa a vantagem que tirei das minhas constantes viagens. Não há decepções possíveis para um viajante, que apenas vê de passagem o lado belo da natureza humana e não ganha tempo de conhecer-lhe o lado feio. Mas deixemos estas filosofias inúteis. (OC.II, p. 771)

What business does a man with so little time for deep, serious thought, one of life's butterflies, have introducing a tragic tale on the topic of slavery? None whatsoever, except, perhaps, for the pleasure of relating a sad but interesting story to others (i.e. the readers of the *Jornal das Famílias*) of a similar disposition. Our suspicions are confirmed by the way in which this narrator chooses to conclude the story he has passed on to us:

Coutinho concluiu assim a sua narração, que foi ouvida com tristeza por todos nós. Mas daí a pouco saímos pela Rua do Ouvidor fora, examinando os pés das damas que desciam dos carros, e fazendo a esse respeito mil reflexões mais ou menos engraçadas e oportunas. Duas horas de conversa tinha-nos restituído a mocidade. (OC.II, p. 783)

Bearing in mind what Machado has been trying to convey through the voice of Coutinho, it seems strange that he should apparently seek to undermine a serious consideration of the issues brought up by the story through the dismissive attitude of his first narrator. From the standpoint of his irony, however, Machado's attitude can be summed up in the expression: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear", and he cares little for those, like his narrator, who have no desire to face difficult issues.

We can therefore conclude that, despite its patent romanticism, "Mariana" shows strong indications of the cynicism which is the dominant feature of Machado's short story writing between 1870 and 1873. He may not question the existence of love here, as he does in the stories to which we shall now shift our attention, but he is extremely critical about prevailing attitudes towards slavery, and, significantly, he chose to make those criticisms indirectly through the irony of his narration.

### **The analysis of negative characteristics**

With the exception of "Mariana" and the anachronistic "O caminho de Damasco", the stories of the early 1870s show Machado continuing to move steadily away from the accepted conventions of Romantic love and morality. Neither of these two factors disappear completely, but they do become increasingly incongruous with the characters to whom Machado presents us. As we saw in "Miss Dollar", one of his major preoccupations now is to establish a way of realistically describing how "lovers" react towards each other, within the context of his already negative views of human nature. The problem though, again as we found in "Miss Dollar", is that a romantic story which either refuses to talk in terms of love, or makes it almost impossible for love to blossom, really has no future. Nevertheless, Machado takes his non-romanticism even further first of all in the novel *Ressurreição* and then in two long short stories of the early 1870s: "Qual dos dois?" and "Nem uma nem outra", with varying degrees of success. Although our interest lies primarily with the short stories, it is essential that we discuss *Ressurreição* at this point, since in all three narratives Machado attempts to analyse

the psychology of the same basic male personality, amongst others. Also, from *Ressurreição* (probably begun in 1869), through "Qual dos dois?" (published between Sept 1872 and Jan 1873), to "Nem uma nem outra" (Aug to Oct 1873), there is a clear chronological development of Machado's cynicism seen not only in characterization, but in his attitude to the romantic story itself.

## The portrait of a sceptic

In the preface to the first edition of *Ressurreição* Machado makes it quite clear what his intentions are in writing the novel:

Minha idéia ao escrever este livro foi pôr em ação aquele pensamento de Shakespeare:

Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt.

Não quis fazer romance de costumes; tentei o esboço de uma situação e o contraste de dous caracteres; com esses simples elementos busquei o interesse do livro. A crítica decidirá se a obra corresponde ao intuito, e sobretudo se o operário tem jeito para ela.

É o que lhe peço com o coração nas mãos. (Ress, p. 32)

Such an objective as Machado outlines makes for a very bare and, in romantic terms, disappointing plot. All we seem to do is watch the oscillating relationship of a loving widow (Livia) and a not so loving bachelor (Félix), with almost all the writer's energies being spent on the emotional and spiritual portrait of Félix, whose nature will always condemn him to romantic failure. Clearly, Machado views his first novel as an opportunity to expand upon the analysis of negative characteristics he had begun in the short stories, especially in "Miss Dollar". Félix can even be looked upon as a synthesis of the two enigmatic characters of "Miss Dollar". Like Mendonça he is an unlikely hero - a doctor, rich through an unexpected stroke of good fortune, but no longer young and apparently wanting nothing out of life:

Félix entrava então nos seus trinta e seis anos, idade em que muitos já são pais de - família, a alguns homens de Estado. Aquele era apenas um rapaz vadio e desambicioso. (Ress, p. 34)

His literary approach to life is seen very early on when he dismisses a casual lover on New Year's Day for no other reason than because "Félix lera pouco antes um livro de Henri Murger, em que achara um personagem com o sestro destas catástrofes

prematuras" (Ress, p. 35). The fact that Félix's cynicism is just as false as Mendonça's is made especially clear to the reader in the eleventh chapter when he and Livia discuss their romantic past in melancholy mood. After she has spoken of her disappointing marriage, he goes on to talk about his painful experiences, insisting he is worse off than she. For whilst she can still go on to be happy, he cannot, since he no longer has a basic trust in the sincerity of his fellow man. At this point, however, Machado stands back from his characters and remarks:

Félix continuou a narração por este mesmo tom elegíaco e triste. Foi longa e fiel. Se a viúva não o escutasse só com o coração, poderia perceber alguma coisa mais do que ressentimento e amargura. Félix não era virtualmente mau; tinha porém, um cepticismo desdenhoso ou hipócrita, segundo a ocasião. Não perceberia só isso; veria também que a natureza fora um tanto cúmplice na transformação moral do médico. A desconfiança dos sentimentos e das pessoas não provinha só das decepções que encontrara; tinha também raízes na mobilidade do espírito e na debilidade do coração. A energia dele era atu de vontade, não qualidade nativa; ele era mais que tudo fraco e volúvel. (Ress, p. 98)

As with Mendonça, there is the strong suggestion of a sexual motive on Félix's part, which he in his cynicism also fancies he sees in Livia's tender affections:

A viúva tornou a ocupar-lhe o espírito. Recapitulou então tudo o que se passara em Catumbi, as palavras trocadas, os olhares ternos, e a confissão mútua; evocou a imagem da moça e viu-a junto dele, pendente de seus lábios, palpitante de sentimento e ternura. Então a fantasia começou a debuxar-lhe uma existência futura, não romanesca, nem legal, mas real e prosaica, como ele supunha que não podia deixar de ser com um homem inábil para as afeições de céu. (Ress, p. 74)

Quando Félix chegou a casa, estava plenamente convencido de que a afeição da viúva era uma mistura de vaidade, capricho e pendor sensual. Isto lhe parecia melhor que uma paixão desinteressada e sincera, em que, aliás, não acreditava. (Ress, p. 74)

Apart from Mendonça's pretence, there is also something of Margarida's more perverse nature in Félix, leading eventually to romantic behaviour which is as contradictory and self-destructive as anything we saw in the heroine of "Miss Dollar". This time, however, there is no mystery since from the very beginning we are made aware of the fact that inconsistency is part and parcel of the character that Machado has undertaken to study:

Não se trata aqui de um caráter inteiriço, nem de um espírito lógico e igual a si mesmo; trata-se de um homem complexo, incoerente e caprichoso, em quem se reuniam opostos elementos, qualidades exclusivas e defeitos inconciliáveis. (Ress, p. 34)

So, at the same time as Félix's spirit seems to be going through a process of renewal (or, in the terms of the novel, resurrection), due to Livia's loving attentions, something else inside him conspires to destroy everything they possess. He becomes intensely jealous, seeing infidelity in every glance and smile that the widow directs at another

man. And when it becomes apparent that someone else is madly in love with Livia as well as he (although she ignores him), Félix does exactly the opposite of what one would expect from a man who is on the verge of marriage:

Uma só palavra bastava ao médico para arredar do seu caminho aquele rival nascente; Félix repeliu essa idéia, metade por cálculo, metade por orgulho, - mal entendido orgulho, mas natural dele. O cálculo era cousa pior; era uma cilada, - experiência, dizia ele; - era pôr em frente uma da outra, duas almas que lhe pareciam, por assim dizer, consanguíneas, tentá-las a ambas, aquilatar assim a constância e a sinceridade de Livia. (Ress, pp. 104-105)

Amazingly, the relationship somehow manages to survive Félix's deliberate suicide attempt, but in the end it really makes no difference. Sooner or later doubts are bound to reappear in the mind of the man who has already decided he can trust no one. The day before he is due to be wed, Félix cancels all arrangements on the strength of an anonymous note in which Livia is accused of infidelity in her first marriage and he is advised to avoid the probability of receiving similar treatment. Félix does not even attempt to find out whether or not this is true. "Quem te diz que é verdadeira?", asks one of his friends. "Quem me diz que o não é?", comes the reply. "A dúvida era já bastante para justificar o que fiz" (Ress, p. 155) This proves to be the final straw for Livia. Even when the repentant Félix finally learns that the whole thing has been concocted by his arch rival, the widow has the good sense to close the curtain on their courtship. She reasons that Félix's spirit will always be prone to doubt and suspicion, a judgement that is borne out not only Félix's past behaviour but also by his future thoughts, revealed to us by the narrator in a concluding epilogue:

O amor do médico teve dúvidas póstumas. A veracidade da carta que impedira o casamento, com o andar dos anos, não só lhe pareceu possível mas até provável. Meneses disse-lhe um dia ter a prova cabal de que Luís Batista fora o autor da carta; Félix não recusou o testemunho nem lhe pediu a prova. O que ele interiormente pensava era que, suprimida a vilania de Luís Batista, não estava excluída a verossimilhança do fato, e bastava ela para lhe dar razão. (Ress, p. 165)

So the "romance" of Livia and Félix ends as "Miss Dollar" ought to have done. Not happily, nor with any real sense of tragedy, but in an atmosphere of disappointment and quiet resignation. Like Livia, who retires into a life of solitude, we are left to meditate on how things might have been had Félix been able to bury his scepticism. But we realise that this is impossible and are forced to share with Machado the belief that even the greatest love cannot resurrect "o sentimento da confiança e a memória das ilusões" (Ress, p. 165) in the heart of a cynic. In the ending of *Ressurreição*, therefore,

we have confirmation of Machado's increasing tendency to give the victory over to negative and non-romantic forces in his fiction.

On the other hand, however, the conclusion to the novel also highlights aspects of *Ressurreição* which are conventionally romantic and moral. Livia, who never stops loving the undeserving Félix, is made to look like a modern version of one of Pereira da Silva's suffering heroines:

No tempo em que os mosteiros andavam nos romances, - como refúgio dos heróis, pelo menos, - a viúva acabaria os seus dias no claustro. A solidão da cela seria o remate natural da vida, e como a olhos profanos não seria dado devassar o sagrado recinto, lá a deixaríamos sozinha e quieta, aprendendo a amar a Deus e a esquecer os homens.

Mas o romance é secular, e os heróis que precisam de solidão são obrigados a buscá-la no meio do tumulto. Livia soube isolar-se na sociedade. Ninguém mais a viu no teatro, na rua, ou em reuniões. Suas visitas são poucas e íntimas. Dos que a conheceram outrora, muitos a esqueceram mais tarde; alguns a desconheceriam agora. (Ress, p. 164)

Throughout the novel, Livia's capacity for selfless, romantic love provides a constant contrast to Félix's vanity and scepticism. And on at least one occasion, when Félix is preparing to make his first declaration of love to the widow, Machado's presentation of the contrasting thoughts and motives of this unlikely couple reaches the level of humorous irony:

A tarde estava realmente linda. Félix, entretanto, cuidava menos da tarde que da moça. Não queria perder o ensejo de lhe dizer, como se fora verdade, que a amava loucamente. Encostada ao parapeito do terraço que dava para a chácara, a viúva simulava contemplar os esplendores do ocaso; na realidade, afiava o ouvido para escutar a confissão amorosa. (Ress, p. 70)

Whatever humour is contained here, however, is not directed at Livia's patent romanticism. Rather, the irony of the situation lies in the fact that such irreconcilable personalities should be together in the first place. The reader may perhaps be tempted to laugh at Livia for seeing Félix through rose-coloured glasses, but that is clearly not Machado's intention. Throughout the novel, Livia's love represents the only real positive force in Félix's life; as A. J. MacAdam has written:

*Ressurreição* is composed of the collision of two forces, which we may loosely identify as life and death. Livia in general is associated with life, motion, growth and spring, while Félix is linked to death, deserts, inertia and barren ground.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Livia fails is due not so much to the ideal nature of her love as to Félix's perverse determination to remain "essencialmente infeliz", as he is described in the

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<sup>3</sup> "Re-reading *Ressurreição*", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, IX.2 (1972), p. 54.

concluding paragraph to the novel. Whether or not Livia's romantic approach to life is valid is never made an issue as it is with some characters in the short stories. Félix is the one whose scepticism is criticized, whose attitude is summed up in the Shakespearean moral of the novel quoted earlier:

Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt.

Machado's acceptance of conventional moral and romantic values in *Ressurreição* is made even clearer at the end of the novel in the contrasting fortunes of a secondary couple, Raquel and Meneses. MacAdam gives a useful summary of their function:

The function of the other couple, Meneses and Raquel is purely dramatic. To the tragic dissolution of future happiness, which occurs when Livia sensibly breaks off further relations with Félix, the union of Meneses and Raquel is a comic balance. Their dramatic trajectory is an exact, opposite parallel to that of the older couple. They begin in confusion: Meneses loves Livia and Raquel loves Félix. At the end they are together and happy.<sup>4</sup>

The marriage of Raquel and Meneses is a sensible one, borne of misfortune, but solidly based on the spiritual compatibility of two sensitive people. Reminiscent of the time when Machado was careful to punish vice and reward virtue in his stories, their happy union is a kind of consolation prize both for them and the reader.

In conclusion, then, *Ressurreição* can be looked upon as a novel that continues the anti-romantic direction of the short stories in its psychological portrait of Félix, whilst making considerable concessions to the moral and formal conventions of romantic literature. At no point does Machado ever question the deep, sincere and eternal nature of Livia's love and at the end he sees nothing wrong in counterbalancing the negative results of Félix's actions with Raquel and Meneses' deserved marital bliss. It is significant that neither of these features is allowed to cushion the impact of his cynicism in both "Qual dos dois?" and "Nem uma nem outra", although in each story he adopts a very different approach.

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<sup>4</sup> Macadam, p. 55.

## A strange kind of love

As a work of art, "Qual dos dois?" is not a success. Its publication dates (Sept 1872 to Jan 1873) reveal that it far exceeds the usual length of a short story, and in doing so, lacks both direction and conciseness. Moreover, since its many faults are not even redeemed by the irony and narrative vigour we find in "Miss Dollar", the total interest of "Qual dos dois?" lies in the useful documentary evidence it gives us of Machado's attempts to construct romantic stories which are devoid of romantic sentiment. Though the title of the story refers to the choice that Augusta must make between two suitors, - Daniel and the featureless fop Luis - in reality Machado focuses all of his analytical attention on the relationship between Augusta and Daniel. And to a much greater degree than we find in either "Miss Dollar" or *Ressurreição*, the game of love that these two play is dominated by the presence of negative traits of character which inevitably exclude the possibility of marriage.

Daniel, to whom we are given a fairly lengthy introduction, is presented as the epitome of laziness. A young man, good-looking, rich and educated, he seems to have everything except ambition, whose lack is due to pure indolence. In painting Daniel as a character who is motivated fundamentally by laziness, Machado is testing in fictional form the truth of one of La Rochefoucauld's cynical theories of human behaviour, referred to briefly in the story (HistR, p. 242) and expressed in full in maxim 266:

C'est se tromper que de croire qu'il n'y ait que les violentes passions comme l'ambition et l'amour, qui puissent triompher des autres. La paresse, toute languissant qu'elle est, ne laisse pas d'en être souvent la maîtresse: elle usurpe sur tous les desseins et sur toutes les actions de la vie; elle y détruit et y consume insensiblement les passions et les vertues.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, Daniel has absolutely no interest in politics, the arts, or affairs of the heart and has adopted the philosophy of apathy, which he expresses in a series of cynical axioms. Like Mendonça and Félix his cynicism is false, but unlike the former dog-lover, Daniel is only cynical because he cannot be bothered to be anything else. Machado does not, however, speak in totally negative tones about his character, adding in one place: "Pode ser que houvesse dentro dele o germen das grandes paixões, mas faltava fecundá-lo" (HistR, p. 243). The statement lies almost unnoticed amid the general

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<sup>5</sup> *La Rochefoucauld: Maximes*, ed. Pierre Kuentz (Nancy: Bordas, 1966), p. 101.



blandness of Daniel's character description, but it is a very important opening for Machado when he wants to introduce some kind of love interest. Nevertheless, the general impression we have of Daniel is of a lazy good-for-nothing, living shamelessly on the hard-earned fortune of his father, an unlikely hero if ever there was one.

So, having created for himself a character in whom laziness is sovereign, Machado is then faced with the problem of how to make Daniel fall in love without contradicting his nature. The way Machado tries to resolve this is by making Daniel respond in a negative way to negative stimuli from the female protagonist and then to call that response love. On the first occasion they see each other, Augusta throws Daniel an unmerited look of disdain which leads to love in him, eventually. And Machado is very careful to state clearly the stages in the awakening of Daniel's affections. First of all, Machado leaves himself a little room for movement by slightly adapting La Rochefoucauld's maxim:

Se a preguiça como quer o moralista, destrói todas as paixões, confessemos-lo que o faz lentamente e não de um lance. Daniel ainda tinha em si uma boa dose de orgulho que resistia a ação dissolvente. A lembrança de Augusta foi de orgulho ofendido. (HistR, pp. 258-59)

And if we add to this a natural curiosity concerning the reasons for her apparent dislike of him, we have the beginnings of an interesting relationship. Daniel is drawn to Augusta not so much by her beauty, which he does appreciate, but by her disdain of him. From her first inimical look, through her refusal to dance with Daniel at a party, to expressions of mere indifference in frivolous company, Machado lists the negative acts of Augusta which nevertheless have their effect on Daniel's heart:

Estes e outros incidentes produziram em Daniel o efeito natural; o orgulho foi-se pouco a pouco transformando; quando dali saiu, naquela noite, já se pode dizer que no coração do rapaz rompia a aurora do amor.

É, coisa singular, esse amor não era, como em outros casos, um resultado de simpatia, mas sim antipatia de duas criaturas, que, se odiassem alguma vez, seriam mortais inimigos. (HistR, p. 283)

In more concise terms, Machado says of Daniel at the beginning of the sixth chapter: "Despontava-lhe já uma espécie de ódio contra Augusta. Seria esse o caminho do amor" (HistR, p. 266) A strange love this, that is fuelled on hate, pride and indifference, but Machado would argue that it is in keeping with the psychology of the character of Daniel. There are as many roads to love as there are different personalities - only an

appeal to his pride could possibly stir the emotions of Daniel. And once those emotions are stirred, Machado is careful to keep Daniel cool and reserved in speech, even when it comes to a declaration of love:

- Não creia, disse ele, que se trata de um amor de poeta. Eu não tenho nada de poeta; nem é coisa que me penalize. O meu amor vem um pouco da razão. Sou um homem temperado. Confesso que as suas graças me impressionaram bastante; mas creia que, se não a achasse digna de ser minha mulher, não lhe falava nisso. Estou que o amor duraria um pouco mais que as rosas de Malherbe. Quer ser minha mulher?

Esta declaração, em que misturava a sinceridade com a insolência, foi dita com volubilidade, sem fogo nem lágrimas na voz, no meio de tudo com certa graça. (HistR, pp. 286-87)

When his suit is rejected by Augusta, Daniel does the sensible thing and absents himself from the Corte for a few months. He returns bearing no traces of his former feelings for Augusta, and completely restored to his former state of apathetic laziness. Unlike Livia, Daniel is not destined to suffer the pains of unrequited love.

No matter how implausible Machado's theory of character may seem we have to admit that the personality of Daniel does have a certain unity within the contours that Machado has drawn for him. Even his love has a kind of logic to it, since it is inspired by a pride which is as negative a quality as the laziness that is his major trait. The character who really causes problems for Machado is Augusta, the other half of the romantic duo, problems which reveal themselves in inconsistencies of personality and in the awkward structure of the plot.

## **An impossible affection**

Machado's main difficulty with Augusta is, as with Daniel, how to make her fall in love in a way which is consistent with her character. Like Daniel, Augusta is dominated by one major negative trait which puts all other emotions in the shade - her coldness.

As Machado tells us at the beginning of chapter XI:

Não é minha intenção apresentar Augusta como um carácter excepcional, nem como um espírito superior. Os sentimentos da moça eram, em resumo, os mesmos das outras mulheres. O que a dominava, porém, era uma certa frieza de temperamento que a tornava incompetente para os grandes afetos. Acrescente-se a isto uma tal ou qual vaidade de sua beleza, e aí temos o que era a filha de Madalena. (HistR, p. 284)

Unlike Daniel, however, Augusta does not possess the ability to love. Her temperament is too cold, her bearing too haughty, her spirit too independent for her to allow emotion

to take over. In short "o amor para ela era simplesmente uma coisa que ela não compreendia, nem desejava compreender" (HistR, p. 284). Here then, we see the extreme nature of Machado's non-romanticism, expressed in the forceful personality of a rich provincial girl whose wealth and upbringing allow her the luxury of not having to think in terms of marrying a man for reasons of social freedom or financial security. Augusta is extremely aware of the attraction her good looks and riches must hold for prospective suitors, and this awareness, coupled with the fact that she has been brought up by her mother "com uma perfeita independência de espírito" (HistR, p. 284), makes for a very strong-willed personality. There is no room for romantic love here. So for the majority of the story, Augusta's apparently strange actions with regard to Daniel and Luís are perfectly in keeping with her character. On one occasion when Daniel tries to visit her, she does not deign to enter the room until he is on his way out. And when he has gone, we find Augusta ironically echoing her mother's words that it was a pity she missed him:

- Foi pena! murmurou a moça, disfarçando um sorriso que lhe estava a brincar nos lábios.

Não disfarçou tanto que a mãe o não percebesse.

- Há alguma coisa, pensou ela.

Augusta não lhe disse mais nada; mas quem pudesse penetrar no seu espírito, ouviria a seguinte reflexão:

- São todos os mesmos!

Reflexão que aliás não esclarece muito a situação. É provável que pelo romance adiante compreendamos essas palavras interiores de Augusta. (HistR, p. 277)

In Augusta's eyes men are all the same since they are all after her wealth or her beauty. Although at one point we read that she admires "a desdenhosa superioridade de Daniel" (HistR, p. 265), the fact that he chases her reduces him to the status of her other candidates, thus confirming Augusta's own sense of desirability and self-importance. Both Luís and Daniel fail to perceive this perverse strain in Augusta's way of thinking and as a result they also fail to attract her. The narrator writes in chapter XI:

O verdadeiro triunfo seria abandonar o campo; talvez o despeito produzisse nela o resultado favorável. Quem sabe? seria talvez a primeira a dar um passo para o esquivo namorado. (HistR, pp. 284-285)

Augusta is impervious to the usual charms of a prospective lover, but spurn her and she may even try to get you back! This Daniel does quite unconsciously when he delivers his "take it or leave it" proposal of marriage to Augusta, causing her to have a sleepless night:

Augusta não velara pelo mesmo motivo que Daniel. Era outro. Era despeito. A orgulhosa Augusta sentia-se envergonhada com a cena que se passara durante a noite. Humilhara-se com a fácil resignação de Daniel; era a sua primeira derrota. (HistR, p. 291)

Just as hurt pride aroused affection in Daniel, so the same negative stimulus now has its effect on Augusta. But with what results? Surely not love? Certainly not, at least not at first, although for some reason, not explained by the narrator, Augusta does want Daniel to go back on his word to leave Minas:

A sua esperança foi que, demorando um último olhar na janela da casa dela, Daniel não pudesse seguir viagem e tornasse a entrar para casa, dispondo-se a encadear a existência ali a seus pés. A esperança foi iludida. Mas para que desejava Augusta isso, se o não amava? Não sei. Desejava-o. (HistR, p. 308)

Augusta's hope here may simply be a desire to see Daniel humble himself before her and thus restore her shattered pride. Such a desire would, in fact, be in total consonance with her nature. Less easily explicable in terms of her character is the scene at the very end of the story where she confesses to Amélia her love for Daniel. Indeed, besides sounding extremely forced and artificial, the scene is totally incongruous when we remember that Machado has already called Augusta "incompetente para os grandes afetos". So the question we must ask ourselves is, why does Machado make Augusta act in a way which is contrary to the laws of her character? The answer, I believe, lies in the very clear, if unconvincing moral which Machado makes at the very end of the story.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the tendency of the short stories has been to move away from the statement of a positive moral message, and "Qual dos dois?" is, in essence, no exception. For the most part, Machado's main interest is to catalogue the psychology of the Daniel/Augusta relationship with no reference to its morality. But he could have ended the story at the end of chapter XVI, at which point Luís and Daniel have been sent packing, having satisfactorily answered the question of the title. "Qual dos dois?" - Neither. He does not, however, and instead goes on to ask a question which does not really make sense in the light of what we already know about Augusta:

"Quem teria razão? os que esperavam que chegasse a Augusta a hora do amor ou os que a julgavam uma simples estátua de mármore?" (HistR, p. 311). We know that the answer should be the latter but for the purposes of achieving a moral ending Machado makes it the former. Augusta must be seen to have been rejected in love, just as she rejected others. Thus she eventually "falls in love" with Daniel, who by now is no longer interested. She is not even allowed the consolation of a marriage to the featureless Luís, since he conveniently overhears Augusta voicing her low opinion of him to a friend. So by the time we reach the end of the story, Augusta has been totally humiliated and Machado is in a position where he can conclude with a warning for the young, impressionable readers of the *Jornal das Famílias*:

Repelindo os que a amavam, leviana em suas ações, dotada de um caráter orgulhoso e altivo, Augusta teve o castigo dos próprios erros.

A carta de Luís inspirou-lhe a idéia de não casar mais.

E cumpriu a resolução. Ninguém deve imitar Augusta: é um desses tipos raros, extravagantes, que nunca podem ser a esposa amante nem a mãe carinhosa; em suma, é a mulher sem nenhum traço augusto. (HistR, p. 335)

The heavy-handed moral implies that there is much more at stake in this story than mere poetic justice; the humiliation of Augusta is necessary for very good social and moral reasons. Let us return to the morning after the night of Daniel's declaration:

Quando Augusta se levantou tinha os olhos pesados; a vigília deixara-lhe impressos os seus vestígios. E eram belos os seus olhos, não sei até se mais poéticos, com a languidez do cansaço, do que com a viveza natural. Direi mais: aquele aspecto tornara-a mais mulher, porque Augusta tem no olhar e nas feições um quê de enérgico e severo, que indicava antes um caráter masculino. (HistR, p. 292)

Augusta's crime consists of her possessing a strength which far exceeds that usually embodied in the frame of the weaker sex. Her pride, her independence, her lack of emotional sensitivity imply a virility that was deemed improper in a woman, especially one living in the Brazil of the nineteenth century where magazines like the *Jornal das Famílias* and the *Jornal das Moças* encouraged women to be loving mothers and submissive wives. Augusta will never be either, so no matter how much her type may intrigue Machado, she must be officially condemned as a threat to the status quo. And there can be no doubt that the threat she poses is a significant one. We recall Daniel's shock on receiving a signed letter from her on his return to Rio: "não podia furtar-se ao espanto que lhe causava a sem-cerimônia da moça, escrevendo e assinando um

bilhete que podia comprometê-la" (HistR, p. 316). Even more significant is the scene of Augusta's proposal of marriage:

Quem visse os dois julgaria que os papéis estavam trocados. Daniel assemelhava-se a uma donzela tímida, e Augusta a um cavalheiro amante e solícito, querendo arrancar da amada a resposta decisiva. (HistR, pp. 321-322)

In the context of the *Jornal das Famílias*, the sheer masculinity of Augusta's character cannot remain unpunished. The problem for Machado, however, is that the only punishment which counts for anything in a romantic story (i.e. the rejection of love) is a logical impossibility as far as Augusta is concerned. Nevertheless, this is the line which Machado decides to take, wishing perhaps, as with "Miss Dollar", that he had not created a situation which was so difficult to resolve.

In his analysis of the two main characters of "Qual dos dois?", therefore, we see Machado stretching the contours of romantic fiction to breaking-point. His insistence that neither Daniel nor Augusta should be motivated by the force of their emotions (even "Linha reta, linha curva" and "Miss Dollar" had these, although they were disguised as something else) makes a total nonsense of the romantic format in which Machado is writing, causing him difficulties which are insurmountable. Machado would never again attempt an experiment of the nature and scale of the main plot of "Qual dos dois?", preferring instead to express his cynicism about human character and the romantic story through parody.

## **The confusing presence of moral purpose**

Machado's insistence on providing "Qual dos dois?" with some kind of badly fitting moral is also evident in the story's secondary characters and plot. But whereas the marriage of Raquel and Meneses left a positive impression on *Ressurreição*, the separation of a totally contrasting couple in "Qual dos dois?" merely confirms the negative message of the main plot.

Whilst Daniel and Augusta are engaged in a protracted battle of the wills, the speedy marriage, breakdown and eventual divorce of the frivolous Valadares and Amélia provide an extra dimension to the narrative, conveying a message which is more social than psychological. Their characterization is simple, with their non-

romantic reasons for getting married being clearly spelt out by Machado. Amélia represents the fickle young Brazilian woman for whom marriage is the only available means of achieving a degree of economic stability and social movement - "Via-se que era uma menina que casara para adquirir a liberdade de arruar" - we read (HistR, p. 262). Valadares' motives are just as suspect. As a man whose life so far has been a constant search for pleasure and excitement, he regards marriage as just another novelty, of which he soon becomes bored:

Casou o rapaz por motivos alheios ao coração: primeiramente por interesse, depois por novidade. O casamento foi para ele uma espécie de passeio ao Corcovado. Ora todos são de acordo que do Corcovado se goza uma vista magnífica, mas a ninguém lembrou ainda a idéia de lá fundar uma cidade. Ninguém lá fica; sobe-se, goza-se, desce-se.

Valadares começava a sentir a necessidade de descer do Corcovado; a idéia de que estava ligado para sempre era um verdadeiro pesadelo que lhe sufocava o espiirito. (HistR, p. 278)

The obvious shortcomings of the Valadares and Amélia relationship enables Machado to indulge in some idealistic moralizing about the true nature and purpose of marriage, reminiscent of his earlier stories, via the narrator:

O casamento é a perfeito união de duas existencias e mais do que a união, é a fusão completa e absoluta. Se o casamento não é isto, é um encontro fortuito de hospedaria; apeiam-se à mesma porta, escolhem o mesmo aposento, comem à mesma mesa, nem mais, nem menos.

Este é o casamento mais comum. O outro, o legítimo, o raro, esse é outra coisa que não isto. A religião santifica o casamento, mas supõe sempre a existência anterior de um elo tão sagrado como o do altar. (HistR, p. 277)

and even through the sceptical Daniel:

Eu, profundamente céptico, a respeito de tudo, tenho a veleidade de crer no amor, ainda que raro, e quero que o amor seja a única razão de casamento. (HistR, pp. 323-324)

In "Qual dos dois?", however, such statements are definitely out of place when Machado provides no positive model on which to base his idealism. In fact, one can sense a degree of contradiction in Machado's stance when, very near the end of the story, he has Daniel comment very dryly on the demise of Valadares' marriage:

- Tudo isto, pensava ele consigo, voltando para casa, são argumentos para não casar nunca! (HistR, p. 328)

If Daniel believes in the possibility of true love and marriage, he has no reason for doing so, either from the evidence of his own experience or from the farcical adventure of his friend Valadares. And neither do we. The seemingly inevitable separation of both

couples in "Qual dos dois?" would seem to point to complete scepticism on Machado's part about how romantic affairs are conducted, which he expresses both in social and psychological terms. This double confirmation of Machado's cynicism together with the lack of a positive example, leaves no room for hopeful statements on the sanctity of marriage and weakens the attempted moral messages of both plots. With the disappearance of romantic love, the rejection of romantic morality cannot be far behind. Not surprisingly, in "Nem uma nem outra" the last of the psychological stories to be published before *Histórias da Meia-Noite*, Machado completely drops the serious moral stance of *Ressurreição* and "Qual dos dois?", and opts for a more sarcastic conclusion to his study.

### **The demise of the moral conclusion**

Throughout my study of the narratives that reflect Machado's desire to give a less romantic version of character analysis, I have especially stressed the conflict between the negative substance of the plot and its ending. The conflict is seen in its most blatant form in "Miss Dollar", where Machado simply replaces the most logical ending of the romance with one that is happy and supposedly satisfying. In *Ressurreição*, which is undoubtedly the most romantic of the works I have compared, he makes his study of Félix's character into a warning against an over-sceptical approach to life, and confirms the message with the successful marriage of Raquel and Meneses. And despite the fact that "Qual dos dois?" is totally devoid of romantic sentiment, Machado still tries to point the reader towards an ideal which he is no longer interested in portraying. In "Nem uma nem outra", however, Machado finally provides one of his negative psychological studies with an ending that matches the development of its plot. This is all the more significant because the moral potential of the story is not inconsiderable. Its basic format is similar to that of one of Machado's earliest moral stories, "Questão de vaidade", which was considered in the previous chapter. Both stories have as their central character a man who is incapable of deciding between the affections of two very different women. In the earlier one, the moral is clearly spelt out for the reader and, what is more, the vain Eduardo is seen to learn from his mistakes when one of the two innocent women dies as a result of his irresponsible behaviour. In Vicente's story, how-



ever, despite the fact that he is left with "nem uma nem outra" of the women he woos, there is no learning process and there is no moral.

"Nem uma nem outra" is the least detailed of the psychological stories, and Vicente is presented, at first, as the least negative of Machado's self-destructive characters. We find him living in an apparent state of happiness with Clara, upon whom he had taken pity after she had been abducted and then abandoned by a mutual friend. When a rich uncle from Minas, Captain Ferreira, pays Vicente a surprise visit, he is offered the hand of his beautiful cousin Delfina, plus the inheritance of a fabulous fortune. But neither the fact that Delfina is madly in love with him, nor the attraction of the immense wealth can tempt Vicente to return home with his uncle. He has too much to lose:

Clara era bonita e tinha excelente coração; o caráter de Vicente estava de perfeito acordo com o dela; ambos punham a felicidade na tranquilidade interior, na mútua afeição, no trabalho e na mediania. Tinham achado tudo isso; por que abandoná-lo? (CF.II, p. 132)

But a visit from Delfina herself in several months time will change all of this. She arrives in Rio pale and poetic, suffering physically from the emotional pain of being scorned by her cousin, and desperately seeking the fulfilment of her love. The flattering situation of being loved to distraction by such a beautiful young woman quickly proves to be more than Vicente's spiritual forces can stand. Soon he places himself in the position where his weak nature cannot decide which of the women he really loves. The answer, of course, is that he really loves neither one nor the other, although he finds the loss of either one inconceivable. Like Eduardo in "Questão de vaidade", Vicente's indecision is based on personal vanity, but this time Machado decides to highlight a far more interesting aspect of his character's personality, his jealousy, which provides a strong link with Félix of *Ressurreição*.

Our first glimpse of the suspicious nature that will eventually destroy Vicente's romantic relationships comes even before Delfina arrives in Rio. He has received a letter informing him of his cousin's lovesickness and requesting his immediate return to Minas. He firmly decides he will not go, but Clara thinks he ought to:

- Não te zangues, continuou a moça; vais a Minas, e lá te demoras o tempo preciso para acalmar essa pobre moça; voltarás depois. Vai, sim?

Vicente fitou em Clara olhos desconfiados; através daquela insistência ia uma intenção oculta, e pela primeira vez sentiu ciúmes. (CF.II, p. 135)

Clara's unexpected altruism continues when Delfina makes her surprise appearance in Rio, allowing Vicente to make long and frequent visits to his cousin without complaint. At first, Vicente interprets this as an heroic gesture on Clara's part, signifying her trust in him and in the strength of their relationship. But as his involvement with Delfina grows deeper and his relationship with Clara progressively worse, Vicente begins to wonder how his first lover can be so impassive. Clara even appears to be happier than ever at the very time when Vicente's affections for Delfina are at their most obvious. It is from this point, where he misinterprets Clara's calm acceptance of what is effectively the end of their affair, that Vicente's now paradoxical jealousy asserts itself far beyond the glare of his "olhos desconfiados". A love letter is found hidden in the pages of one of Clara's novels, making Vicente doubly suspicious. He suddenly decides to shift the emphasis of his romantic attentions from one woman to the other, provoking the following comment from the narrator:

Quem explicará todas estas incoseqüências do coração humano? Vicente, quase noivo de Delfina, teve ciúmes de Clara; o amor passou ao segundo plano; agora tratava-se de uma ofensa que ele supunha aviltante. (CF.II, p. 163)

Whether Clara is actually guilty of being unfaithful at this stage is unclear. It makes no difference anyway because the treatment she receives from Vicente seems more calculated to harm than heal their relationship:

Vicente, dedicado, terno, meigo no amor, era brutal no ciúme. Clara sentia-o agora. Longe de receber as suas caricias com boa cara, Vicente maltratava a rapariga com palavras duras e inconvenientes.

O menor gesto de Clara era para ele objeto de suspeita; um sorriso à janela, um recado a alguma amiga, um papel que lesse, tudo enfim lhe parecia sintoma de outro amor estranho ao seu.

A pouco e pouco este procedimento de Vicente foi tornando o coração de Clara mais indiferente ao amor dele. (CF.II, p. 168)

Consequently, it comes as no surprise when we learn that Clara has received further letters from her mysterious admirer, which have escaped Vicente's careful vigilance.

At the same time as Vicente's tyrannical jealousy is losing him Clara's affection, his frequent absences at the house of his rich cousin allow his friend and confidant, Correia, to court and eventually marry Delfina. One might be tempted to view this development of the plot as a moral punishment for Vicente's vanity and indecision (which in a sense, it is). But even a brief glance at the dubious motives that lie behind the procedure of both Correia and Delfina does not encourage us to think of them as ap-

appropriate instruments of poetic justice. This is especially true of Correia, who exerts an Iago-like influence over the major characters and events:

O leitor já há de ter notado o procedimento ambíguo e obscuro de Correia: ora animava o namoro de Delfina e Vicente; ora aconselhava ao amigo que não perdesse Clara de vista.

Quando estava com Clara, lançava-lhe no espírito o gérmen da suspeita.

Finalmente, por vontade ou não, fizera com que Delfina se apaixonasse por ele; e um belo dia resolveu ir pedi-la ao pai. (CF.II, p. 171)

Motivated by the double incentive of Delfina's considerable wealth and a petty grudge he secretly holds against Vicente, Correia can be regarded as the supreme manipulator. And yet the moral lesson he so thoroughly deserves is not even suggested. Delfina, likewise, is something of an opportunist, but of a totally different kind. She travels from Minas to Rio in order to win over the man she loves, even after he has made it absolutely clear that he is not interested. She attracts Vicente easily enough, but when things start to go wrong she makes no attempt to chase after him. She decides instead to follow the practical advice of a frivolous female friend, Júlia, whose philosophy is that a girl should love and marry the man who shows most interest (in her case, it is the pathetic poet figure, Castrioto), rather than waste time pining after someone whose intentions are not clear. Delfina settles, therefore, for the attentive Correia, whom she had previously hated. The narrator does not even attempt to explain such contradictory behaviour:

Aqui, o leitor há de ficar admirado de ver uma moça que quase morre de amores por um rapaz, apaixonar-se rapidamente por outro.

Que quer? A coisa passou-se assim; eu estou contando a história de pessoas que conheço, não acrescento nem suprimo nada. (CF.II, p. 167)

The loss of Delfina cannot, therefore, be regarded purely as the inevitable consequence of Vicente's moral faults, since Correia and Delfina herself also play their part. The same can be said of Clara's eventual departure to be with her secret admirer. Despite the apparent sympathy with which she is portrayed throughout the story, the fact remains that Clara is a woman of dubious virtue. After being abducted and abandoned by one man, she is perfectly content to live with another, Vicente, seemingly out of gratitude for the kindness he has shown her. There is no suggestion or even hope of future marriage in Clara, and she is remarkably complacent about Vicente's relationship with Delfina. Although it is nowhere stated by Machado, one wonders whether

Clara already has a successor in mind. When she finally packs her bags whilst Vicente is absent from the house for a short while, the one-time victim is shown to be a smooth operator when it comes to looking after her own interests. One assumes she will merely continue her lifestyle of dependency and respectable immorality with the next man.

So although Vicente may have his romantic and moral inadequacies, so too does everyone else in the story. He may, in part, be regarded as the author of his own misfortune, but there can be no doubt that he is given a helping hand by the other characters, notably Correia. This forms a sharp contrast to both *Ressurreição* and "Qual dos dois?", in which the romantic downfall of Félix, Daniel, Augusta, can be viewed as the almost inevitable result of their peculiar psychologies alone. By asserting the importance of factors other than Vicente's vanity and jealousy, Machado makes it impossible for "Nem uma nem outra" to have any meaningful moral. Consequently, the story does not end, as its title suggests, with Vicente living out the lonely scepticism of Félix and Daniel. What we have instead is a sarcastic parody of the romantic happy ending for everyone concerned (except Clara, who is simply not mentioned):

Um ano depois as situações dos personagens deste romance eram as seguintes:

Correia, a mulher e o sogro estavam na fazenda; todos felizes. O capitão por ver a filha casada; a filha por amar o marido; e Correia porque, tendo alcançado a desejada fortuna, pagara-a com ser bom marido.

Júlia e Castrioto também eram felizes; neste casal o marido era governado pela mulher que se tornara uma rainha em casa. O único desafogo que o marido tinha era escrever furtivamente alguns romances e colaborar num jornalzinho literário que se chamava: O girassol.

Quanto a Vicente, julgando a regra pelas exceções, e lançando à conta de todos as culpas suas, não queria mais amigos nem amores. Escrevia numa casa comercial, e vivia como um anacoreta. Ultimamente consta que tenciona casar com uma velha... de duzentos contos. (CF.II, pp. 183-184)

Here we have the complete reversal of the romantic and moral values with which Machado began his short story writing. Correia's greed and Delfina's romantic flexibility may not amount to the soul compatibility of earlier stories but they do lead to happiness in their own terms. Júlia and Castrioto's seemingly unequal match is no less stable, since it is a marriage that suits their respective natures. Finally, Vicente finds the faithfulness he laments (despite his own infidelity to Clara) by marrying a rich old hag. If this story has any moral to it at all, it must be that cynicism and self-interest do

not only outstrip love and virtue as major motivations for behaviour, but that they also constitute the most effective means of achieving success in this life.

In "Nem uma nem outra", then, Machado refuses to allow his characters to be defeated by their negative characteristics by pointing, ironically, to the "positive" value of cynicism. Although this sarcastic conclusion is unique to "Nem uma nem outra" as far as the psychological narratives are concerned, by the time the story was published in the autumn of 1873, the ironic denial of romantic and moral values had already become an established feature of many of Machado's other stories. In some, his insistence that life is neither romantic nor moral results in works that present a startlingly frank and cynical view of the way in which society works. In others, Machado's criticisms are conveyed by way of a light-hearted and parodic humour. The best example of the latter tendency is "A parasita azul", Machado's longest and most ambitious story of the period. Comparable to "Miss Dollar" in terms of its importance, "A parasita azul" does not contain the psychological contorsions of the earlier story, and its parodic elements are emphasized to the point where we can be sure that Machado is writing a deliberate satire on romantic and social values. But before we consider in detail the objects of Machado's humorous criticisms in the tale, some account needs to be given of the moral and literary ambiguity upon which he constructs his satire, illustrated most clearly in his treatment of the story's leading character - Camilo Seabra.

### **The satirical basis of "A parasita azul"**

When we are introduced to Camilo Seabra at the beginning of "A parasita azul", it is difficult to believe that this man will become the hero of the story. Since the male protagonists of the psychological narratives (and some female characters as well) are also unlikely romantic figures to one degree or another, this is not an unusual statement to be made about one of Machado's characters. But Camilo differs from them all in two fundamental ways which are essential to the parodic impact of "A parasita azul". I shall outline them both by referring to the text and the plot of the story.

First of all, Camilo is portrayed from the very early stages as a libertine who possesses absolutely no sense of morality or capacity for true romantic sensitivity. He is immoral to a degree that a Daniel or a Félix could never be, despite their

imperfections. The story begins with Camilo's return to Brazil from Europe after an absence of eight years. During that time he had completed his medical studies in Paris, besides travelling extensively around the continent. But although, as a man of means and of taste, Camilo has taken great advantage of his period abroad, at the end of the opening paragraph there is an implicit criticism of the way in which he has spent his time:

Se tivesse também, não digo muito, mas um pouco mais de juízo, houvera gozado melhor do que gozou, e com justiça poderia dizer que vivera. (OC.II, p. 161)

Following this indirect comment, however, it does not take long for the narrator to launch into a full-blooded ironic attack on Camilo and his activities in the French capital. Especially sarcastic is the mock sympathy expressed for Camilo as he meditates dejectedly on the tragedy of his enforced return to his homeland:

Na opinião dele, nunca houvera mortal que mais dolorosamente experimentasse a hostilidade do destino. Nem no martirilógio cristão, nem nos trágicos gregos, nem no *Livro de Jó* havia sequer um pálido esboço dos seus infortúnios. Vejamos agora alguns traços patéticos da existência do nosso herói. (OC.II, p. 161)

The fact is that as the son of a rich landowner and comendador, Camilo has devoted most of his time overseas to squandering his father's over-generous allowance through the single-minded pursuit of unbridled pleasure. As far as his studies are concerned, he does just enough to get his degree, and once the course is over he throws himself fully into a lifestyle that is reminiscent of Jesus' parable on the prodigal son:

A escala de todos os prazeres sensuais e frívolos for percorrida por este esperançoso mancebo com uma sofreguidão que parecia antes suicídio. Seus amigos eram numerosos, solícitos e constantes; alguns não duvidavam dar-lhe a honra de o constituir seu credor. Entre as moças de Corinto era o seu nome verdadeiramente popular; não poucas o tinham amado até o delírio. Não havia pateada célebre em que a chave dos seus aposentos não figurasse, nem corrida, nem ceata, nem passeio, em que não ocupasse um dos primeiros lugares *cet aimable brésilien*. (OC.II, p. 163)

The latest of his exploits consists of an affair with a fake Russian princess, (widow of prince Alexis), with whom he has fallen madly in love. But despite his valiant attempts at procrastination, Camilo is finally forced to break ties with his beloved to whom he faithfully promises to return some day. If Camilo is a prodigal son, he does not possess the shame and repentance of his biblical example. His homecoming is prompted purely by an impatient fatherly threat ("O velho goiano intimava pela última vez al filho que voltasse, sob pena de lhe suspender todos os recursos e trancar-lhe a porta". (OC.II, p. 164)), and it is clear that Camilo fully intends to return to Paris. The fact that he never

actually fulfills this intention, opting instead for the comparative backwardness of the interior of Brazil and the love of Isabel, does not, however, mean that Camilo goes through any process of repentance throughout the story either. The affair with Isabel is presented as a mere continuation of Camilo's roguish activities, prompted not by anything that we could really call love, but by a need for diversion, by curiosity, and by physical attraction. It is important to note how much the narrator stresses these three aspects of Camilo's interest. First of all he records the rapid and intense boredom that set in for the ex-bohemian. Life in the backlands holds few attractions for man who is accustomed to the constant movement of Paris:

No fim de quinze dias tinha Camilo esgotado a novidade das suas impressões; a fazenda começou a mudar de aspecto; os campos ficaram monótonos, as árvores monótonas, os rios monótonos, a cidade monótona, ele próprio monótono. Invadiu-o então uma cousa a que podemos chamar - nostalgia do exílio. (OC.II, p. 171)

In the midst of this overwhelming sense of tedium, Camilo suddenly remembers something that was told him during the long journey up to his hometown concerning Isabel Matos, one of the local girls. Camilo had only vaguely remembered her as being "bonitinha aos doze" (OC.II, p. 166), but whilst he is waiting in Rio for the next steamboat to take him as far as Santos, he meets an old acquaintance, Leandro Soares, also headed north, for whom Isabel has become something of an obsession. Soares spoke volumes of her beauty and of his jealous love for her, but having already declared his love and been rejected like so many others, he has been forced to concede that she will never love him. During their journey Soares had also recounted a fantastic nightmare, (the details of which I shall consider a little later), in which Camilo and Isabel end up being swept along by a fierce current at the bottom of a ravine. Camilo had regarded such talk as so much romantic rubbish, but it serves the useful purpose of reminding him of Soares' enigmatic heroine. And when Camilo realizes that Isabel is the only girl in the immediate locality to whom he has not been introduced, it is not long before he will look upon the renowned beauty and the puzzling coldness of Isabel (especially towards him) as a remedy for his boredom:

A beleza da moça, que ele não julgava pudesse ser superior nem sequer igual à da viúva do príncipe Alexis, a paixão incurável de Soares, e o tal ou qual mistério com que se falava de Isabel, tudo isso excitou ao último ponto a curiosidade do filho do comendador. (OC.II, p. 172)

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Isabel is simply another diversion for Camilo, an adventure which enables him to forget the inactivity of his native Santa Luzia. Also, it is clear that his interest in her is sustained purely by physical considerations. At the beginning of chapter five, entitled "Paixão", we read of the qualities that Camilo starts to appreciate in Isabel when he finally gets to talk with her:

A conversa entretanto, não passou de cousas totalmente indiferentes; mas Isabel falava com tanta doçura e graça, posto não alterasse nunca a sua habitual reserva; os olhos eram tão bonitos de ver ao perto, e os cabelos também, e a boca igualmente, e as mãos do mesmo modo, que o nosso ardente mancebo, só mudando de natureza, poderia resistir ao influxo de tantas graças juntas. (OC.II, p. 180)

Clearly, in terms of his sensuality, Camilo in Paris and Camilo in Goiás are one and the same person.

Under the general heading of Camilo's immoral and frivolous nature, we can add the unscrupulous means by which he finally secures Isabel's affections. After discovering that she has been in love with him from childhood and is now disappointed that his feelings for her are not of equal duration, Camilo goes out of his way to satisfy Isabel's romantic pretensions as far as possible. He may not be able to boast an enduring passion, but he can at least demonstrate the intensity of his love. This he does by going missing in an apparent fit of romantic desperation and then faking his attempted suicide. Isabel is convinced by the charade and, clever rascal that he is, Camilo wins out again.

But although Camilo deserves to be condemned for his dishonest and immoral behaviour, he is not, and furthermore is endeared to the reader by virtue of his natural cunning and dogged determination. These features together form the second major characteristic that distinguishes Camilo from the likes of Mendonça and Félix. Camilo is nothing if not a practical and positive romantic thinker, allowing neither doubts, nor jealousy, nor cynical indifference to divert him from attaining the desired relationship with Isabel. Like the conventional romantic hero, Camilo makes love his aim, overcoming all obstacles on the way. The methods by which he deceives Isabel and outwits his main rival, Leandro Soares, (by offering him the consolation of a political candidature), are somewhat unethical, but there is a sense in which Camilo earns his "happy ending" through sheer single-mindedness. The fact that Camilo shows himself to be superior to Isabel's romantic pride and Soares' melodramatic but ultimately im-



potent jealousy makes him into a hero of sorts, redeeming him, to a certain extent, of his many faults.

By very definitely combining in Camilo the attributes of villain and hero, Machado presents the reader with a serious dilemma as far as the message of the story is concerned. If we were expecting a moral conclusion to the story, we would be shocked since Camilo is a rake and a liar, - a rogue of the first order -, and we would expect such a character to either be punished or to go through a process of repentance. If our preference is for tales of true love, we would be similarly disappointed because, although the ending is happy enough, (the story closes with Camilo and Isabel embracing after a year of married life), the grounds upon which the marriage is based are very shaky indeed. Far from being a romantic story, "A parasita azul" is a tale of cunning and deceit on the part of Camilo, of pride and naivety on the part of Isabel. Leandro Soares plays the role of the jealous rival, but despite his avowed interest in Isabel, succumbs all too easily to Camilo's "compensação politica" (OC.II, p. 190). It is evident, then, that in "A parasita azul" Machado steers very carefully between two opposing literary camps, granting concessions to both, but satisfying neither and therefore depriving himself, in the words of Brás Cubas, "da estima dos graves e do amor dos frívolos". As a moralist Machado gives a highly critical portrait of a rich and unprincipled young man whom he refuses to punish; as a writer of popular fiction he provides an intriguing romantic plot and conventional framework which, however, are constantly undermined by rather unromantic sentiments. The net result, therefore, is not a serious moral tale nor a genuine version of the romantic story, but an example of satirical literature, in which we are encouraged by Machado to both criticize and laugh at the attitudes and activities of his characters. Also, the fact that there are several points in the narrative at which the narrator virtually suspends the romantic plot in order to concentrate on the portrayal of political life in Santa Luzia indicates that Machado's objectives were not limited to the criticism of the conventional love story. Since "A parasita azul" is as much a satire on social values as it is a parody of the romantic tale, both of these aspects will be analysed in separate sections, with appropriate references being made to other stories of the period.

## On romantic parody in "A parasita azul"

As my previous remarks have indicated, in "A parasita azul" Machado adopts a very different approach to the criticism of romantic values from the stance he assumes in the psychological narratives. Instead of attempting to analyse rather sober, unromantic characters through the vehicle of the love story, he transforms the whole idea of romantic courtship into a comedy. There was something of this in "Miss Dollar", with Margarida's unconscious imitation of the romantic heroine, and other features I have already mentioned, but not enough to make either her or Mendonça into comic figures. Similarly, although it is impossible to escape the note of farce at the end of "Nem uma nem outra", most of the main plot is a serious study of the vice of jealousy. In "A parasita azul", however, Machado gives us a deliberately farcical version of the romantic story. He sets up a situation in which the reader can anticipate the emotional conflicts of the traditional love triangle (hero, heroine and rival), but then forces us to conclude that conventional romantic sentiment is both extremely ridiculous and prone to abuse for purely egotistic reasons. Camilo, of course, is the one who is most adept at manipulating the system for his own ends. The fact that he is a deliberate phoney is made especially obvious by the narrator when Camilo returns after his disappearance and "attempted suicide":

O misero rapaz trazia escrito no rosto a dor de haver escapado à morte trágica que procurara; pelo menos, assim o disse muitas vezes em caminho, ao pai de Isabel. (OC.II, p. 188)

And when it is revealed to the mourning ex-student that Isabel is really in love with him, we read that "Camilo fez aqui um gesto de surpresa perfeitamente imitado" (OC.II, p. 188). He is a born actor and he plays his part to perfection. Through him, Machado illustrates how easily clever theatricality can pass for real feeling, and how a pragmatic approach to life is far more effective than the dramatic outbursts of a man like Soares. So despite (and to a certain extent due to) his immoral nature, Camilo actually becomes a positive vehicle through which Machado can discredit the romantic attitudes held by the two other major characters. Camilo may be a lying rogue, but at least he is neither a loser nor a romantic fool. Those titles belong to Soares and Isabel, who are the true targets of Machado's literary satire. What is more, in his perceptive analysis of their

ridiculous poses, Machado condemns so-called romantic behaviour by revealing the psychological deficiencies and egotism that can lie behind it. Having already looked at Machado's ambiguous treatment of Camilo, it is important that some attention be given to the way in which Soares and Isabel are presented. For not only can all three be regarded as parodies of definite literary types, but they also clearly represent Machado's growing reluctance to contrast vice with virtue (there are very few "good" people left in the stories now), and his increasing tendency to class his characters in terms of their capacity to delude or be deluded.

### **The inferior rival - Leandro Soares**

Of the three figures that make up the traditional love triangle in "A parasita azul", Leandro Soares is the one who is destined from the start to be the unfortunate loser. Since he knows that Isabel can never love him, and very soon realizes that he will never be able to compete with Camilo, he resolves to play the part of the jealous rival as best he can. However, there is a huge gap between the passionate (but unlucky) lover that Soares claims to be and the miserable and vindictive creature he really is. As a consequence of his patent inability to live up to the role he has assigned for himself, he ends up being a figure who is both comic and pathetic.

Talking on their journey with Camilo, who accuses him of being egotistical in his love for Isabel, Soares gives a very romanticized view of his own nature:

- Pode ser; mas sou assim. Tenho ciúmes de tudo, até do ar que ela respira. Eu, se a visse gostar de outro, e não pudesse impedir o casamento, mudava de terra. O que me vale é a convicção que ela não há de gostar nunca de outro, e assim pensam todos os mais. (OC.II, p. 167)

This is exactly the kind of sentiment that one would expect to be applauded in the context of a popular romantic tale. Coming from the lips of Soares, however, it is no more than a ridiculous and empty boast, since we have already been told that Camilo had noted in his companion "certa fanfarronice, em tudo o gênero de cousas, na política, na caça, no jogo, e até nos amores" (OC.II, p. 166). As far as romance (or anything else, for that matter) is concerned, Soares is a loud-mouthed vessel with very little substance. Furthermore, we are given clear indications that Soares' tendency to brag, and the protective stance he adopts towards Isabel, are guises he has put on (whether de-

liberately or subconsciously) in order to cover up an intensely felt inferiority complex. That Soares is acutely aware of his own inadequacies is made apparent by the repeated comparisons he makes (either in his own words or as summarised by the narrator) between himself and Camilo. The first and most striking of these occurs as the two men part after their brief chance meeting in Rio:

Camilo indicou o hotel em que se achava, e despediu-se do comprovinciano, satisfeito de haver encontrado um companheiro que de algum modo lhe diminuísse os tédios de tão longa viagem. Soares chegou à porta e acompanhou com os olhos o filho do comendador até perdê-lo de vista.

- Veja o senhor o que é andar por essas terras estrangeiras, disse ele ao correspondente, que também chegava à porta. Que mudança fez aquele rapaz, que era pouco mais ou menos como eu! (OC.II, p. 165)

Soares comment is slightly puzzling because he has scarcely had time to exchange greetings with Camilo, and yet already there are tinges of jealousy and inferiority. Perhaps he anticipates the reception that an elegant, educated and well-travelled man will be afforded in the interior of the country. Certainly, by the time he and Camilo set off on the last stage of their trek into the province of Goiás, Soares has subconsciously at least begun to fear that his fellow-traveller will succeed with Isabel where he has definitely failed. Again we find Soares comparing Camilo's superiority to his inadequacy - this time in the sequence of a very melodramatic nightmare. He dreams that whilst he is hunting near a river, Isabel asks him to fetch her hat (that has fallen into the fierce waters of a deep gorge) as proof of his love. As Soares meditates dejectedly on the impossibility of the task, Camilo appears out of nowhere and wastes no time in fulfilling Isabel's whim. Then disaster strikes. The swelling current appears to overcome Camilo, Isabel follows him into the water, and Soares is left on the bank, appealing desperately for help. At this point he awakes with a shout, jolting Camilo out of his sleep, but does not recount the dream till the morrow. Camilo reacts to the nightmare with derision, but for Soares it is a serious premonition of things to come:

Desde que concluíra a narração, e logo depois das primeiras palavras de Camilo, - entrara a fazer consigo uma série de reflexões que não chegaram ao conhecimento do autor desta narrativa. O mais que lhes posso dizer é que não eram alegres, porque a frente lhe descaiu, enrugou-se-lhe a testa, e ele, cravando os olhos nas orelhas do animal, recolheu-se a um inviolável silêncio. (OC.II, p. 169)

Once again, the comparison with Camilo results in an inner confirmation of Soares' inferiority, accompanied this time by "uma leve melancolia" (OC.II, p. 169).

Somehow Soares manages to lift his spirits as they approach Santa Luzia, but despite his renewed verbosity and friendliness towards Camilo, it is clear that he has now donned the mantle of the implacable rival in earnest. When Camilo starts making his first, inquisitive advances towards Isabel, Soares is right behind them, watching their every move:

Era Soares.

O filho do negociante vinha bem diferente do que até ali andava. Cumprimentou-os sorrindo e jovial como estivera nos primeiros dias de viagem do médico. Não era porém difícil conhecer que a alegria de Soares era um artifício. O pobre namorado fechava o rosto de quando em quando, ou fazia um gesto de desespero que felizmente escapava aos outros. Ele receava o triunfo de um homem que, física e intelectualmente lhe era superior; que além disso, gozava naquela ocasião a grande vantagem de dominar a atenção pública, que era o urso da aldeia, o acontecimento do dia, o homem da situação. Tudo conspirava para derrubar a última esperança de Soares, que era a esperança de ver morrer a moça isenta de todo o vínculo conjugal! O infeliz namorado tinha o sestro, aliás comum, de querer ver quebrada ou inútil, a taça que ele não podia levar aos lábios. (OC.II, p. 174)

I have quoted the passage at some length because the narrator reveals with great clarity the true nature of his character's jealous passion. Far from being the sublime romantic sentiment he claims it to be, Soares's attitude is rooted in envy and malice. Also, the narrator slips in the comment that Soares is not alone in the feelings that inspire him to see Isabel remain a spinster. The statement that the desire for spiteful revenge is commonplace reminds us that Machado's view of human nature as a whole is fundamentally negative.

From merely brooding darkly upon his inadequacy, Soares is finally spurred on by news of Camilo and Isabel's marriage to wreak a horrible vengeance on the happy couple. As in the dream episode, Machado encourages us to laugh at the ultra-romantic imagination of this man:

Mil projetos lhe acudiram à mente, cada qual mais sanguinário: em sua opinião eram dous perversos que o haviam traído; cumpria tirar uma solene desforra de ambos.

Nenhum déspota sonhou nunca mais terríveis suplicios do que os que Leandro Soares engendrou na sua escaldada imaginação. Dous dias e duas noites passou o pobre namorado em conjeturas estéreis. No terceiro dia resolveu ir simplesmente procurar o venturoso rival, lançar-lhe em rosto a sua vilania e assassiná-lo depois.

Muniu-se de uma faca e partiu. (OC.II, p. 189)

Somehow, we know that Soares will never accomplish the task, and our expectations are confirmed when Camilo deftly persuades him to accept a political candidature as a consolation for the loss of Isabel. As Brito Broca has noticed, it is in this final scene that Soares betrays the full extent of his miserable inferiority and artificial

romanticism.<sup>6</sup> One gets the impression that inwardly Soares greets Camilo's offer with some relief, although on the face of things he is first outraged, then dubious before he eventually concedes. When Soares realizes that he has been given a convenient (and possibly glorious) way out he smiles "um sorriso irônico e cheio de ameaças" (OC.II, p. 190) which is commented on perceptively by Broca:

O sorriso irônico de Leandro é o disfarce de sua miséria; vem por isso mesclado de ameaças que mal lhe escondem a covardia. Já decidi, mas sente a mesquinhez da situação.

"Que faria o senhor no meu caso?", e aqui o sorriso irônico toma um ar lúgubre, mostrando o indivíduo sob o peso da mais constrangedora situação. Camilo declara-lhe que recusaria porque não possuía jeito para a Política, mas o mesmo não acontecia com o rival, que era um esteio do Partido. Leandro concorda. "Tenho essa convicção" - diz com orgulho, orgulho que seria afinal ingênua revanche da inferioridade em que se sentia perante o outro.<sup>7</sup>

In accepting Camilo's proposal, Soares is finally unmasked as a pitiful human specimen and cheap romantic imitation. Nevertheless, he tries to keep up the pretence to the end, referring to "a tempestade que me fica na alma, a dor imensa que me há de acompanhar até a morte. Amores destes vão até à sepultura". But at the same time as Soares insists on the enduring nature of his love, the mocking narrator adds his own sarcastic remarks:

- Resignar-me-ei à sorte: e se aceito essa candidatura política que me oferece é unicamente para afogar nela a dor que me abafa o coração.

Não sei se este remédio eleitoral servirá para todos os casos de doença amorosa. No coração de Soares produziu uma crise salutar, que se resolveu em favor do doente. (OC.II, p. 191)

We can detect a double irony in these words. First of all, Soares' sickness is not romantic but spiritual. Throughout the story he has suffered a crisis of inferiority on account of Camilo and is now grabbing hold of a final opportunity to assert himself. Secondly, although this electoral remedy may have cured Soares of the most dangerous (for Camilo, at least) of his romantic delusions, there is no evidence to suggest that it has really struck at the heart of the problem. If his former political exploits are anything to go by, (he had earlier boasted to Camilo of his "rixas eleitorais" (OC.II, p.166)),

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<sup>6</sup> See "Um conto romântico", in *Machado de Assis e a Política* (São Paulo: Editora Polis, 1983), pp. 78-80

<sup>7</sup> Broca, p. 80.

the odds are that Soares will merely transfer his romantic vindictiveness to the arena of public life.

Leandro Soares, then, is fashioned into a parody of the intensely jealous romantic lover. The passages in which Soares' melodramatic imagination is allowed to run wild are meant to strike us as ridiculous and comical, but the gradual unveiling of his underlying nature and real motives has a much more sobering impact. Once these are revealed to us, there is a sense in which Soares takes over from the immoral Camilo as the villain of the piece, acting as a vehicle through which Machado can convey his thoughts on some of mankind's more despicable and pathetic features.

### **Isabel Matos and the vanity of love**

Bearing in mind the criticisms that are levelled at the character of both Camilo and Soares, Isabel would appear to suffer little under Machado's sharp satire. After all, she is not hypocritical in the obvious sense that her two suitors are. But although she is neither immoral nor aggressive, Isabel does not emerge unscathed from the story. For if Camilo must be labelled an unrepentant rogue and Soares a loud-mouthed braggard, Isabel can best be described as a proud and very gullible young woman.

Like the two male members of the threesome, Isabel has a specific role to play - that of the faithful romantic heroine. As J.A. Gledson aptly describes her, "Isabel is perhaps the Sleeping Beauty, bound by her own childhood promise" and "the lady who imposes tasks on her suitors"<sup>8</sup> But in contrast to Camilo and Soares, there is a very close correspondence between Isabel's actions and motivations and those of the melodramatic persona she portrays. She is really the only figure in the story whom we can call romantic, in the sense that she is totally obsessed by the ideas of romantic fiction. Once we accept the most unbelievable fact of the story: that Isabel has waited eight long years (rejecting the proposals of all other men) for her beloved Camilo to return, it is impossible to argue in favour of any material or social motive, as one of the minor characters, Padre Maciel, attempts to do. After referring to Isabel as "uma grande finória" in a conversation with Camilo, the priest gives his frank opinion on the

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<sup>8</sup> "Machado de Assis between Romance and Satire: A Parasita Azul", in *What's Past is Prologue* (Edinburgh: Scottish Press, 1984), p. 58.

reasons behind the attractive young woman's apparent indifference towards her many suitors:

- Suspeito que tem muita ambição; não aceita o amor de Soares, a ver se pilha algum casamento que lhe abra a porta das grandezas políticas. (OC.II, p. 176)

Maciel's remark is understandable in a place where even Isabel's deaf and ageing aunt "gostava de política", and one wonders whether Machado really wants to attribute some ulterior motive to the actions of Isabel. But such an interpretation does not tally with the nature of her devotion to the landowner's son. Isabel does not marry Camilo because of his parliamentary potential, but because he is the only person who totally satisfies her extremely demanding, but nevertheless entirely conventional conception of romantic love.

Having said all this, it would not be at all correct to conclude that Isabel is in love with Camilo. She most certainly is not, in any true sense of the word. What she is in love with is a romantic ideal, which in no way corresponds to reality. This is made quite clear by the narrator in a passage at the beginning of chapter six, entitled "Revelação":

Não há mistérios para um autor que sabe investigar todos os recantos do coração. Enquanto o povo de Santa Luzia faz mil conjecturas a respeito da causa verdadeira da isenção que até agora tem mostrado a formosa Isabel, estou habilitado para dizer ao leitor impaciente que ela ama.

- E quem ama? pergunta vivamente o leitor.

Ama ... uma parasita. Deve ser então uma flor muito linda, - um milagre de frescura e de aroma. Não, senhor, é uma parasita muito feia, um cadáver de flor, seco, mirrado, uma flor que devia ter sido lindíssima há muito tempo, no pé, mas que hoje na cestinha em que ela a traz, nenhum sentimento inspira, a não ser de curiosidade. Sim, porque é realmente curioso que uma moça de vinte anos, em toda a força das paixões, pareça indiferente aos homens que a cercam, e concentre todos os seus afetos nos restos descorados e secos de um flor. (OC.II, p. 182)

The narrator then goes on to explain the incident that lies behind Isabel's worship of the withered flower. It has been picked for her nine years previously from the top of a tree by a boy who on his descent had fallen and cut his forehead. The wound was slight, but its effect on the romantic Isabel was such that the blue parasite soon became a symbol of the highest ideals of sacrificial love.

Returning to the passage that has just been quoted, there are at least three ways in which it can be read, all of which involve some kind of critical comment on the romantic story. First of all, Machado is obviously teasing the reader, pretending, as he did in "Miss Dollar", to relieve our curiosity, but refusing to divulge the identity of



Isabel's secret lover. Paradoxically, however, we are also expected to have gathered that the boy is in fact Camilo by the time the ex-student hears the parasite story for himself from the lips of a stranger towards the end of the same chapter:

Um leitor menos sagaz imagina que o namorado ouviu essa narração triste e abatido. Mas o leitor que souber ler adivinha logo que a confiança do desconhecido despertou na alma de Camilo os mais incríveis sobressaltos de alegria. (OC.II, p. 185)

Machado is fully aware of the fact that his romantic plot is following a pattern to which his readers would be well accustomed. Macedo's *A Moreninha* (1844) had long since set the trend for the gradual unravelling of romantic mystery in the Brazilian novel and the unveiling of secret identity had been given a high profile by Machado's predecessors in the short story. Both the opening paragraphs of the chapter (especially where the narrator states: "estou habilitado para dizer ao leitor impaciente que ela ama") and the later reference to "the reader who knows how to read" are patently sarcastic, since the kind of fiction that is being written (and parodied at the same time) is of an extremely predictable nature.

Secondly, when we are told that Isabel is in love with a parasite, we can regard this as a play on words, and consequently as an oblique, but nevertheless critical reference to Camilo. As J. A. Gledson has stated:

Camilo, then, is the parasite: if he is, of course, he is also 'um cadáver', 'os restos descorados e secos' of what he once was. The obviously symbolic scene which follows, in which the boy wounds himself going up the tree to get the plant, begins to look like a parable of lost innocence, the fall and the wound being symbols of that loss.<sup>9</sup>

Gledson goes on to mention that Camilo's actual fall from innocence occurs when he is plucked from his natural habitat of Brazil and sent to live in the foreign (and by extension, morally polluted) atmosphere of Paris. It must be added that the Camilo/parasite parallel also says something less than complimentary about Isabel and the romantic beliefs that inspire her long vigil. Unknown to her, the corruption she blatantly ignores in her flower is also undergone in a spiritual sense by the man whose childhood action she continues to worship. So in her insistence that Camilo's dramatic gesture was an indication of selfless love, and that true love lasts forever, Isabel shows herself to be both naive and blind to the realities of human nature (especially, of course, Camilo's). Her gullibility continues right up to the end of the story when Camilo tricks

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<sup>9</sup> Gledson, p. 62.

her into believing that his love is as idealistic as hers. And the ending, despite its superficially happy and conventional aspect, confirms Isabel as a fool who never learns the error of her ways.

Thirdly, the sorry-looking parasite that Isabel adores can also be regarded as a direct parody of the romantic ideals with which she is really in love. So often the Romantics saw the exchange of flowers - roses, carnations, violets - between lovers as being a symbol of their affection towards each other. Machado makes fun of this convention by letting his heroine be given a humble parasite by a young lad (whose feelings for her are quite obviously lukewarm). And then, by emphasizing the shrivelled aspect of the flower, Machado hammers home the message that everything in this life - even love - is prone to decay. Besides, there is at least one clear indication in the story that Isabel's steadfast devotion to the principles of idealistic love has not remained as pure as one might expect. When Camilo boldly declares his love for her after hearing the story of the parasite, Isabel writes him a brief note in which, whilst confessing that she has been in love with him for along time, she also explains why she cannot marry him:

Quanto a ser sua esposa, nunca. Eu quisera entregar a minha vida a quem tivesse um amor igual ao meu. O seu amor é de ontem; o meu é de nove anos; a diferença de idade é grande demais; não pode ser bom consórcio. Esqueça-me e adeus. (OC.II, p. 186)

On the face of things, Isabel's resolution is rooted in the idea (once expressed by Machado) that true love can only exist where there is total compatibility of soul and spirit. But in reality her stubborn stance has nothing to do with such an ideal. As the narrator points out in one of his many asides to the reader:

Alguma leitora menos exigente, há de achar singular a resolução de Isabel, ainda depois de saber que era amada. Também eu penso assim; mas não quero alterar o caráter da heroína, porque ela era tal qual a apresento nestas páginas. Entendia que ser amada casualmente, pela única razão de ter o moço voltado de Paris, enquanto ela gastara largos anos a lembrar-se dele e viver unicamente dessa recordação, entendia, digo eu, que isto a humilhava, e porque era imensamente orgulhosa, resolvera não casar com ele nem com outro. Será absurdo; mas era assim. (OC.II, p. 186)

If Isabel's adherence to the tenets of Romanticism was at one time genuinely divorced from any ulterior motive, it is certainly not now. Like the once fresh parasite, her love has undergone some kind of deterioration, having been contaminated at some point by the ego. Clearly, she has become proud of her feat of romantic endurance and desires Camilo to prove himself in a similar fashion. In the end Isabel is no less hypocritical

than Camilo or Soares in her usage of romantic concepts to mask her true self. (although she is neither as immoral as the one nor as pathetic as the other), and evokes none of our sympathy when she is finally hoodwinked by the better man. However, despite the fact that Machado depicts all his major characters as being dominated by self-love (even in their amorous relationships), he does not deny satisfaction to Camilo, Soares and Isabel, as he might have done at an earlier period. At the end of the story all three are happy with their lot, and Machado himself is content to have made us smile at their conscious and unconscious deceptions.

By studying the three main characters of the story, it has become apparent that in "A parasita azul" Machado ridicules romantic actions and ideas by revealing the personal vices that can often lie behind them. If we leave "A parasita azul" for a moment, it can be demonstrated that Machado uses similar ironic techniques in other stories of the period.

### **Romanticism as the art of delusion**

The portrayal of romance as a means through which certain character types can be fooled either by themselves or by others for purely egotistical reasons is an essential feature of Machado's parodic humour in the early 1870s. At times the humour is extremely lightweight and does not constitute any real depth of analysis or development of technique from the work that was produced during the previous period. This is especially apparent in "Quem não quer ser lobo" (JdasF Apr-May 1872) and "Uma loureira" (JdasF May-June 1872). In the former, Coelho's efforts to get rich through marriage are foiled when he discovers (too late) that his ugly young bride is almost as poor as he. The plot of the latter story consists of the exploits of a frivolous and coquettish young woman who manages to hold on to two eligible suitors before eloping unexpectedly with her cousin. Neither story has any real substance to it, and both have their near equivalents in stories written before 1870 such as "O oráculo" and "O que são as moças". Of slightly greater interest, because of Machado's ironic manipulation of first person narration, is the brief but entertaining "Ponto de vista" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1873). Previously entitled "Quem desdenha" in the *Jornal das Famílias* original, the work consists of a series of letters, written mainly by one frivolous young woman in Rio

to her friend in Juiz de Fora. Rachel's letters purport to be personal and intimate, but unlike the "Confissões de uma viúva moça", they are far from being totally honest, since she blatantly lies to Luisa about her intentions regarding a certain Dr. Alberto, keeping their courtship a secret until just before the marriage. Despite the fact that she mentions Alberto's name in virtually every note, Rachel repeatedly denies any affection for him. In one letter, for example, she exclaims: "Que espirito frívolo! que sujeito tolo é o tal Alberto!" (OC.II, p. 244). In others she insists, as a young unmarried woman (unlike her friend), upon a strict adherence to romantic principles:

Ah! Luisa, o homem que o céu me destina ainda não veio. Sei que não veio porque ainda não sinto dentro de mim aquele estremecimento simpático que indica a harmonia de duas almas. Quando ele vier, fique certa de que será a primeira a quem eu confiarei tudo. (OC.II, p. 243)

Nothing could be further from the truth, as is proven by Rachel's subsequent relationship with Alberto (based mainly, it seems, on his marvellous dancing technique) and the silence with which she treats Luisa once the romance is under way. Throughout her correspondence, Rachel tries to present herself as a high-minded Romantic, and ends up condemning herself by her own words and actions.

The only other story of the period which can really compare with the extensive parody of romantic plot, characters and language that we find in "A parasita azul" is "Ernesto de tal". Here again we have a cast of three: a heroine and two rivals, one of whom is a fool (Ernesto), the other a man who is superior in every way and remains anonymous (Machado refers to him consistently as "o rapaz de nariz comprido"). This time it is the woman who is the fraud, and her efforts to attract a suitor do not meet with the unqualified success that Camilo enjoys. Nevertheless, the story ends in a state of ironic contentment for all concerned.

For most of the narrative, Machado involves us in the relationship between the cunning Rosina and her lapdog suitor, Ernesto, and exploits for humorous purposes the contrast between the thoughts and intentions of two very different characters. Rosina is the model of the frivolous but socially ambitious young woman. She has absolutely no capacity for love, since whatever inclinations she may have entertained towards a romantic approach to life are overshadowed by other considerations:

Rosina não era inteiramente avessa aos impulsos do coração e à filosofia do amor; mas tinha ambição de figurar alguma coisa, morria por vestidos novos e espetáculos frequentes, gostava enfim de viver à luz pública. Tudo isso podia dar-lhe, com o tempo,

o rapaz de nariz comprido, que ela antevia já na direção da casa em que trabalhava; o Ernesto porém era difícil que passasse do lugar que tinha no arsenal, e em todo o caso não subiria muito nem depressa. (OC.II, p. 208)

Rosina is the archetype of the calculating woman that Machado had merely sketched out for his readers in the exploits of "Onda" and "O que são as moças". Her eyes are "espertinhos e caçadores" (OC.II, p. 208) and she uses them to full effect as she attempts to secure a suitable partner. Leaving nothing to chance, she contrives to date two men at the same time, although one is obviously inferior to the other. As the narrator remarks for the benefit of the reader who is baffled by the balancing act of the heroine:

As intenções de Rosina, leitor curioso, eram perfeitamente conjugais. Queria casar, e casar o melhor que pudesse. Para este fim aceitava a homenagem de todos os seus pretendentes escolhendo lá consigo o que melhor correspondesse aos seus desejos, mas ainda assim sem desanimar os outros, porque o melhor deles podia falhar, e havia para ela uma coisa pior que casar mal, que era não casar absolutamente. (OC.II, p. 210)

Rosina's decision to keep Ernesto in reserve, however, proves to be her downfall, at least, as far as marriage to her long-nosed boyfriend is concerned. In a fit of jealousy, Ernesto puts paid to her well-laid plans by informing his rival of Rosina's two-timing ways. Both men decide to write her a brief and indignant note in which they break off all contact with her, but Rosina still manages to lure the gullible Ernesto to the altar by dint of a clever explanation of her former actions and an effortless effusion of crocodile tears.

In Ernesto, Machado provides us with perhaps his most pathetic portrait of the romantic fool. Like Leandro Soares, Ernesto is jealous and overdramatic but lacks the vindictiveness and boorish qualities of the former. Ernesto is also one of life's losers, as is indicated by his relatively low social status and consequent position in the hierarchy of Rosina's affections. The suggestion that he has been cursed by fate is put forward in a humorous way when Ernesto's attempts to borrow a waistcoat for a social occasion at Rosina's house end in total failure. After exhausting all possible sources, he gives into despair and then resignation:

Imagine-se o desespero de Ernesto; mas admira-se também a requintada crueldade com que o destino tratava a este moço, que ao voltar para casa encontrou tres enterros, dois dos quais com muitos carros, cujos ocupantes iam todos de casaca. Era mister curvar a cabeça à fatalidade; Ernesto não insistiu. (OC.II, p. 205)

The themes of destiny and fortune will, in time, become an important feature of Machado's work, but in this particular story they are not developed to any significant degree. Ernesto is a loser mainly because, like Leandro Soares, he has a deep-seated complex about his own inferiority. Despite his melodramatic outbursts, he displays a conspicuous lack of inner resolve. As a result, the criticisms directed at him are just as harsh as those that apply to Rosina. When, for example, it finally dawns on Ernesto that he is being duped, we read the following:

Como por via de regra, é da nossa miserável condição que o amor-próprio domine o simples amor, apenas aquela suspeita lhe pareceu provável, apoderou-se dele uma feroz indignação e duvido que nenhum quinto ato de melodrama ostente maior soma de sangue derramado do que ele verteu na fantasia. Na fantasia, apenas, compassiva leitora, não só porque ele era incapaz de fazer mal a um seu semelhante, mas sobretudo porque achava repugnava à sua natureza achar uma resolução qualquer. (OC.II, p. 213)

It is amazing that Ernesto finds the courage even to confront his rival, never mind exact the melodramatic vengeance that the hypocritical narrator is determined to deny his audience. What does not surprise us, however, is the ease with which Rosina brushes aside Ernesto's romantic wrath to the point of getting him to apologize for the rift in their relationship. Earlier in the story, when Ernesto had spotted a suspect letter being passed to Rosina by a former lover, the narrator had made us painfully aware of Ernesto's wilful tendency to delude himself:

Seus olhos faiscaram de raiva quando viram alvejar a misteriosa epistola nas mãos da moça. Fez um gesto de ameaça ao rapaz, lançou um olhar de desprezo à moça e saiu. Depois escreveu a carta de que temos notícia, e foi a esperar a resposta na esquina da rua. Que resposta, se ele vira o gesto de Rosina? Leitor ingênuo, ele queria uma resposta que lhe demonstrasse não ter visto coisa alguma, uma resposta que o fizesse olhar para si mesmo com desprezo e nojo. Não achava possível semelhante explicação; mas no fundo d'alma era isso o que ele queria. (OC.II, p. 209)

Ernesto is such a sorry character that he actually invites Rosina to take advantage of him. So despite her many faults it is impossible for the reader to sympathize with him. This is an important point, since it restates the moral ambiguity of "A parasita azul" and other stories of the early 1870s. Vice goes unpunished and moral lessons are not learned because in Machado's world there is no longer any such thing as a virtuous lover. You either deceive or allow yourself to be taken in by the falsity of romantic behaviour.

There is one other alternative, however, which is to avoid affairs of the heart altogether. This is effectively the decision that is taken by the "rapaz de nariz comprido" when he realizes how close he came to being fooled by Rosina. The confrontation with

Ernesto eventually leads to a great friendship and business partnership between the two men, but they remain divided on the question of marriage:

- Porque não te casas? pergunta Ernesto às vezes ao seu sócio, amigo e compadre.
- Nada, meu amigo, responde o outro, eu já agora morro solteiro. (OC.II, p. 220)

Whilst Ernesto continues to be deluded by his romantic attitudes, the whole experience has been something of an education for his long-nosed friend. His disillusionment corresponds to what can be regarded as the serious message of "Ernesto de tal", with his final terse words reflecting the cynical attitude of the narrator towards the romantic ideal love in courtship and marriage. They are at once a painful recognition of the presence of the ego in romantic affairs and a passive acknowledgement that nothing can be done about it except to detach oneself, i.e. become a bachelor. But there is no real sense of bitterness here. From the context of the story we can imagine that the words of Ernesto's "unlucky" rival would be accompanied by an imperceptible wry smile, quite in tune with the knowing grin that has been worn all along by the narrator.

At the heart of Machado's parodic humour in "A parasita azul", "Ernesto de tal" and other minor stories of the period, then, is the unmasking of romantic behaviour as a convenient disguise for personal failings and ambitions. But as we shall discover by returning first of all to the story of Camilo and then moving on to other tales of the period, romance is only one of several devices through which individuals choose to deceive themselves and each other, according to Machado.

### **"A parasita azul" as a satire on social values**

In "A parasita azul", deception is not limited to the sphere of so-called romance, nor are Camilo, Soares and Isabel the only characters to be involved in the art of self-delusion. On the contrary, the love affair takes place against the background of a whole community that is obsessed by the appearance of things and is more than willing to accept as valid currency the values of a superficial society.

At the very beginning of the tale, one could be forgiven for thinking that Camilo is to be the main focus of Machado's social satire. The young man's irresponsible activities in Paris are obviously meant to invoke the disapproval of the reader. For not only

has he wasted his father's money, but as a privileged representative of the Brazilian upper-classes, Camilo has thought nothing of squandering an education that could have been of enormous benefit to his country. As the story progresses, however, Camilo becomes a useful reference point for the criticism of the behaviour of other characters in much the same way as he is transformed into the romantic hero of the tale. In the relationship between Camilo and his father, for example, the charge of irresponsibility is definitely not one-sided. The landowner's foolishness is particularly in evidence when the young student, fearing that the sudden death of his Parisian guardian will curtail his time abroad, takes the opportunity to write his father "uma carta cheia de reflexões filosóficas" (OC.II, p. 162):

O bom velho não era homem que pudesse ver por entre as linhas desta lacrimosa epístola o verdadeiro sentimento que a ditara. Chorou de alegria ao ler as palavras do filho, mostrou a carta a todos os seus amigos, e apressou-se a responder que podia ficar em Paris todo o tempo necessário para completar os seus estudos, e que, além da mesada que lhe dava, nunca recusaria tudo quanto lhe fosse indispensável em circunstâncias imprevistas. (OC.II, p. 163)

*Graças a estas facilidades* [my emphasis] atirou-se o nosso Camilo a uma vida solta e dispendiosa, não tanto, porém, que lhe sacrificasse os estudos. (OC.II, p. 163)

Clearly, the blind prodigality of Machado's "bom velho" is the root cause of Camilo's licentious conduct, and the good-natured *fazendeiro* can be regarded as an early precursor of the father-figure whose indulgences play a decisive part in the formation of Brás Cubas' character:

Esconder os chapéus das visitas, deitar rabos de papel a pessoas graves, puxar pelo rabicho das cabeleiras, dar beliscões nos braços das matronas, e muitas façanhas deste jaez, eram mostras de um gênio indócil, mas devo crer que eram também expressões de um espírito robusto, porque meu pai tinha-me em grande admiração; e se às vezes me repreendia, à vista de gente, fazia-o por simples formalidade: em particular dava-me beijos. (Cubas, p. 26)

Later in the novel, Brás is allowed to waste a fortune on a Spanish courtesan before he is packed off to Coimbra University in the hope that it will make a serious man of him. But it is far too late for that, and throughout his life Brás merely continues the kind of lifestyle that had been sanctioned by his father from an early stage. One can imagine that Camilo has gone through a similar process of being spoilt in his childhood years.

It would be unfair, however, to lay all the blame for Camilo's waywardness on the shoulders of his father. As the son of a rich and respectable *comendador*, Camilo has never been taken to task for his actions. His lack of accountability is as much a social phenomenon as anything else. So we find that when the ex-student decides to circulate



a somewhat expurgated version of his adventures in Paris to the inhabitants of his home town, none of his listeners is prepared to disbelieve him:

É perfeitamente inútil dizer que o nosso herói omitiu sempre tudo quanto pudesse abalar o bom conceito em que estava no ânimo de todos. A dar-lhe crédito, vivera, quase como um anacoreta; e *ninguém ousava pensar o contrário*. [my emphasis] (OC.II, p. 171)

By mentioning their universal acceptance of the young man's account, Machado is making an important point about the values of the community. The return of the prodigal is regarded as a social event, and the townspeople are much more interested in a superficial appreciation of Camilo's air of elegance and apparent education than the subtle investigation of his true character:

Na cidade e nos seus arredores não se falava em outra cousa. O assunto, não principal, mas exclusivo das palestras e comentários era o filho do comendador. Ninguém se fartava de o elogiar. Admiravam-lhe as maneiras e a elegância. A mesma superioridade com que ele falava a todos achava entusiastas sinceros. Durante muitos dias foi totalmente impossível que o rapaz pensasse em outra cousa que não fosse contar as suas viagens aos amáveis conterrâneos. Mas pagavam-lhe a maçada, porque a melhor cousa que ele dissesse tinha aos olhos dos outros uma graça indefinível. (OC.II, p. 170)

The only person who makes any attempt to test Camilo's spiritual capacity is Padre Maciel, but the conclusions reached by the priest say rather more about his inability to judge character than they do about the inner nature of Camilo:

- Santa Luzia vai ter um médico de primeira ordem, se me não engana o afeto que tenho a esse que era ainda ontem um pirralho. E não é só médico, mas até bom filósofo. Sondei-o ontem nesse particular, e não lhe achei ponto fraco ou duvidoso. (OC.II, p. 170)

The landowner's son is surrounded by a host of inferior characters, none of whom has the ability or the desire to see him as he really is. If people allow themselves to be taken in by the glare of a young man's elegance, wealth and education, there is no reason why Camilo should seek to disillusion them.

By far the most important aspect of the story in which Machado uses Camilo as a means of commenting upon social attitudes is the frequent reference to local politics. From the time that Leandro Soares boasts of his "rixas eleitorais" to his receipt of Camilo's "compensação poética", we are rarely permitted to forget that party-feeling and political prestige constitute the lifeblood of Santa Luzia. Not so with Camilo, whose detachment from such matters is constant throughout and contrasts favourably with the aspirations of those around him. Politics in "A parasita azul" has nothing to do with true statesmanship. Rather it is consistently linked with personal influence, petty rivalries, impossible dreams and a false rhetoric, none of which holds any interest for the love-

sick hero. So when the novelty of life in the town starts to wears off for Camilo, it is love and not politics, as his father would have wished, that will cure his boredom:

O aborrecimento de Camilo não escapou aos olhos do pai, que quase vivia a olhar para ele.

“Tem razão, pensava o comendador. Quem viveu por essas terras que dizem ser tão bonitas e animadas, não pode estar aqui muito alegre. É preciso dar-lhe alguma ocupação ... a política, por exemplo.”

- Política! exclamou Camilo, quando o pai lhe falou nesse assunto. De que me serve a política, meu pai?

- De muito. Serás primeiro deputado provincial; podes ir depois para a câmara no Rio de Janeiro. Um dia interpelas o ministério, e se ele cair, podes subir ao governo. Nunca tiveste ambição de ser ministro?

- Nunca.

- É pena!

- Por quê?

- Porque é bom ser ministro.

- Governar os homens, não é? disse Camilo rindo; é um sexo ingovernável; prefiro o outro. (OC.II, p. 171)

At a later stage in the tale we learn that, undeterred by Camilo's obvious lack of enthusiasm, "o comendador escreveu às principais influências da provincia para que o rapaz entrasse na respectiva assembleia" (OC.II, p. 186). The *fazendeiro* is evidently determined that Camilo bring further esteem to the family name by holding an important post in local and eventually national government. All to no avail, however, since the young man fails to see the attraction in "um futuro esplêndido e todo semeado de altas posições" (OC.II, p. 186). In the end it is Soares and not Camilo who will benefit from the personal contacts of Sr. Seabra.

The other occasions in which the ex-student's political apathy contrasts with the passion of his relatives and acquaintances centre around the *Espirito Santo* celebrations at which Camilo is a rather bemused spectator. As a relative stranger to such customs and preoccupied as he is with his love for Isabel, Camilo appears to be the only inhabitant of Santa Luzia who is not obsessed by the current festivities, which are as much an expression of the town's political fever as they are of its concern for tradition. Tenente-coronel Veiga, the man who has been chosen to play the all-important role of *imperador do Divino* in the procession, is determined to ensure that the event is a dazzling success, if only for personal and partisan reasons:

O festivo imperador estava literalmente fora de si. Era a primeira vez que exercia aquele cargo honorífico e timbrava em fazê-lo brilhantemente, e até melhor que os seus predecessores. Ao natural desejo de não ficar por baixo, acrescia o elemento da inveja política. Alguns adversários seus diziam pela boca pequena que o brioso coronel não era capaz de dar conta da mão.

- Pois verão se sou capaz, foi o que ele disse ao ouvir de alguns amigos a malícia dos adversários. (OC.II, p. 176)

The high point of the festivities consists of the glorious appearance of the *imperador* and his triumphant march (complete with cortege) towards the throne that has been set up in the local church building. Veiga has prepared well for his moment of glory, much to the amazement of Camilo:

Camilo perdera de todo as noções que tinha a respeito do traje e das insígnias de um imperador do Espírito Santo. Não foi pois sem grande pasmo que viu assomar à porta da sala a figura do tenente-coronel.

Além da calça preta, que já tinha no corpo quando ali chegou Camilo, o tenente-coronel envergara uma casaca, que pela regularidade e elegância do corte podia rivalizar com as dos mais apurados membros do Cassino Fluminense. Até aí tudo ia bem. Ao peito rutilava uma vasta comenda da Ordem da Rosa, que lhe não ficava mal. Mas o que excedeu a toda expectativa, o que pintou no rosto do nosso Camilo a mais completa expressão de assombro, foi uma brilhante e vistosa coroa de papelão forrado de papel dourado, que o tenente-coronel trazia na cabeça.

Camilo recuou um passo e cravou os olhos na insígnia imperial do tenente-coronel. Já lhe não lembrava aquele acessório necessário indispensável em ocasiões semelhantes, e tendo vivido oito anos no meio de uma civilização diversa, não imaginava que ainda existissem costumes que ele julgava enterrados. (OC.II, p. 178)

Machado's emphasis upon Camilo's startled reaction to the cardboard crown, (which is not a particularly significant item of clothing given the nature of the event), effectively forces the reader into making a critical reevaluation of the social attitudes that lie behind the celebrations. There is a strong element of political satire here, which may or may not extend to a disparaging comment on Emperor Pedro II and the Brazilian nation in general.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, for tenente-coronel Veiga and his supporters, the splendour of *Espírito Santo* is seen as a golden opportunity for him to take the initiative over his political rivals by displaying all the emblems of his social position. The immaculate waistcoat and eye-catching *comenda* are obvious symbols of Veiga's wealth and status in the community. But the prominence given to the paper crown in Machado's description, the pride with which it is worn by the pretend emperor and the keen interest exhibited by the waiting crowd ("ansioso por ver a figura do tenente-coronel" (OC.II pp.

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<sup>10</sup> In the opinion of J. A. Gledson "the repeated references to the connexion between politics and the festival, the crown, and the *Ordem da Rosa* leave us in no doubt that Machado is making fun of the Brazilian Imperial system, of a society mesmerised by a cardboard crown" ("Machado de Assis between Romance and Satire", pp. 60-61).

178-179)), has the effect of highlighting the essential triviality and theatricality of social and political concerns in Santa Luzia. And the added suggestion that Veiga might prefer the glories of what could almost be described as a fancy-dress parade to the position of cabinet minister or even ruler of the world, provides us with further indications as to the true nature of his political sentiments. When he ascends the steps of his processional throne, "tão orgulhoso como se governasse dali todos os impérios juntos do mundo" (OC.II, p. 179), we realize that he is experiencing a moment of deep personal fulfilment, in much the same way as Leandro Soares had revelled in his petty electoral clashes.

Following the procession itself, the celebrations continue in the form of a meal held at the home of teniente-coronel Veiga. So also does the satirical tone of Machado's writing. The impression is given that the town is run by a mutual admiration society consisting of persons who make use of occasions such as *Espirito Santo* to consolidate their useful friendships and express their perfect unanimity:

O jantar correu sem novidade apreciável. Reuniram-se à mesa do tenente-coronel todas as notabilidades do lugar, o vigário, o juiz municipal, o negociante, o fazendeiro, reinando sempre de uma ponta a outra da mesa a maior cordialidade e harmonia. O imperador do Divino, já então restituído ao seu vestuário comum, fazia as honras da mesa com verdadeiro entusiasmo. A festa era o objeto da geral conversa, entremeada, é verdade, de reflexões políticas, em que todos estavam de acordo, porque eram do mesmo partido, homens e senhoras. (OC.II, p. 180)

Besides the murmur of political titbits and polite conversation, the meal is accompanied by a speech delivered by Major Brás in honour of the host, who also responds with affected modesty to the compliments he receives. The whole atmosphere is one of a miniature party conference, with the would-be speaker exhausting the patience of many of his listeners at the same time as he confirms the superiority of the group over their rivals under the leadership of "o nosso ilustre correligionário e amigo, o Tenente-coronel Veiga, honra da classe a que pertence, e glória do partido a que se filiou" (OC.II, p. 181). The fact that all the influential figures of Santa Luzia are of the same political persuasion is no mere coincidence. Rather, it reflects Machado's desire to reveal the social and political realities of mid-nineteenth century Brazil in light-hearted terms. Several historians of the period have remarked that once one party had secured power on a national level it rarely stopped short of seizing control in many aspects of local life. In the words of Beatriz Westin de Cerqueira Leite:

O Poder Executivo, isto é, o gabinete que dominava o país por um certo tempo, era de escolha imperial e nascido do Legislativo. No momento, porém, que um dado gabinete estava no poder, sua vontade tornava-se lei, seu partido tudo monopolizava, sua esfera de domínio tornava-se absoluta.<sup>11</sup>

So in the wake of a Conservative victory, for example, in the national polls, one could not only expect a Conservative whitewash in local elections (due to various forms of pressure, influence and inducement) but also the placing of party members in prominent bureaucratic positions and even in the Judiciary at the expense of Liberal occupants. The dominance of one party over the other was particularly marked in rural areas, and Machado's picture of the local heads of power sitting amiably and exchanging elaborate compliments around the dinner table in "A parasita azul" may simply be a comment on the usual state of affairs in the provinces as opposed to Rio.

All in all, "A parasita azul" contains a considerable amount of social comment, much of which is only tenuously related to the tale of Camilo and Isabel and could quite easily have been omitted. The fact that it was not is, perhaps, an indication of the degree to which Machado felt it was important to place his romance within a fairly precise social context or, at least, satirize a selection of dubious social values in the same way as he was parodying the traditional love story. The inclusion of such elements as Camilo's welcome and the *Espirito Santo* celebrations is perfectly in step with Machado's sarcastic representation of romantic fiction and exemplifies the increasing reference in his writing during the early 1870s to social practices and aspirations. It is a significant feature of the majority of the stories to which we shall now turn our attention that Machado decides to remove love interest (even in the form of parody) from its central position in the narrative in order to concentrate on targets ranging from the harmless niceties of polite society to the ruthlessness of ambition.

## **Towards a comedy of social manners**

The stories which can be considered as mildly satirical in their vision of social

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<sup>11</sup> *O Senado nos Anos Finais do Imperio 1870 - 1889* (Brasilia: Universidade de Brasilia, 1978), p. 97.

habits are "Tempo de crise", "As bodas do Dr. Duarte",<sup>12</sup> and "Aurora sem dia" all of which appeared for the first time in 1873. "Tempo de crise" is the least inspired of the three, although it does at least reaffirm the emergence of politics as a major theme of Machado's fiction as well as containing some interesting comments on the importance of the Rua do Ouvidor. It is written as an anecdote in first person and in dialogue form by a rural man visiting Rio addressed to a rich brother in the provinces (where items of news arrive "amortecidas pela distância" (OC.II, p. 783)) and is an attempt to convey the detailed experience of a ministerial crisis in the capital. And although it is possible that Machado may have had a particular crisis in mind, since there was no such occurrence in the early part of 1873 it is more likely that he is talking in general terms about the speculation that would surround ministerial instability in Rio. Besides being presented as the major source of information, the Rua do Ouvidor is described as a microcosm of the whole city - "resume o Rio de Janeiro. . . exprime todos os sentimentos e todas as idéias" (OC.II, p. 785). The narrator's guide (referred to simply as "C.") even goes to the extent of calling it "a sociedade humana em ponto pequeno" (OC.II, p. 785), since all sectors of society can be found here, from fashion-conscious young women on their latest shopping spree to the manual labourer who pauses for a while outside a shop "para ter o prazer de contemplar durante minutos uma destas vidraças rutilantes de riqueza" (OC.II, p. 785). Machado does not, however, use the opportunity to meditate on the injustices of life, despite the moralizing tendencies of the guide. After showing some interest in C.'s vaguely philosophical remarks on the University of life, the narrator cuts him short once the name of La Rochefoucauld is mentioned. As he explains to his brother:

Estas últimas palavras revelaram no C. um desses indivíduos doentes que andam a ver tudo cor da morte e do sangue. Eu que vinha para divertir-me, não queria estar a braços com um segundo volume do nosso Padre Tomé, espécie de Timon cristão, a quem darás a ler esta carta, acompanhada de muitas lembranças minhas. (OC.II pp. 785-786)

It is difficult to know whether Machado is making an indirect comment on the frivolous nature of his narrator (as he did in "Mariana") or criticizing those boring types who want to philosophize everything. In any case, the two men return to the question of the ministerial crisis, remaining in the Rua do Ouvidor, which is a hive of informed and

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<sup>12</sup> Later published in *Histórias da Meia-Noite* under the title "As bodas de Luís Duarte".

uninformed gossip on the political situation. Neither the cause of the crisis nor the formation of the new cabinet is certain but conjectures and suggestions concerning the latter abound until nine o'clock at night when the definitive list is circulated. Despite its almost exclusive dedication to the discussion of politics, "Tempo de crise" contains none of the satire that we see in "A parasita azul" and can be regarded as something of a time-filler in literary terms.

In "As bodas do Dr. Duarte" Machado enters the home of José and Beatriz Lemos (situated in the fashionable Rio district of Tijuca) on the occasion of their younger daughter's wedding to Luís Duarte. With its cataloguing of the petty domestic incidents that make up the day and its brief sketches of certain social types, the story is a good-natured example of Brazilian *costumbrismo*, aimed primarily at the affectations of the wealthier classes. For example, a slight disagreement recorded near the beginning of the narrative between husband and wife over the hanging of two engravings acquired by José Lemos especially for the occasion, gives us an insight into their respective characters:

uma representava a *Morte de Sardanapalo*; outra a *Execução de Maria Stuart*. Houve alguma luta entre ele e a mulher a respeito da colocação da primeira gravura. D. Beatriz achou que era indecente um grupo de homem abraçado com tantas mulheres. Além disso, não lhe pareciam próprios dous quadros fúnebres em dia de festa. José Lemos que tinha sido membro de uma sociedade literária, quando era rapaz, respondeu triunfantemente que os dous quadros eram históricos, e que a história está bem em todas as famílias. (OC.II, p. 192)

If D. Beatriz' pious objection to seeing the funeral pyre of the legendary Assyrian king Sardanapalus (complete with servants and concubines) draped on the walls of her home is an indication of her total lack of artistic sensitivity, the rejoinder made by her husband is no less superficial. His interest in the two works of art reflects the mid to late-nineteenth century fashion for historical or pseudo-historical topics<sup>13</sup> and contains no sense of aesthetic appreciation. We are given another glimpse of D. Beatriz' prudish disposition at a later stage when she decides to have the meal after the ceremony for the simple reason "que achou esquisito ir para a igreja com a barriga cheia" (OC.II, p. 194). The fact that José Lemos, on the other hand, is a literary pedant and intellectual philistine, despite his apparent cultivation of the arts, is confirmed at several other

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<sup>13</sup> For information on the Romantic tendency for artists to draw on heroic and mythical themes, see Fernando de Azevedo, *A Cultura Brasileira*, 3rd edit. (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos), 1958, chapter 5, vol. II.

points in the narrative. His insistence that his wife recite a well-rehearsed speech to the bride on the responsibilities of married life provokes the following criticism from Machado:

Melhor fora que D. Beatriz, como as outras mães, tirasse alguns conselhos do seu coração e da sua experiência. O amor materno é a melhor retórica deste mundo. Mas o Sr. José Lemos, que conservara desde a juventude um sestro literário, achou que fazia mal expondo a cara metade a alguns erros gramaticais numa ocasião tão solene. (OC.II, p. 194)

Also, in his strenuous efforts to ensure the presence of the local speech-maker, tenente Porfírio, at the wedding banquet and in his own after-dinner toast "aos meus amigos, a estes sectários do coração, a estas vestais, tanto masculinas como femininas, do puro fogo da amizade!" (OC.II, p. 201), Lemos reveals a taste for rhetoric of the worst kind. Paradoxically, however, it is also clear that this preference for wordy speeches on the part of the host is accompanied by a limited education, at least in terms of vocabulary. On being referred to as "nosso anfitrião" (OC.II, p. 200) by Porfírio, he is not sure quite how to react but not wishing to show his ignorance he decides to smile and take it as a compliment. His appreciation of Porfírio's discourse is shared by D. Beatriz, amongst others, who does not hesitate to acknowledge the apparent superiority of the speaker's rhetoric. "Fala muito bem!" she says to another guest, "parece um dicionário!" (OC.II, p. 202).<sup>14</sup> Porfírio himself provides Machado with an excellent opportunity to parody the speech and mannerisms of "o tipo do orador de sobremesa" (OC.II, p. 194). Regarded as an indispensable feature of any social gathering, Porfírio is sychophantic in the extreme and is more than willing to trade the desired "saúde historiada" (OC.II, p. 201) for ample quantities of food and drink. As the evening wears on and having fulfilled his duty, he proceeds to get himself drunk by entering an impromptu toasting contest with another of the guests "brindando calurosamente todas as idéias práticas e úteis deste mundo" (OC.II, p. 203) such as the army and its generals

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<sup>14</sup> The high value placed on rhetoric in mid to late-nineteenth century Brazil, which is a frequent source of humour in Machado's satire, is referred to by Gilberto Freyre as:

a socio-cultural attitude, the extension into republican times of which should not be discounted. Such was the emphasis placed on eloquence - sacred, political, or merely social - that during this long period in Brazilian life it overflowed its conventional limits (the address, the sermon, or the toast) to disfigure and pervert other forms of expression: poems, novels, essays, editorials, letters, official documents and reports, even telegrams.

*Order and Progress*, ed. and trans. by Rod W. Horton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1970, p. 81.



and the establishment of world peace. The only other character who stands out amongst Machado's gallery of social types is Dr. Valença, the man who was chosen to act as godfather at the wedding ceremony. Unlike Porfirio, Dr. Valença says very little and his actions are as reserved as his speech. As far as his spiritual nature is concerned, however, he is no less mediocre:

Era ele homem de seus cinqüenta anos, nem gordo nem magro, mas dotado de um largo peito e um largo abdômen que lhe davam maior gravidade ao rosto e às maneiras. O abdômen é a expressão mais positiva da gravidade humana; um homem magro tem necessariamente os movimentos rápidos; ao passo que para ser completamente grave precisa ter os movimentos tardos e medidos. Um homem verdadeiramente grave não pode gastar menos de dous minutos em tirar o lenço e assoar-se. O Dr. Valença gastava três quando estava com defluxo e quatro no estado normal. Era um homem gravíssimo.

Insisto neste ponto porque é a maior prova da inteligência do Dr. Valença. Compreendeu este advogado, logo que saiu da academia, que a primeira condição para merecer a consideração dos outros era ser grave; e indagando o que era gravidade pareceu-lhe que não era nem o peso da reflexão, nem a seriedade do espirito, mas unicamente certo *mistério do corpo*, como lhe chama La Rochefoucauld; o qual mistério, acrescentará o leitor, é como a bandeira dos neutros em tempo de guerra: salva do exame a carga que cobre. (OC.II, p. 195)

According to La Rochefoucauld, "La gravité est un mystère du corps inventé pour cacher les défauts de l'esprit",<sup>15</sup> but Valença's "intelligence" lies in the realization that the appearance of sobriety in polite circles can often pass for the real thing and looks forward to the ironic paternal advice included in Machado's "Teoria do medalhão" of 1881.

The parody of the individual's search for personal recognition in society, present in both "A parasita azul" and "As bodas do Dr. Duarte", becomes the central source of humour in "Aurora sem dia". Here Machado writes a fairly detailed account of the ridiculous literary and political aspirations to which Luís Tinoco had been prone in his formative years. The young man's sudden decision to become a poet results in mere imitation and badly rhyming verse. In the words of Machado, Luís' swiftly produced work can be summarized as "Imagens safadas, expressões comuns e nenhuma arte" (OC.II, p. 222). Despite the fact that he borrows indiscriminately from the ideas of such men as Byron and Shakespeare (whom he has never read), Tinoco labours under the illusion that he is an unrecognised genius and insists on walking "com o ar inspirado de todos os poetas nòveis que se supõem apóstolos e mártires" (OC.II, p. 223).<sup>16</sup> Ap-

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<sup>15</sup> Maxim 257, *La Rochefoucauld: Maximes*, ed. Pierre Kuentz (Nancy: Bordas, 1966), p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Several of the points made by Machado in this parody figure of the Romantic poet were also applied to contemporary Brazilian authors in his article "Instinto de Nacionalidade", published

parently, pseudo-romantic ideas on poetic inspiration were still alive in the minds of both writers and public in the Empire. The reaction of Luís' guardian, Anastácio, to the conversion of his godson is typical of the popular conception of genius and illustrates the widespread ignorance of literary matters:

Anastácio leu outra vez os versos, e só então reparou na assinatura do afilhado. Não havia que duvidar: o rapaz dera um poeta. Para o velho aposentado era isto uma grande desgraça. Esse, ligava à idéia de poeta a idéia da mendicidade. Tinham-lhe pintado Camões e Bocage, que eram os nomes literários que ele conhecia, como dous improvisadores de esquina, espeitorando sonetos em troca de algumas moedas, dormindo nos adros das igrejas e comendo nas cocheiras das casas-grandes. Quando soube que o seu querido Luís estava atacado da terrível moléstia, Anastácio ficou triste, e foi nessa ocasião que se encontrou com o Dr. Lemos e lhe deu notícia da gravíssima situação do afilhado. (OC.II, p. 222)

Thankfully for Anastácio and Dr. Lemos, Luís will eventually abandon his hopes of glory, but not before pursuing fame as a political orator. In many ways his procedure as a politician is no different from his poetical method. When he is lent several books on statesmanship we read that:

ele ia atrás das grandes frases, - sobretudo das frases sonoras - demorava-se nelas, repetia-as, ruminava-as com verdadeira delícia. O que era reflexão, observação análise parecia-lhe árido, e ele corria depressa por eles. (OC.II, p. 230)

In spite of his superficial approach, Luís somehow manages to become a provincial deputy, but his career effectively comes to an end when a rival decides to embarrass the ex-poet by reading out one of Tinoco's worst verses in the Chamber. By the end of the story Luís is transformed into a hardworking farmer and family man, and we learn that it was the sudden realization that a bad poet would make an even worse politician that caused him to make the change. Luís Tinoco's awareness and voluntary renunciation of the illusion of destiny and self-importance is a rare occurrence in the

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in the magazine *Novo Mundo* in Rio on 24 March 1873 (reprinted in OC.III pp. 801-809). Three criticisms are of particular interest:

Em que peca a geração presente? Falta-lhe um pouco mais de correção e gosto; peca na intrepidez às vezes da expressão, na impropriedade das imagens, na obscuridade do pensamento. (OC.III, p. 807)

Feitas as exceções devidas não se lêem muito os clássicos no Brasil. Entre as exceções poderia eu citar até alguns escritores cuja opinião é diversa da minha neste ponto, mas que sabem perfeitamente os clássicos. Em geral, porém, não se lêem, o que é um mal. (OC.III, p. 809)

Outra coisa de que eu quisera persuadir a mocidade é que a precipitação não lhe afiança muita vida aos seus escritos. Há um prurido de escrever muito e depressa; tira-se disso glória, e não posso negar que é caminho de aplausos. . . Faça muito embora um homem a volta ao mundo em oitenta dias; para uma obra prima do espirito são precisos alguns mais. (OC.III, p. 809)

short stories. Rather than allow his characters to come to terms with their mediocrity, Machado's prefers to let them continue the game of pretence which, in his opinion, forms the basis of social behaviour.

For all their criticisms, the dominant tone of the three main satires of the period - "Aurora sem dia", "As bodas de Luís Duarte" and "A parasita azul" (all of which managed to find their way into *Histórias da Meia Noite*) - would seem to suggest that Machado was primarily interested in promoting a light-hearted treatment of certain social themes. But whilst it may be true that for the readers of his second collection of short stories Machado was keen to sell himself as a mild-mannered humourist, the inclusion of "O relógio de ouro" (JdasF Apr-May 1873) and the evidence of other tales that he chose not to re-publish indicate that Machado was very capable of supplying a sharper edge to the discussion of social morality. Together with "O relógio de ouro", in "Aires e Vergueiro" (Jan 1871) Machado uses a brutal and non-moralizing technique in his approach to the theme of adultery. At the end of "Aires e Vergueiro" especially, we are left with the feeling that the narrator is as cynical as the characters he has invented. There are also three stories which explore the mechanics of personal ambition. The aspirations held by the female protagonist of "Uma águia sem asas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1872) turn out to be beyond her reach but in "Almas agradecidas" (JdasF Mar/Oct 1871) and "Um homem superior" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1873) Machado shows how the unscrupulous manipulation of one's acquaintances can secure a desirable position in life.

## **The amoral treatment of adultery**

"Aires e Vergueiro" begins as the story of two men who become great friends and enter into a business partnership. When they lose money as a result of becoming involved in some risky ventures, Aires and Vergueiro decide to sell off their property as surreptitiously as possible in order to avoid paying their creditors. Their plan of escape is for Vergueiro to travel openly to Buenos Aires, feign sickness and then request the presence of his wife and best friend, who will also bring the money with them. Everything appears to be going beautifully until Aires and Carlota sneak off to start a new life in Europe. The ending of the story is calculated to shock the reader, not simply in terms of the immoral actions of the characters, but also on account of its misleading narration.

There are at least three aspects to the story which imply a deliberately deceptive approach on the part of the author and which impel the reader to look back over various details in the narrative in order to examine their authenticity and to determine Machado's reason for supplying them.

The concealment of the true nature of Aires' friendship with Vergueiro is the most obvious and repeated irony of the story. After the establishment of their business partnership the two men are depicted as bosom pals, in much the same way as the girls in "O que são as moças":

Nascida da simpatia, criada no infortúnio comum, a amizade de Aires e Vergueiro assumiu as proporções do ideal. Na vizinhança, já ninguém recorria às expressões proverbiais para significar uma amizade íntima; não se dizia de dois amigos: são unha e carne; dizia-se: Aires com Vergueiro. Diógenes teria achado ali um homem, e realmente ambos formavam uma só criatura. (CF.II, p. 46)

Unlike the earlier story, however, we are given no reason to doubt the quality of the relationship. On the contrary, as Aires and Vergueiro approach the realization of their fraudulent plans, the narrator asserts that "a cumplicidade dos dois sócios apertou os vínculos da sua proverbial amizade" (CF.II, p. 50) and paints the picture of a tearful separation as Vergueiro leaves for Argentina. At the end of the tale, the reader finds him/herself in much the same situation as Vergueiro, betrayed by a person in whom so much confidence had been placed. "Aires e Vergueiro" marks the true beginning of Machado's exploitation of the implicit relationship of trust between the author and his audience which is so much a part of his style in the later novels. Since the traditional truthfulness of the narrator cannot be taken for granted, the reader is obliged to both suspend belief and reconstruct the hidden facts and disguised motivations that lie between the lines.

Two other features of Machado's deceptive style in "Aires e Vergueiro" are the covering up of Carlota's true character and of the adultery situation. With the value of hindsight, it can be seen that both are hinted at in the course of the story but not to the extent where attention is drawn to either possibility. For example, at the beginning we are given the financial background to Vergueiro's wedding to Carlota:

Requestada por muitos rapazes no ano da Maioridade, deu ela a preferência ao Luís Vergueiro que, posto não fosse mais bonito que os outros, tinha qualidades que o punham muito acima de todos os rivais. Destes se podia dizer que os movia a ambição; tinham geralmente pouco mais que nada; Vergueiro não era assim. Iniciava um negociozinho de fazendas que lhe ia dando esperanças de enriquecer, ao passo que a amável Carlota apenas tinha aí dez contos, dote feito pelo padrinho. (CF.II, p. 37)

Does Carlota marry Vergueiro because she knows that he cannot be after her money? Or because she senses that he has the capacity to make himself rich? If the latter is true, then we should not be surprised to see her elope with Aires and their ill-gotten gains. The problem for the reader, however, is that the money-grabbing aspect of Carlota's nature is not dwelt upon by the narrator. In fact, when Aires and Vergueiro are discussing their plans to cheat on their creditors, it is Carlota who tries to dissuade them. She soon comes round to the idea, however. In the words of the narrator:

A que se não acostuma o coração humano? Lançada a má semente no coração da moça, depressa germinou, e o plano secreto passou a ser assunto de conversa entre os três conjurados. (CF.II, p. 50)

The impression is given that Carlota is an honest woman, whose mind is poisoned by the influence of her husband and friend. Her decision to run away with Aires, however, shows her to be a person of very few scruples. Even before the escape, Carlota had obviously been committing adultery with Pedro Aires for some time. The precise beginning of their relationship is kept a secret from the reader, but a re-evaluation of the narrative favours the period of illness suffered by Aires following the death of his wife:

Com verdade se diz que é nos grandes infortúnios que se conhecem as verdadeiras amizades. Aires encontrou da parte do sócio e da mulher a mais sublime dedicação. Carlota foi para ele uma verdadeira irmã ; ninguém levou mais longe e mais alto a solicitude. Aires comia pouco; arranjou-lhe ela comidas próprias para lhe vencer o fastio. Conversava com ele longas horas, ensinava-lhe alguns jogos, lia-lhe o *Saint-Clair das Ilhas*, aquela velha história de uns desterrados da ilha da Barra. Pode-se afiançar que a dedicação de Carlota foi o principal medicamento que restituiu à vida o nosso Pedro Aires. (CF.II, p. 45)

Once again, with the value of hindsight one can impose a fresh interpretation on this passage, which goes beyond the statements made by the narrator. Having become aware of the unethical inclinations of both Aires and Carlota it is not difficult to see how so much contact (which ironically included the reading of one of the most popular sentimental romances of the nineteenth century) could have given birth to adultery.

Though the build-up to its conclusion is very different to what we have seen in "Aires e Vergueiro", the final effect of "O relógio de ouro" is very much the same. It is the only story in *Histórias da Meia-Noite* whose message has any real sting to its tail, due to the manner in which Machado suddenly confronts us with the unsuspected fact of a young man's infidelity. Luis Negreiros returns home (presumably from work) at the opening of the tale to discover a large pocket-watch, complete with golden chain,

on his dressing-table. The watch is obviously new, but his wife Clarinha refuses to divulge any information on its owner or how it got there. Faced with the silence of his wife, Negreiros begins to draw his own conclusions. He thinks at first that the mysterious object is a special present that Clarinha is trying to keep secret until his birthday on the next day. When it becomes obvious that this is not the case, he begins to suspect that the watch and chain have unwittingly been left behind by a lover, and in a fit of rage he grabs his wife by the neck and demands that she tell all. In reply she calmly shows him a brief letter that had arrived with the watch when it was delivered. Signed "Tua *laiá*", the note is clear evidence that Negreiros, the former dandy who had apparently turned over a new leaf, is the one who has been guilty of adultery. Throughout this brief tale, we are led to believe that Clara has something to hide. Why else should she remain silent? At the same time the romantic reader is encouraged to anticipate a violent conclusion, especially when just a few lines before the end "O infeliz marido lançou as mãos ao colo da esposa e rugiu: - Responde, demônio ou morres!" (OC.II, p. 240). The remainder of the story, however, is uncomfortably serene as Machado ends the tale immediately after the reading of the incriminating note in the matter-of-fact tone with which he began it ("Agora contarei a história do relógio de ouro. . . Assim acabou a história do relógio de ouro"). Refusing to sentimentalize the situation or even condemn it, as he had done previously in "Casada e viúva" and "Confissões de uma viúva moça", Machado has nothing more to say and we are left to draw our own conclusions on both the hypocrisy that lies behind Luís Negreiros' outburst of righteous indignation and the prospect of yet another dead marriage for the innocent Clarinha.

### **The mechanics of ambition**

The area of Machado's work in the early 1870s in which his moral silence is at its most disturbing is his investigation of techniques of social-climbing. This is not entirely the case in "Uma águia sem asas", which bears an uncharacteristically domestic moral, but the ruthlessness that we find in the pages of the ironically titled stories "Almas agradecidas" and "Um homem superior" is recorded in such a way as to indicate that Machado has become convinced that cynicism is the only valid approach to the study of individuals and of society.

Twenty two year old Sara Hope, the central figure of "Uma águia sem asas", is another of Machado's strong-minded female characters. The daughter of an English businessman who settled in Brazil in 1830, she is, like Augusta of "Qual dos dois?", both rich and independent and shows no signs of wanting to get married. Her proverbial indifference inspires three elegant young men to compete with other in an eager *steeple-chase* (HRom, p. 345) for her affections. Jorge's attempt to appeal to what he fancies is the hidden romantic idealism of Sara's nature ends in abject failure. Mateus' apparently more practical supposition "que a moça amaria loucamente a quem lhe desse sinais de bravura" (HRom, p. 352) suffers an identical fate, leaving Andrade with the puzzle of how to overcome Sara's disinclination towards marriage. This he does by way of a patient and detailed observation of the young woman's habits: "um livro, uma frase, um gesto, uma opinião, tudo Andrade ouvia com atenção religiosa, tudo examinava cuidadosamente" (HRom, p. 354). Sara's unusual interest in the fall of another government cabinet ("ouvira a notícia com atenção profunda demais para o seu sexo" (HRom, p. 355)) and her reading of a biography of the scheming Catherine da Medici identify her as a person of practical ambition, determined to achieve a certain level of social prestige. Her character is summed up by the narrator as follows:

Ela era efetivamente ambiciosa e sedenta de honras e eminências. Se tivesse nascido nas imediações de um trono poria esse trono em perigo.

Para que ela amasse alguém, era necessário que esse pudesse competir com ela no gênio, e lhe afiançasse a vinda de glórias futuras. (HRom, p. 358)

Having discovered Sara's basic source of motivation, Andrade successfully presents himself as man of equal ambition to hers and in a remarkably short space of time finds himself wedded to the girl who had formerly showed no interest whatsoever in marriage. After only a few months of married life, however, Sara is in for a great disappointment when it becomes obvious that Andrade's preference is for "uma vida calma e pacífica, sem ambições, nem ruído" (HRom, p. 360). When she asks her husband why the formerly intrepid eagle has suddenly lost his urge to fly, he replies that the apparent eagle was never more than a dove in disguise and encourages her to bask in the glories of domestic bliss. Andrade's words pave the way for a moral which is obviously aimed at the female readership of the *Jornal das Famílias*:

Sara ficou longo tempo pensativa, à janela; e não sei se a leitora achará ridículo que ela vertesse alguma lágrima.

Verteu duas.

Uma pelas ambições abatidas e desfeitas.

Outra pelo erro em que estivera até então.

Porquanto, se o espírito parecia magoado e entorpecido com o desenlace de tantas ilusões, dizia-lhe o coração que *a verdadeira felicidade de uma mulher está na paz doméstica*. [my emphasis]

Que mais lhe direi para completar a narrativa?

Sara disse adeus às ambições dos primeiros anos, e voltou-se toda para outra ordem de desejos.

Quis Deus que ela os realizasse. Quando morrer não terá página na história; mas o marido poderá escrever-lhe na sepultura: Foi boa esposa e teve muitos filhos. (HRom. pp. 361-362)

The definite assertion that a woman should not aspire to anything other than peaceful domesticity ought not to be regarded as the sincere expression of a personal viewpoint. The narrator's parting epitaph smacks strongly of sarcasm and is reminiscent of the conclusion to the rather similar story "Astúcias de marido": "Quanto aos nossos esposos, amaram-se muito e tiveram muitos filhos" (CRec, p. 162). One must also bear in mind Machado's sympathetic treatment of the highly ambitious Guiomar in his second novel, *A mão e a luva*, which was only two years away from being published.

"Almas agradecidas" and "Um homem superior" provide further evidence of the growing fascination that the processes of ambition, and this time without the reassurance of a moral ending, were beginning to hold for Machado. Both stories focus on the ability of a certain character to operate in society via means that are underhand but extremely effective in their results.

Magalhães is the protagonist of "Almas agradecidas", and his story begins with the chance meeting of an ex-schoolmate outside the theatre in the pouring rain. There are consistent indirect references to Magalhães' humble circumstances. In the opening scene he is described as the man without an umbrella; a little later on as the man without a calling-card and a fob-watch, in stark contrast to Oliveira, who seems to have had all the luck:

Sabemos destas revelações mútuas, que Oliveira era bacharel em direito, e começava a advogar com pouco sucesso. Herdera alguma coisa da avó, última parenta que conservara até então, tendo-lhe morrido os pais antes de entrar na adolescência. Estava com certo desejo de entrar na vida política e contava com a proteção de alguns amigos de seu pai, para ser eleito deputado á assembléia provincial fluminense.

Magalhães era o nome do outro; não herdera de seus pais dinheiro, nem amigos políticos. Aos 16 anos, achou-se só no mundo; exercera vários empregos de caráter



particular, até que conseguira obter uma nomeação para o Arsenal de Guerra, onde estava atualmente. Confessou que esteve a ponto de enriquecer casando com uma viúva rica; mas não revelou as causas que lhe impediram essa mudança de fortuna. (HRom. pp. 95-96)

Magalhães' job at the military arsenal would seem to mark him out as an all-time loser like Ernesto de tal, who had an identical post. Several early details, however, encourage us to see him in a very different light. When Oliveira invites him to have a quick snack at a local hotel in order to escape the rain (the two men do not recognise each other at this point), Magalhães does not accept until he has cast a searching glance over his prospective host, "espécie de exame prévio da condição social da pessoa" (HRom, p. 93). Magalhães makes a similar but more prolonged examination of Oliveira's wealth on his first visit to the latter's house, studying the quality of its furniture and fittings. "A sua curiosidade era minuciosa e sagaz", we read, "parecia estar avaliando o gosto ou a riqueza de seu ex-colega" (HRom, p. 97). It soon becomes evident that Magalhães is a very capable social operator, and having been badly treated by fortune in the past, he is not ashamed to make up for lost ground by taking full advantage of "o dom de ser naturalmente insinuante" (HRom, p. 100). In this sense he is far superior to Oliveira, for all his wealth and contacts, and uses their friendship as a means of securing a more lucrative post. Magalhães even manages to court and eventually marry the rich girl whom Oliveira had intended to marry himself, without arousing the slightest suspicion of treachery from his companion. Unable to go to the wedding or even visit their household because of his great love for Cecília, Oliveira nevertheless remains a firm friend of Magalhães. "Foram amigos até à morte, posto que Oliveira não freqüentasse a casa de Magalhães" (HRom, p. 130), informs the narrator, at which point he ends the tale without comment.

The reasoning behind the humourless account of the social climber in "Almas agradecidas" and its lack of moral comment is made explicit in the concluding paragraphs to "Um homem superior". In many ways the latter story is a re-run of the former, with its concentration on one man's determined rise from penury to complete financial security. In the early stages of the story Clemente Soares, like Magalhães, is made to look like something of a loser as we watch him contemplating suicide on the beach after a sleepless night. He overcomes such gloomy thoughts by returning home to eat a frugal breakfast, smoke his last two cigars and read a Balzac novel whilst looking forward

to a regular main meal provided by a generous friend. But Soares' poverty is of a peculiar nature, since his well-furnished house retains the aspect of better days:

E quem o visse ali, estendido no sofá, metido em um chambre, lendo um volume encadernado em Paris, diria que o bom rapaz era um estudante rico, que havia falhado a aula e enchia com alguma distração as horas, até receber uma carta da enamorada. (CF.II, p. 89)

Far from being a pitiful character, Soares' decision to maintain appearances, despite financial difficulties, indicates his potential and desire for upward social progress. Also, he had recently abandoned one girlfriend as soon as he realised she was not as rich as he had first thought, and although we are never told the reasons for his present financial embarrassment, his subsequent social strategies leave us in no doubt as to his ability to get on in life. When his generous friend, Castrioto ("honrado negociante de fazendas" (CF.II, p. 90)), informs him of a well-paid book-keeping job that has turned up in a local firm, he greets the news "com ar de calculada indiferença" (CF.II, p. 90), refusing to show how desperate he is for any kind of employment. And when he does condescend to thank his friend for the favour, he attempts to save face by adding: "Eu já tinha alguma coisa em vista. . . mas era precário e inferior ao que você me oferece" (CF.II, p. 91). This is just the upturn in his fortunes that Soares was looking for, and once he gets his foot on the ladder there is no stopping him. Castrioto's act of kindness is repayed by a deliberate snub from Soares when the honest businessman falls on hard times, a clear indication that the "superior man" of the title will leave no room for sentiment in his climb to the top. Whilst on the one hand, Soares works hard to make himself an indispensable part of the firm, on the other, he systematically rids himself of all former contacts which he now regards as undesirable:

Clemente Soares ganhou depressa a estima do dono da casa. Era solícito, zeloso, e sabia levar os homens. Dotado de inteligência aguda, e instruído, resolvia todas as dúvidas que estavam acima do entendimento de Medeiros.

Não tardou, pois, que fosse considerado pessoa necessária no estabelecimento, verdadeiro alvo dos seus esforços.

Ao mesmo tempo, tratou de se descartar de certos conhecimentos do tempo em que tinha o almoço casual e a ceia incerta. Clemente Soares professava a opinião de que a um pobre não se tira chapéu em nenhum hipótese, salvo se se encontram num beco deserto, e ainda assim sem grandes mostras de intimidade, a fim de não dar confiança. (CF.II, p. 93)

Simultaneously, of course, Soares is constantly gaining ground with new contacts, "penetrando na sociedade que convinha a seu gosto" (CF.II, p. 93), amongst whom we

will find comendador Brito, the old but rich husband of Carlotinha, the girlfriend Soares had once rejected. Seeing the financial potential of the situation, Soares embarks on the next stage of his social campaign by cleverly regaining the affection of Carlotinha without endangering his relationship with Brito. When Brito's inevitable death occurs, Soares and Carlotinha marry following a six month period of mourning. After a year of apparent married bliss, however, Carlotinha's romantic dreams are destroyed by her husband's repeated and unrepentant infidelity; after four years, she is dead, her emotional and physical state in ruins. Despite his lack of feeling for her, Soares buries his wife with great pomp in a ceremony at which the presence of several ministers of state bears witness to his increasing social prestige. Before returning to his immoral lifestyle, Soares makes a great show of mourning his wife by wearing black for a whole year, "e quando acabou o luto foi viajar para se distrair da perda, dizia ele" (CF.II, p. 109). This is as much as Machado is prepared to catalogue concerning the social movement of Clemente Soares, leaving us to imagine the continued consolidation of his position and public image. And in case we were wondering about the moral to the story, there isn't one:

Aqui acaba a história.

Como! E a moralidade? A minha história é isto. Não é uma história, é um esboço, é um traco. Não me proponho a castigar ninguém, salvo Carlotinha, que se achou bem punida de ter amado outro homem em vida do marido.

Quanto a Clemente Soares nenhuma punição teve, e eu não hei de inventar no papel aquilo que se não dá na vida. Clemente Soares viveu festejado e estimado por todos, até que morreu de apoplexia, no meio de muitas lágrimas, que não eram mais sinceras do que ele foi durante sua vida. (CF.II, p. 109)

The statement that life has no moral is crucial to our understanding of the direction that Machado's fiction takes in the 1870s. If society is clearly unjust and individuals are patently hypocritical in their actions, it is the writer's responsibility to record (or invent) according to that pattern, regardless of whether his work does or does not conform to established forms of fiction. The villain cannot be punished merely to satisfy our urge for poetic justice, nor can love or friendship be praised where no such virtues exist. Machado's words on the amoral nature of life also imply that his stance is not just a literary one, opposed to the excesses of popular literature and developed simply for the purposes of shocking his audience. It is one that is based on a particularly negative philosophy of human experience. The definite philosophical expression of Machado's

ideas within the short story begins with "O rei dos caiporas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1870), followed by "Rui de Leão" (JdasF Jan-Mar 1872). The former is comic, the latter predominantly sober in tone, but both convey the message that for some poor unfortunates, at least, life has little meaning.

## **The absurdity of life**

Is it true that human events are ruled by a blind and capricious destiny? Does this same force govern the fate of individual human beings? After posing such questions as these at the beginning of his story, the narrator of "O rei dos caiporas" does not dare suggest any definitive answers. He proceeds instead to give a practical example by recounting the tale of a man whose total inability to get on in life perfectly illustrates what the Brazilian man in the street would call *caiporismo*, or, a bad-luck syndrome.

From the moment his mother dies just after the birth, it would appear that the existence of the ironically-named João das Mercês is under a curse. He goes through a succession of seven substitute mothers even before he is weaned and, predictably enough, grows up to be a lazy young rogue. At sixteen we find him penniless and homeless, having been thrown out of the house for unruly behaviour by his less than exemplary father. For a while, he is taken in by the parents of the cousin with whom he is in love and things seem set for an imminent marriage. Aunt Angêlica is so eager to ensure the financial security of her slightly lame daughter ("Marianinha tinha uma perna mais curta que a outra" (CAV, p. 44)) that even João is considered a worthy match, especially after a job is swiftly arranged for the young lad by his uncle Gaspar. Just when things are going so well, João's father makes an inexplicable but successful attempt to regain custody of his son. Both job and girlfriend are lost other candidates during the long period that João is kept a virtual prisoner at home.

Following the death of his father, João's bad luck is reflected in a series of unfair job dismissals and a business that fails with the help of a cheating partner. In addition to these, he has the misfortune of having a winning lottery ticket stolen from his pocket the night before he is due to collect. Even the desperate attempt to escape his *caiporismo* through suicide is denied by fate when he is rescued from drowning in the sea. And so the struggle continues. The final mockery of João's hopes to be related

by the narrator is his near marriage to a very rich old woman, who unfortunately dies the day before the wedding. We are left to assume that João's life will follow the usual pattern:

Nunca raiou dia de felicidade para este infeliz. Tem sido sucessivamente agente de procurador, copista de advogado, porteiro de teatro, vendedor de bilhetes de loteria, negociante de charutos, sempre perseguido pela fatalidade.

Ele mesmo diz com resignação evangélica:

- Sou o rei dos caiporas! (CAV, p. 58)

The tale of "O rei dos caiporas" could be read as just another funny story along the lines of "O oráculo". However, the repeated insistence that João be denied any kind of release, even that of death, is a sobering message. To be sure, the young man is often his own worst enemy in allowing himself to be exploited, but when he tries to exploit in return the result is the same, and there is nothing he can do about it. It would be premature, however, to conclude from the evidence of this story that Machado truly believed in fate, especially when we bear in mind the indecisive comments he makes in one of the early paragraphs:

A filosofia diz que o homem depende de si; o vulgo aponta mil casos em que todos os esforços de um homem vão esbarrar diante de uma força invisível que o não deixa dar um passo diante. A filosofia é uma boa senhora, e o vulgo é um sujeito prático; seria parcialidade inclinar-me a qualquer deles. Atento-me a ambos. (CAV, p. 42)

Unable to make up his mind, Machado goes for both options by, on the one hand, recording the seemingly inevitable successes of his "homem superior" in several stories of the period, and cataloging the unavoidable mishaps of a João das Mercês on the other. Whilst the ideological conflict involved in accepting the invisible force theory together with self-determinism is obvious, it is also clear that Machado is keen to explore both aspects as outlets for cynicism. As a writer of fiction, Machado would never construct a rigid or even coherent philosophical system, nor should we expect him to. What is more important is the added depth that the spirit of philosophical enquiry would endow on his later novels and stories, combined with a surer sense of artistic direction. Throughout the middle years of the 1870s, the theme of fate's cruelties would attain a higher profile, although not before a more fundamental philosophical problem had emerged in the earlier years of the same decade. The question to which Machado addresses himself in "Rui de Leão" is not so much whether the lives of certain individuals

are destined for misery, as whether the human experience of life in general terms can be regarded as a blessing or a curse.

Rui's unusual biography is taken up by the narrator at about 1630 when the middle-aged Portuguese nobleman, living in the interior of Brazil among the Tamoio Indians, marries the daughter of the local chief. He is awaiting the birth of their first child when his father-in-law falls ill. Before the old man dies, however, he entrusts Rui with a secret whereabouts of a flask that contains the legendary elixir of immortality, which he had himself acquired "das mãos de Tupã", the tribal deity. Some months later Rui also falls gravely ill, and is forced to test the efficacy of the mysterious liquid after the failure of all medical efforts to save him. Amazingly, the elixir is an instant success, and more than just heal Rui, it makes him look and feel twenty years younger. This marks the beginning of a life of action and constantly renewing vigour for Rui, which, over a period of two hundred years will take him over to Portugal, Spain, Germany, Rome and eventually back to Imperial Brazil. Besides his repeated involvement in romantic intrigues, Rui obtains international fame as an expert in "teologia, filosofia, matemática, direito, medicina, profundo antiquário, extremado nas ciências físicas e químicas; em suma o doutor dos doutores" (CRec, p. 109). But after two centuries of energetic endeavour the man who has seen and achieved almost all the world has to offer is struck by an incurable weariness. He makes a couple of desperate suicide attempts in Europe, one of which sees him jumping into the Tagus: "Debalde! o corpo voltou e desceu até esbarrar num galeão, dondo foi visto e pescado" (CRec, p. 110). Suddenly, Rui begins to look more like the unfortunate *caipora* than a man who has enjoyed the benefits of life several times over. Returning to Brazil, he becomes entangled in a particularly dramatic affair with Madalena, whose admirer makes several vain attempts at Rui's life. Rui's eventual marriage to Madalena is a happy one, but is abruptly terminated by her unexpected death. Significantly, this unfortunate occurrence is not without its precedents. All three of Rui's wives die prematurely, leaving him to lament: "Quê!. . . pois hei de ver morrer todos aqueles a quem amo e hei de arrastar este castigo de vida?" (CRec, p. 117). Rui's last concentrated effort to bury his tedium takes the form of a brief political career in 1830s Brazil. He soon tires of the game and as the century progresses seeks death once more on the battlefields of the Paraguayan War.

Once more his search is in vain, and would continue to be so forever had he not befriended a doctor of homeopathy who is eager to divulge the principles of his system. The homeopathic slogan that like cures like finally gives Rui the remedy for his condition. By drinking what remains of the elixir of life, he is paradoxically able to hasten the death he has desired for so long. The concluding chapter to Rui's life is absurd, but no more so than the rest of his story. In any case, Machado had to invent some way for his hero to die so that he could present the reader with the long-awaited moral:

Assim acabou este grande homem, após quase três séculos de existência, tendo colhido louros na guerra, na ciência e no parlamento; feliz no jogo e nos amores; mimoso da fortuna; homem, enfim que provou praticamente que a morte, longe de ser um mal, é um corretivo necessário aos aborrecimentos da vida.

Imitemo-lo nas façanhas e no amor ao estudo; não no desejo de ser imortal; e convencemo-nos de que o melhor elixir de imortalidade não vale os sete palmos de terra de Caju. (CRec, p. 124)

The final summary is something of an understatement, with the narrator neglecting to remind the reader of Rui's involvement in murder and of the full extent of his "aborrecimentos". Still, the point is made that not even the most favoured of individuals can be immune from the physical or spiritual crises of life. The ailing chief was very much mistaken when, refusing to take the elixir himself, he fancied that his son-in-law would benefit from the gift of immortality. "Profundos desgostos me amarguraram a vida", he had stated, "não quero ser imortal. Tu sim; és feliz; podes ser imortal" (CRec, p. 101). Happiness is a very elusive commodity, as Rui would discover to his cost, and the old man was wrong to suppose that Rui or anyone else could fare any better than he.

The tale of Rui de Leão would be given a new lease of life in the much improved form of "O imortal" (Est Jul-Sep 1882), a full decade after its original appearance. What is perhaps more important is the fact that the spirit of the story, its emphasis on the inevitable disillusionment brought on by one's experiences, can be felt throughout much of the short fiction produced by Machado during those ten years. The cynicism with which Machado consistently scrutinises individuals and society in the 1870s is symptomatic of a deep-seated *malaise* which will culminate in the pessimism of the *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*.

## Chapter Four - The Praise of Vanity

1874 - 1878

### Vanity as an underlying principle of life and fiction

In his remaining five years at the *Jornal das Famílias* Machado would continue to produce a steady stream of over thirty stories, only one of which, "Uma visita de Alcibiades" (Oct 1876), would be republished (after some important revisions) in *Papéis Avulsos* (1882). Although two other stories written for other magazines during the same period would also be included,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that by the time Machado (or his editor) had decided to launch his next collection, the writer preferred to pass over the vast amount of work he had already done in favour of very new material. The main reason for this neglect (and for the eight year-long gap) may not lie so much in the quality of the stories themselves, (although there are signs of repetition and mediocrity), as in Machado's parallel commitment to the novel. The efforts involved in preparing the serialization and subsequent printing in book-form of *A Mão e a Luva* (1874), *Helena* (1876) and *Iaiá Garcia* (1878) may well have dissuaded Machado from organizing another volume of short stories before the 1880s, by which time his approach to writing fiction had altered significantly. Nevertheless, whatever Machado's own attitude towards the work he produced in the mid to late 70s, the critic cannot afford to ignore those tales which both consolidate the cynicism of previous years and contribute to the forging of a new style. It is still true to say that, despite (and, perhaps, as a result of) the sense of prestige that

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<sup>1</sup> "A chinela turca" (Época Nov 1875) and "Na arca" (Cruz 14 May 1878). For reasons which shall become obvious, I have chosen to postpone discussion of the earlier story until the Conclusion.



novelistic writing probably held for Machado, the short stories are very much at the vanguard of his fiction. In both genres, Machado explores the psychological and other practical aspects necessary for social ascendancy in Brazil but, following the example he set for himself in *Ressurreição*, Machado is reluctant to fully adopt the cynical tone of the stories in the pages of the novel. His refusal to abandon the traditional romantic basis of the novel, (despite his patent inability to accept the possibility of disinterested love), places an enormous strain on the writing of *A Mão e a Luva* and *Iaiá Garcia* in particular, and confirms the short stories as the most accurate and revealing transcription of Machado's thinking in the years leading up to *Brás Cubas*. Also, where, for example, in *A Mão e a Luva* he allows Guiomar the consolation of an advantageous marriage, in "Miloca" (JdasF Nov 1874-Feb 1875) Machado chooses to frustrate the social ambitions of an almost identical heroine. Miloca's failure to rise above her original status is typical of an increasing tendency for Machado to emphasize the limitations that can be placed on ambition by personality, social indifference or the run of circumstances. All too often, in stories like "Valério" (JdasF Dec 1874-Mar 1875), "Silvestre" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1877) and "A melhor das noivas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1877), we encounter characters who are denied the fulfilment of their social, financial or artistic aspirations by a sarcastic narrator who appears to care little for their predicament. The black humour evident in several stories is a clear indication of Machado's conception of life as an ironic experience, full of unexpected obstacles and deceptive mirages. After conceding, via stories such as "To be or not to be" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1876) and "O passado passado" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1876), that individual emotions, aspirations and resolutions are subject to constant change, Machado concludes in "A herança" (JdasF Apr-May 1878) and "Folha Rota" (JdasF Oct 1878) that life itself is characterized by a "cosmic vanity", with human existences being regulated by an indifferent Fortune which is very often cruel in its effects and certainly always capricious in its actions. In only one story, however, is Machado's belief in the instability of life's hopes and emotions expressed in tones of unambiguous despair. "O machete" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1878) is a rare illustration of the devastating spiritual consequences of Machado's pessimism for the sensitive individual, and its pathos is in stark contrast to the unsympathetic irony or apparently frivolous humour of most other tales.

Machado's vision of life as a sequence of unexpected ironies, his refusal to pigeon-hole experience, also impelled him to satirize the idea that superior knowledge could be obtained by adopting a particular philosophy or belief. The conclusions to be drawn from "Os óculos de Pedro Antão" (JdasF Jun-May<sup>2</sup> 1876), "Uma visita de Alcibiades" and "Sem olhos" (JdasF Dec 1876-Feb 1877) are typical of Machado's intellectual scepticism. Besides informing us of his avid interest in the philosophical, scientific and spiritual ideas that Brazilians had been eagerly importing from Europe from about the middle of the nineteenth century, these stories highlight a whimsicality in Machado's prose which had first appeared with "O capitão Mendonça" (1870) and "Decadência de dois grandes homens" (1873), and which fairly explodes in the works he produced for the ephemeral literary magazine *O Cruzeiro* in 1878. Undoubtedly, the most important of these, in conceptual terms if not in actual content, is the "Elogio da vaidade" (Cruz 28 May 1878). The title is a conspicuous borrowing from Erasmus' famous *Praise of Folly*, a work with which Machado had long been familiar,<sup>3</sup> but whose narrative approach is only just now beginning to make an impact on the fiction of the Brazilian author. It could be argued that Machado's stylistic praise of vanity, his inclination towards the use of the grotesque and the frivolous in the discussion of serious matters, is the most important development in his writing as we approach the publication of *Brás Cubas* and *Papéis Avulsos*.

## Minor stories of the period

Given Machado's vigorous cultivation of the novel during the mid to late 1870s, it is inevitable that he should have written several stories for the *Jornal das Famílias* which are little interest to the critic. The title of "Encher tempo" (JdasF Apr-Jul 1876) together with its casual conclusion ("são umas vinte páginas para encher tempo. Em falta de coisa melhor, lê isto, e dorme-se." (HistR, p. 461)) could well be applied to a number of weak, trivial or backward-looking works that tell us nothing about the emerging themes and continuing evolution of Machado's fiction. "Encher tempo" itself

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<sup>2</sup> As recorded in J. Galante de Sousa's *Bibliografia de Machado de Assis* (Rio: INL, 1955).

<sup>3</sup> I shall be referring to Machado's mention in an early *crônica* of "o livro que immortalizou Erasmo" at a later point in this chapter.

is the apparently pointless account of how a young lover (Alexandre) and the prospective priest (Pedro) eventually reverse their respective roles. Its absence of plot, characterization and narrative irony marks it out as one of Machado's most superficial tales. Though they are undoubtedly more entertaining, "Um dia de entrudo" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1874), "Muitos anos depois" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1874), "Um esqueleto" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1875) "História de uma fita azul" (JdasF Dec 1875-Feb 1876) and "O astrólogo" (JdasF Nov 1876-Jan 1877) can also be added to the list of literary time-fillers.

Two stories which would seem better placed amongst Machado's earlier writings are "A última receita" (JdasF Sep 1875) and the unexpectedly moral "Onze anos depois" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1875). The former is a gentle version of the "linha reta, linha curva" love affair in which neither the doctor nor his patient are able for a long time to declare their mutual affection. When frequent consultations and dietary advice do nothing to improve the young widow's bogus complaints, Dr. Avelar suggests a final prescription that works - marriage. "Onze anos depois" begins with the remeeting of two friends after a gap of eleven years and after their very first conversation the reader is not at all surprised to learn that one is married to the former girlfriend of the other. The villainous ex-lover attempts to rewin the woman's affection, but, like Francisca (1867), she holds firm and informs her husband. In the end the unlucky opportunist is forced to sign a humiliating confession under pain of death. Another old theme, that of the two-timing lover, which goes right back to "O que são as moças" (1866), is repeated once again in "Brincar com fogo" (JdasF Jul-Aug 1875) and "Casa não casa" (JdasF Dec 1875-Jan 1876), with Machado making no significant attempt to vary his approach. In "D. Mônica" (JdasF Aug-Oct 1876), however, the dilemma of the suitor who is obliged to decide between the merits of two women takes on a very different appearance, and serves as a useful introduction to Machado's persistent devaluation of romantic values in the face of the uncomfortable realities of social survival and of human nature.

## **The shipwreck of the illusions**

When young Gaspar is named the universal heir of his uncle Matias' fortune on the condition that he marry his ugly great-aunt, his first reaction is a mixture of indignation and disappointment. Not wishing to foresake the love of his beloved Lucinda, he

waves goodbye in his mind to the reward he had fully expected to be his after the huge investment of "atenções, carícias, sorrisos, enfados de toda espécie" (CEsq, p. 160) he had lavished on his elderly relative. True to the romantic side of his nature, Gaspar eventually gets round to writing a diplomatic letter of rejection to D. Mônica at the same time as he composes a note of proposal to Lucinda, but events do not unfold in quite the way he plans. Lucinda's father had also been relying on Gaspar's inheritance, and refuses to see his daughter married to a "modesto empregado público" (CEsq, p. 160). Comendador Lima is quick to remind his daughter that love is of little practical value in life:

- Esse tal Gaspar não é mau rapaz, concluiu o comendador; mas não tem posição digna de ti, nem futuro. Por ora tudo são flores; as flores passam depressa; e quando tu quiseses um vestido novo ou uma jóia, não hás de mandar à modista ou ao joalheiro um pedaço do coração de teu marido. São verdades que debes ter gravadas no espírito, em vez de te guiarest somente por fantasias e sonhos. Ouviste? (CEsq, p. 169)

The cooling-off of his relationship with Lucinda, a brief conversation with a casual acquaintance who thinks he is wasting the opportunity of a lifetime ("O desconhecido olhou para Gaspar com tanta compaixão que este sentiu-se envergonhado" (CEsq, p. 174)), the loss of his office job without notice, all these combine to make Gaspar think twice about his situation. Suddenly, the acquisition of his uncle's inheritance is of crucial importance and Gaspar's great-aunt begins to take on a new appearance in the eyes of the desperate young man:

Seria ilusão ou realidade? D. Mônica pareceu-lhe nessa ocasião menos velha do que antes a achava. Ou fosse da *toilette*, ou de seus olhos, a verdade é que Gaspar viu-se obrigado a reformar um pouco o juízo anterior. Não a achou moça; mas a velhice pareceu-lhe mais fresca, a conversa mais agradável, o sorriso mais meigo e o olhar menos apagado. (CEsq, p. 177)

By the end of the tale, one is scarcely surprised to find Gaspar married to D. Mônica, and this despite the renewed availability of Lucinda, whose father had eventually bent to the wishes of his lovesick daughter. But in case the reader is inclined to harbour any illusions about the nature of Lucinda's affections, we are left with the following lines by way of conclusion:

Lucinda chorou durante dois dias, ficou raivosa outros dois; no quinto encetou um namoro, que acabou pelo casamento daí a quatro meses. Não era melhor que todos eles comessem por aí? Poupavam a si próprios alguns desgostos, e a mim o trabalho de lhes contar o caso. (CEsq, p. 182)

The narrator's final words contain a double-sided message which is both a restatement and an expansion of ideas that have been present in Machado's work from its earliest stages. Besides confirming the superficiality of Lucinda's love, the narrator is also pouring scorn on Gaspar's reluctance to choose the cynical alternative. Why hesitate when, as one of the other characters remarks, "A mocidade passa e as apólices ficam" (CEsq, p. 168)? In a world where relationships have no real substance and noble sentiments are of no practical value, Gaspar is well-advised to sacrifice his youthful illusions. Thankfully, he is able to learn these facts of life before it is too late, which is more than can be said for the sorry protagonist of "Antes que cases" (JdasF Jul-Sep 1875).

Here, we observe Alfredo Tavares enter marriage full of ideas about a peaceful and idyllic existence, only to find that his wife, as early as the honeymoon, has a totally contrasting concept of the union. He wants to stay up in the solitude of Tijuca; she is anxious to re-enter the hurly-burly of society:

- Mas eu pensei que era um paraíso, disse o marido com ar melancólico.
- Paraíso é coisa de romance. (CEsp, p. 115)

With the wife dedicated to wasting time and money on the theatre, fashion and other frivolous occupations, Machado leaves us with the husband's pathetic cry: "Fui à cata de poesia e acho-me em prosa chata e baixa" (CEsp, p. 122). Life for Machado is not beautiful poetry but a vulgar prose that he is keener than ever to recount in his short stories. In "O sainete" (Época Dec 1875), for example, the bait of the title for the girl who formerly despised her suitor is the simple fact that another young woman finds him attractive. The vain realization that she can marry someone in demand motivates her to acquire him in the same way that she would follow the latest trends in fashion and behaviour.

Machado's insistence upon the irresistible influence of the ego reaches new heights in "Um almoço" (JdasF Mar-May 1877), where an apparent act of kindness is used as a cloak for self-interest.<sup>4</sup> When the suicidal Germano Seixas is set on the road to recovery by the provision of a meal and a job, he little suspects the true nature of José Marques' generosity. "A verdadeira paga do benefício é a gratidão do

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<sup>4</sup> "O almoço" is a perfect illustration of La Rochefoucauld's maxim: "Le nom de la vertu sert à l'intérêt aussi utilement que les vices". Maxim 187, *La Rochefoucauld: Maximes*, ed. Pierre Kuentz (Nancy: Bordas, 1966), p. 85.

beneficiado" (ReliqCV, p. 130), says Marques to a friend early on in the story, and as we read on we discover that he intends to be paid back in full with actions that demonstrate gratitude. First of all, he expects Seixas' wife and daughter to nurse his own wife back to health; when she eventually dies, he expects to be the first in line for the hand of Seixas' daughter. In the end he announces he is moving into the Seixas' home, expecting to be welcomed with open arms, all because of that initial meal. At one point the narrator says of Marques' relationship to Seixas: "Nunca lhe pedia favores; exigia-os, e era justo, porque o salvara da morte" (ReliqCV, p. 138). Later on, Marques himself informs his friend:

- Eu considero-te, por assim dizer, uma obra minha; e estou certo de que não és mais amigo de outro. Sei que és grato, que não te esquece nunca um benefício. (ReliqCV, p. 148)

Marques' repeated claim that he is perfectly entitled to special treatment from Seixas strains our credulity, but his words are not devoid of their own perverse logic. Since altruism is of no material benefit, Marques is wise to demand that Seixas' rapidly waning sense of gratitude be transferred into more tangible currency.

The undesirable consequences of indiscriminate generosity are explored in "Conversão de um avaro" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1878), where we witness the gradual softening of a miser's heart (and the loosening of his purse strings) as he falls in love with and eventually marries a beautiful young widow. This is no ideal love story, however, since the miser's prodigality leads to misery, thus justifying the sceptical, La Rochefoucauld-like comment<sup>5</sup> made at the beginning of this ironically titled tale:

Os vícios equilibram-se muita vez; outras vezes neutralizam-se ou vence um a outro. Há pecados que derrubam pecados, ou, pelo menos, quebram-lhes as pernas. (CF.II, p. 281)

If avarice is a mortal vice, then it would have been better for Gil Gomes to have died in his sins and retained his profitable business than to have spent his last years "servindo de agente em um cartório de escrivão" (CF.II, p. 309). In social and financial

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Les vices entrent dans la composition des vertues comme les poisons entrent dans la composition des remèdes : la prudence les assemble et les tempère, et elle s'en sert utilement contre les maux de la vie.

Maxim 182, La Rochefoucauld, p. 84. Note, however, that Machado's axiom speaks of vice counteracting vice and makes no mention of virtue.

terms, parsimony is a positive virtue if it serves to check the extravagances of a man who is prepared to waste his wealth on the wife he adores.

The tale which best exemplifies Machado's ironic juxtaposition of the romantic and the materialistic attitudes to life, however, is undoubtedly "A mágoa do infeliz Cosme" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1875). By way of sentimental tone and clever argument (on Cosme's part) the reader is led to believe right up to the very end that Cosme is genuinely mourning his wife's early death as he talks to one of her silent admirers. During their conversation Cosme expresses a hatred for the idea that it is necessary to keep the memory of a loved one alive through their possessions: "Com franqueza, eu detesto esse materialismo, esse aniquilamento da alma, em proveito de coisas passageiras e estéreis" (ReliqCV, p. 61). One should be able to remember the essence of a person without these props, hence his decision to sell off most of his wife's precious belongings, with one exception - an emerald hat-pin. This Cosme brings out and it is immediately recognized by Oliveira, who had tried to buy the same object for his sister, only to find it sold. After further conversation, during which Oliveira is captivated by the magic of the precious *alfinete* as it is toyed with in the hands of Cosme, the two men part company. Very early the next day, however, a stunned Oliveira receives a letter from Cosme offering him the jewelled pin at ten per cent off cost price. Cosme's final action contradicts everything he has said about love and remembrance and confirms him as yet another of Machado's cynical pretenders.

In the context of Machado's short fiction of the mid 1870s Cosme should perhaps be classed a realist, since, like Gaspar in "D. Mônica", he chooses to elevate the solid benefits of money over the dubious advantages of sentimentality. Machado's world is one in which love is an elusive commodity. Furthermore, even when it can be said to exist, the fact that it is subject both to the atrophy of time and the whims of human nature reduces its value dramatically. This, in essence, is the message of "O passado, passado" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1876), in which two former lovers meet again after a separation of at least six years. During this time they have both been married and widowed so it would appear that all channels are now clear for them to renew their former relationship. But neither of them seems motivated to make any definite moves in that direction. "Não era comoção, era frouxidão" (CESq, p. 151), we read. A sort of *namoro*

ensues but it is rather more the relationship of two friends than two lovers. After a few months and with no warning, the woman marries another without her former lover seeming particularly bothered about the turn of events. For the reader who has still not grasped the purpose of this brief tale, it ends with a definite moral:

Qual é então a moralidade do conto? A moralidade é que não basta amar muito um dia para amar sempre o mesmo objeto, e que um homem pode fazer sacrifícios por uma fortuna que mais tarde verá ir-se-lhe das mãos sem mágoa nem ressentimento. (C. Esq, p. 155)

The mutability of human desires, romantic or otherwise, is investigated in another four stories of the period. In each case, Machado takes a very different angle, although each tale contains the same air of philosophical resignation that can be observed in the ending to "O passado, passado". "Longe dos olhos" (JdasF Mar-May 1876), the least important of the four, begins as the tale of a young man and woman who stubbornly refuse to submit to the marriage arranged for them by their fathers. As parental pressure is eased, however, Aguiar and Serafina become great friends and choose to abandon their respective lovers in order to get married. A more sobering study of human inconstancy is to be found in "To be or not to be", where we are introduced to the miserable *caipora* figure, André Soares. At the beginning of the story, disappointed at his failure to acquire a better paid job, André is about to jump off a boat into the sea when the eyes of a beautiful, young, rich widow draw him into an adventure that ends in him losing her to another man, together with his job. But although his last state is worse than his first, suicide does not enter the picture, for reasons which the narrator is happy to explain:

#### MORALIDADE

Mas onde está a moralidade do conto? pergunta a leitora espantada com ver esta serie de acontecimentos descosidos e vulgares.

A moralidade está nisso.

Tendo perdido a esperança de obter um emprego de duzentos mil-réis, quando apenas desfrutava de um de cento e vinte, assentou André Soares de dar cabo da vida.

No dia, porém, em que perdeu a noiva e o emprego de cento e vinte mil-réis, com um insulto físico de quebra, nem se matou, nem tentou matar-se, nem se lembrou de o fazer.

Tanto é certo que o suicidio depende mais das impressões e disposições do momento, que da gravidade do mal.

Disse. (CF.II, pp. 277-278)



A little later on in the 70s Machado applies the principle of constantly changing emotions to the aspirations of an equally pitiful man in "Um ambicioso" (JdasF Nov 1877-Jan 1878). At the age of 30, José Cândido is the epitome of indolence and mediocrity when he eventually resolves to fulfil the dream of a lifetime. As an electoral agent, he has had enough of canvassing other people's votes and decides to promote himself into the position of *eleitor*<sup>6</sup>. But despite the considerable amounts of money he spends on wining and dining his prospective supporters, Cândido ends up with the meagre total of 37 votes. At first he is angry, ashamed, disappointed, but as time goes by he sees the figures in a different light and "os 37 votos ficaram sendo um título, uma recordação, uma espécie de aurora eleitoral" (ReliqCV, p. 184). He compares himself to candidates who got even fewer votes and from that draws some feeling of consolation or even victory. Finally, the year of his embarrassing defeat is perceived as a time of heroic struggle, whose mention is a constant source of pride for José and the barber who had been one of his few allies during the "campaign":

Às vezes, conversando com o barbeiro, diziam ambos, para recordar um fato e uma data:

- Foi no ano da nossa luta eleitoral.

E ao dizer isso, José Cândido parecia inchar, subir, trepar às eminências; sentia-se superior; seus olhos derramavam um olhar satisfeito ao passado. Depois concertava a gravata, a mais a mais amarela, com o gesto de um homem que preencheu seus destinos; puxava o colete para baixo com outro gesto sacudido, rápido, imperioso. E o resto do dia era um deleite, uma vida luminosa, dourada, juvenil... Pobres mortais! Até a ambição é caduca. (ReliqCV, pp. 184-185)

"Um ambicioso" is the tale of a particularly petty individual, but Machado's parting comments invite the reader to make a universal application. José Cândido's shifting point of view is perfectly in line with the author's belief in the general transience of human passions, regardless of their original intensity.

With "Dívida extinta" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1878), Machado's final story for the *Jornal das Famílias*, we return to the thesis that romantic ideals simply cannot compete with the hard facts of life. In this case, two cousins literally come to blows over their love

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<sup>6</sup> For much of the nineteenth century, Brazil practised an indirect, two-tier electoral system for the few males who had the privilege to be able to participate:

National elections were indirect, in two stages. The voters chose electors, and these in turn selected the deputies to the Parliament.

In *Empire in Brazil, A New World Experiment with Monarchy*, by C. H. Haring (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 110.

for the same woman (whom, incidently, neither of them manages to conquer), and melodramatically resolve never to be reconciled despite the pleas of their uncle. But after he names them as joint heirs to his fortune, with the proviso that the will remains undivided, we see a gradual thaw in their relationship. In the closing scene of the story we leave them in their newly acquired shop having just served a customer and united in their joy at having boosted their profit margins.

So, by the end of Machado's association with the *Jornal das Famílias*, the reader cannot fail to be aware of the author's total disillusionment with regard to love or any other idealistic sentiment. The final statement of *laiá Garcia*, the last of Machado's novels to be published in the 1870s, that "Alguma coisa escapa ao naufrágio das ilusões" (OC.I, p. 407) simply does not apply in the short stories of the period. Rather, Machado's short fiction insists that nothing can resist the pull of financial necessity, greed, the ego and the passage of time and that to believe otherwise would be foolish and prejudicial to one's survival in the world. In fact, in three particularly bleak stories of the decade, Machado affirms that the failure to relinquish one's illusions is tantamount to suicide. The protagonists of "Miloca" (JdasF Nov 1874-Feb 1875), "Valério" (JdasF Dec 1874-Mar 1875) and "Silvestre" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1877) pay dearly for their inability to fully understand and then adapt to the realities of their respective situations. The narrator's attitude to their final misery, however, is at best ambiguous and at worst distinctly unsympathetic, with the reader being denied the opportunity to ally him/herself to the cause of characters who fail to learn one of the most basic lessons of Machado's philosophy.

## **Survival of the fittest?**

In the early stages of the story which bears her name, Miloca appears to be a girl who is destined for great things. The daughter of a mediocre and out-of-touch businessman, she is the archetype of the ambitious woman, showing nothing but disdain for the romantic attentions of men of her own class. Even Adolfo, the most persistent of her suitors, finds himself humiliated by Miloca's coldness. Since his position as "empregado no Tesouro" (OC.II, p. 794) falls way below the status the Miloca demands of her prospective husband, she regards Adolfo's attentions as a personal insult and

tells him so in no uncertain terms. "Por que há de olhar tanto para cima?" (OC.II, p. 800), asks her elderly aunt, disappointed at Miloca's obvious disinterest in the likeable Adolfo. The young girl's eventual answer is typical of her arrogance:

- Acho engraçado. Com que então o Sr. Adolfo dignou-se olhar para mim? Não tinha percebido; não podia esperar tamanha felicidade. Infelizmente, não o amo ... e por mais digno que seja o noivo, se eu não amar vale para mim o mesmo que um vendedor de fósforos. (OC.II, p. 800)

The roots of Miloca's snobbish ambition lie partly in the inclinations of her own character, but the narrator informs us that she has also been deeply influenced by the unusually privileged education that her father Rodrigo has struggled to provide for her:

Rodrigo estremecia a filha e buscou dar-lhe uma educação esmerada. Fê-la entrar como pensionista em um colégio, onde Miloca ficou em contato com as filhas das mais elevadas senhoras da capital. Afeiçoou-se a muitas delas, cujas famílias visitou desde a infância. O pai tinha orgulho em ver que a filha era assim tão festejada nos primeiros salões, onde aliás ele nunca passou de um intruso. Miloca bebeu assim um ar que não era precisamente o do armarinho da Cidade Nova. (OC.II, p. 801)

In the end, it is her refusal to let go of her desire for social ascendancy that proves to be Miloca's undoing. She fails to realize that, as a consequence of her own unfortunate status, she is no position to control her destiny. Her aunt Pulquéria and her father were right when they tried to convince Miloca "que o nascimento dela não era tão brilhante que pudesse ostentar tamanho orgulho" (OC.II, p. 801). D. Pulquéria, in particular, is painfully aware of her niece's precarious position. Described in the opening paragraph as "viúva de um capitão de cavalaria que morrera em Monte Caseros deixando-lhe uma escassa pensão e a boa vontade de um irmão mais moço que possuía alguma coisa" (OC.II, p. 793), the elderly aunt is living proof of the crucial importance of marriage for the average nineteenth century Brazilian woman, especially one who had been born into humble circumstances. Miloca is playing a dangerous game, as D. Pulquéria's words indicate during a conversation with Rodrigo:

- Miloca, acrescentou a velha, é uma rapariga *muito metida consigo* [my emphasis]. Pode ser que não ache casamento tão cedo, e nós não havemos de viver sempre. Quer você que ela aí fique sem proteção no mundo? (OC.II, p. 795)

Unfortunately for Miloca, the realization that her personal dreams will never actually materialize comes much too late. Even when the sudden deaths of D. Pulquéria and Rodrigo in quick succession (following the financial ruin of her father) oblige her to accept the hospitality of a rich school friend, Miloca retains the hope of attracting one of the many "rapazes bonitos, elegantes, distintos, e não poucos ricos" (OC.II, p. 805) who

frequent her new home. Finally, even she is forced to admit the likelihood of defeat, although she never truly regrets her previous actions:

O despeito parecia aconselhar à bela órfã o completo esquecimento de seus planos matrimoniais. Compreendia agora que, talvez pela mesma razão com que ela recusara o amor de Adolfo, recusavam-lhe agora o seu amor dela. A punição, dizia ela consigo, fora completa.

A imagem de Adolfo surgiu então em seu espírito atribulado e abatido. Não se arrependeu do que fizera; mas lamentou que Adolfo não estivesse em posição cabal de lhe realizar os seus sonhos e ambições.

“Se assim fosse, pensava Miloca, eu seria hoje feliz, porque esse amava-me.”

Tardias queixas eram aquelas. O tempo corria, e a moça com o seu orgulho se definhava na solidão povoada da sociedade a que aspirara desde os tempos da sua mediania. (OC.II, pp. 805-806)

Just when all seems lost, Adolfo reappears on the scene, transformed into a bohemian by a godfather's inheritance and the disappointments of love. A love affair ensues but in a strange turn of events the two lovers elope with Adolfo returning to Rio a year later, accompanied by Miloca but not wedded to her. Evidently, Miloca has allowed herself to be deceived by two more chimerical hopes - the possibility of marriage and the continued sincerity of Adolfo's affections. This time her mistake will lead to abandonment and a possible early death, to the apparent indifference of the narrator:

Adolfo parecia estar aborrecido da aventura; e todavia Miloca ainda o amava como no principio. Iludiu-se a respeito dele, nesses últimos tempos, mas afinal compreendeu que entre a atual situação e o fervor dos primeiros dias havia um abismo. Ambos arrastaram a cadeia durante um ano mais, até que Adolfo embarcou para Europa sem dar notícia de si à infeliz moça.

Miloca desapareceu tempos depois. Uns dizem que se fôra à cata de novas aventuras; outros que se matara. E havia razão para ambas estas versões. Se morreu, a terra lhe seja leve! (OC.II, p. 809)

Despite the reference to the heroine as “infeliz”, the general tone of the closing paragraphs is that Miloca gets all she deserves. There can be no room for sentiment for a woman who is even prepared to sacrifice her virtue for the sake of ambition. To this degree, it is possible to regard “Miloca” as a moral tale in the traditional sense. Taking into account, however, the general direction of the story itself and of Machado's short fiction during the 1870s, the real message is that Miloca's unenviable demise is the direct consequence of her unrealistic desires.

The sense of poetic justice that can be read into “Miloca” is greatly reduced in the rather more sombre story of Valério, a thirty year old man driven to despair by the seemingly unending misfortunes of his life. Orphaned at seven years of age, Valério has

had to learn to fend for himself from the age of fourteen by taking on a succession of low-paid, dead-end jobs. When the narrator commences his account in earnest, Valério is in the difficult position of having to hold down the humble occupations of notary clerk and proof reader at the same time. We are given several brief glimpses of the young man's sad condition. In fact, there are times when the narrator appears to sympathize heavily with the character and condition of Valério. We see his childish wonder, his ignorance of social etiquette when he is invited to his first important function. We witness the generosity and selflessness he shows to the girl he loves when she enlists his aid in overcoming her father's displeasure with her cousin suitor. More importantly, we are made to feel the misery of Valério's existence, punctuated only by consolatory dreams of glory and visions of grandeur:

Não tinha objeto sua ambiciosa imaginação: ora vivia uma vida de amores, ora ocupava um trono de glória; agora imaginava-se Petrarca, mais tarde acreditava-se Pitt; construía castelos no ar, embriagava-se com perfumes do Oriente, dominava as turbas pasmadas, vivia um romance e repousava na história.

Quando descia dessas alturas vertiginosas, Valério tinha ao menos esquecido a miséria atual, porque sonhar é esquecer, e esquecer é muita vez toda a felicidade da vida. (ReliqCV, pp. 10-11)

But there are other passages in which Valério is seen to make a significant contribution to his own downfall. Near the beginning of the story, we read that he has delusions which prevent him from getting certain kinds of job:

Tentara estudar direito, mas não conseguira alcançar os meios precisos para um curso regular. Não tinha ofício nenhum, e tinha coisa pior, que era incapaz de adotar qualquer ofício manual não só porque não o arrastava para aí a vocação, como porque, sentindo-se apto para uma carreira literária, temia perder a sua utilidade no mundo, adotando um meio de vida em que nada podia fazer. (ReliqCV, p. 8)

Valério is a dreamer, a man who by his very nature seems destined never to rise above his circumstances. Given the choice, he would rather brood on his lowly condition than construct a way out of it:

Quando Valério meditava sobre as condições da sua existência, a sua mocidade sem risos, o seu futuro sem esperanças, lançava um olhar melancólico para o suicídio, como a solução razoável do problema da vida, e perguntava entre si se a moral que desarma o braço do homem não era simplesmente uma moral de convenção. Imediatamente, porém, volvia a sentimentos melhores; encarava severamente a responsabilidade que lhe corria de carregar a vida dignamente, sem violência nem rebeldia; adiava o suicídio para o próximo desânimo. (ReliqCV, p. 10)

When at the end of the tale Valério decides he can no longer postpone his own death, the narrator's makes no attempt to conceal his contempt: "Valério, que cometera outras

tolices na sua vida, coroou a obra indo atirar-se ao mar” (ReliqCV, p. 48). The story of “Valério” is a strange mixture of sarcastic social comment and the blackest of humour that far exceeds Machado’s comparatively light treatment of the *caipora* theme in earlier stories. Valério condemns himself besides being condemned by the society that abuses and manipulates him and by the events that refuse to run kindly for him. Fate makes him an orphan and society demands that he depend on the favour of others above him to survive (“Na situação em que se achava, queria mão que o levantasse, amigo que o protegesse” (ReliqCV, p. 27)). But when he is given the opportunity to make the most of a friendship with Colonel Borges he does not take full advantage and even rejects payment for the political articles that he composes in Borges’ name. Valério is a virtuous man in many ways but in social terms he is a fool and dies a fool’s death. When the narrator writes of Valério at one point that “apesar dos trinta anos feitos, era de uma ingenuidade pueril” (ReliqCV, p. 29), he is pointing out that naivety in a grown man is inexcusable. In the final analysis Valério can blame no-one but himself for his premature death.

Published some two and a half years after “Miloca” and “Valério”, “Silvestre” (JdasF Jun-Aug 1877) shows a further development in Machado’s tendency to deal ambiguously with the deluded character who is unable to come to terms with the world’s values. At first, the narrator encourages us to feel compassion for the young Silvestre, “um descarado menino de quinze anos, melancólico, taciturno, metido consigo” (CEsq. p. 199), whose artistic temperament and weak constitution prevent him from following in the footsteps of his father, a hard-working but unsuccessful solicitor. Silvestre is a born artist, but for a long time his burning ambition to transfer his personal vision of female beauty onto the canvas is met with ignorance and hostility. His family, despite their affection for him, regard Silvestre as an idiot, a sluggard and a pervert (in his appreciation for the nude) and a fellow artist becomes jealous of the young lad’s obvious talent. After being forced to work in a series of office jobs by his father, he is finally given the opportunity to concentrate on his art by a generous employer/guardian, Dr. Luís Borges. Silvestre is provided with all the necessary materials and, in addition, finds artistic inspiration in the shape of Camila, the stunning young wife of his patron. It is not long before he begins her secret portrait, at which

point the reader is introduced to one aspect of the romantic delusion that will eventually prove fatal for Silvestre:

Como se datasse de uma era nova, o jovem artista marcou a hora e o minuto em que lançou na tela os primeiros traços. Ele tinha a força dos criadores, que é ao mesmo tempo a fraqueza dos iludidos: a convicção de um grande papel debaixo do sol. Quantos, diante da tela ainda nua ou da folha de papel imaculada, não creem que vão trabalhar para os séculos e não chegam a trabalhar para uma semana? Silvestre tinha essa crença ingênua, poderosa e vivaz. (CEsq, p. 215)

Further weaknesses in Silvestre's approach to life soon become apparent. As his work progresses, he plunges himself more and more into a world of his own imaginings, losing contact with his family and everything else that lies outside of his masterpiece. When Silvestre decides to grant Camila a preview of the unfinished canvas, his misinterpretation of her pleased reaction is a sign that his sense of discrimination is beyond repair:

- A senhora há de perdoar, se tive o atrevimento...

Camila respondeu com um muxoxo de faceirice que bem exprimia a vaidade satisfeita. O painel era a sua própria apoteose. Que importava que a Vênus ali pintada fosse apenas uma Vênus, em vez de uma Santa Cecília e fugisse do céu em vez de caminhar para ele? Era o seu retrato, tanto bastava. A vaidade, porém, não falava no ânimo do artista; ele via a moça radiante, como um aplauso e não se deixava levar do aplauso. (CEsq, p. 219)

On the completion of the portrait, Silvestre commits a final error of judgement which will lead directly to his untimely death. Bursting with pride at the sight of her features on the canvas, Camila joyfully kisses the hands of the painter and in a moment of levity asks whether Silvestre would consider marrying her in the event of her husband's death. Once again, Silvestre fails to recognize the vanity that motivates his companion. In a desperate move to escape what he mistakenly believes to be a serious prelude to adultery, he throws himself dramatically out of the window of his attic-studio. His suicide is an unnecessary waste of potential, which is in turn misunderstood by those he leaves behind:

A morte teve uma explicação: o delírio do talento satisfeito. Foi a explicação de Luis Borges e dos pais do artista. Mas há outra explicação mais exata; Silvestre iludiu-se; viu um gesto de amor onde havia uma alteração de vaidade ingênua. E tendo obtido o que queria, que era a beleza de Camila, fugia-lhe desde que lhe supôs a oferta do coração. (CEsq, p. 222)

The words "Silvestre iludiu-se" are a fitting epitaph for the adolescent who has never been able to recognize the futility of his sublime ideals. In the best of all possible worlds, Silvestre may well have made a valuable contribution to the arts. Unlike the ri-

diculous poet/politician of "Aurora sem dia", he shows real promise as an artist and has a genuine capacity for aesthetic appreciation. But the very possession of these qualities disqualifies Silvestre for survival in an environment to which he can never belong. Without the determination to make his way in life and the ability to perceive the self-interest of others, Silvério is virtually assured a swift and meaningless death at the hands of Machado.

"Miloca", "Valério" and "Silvestre", then, can be regarded as object lessons that teach the necessity of maintaining a completely disillusioned approach to life. They are, in a sense, the negative validation of the ambitions and procedures demonstrated by Machado's superior man in 1873. Once again, however, one must be careful not to draw the conclusion that success is quite as inevitable as failure in Machado's fiction. Just as "O rei das caiporas" pointed out the impossibility of rising above one's destiny, three other stories which appeared in the latter years of the decade, "A melhor das noivas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1877), "A herança" (JdasF Apr-May 1878) and "Folha rota" (JdasF Oct 1878), concentrate upon the unavoidable ironies of fate. If the reader can learn anything from the two former tales it must be that even the unscrupulous pursuit of real social objectives is not enough to guarantee their fulfilment.

In "A melhor das noivas", a middle-aged house-keeper manages to obtain the promise of marriage from her ageing master, fending off the efforts of greedy relatives and of another equally calculating woman, only to be thwarted at the very end on the big day:

Tardando o noivo, ela mesma o foi buscar.

João Barbosa estava no gabinete já pronto, sentado ao pé de uma mesa, com uma das mãos calçadas.

Quando D. Joana entrou deu com os olhos no grande espelho que ficava defronte e que reproduzia a figura de João Barbosa; êste estava de costas para ela. João Barbosa fitava-a rindo, um riso de bem-aventurança.

- Então! disse D. Joana.

Ele continuava a sorrir e a fitá-la; ela aproximou-se, rodeou a mesa, olhou-o de frente.

- Vamos ou não?

João Barbosa continuava a sorrir e a fitá-la. Ela aproximou-se e recuou espavorida.

A morte o tomara; era a melhor das noivas. (CEsq, p. 81)



The morbid grin which so cruelly dashes the hopes of D. Joana is not merely a graphic representation of the narrator's ironic humour. It is also a reflection of the concept that life itself is full of unexpected ironies which make a mockery of ambition. The point is made again in "A herança" when D. Venância chooses to name her favourite but lazy nephew in her will rather than the one who has dutifully and calculatingly looked after her. "Que havia feito o irmão para merecer tamanha distinção?" , the unfortunate Marcos asks himself, to be answered by the narrator: "Nada; deixara-se amar apenas. D. Venância era a imagem da fortuna" (ReliqCV, p. 201). Clearly, if a capricious old aunt is an adequate representation of the force we call fortune, then there is nothing at all that people like Marcos and D. Joana can do to merit her favour. So although neither of the main characters in these two stories can be faulted on their technique, even they are helpless to prevent the frustration of their carefully laid plans.

Whilst it makes no mention of Fortune, "Folha rota" is an illustration of how circumstances beyond the control of two young lovers can bring their hopes to an abrupt conclusion and direct the future pattern of their lives. Regardless of her feelings for her rich cousin Caetaninho, Luísa finds herself obliged to terminate their surreptitious but blossoming relationship when her guardian aunt, D. Ana, reveals some unpleasant family secrets. Many years ago, Caetaninho's lustful father had attempted to proposition the already married D. Ana, who had repaid the insult with a slap. His vengeful reply was to slander the reputation of D. Ana, an action that would lead to her being thrown out by her husband and force her into her present precarious lifestyle as a seamstress. When D. Ana demands that Luísa promise never to contemplate marrying "o filho daquele homem" (ReliqCV, p. 214), the young girl has no choice but to concur and in doing so, condemns herself to a brief and miserable life. Meanwhile, the son of the man who has been the cause of so much suffering enjoys totally contrasting fortunes:

As semanas, os meses, os anos passaram. Caetano não foi esquecido; mas nunca mais se encontraram os olhos dos dois namorados. Oito anos depois morreu D. Ana. A sobrinha aceitou a proteção de uma vizinha e foi para casa dela, onde trabalhava dia e noite. No fim de quatorze meses adoeceu de tubérculos pulmonares; arrastou a vida aparente de dois anos. Tinha quase trinta quando morreu; enterrou-se por esmolas.

Caetano viveu; aos trinta e cinco anos era casado, pai de um filho, negociante de fazendas, jogava o voltarete e engordava. Morreu juiz de uma irmandade e comendador. (ReliqCV, p. 871)

In "Folha rota", then, we are shown a more serious side to Machado's concept of Fortune. Suddenly, the fickle old woman has become a catalyst for tragedy as well as disappointment. In spite of the obvious injustice of the situation, however, Machado resists all temptations to sentimentalize or moralize at the end of his account. The whole episode is narrated with a concision and a matter-of-factness that informs the reader of the author's resignation to the unfairness of life.

Life has no moral, Machado had stated at the end of "Um homem superior", it neither punishes the evil or rewards the virtuous in accordance with their deeds. The statement is then developed with increasing cynicism in "Valério" and "Silvestre", especially. But with "A melhor das noivas", "A herança" and "Folha rota", Machado brings his thinking more into line with that of the Preacher of the Ecclesiastes. When Machado turns his eyes upon the "unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with" (Eccles, ch.1:13) he likewise concludes "that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favour to the men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all" (Eccles, ch.9:11).

## **A conflict of literary interests**

In view of what has been said so far about the patent anti-romanticism and philosophical cynicism of the stories, it seems almost inconceivable that during the years 1874-78 Machado should have chosen to write the novels of that period in the way that he did. The female protagonists of *A Mão e a Luva*, *Helena* and *Iaiá Garcia* are depicted as being honest and well-meaning women, caught up in the social web of favour and protection. They are not made the object of Machado's sarcasm like Valério, Miloca or D. Joana, nor is the story of their love affairs subject to the ironies of narration that prevail in the shorter fiction. This is especially evident in the two earlier novels, both of which show Machado making use of conventional ideas on plot and characterization in a way that goes against the very spirit of the stories. The point can be illustrated quite clearly if we compare the fortunes of the *agregadas* who feature in "Miloca" and *A Mão e a Luva*.

Both works appeared in newspaper print in the latter months of 1874 and there are very clear links between the two protagonists. They are from equally modest social backgrounds, Miloca being the daughter of a small-time shopkeeper and Guiomar of a petty civil servant. Both become orphans only to be rescued by a generous family from the necessity of teaching in a state school (Guiomar does actually work as an *aluna-professora* for a while and it is stated that Miloca intends to do the same). Also it is evident that, despite their humble origins, they are both intent on ascending the social scale through marriage. But when it comes to the end result of their desires and the presentation of their characters (which are really quite similar) there could not be a greater contrast. Of Miloca we read: "era séria e emperdigada demais" (OC.II, p. 793). She is cold and proud to an extent that cannot be justified by her social status and publicly humiliates the poor young man who seeks her hand, despite the fact that he is socially suited to her. Her snobbery reaches grotesque proportions ("como ela mesmo disse ao pai, nunca se deve dar esmola sem luvas de pelica, porque o contacto da miséria não aumenta a grandeza da ação." (OC.II, p. 801)) until she discovers that in her efforts to attract a rich husband she is being ignored for the same reasons of class that made her reject Adolfo. As I pointed out earlier, however, Miloca never relinquishes her dream of social ascendancy, with disastrous consequences. No such lesson is given to Guiomar who is painted in a much more sympathetic light although her social aspirations are akin to those of Miloca. Just as Miloca fraternises with her rich schoolfriends, so Guiomar's attention is fixed on her wealthy neighbours:

Criança iam-lhe os olhos com os sedas e as jóias das mulheres que via na chácara contígua ao pobre quintal de sua mãe; moça, iam-lhe do mesmo modo com o espetáculo brilhante das grandezas sociais. (OC.I, p. 159)

Guiomar also possesses a certain amount of snobbishness despite her position, which we see directed at Mrs Oswald, the other *agregada* of the household, when she makes an allusion to a possible love affair with the young man of the family:

Guiomar corava de veras; mas era a altivez e o pundonor ofendido que lhe falavam no rosto. Olhava fria e longamente para a inglesa, com um desses olhares, que são, por assim dizer, um gesto da alma indignada. O que a irritava não era a ilusão, que não valia muito, era a pessoa que a fazia, - inferior e mercenária. (OC.I, p. 135)

But Guiomar is herself no less calculating than her rival when it comes to getting what she wants out of life. "Não há dúvida; é uma ambiciosa" (OC.I, p. 153), comments Luís

Alves and this much is evident from the beginning when she enters the household of her godmother:

Voluntariamente, só uma vez aceitara a obscuridade e a mediania; foi quando se propôs a seguir o ofício de ensinar; mas é preciso dizer que ela contava com a ternura da baronesa. (OC. I, p. 160)

to the end of the story when she cleverly manipulates the baroness into choosing Luís Alves for her instead of Jorge whose name she has uttered. Yet, unlike Miloca, Guiomar's insincerity is excused ("era do barro comum de que Deus fez a nossa pouca sincera humanidade" (OC.I, p. 176)), her ambition rationalized ("A ambição não é defeito."/ "Pelo contrário, é virtude" (OC.I, p. 180)) and she ends up happily married to the equally ambitious Luís Alves. Why should Machado make Guiomar succeed where Miloca fails without displaying the moral criticism that is implicit in a story like "Um homem superior"?

A large part of the answer might lie simply in the nature of the two genres within which Machado is writing, at least as he perceived them at the time. The short stories are characterized by their cynical humour but in his novels Machado tries to provide us with a serious analysis of character and of social philosophy. Through the personality of Guiomar, Machado is testing the validity of a particular thesis, expressed towards the end of the novel:

A vontade e a ambição, quando verdadeiramente dominam, podem lutar com outros sentimentos, mas não de sempre vencer, porque elas são as armas do forte, e a vitória é dos fortes. (OC.I, p. 171)

In the medium of the short stories Machado can afford to be inconsistent from one tale to another and have the hopes of Miloca and others dashed by a Fortune which is as unpredictable as the narrator. The writer of the early novels, however, is above all sober and analytical. He reasons, attempts to provide some kind of genuine love interest in accordance with reader expectation, and proceeds, keeping in mind the conventional laws of cause and effect. In *A Mão e a Luva* Machado presents us with a poor heroine with whom we can identify, Guiomar, who through sheer determination overcomes all obstacles to marry the man she loves, thus obtaining our admiration. Victory belongs to the strong.<sup>7</sup> With the formula that Machado is using the story could con-

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<sup>7</sup> Referring to the same quotation in the introduction to his translation of *laia Garcia* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), Albert J. Bagby Jr. applies the thesis to all of

ceivably have ended in tragedy with Guiomar being defeated by a will stronger than her own or by the dictates of society since this would be a rational and satisfactory ending, consistent with the formal patterns of the romantic novel. For Guiomar to be defeated by Chance or foolishness would make a mockery not only of the heroine but of the very genre within which Machado is writing.

So from the mid to late 70s there is a clear dichotomy in Machado's fictional work between the novels, which are written to a given standard for the purposes of character and social analysis, and the short stories, whose spirit is essentially ironic, anti-romantic and ultimately anarchic. But having established a division between novel and story, we must also add that there are links between the two in Machado which reveal the difficulty he had in sustaining such a schizophrenic literary stance. If we return briefly to *A Mão e a Luva* we see the problems Machado has in trying to make Guiomar fit the mould of the "virtuous" romantic heroine. Rather like Augusta in "Qual dos dois?", she is given so much willpower that one wonders how she could ever fall in love:

Guiomar amava deveras. Mas até que ponto era involuntário aquele sentimento? Era até o ponto de lhe não desabotar à nossa heroína a castidade do coração, de lhe não diminuirmos a força de suas faculdades afetivas. Até aí só ; daí por diante entrava a fria eleição do espírito. (OC.I, p. 165)

The kind of love she desires and her determination to succeed are confused to the extent that there is really no difference between the two:

Pedia amor, mas não o quisera fruir na vida obscura; a maior das felicidades da terra seria para ela o máximo dos infortúnios, se lhe pusessem num ermo. . Ela queria um homem que, ao pé de um coração juvenil e capaz de amar, sentisse dentro de si a força bastante para subi-la aonde a vissem todos os olhos. (OC.I pp. 159-160)

And the marriage of Guiomar and Luís Alves is more the meeting of two wills than the union of two hearts:

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Machado's early novels but reaches a conclusion with which I would disagree, bearing in mind the evidence of the short stories:

In capsule, Assis's formula is *success for the strong* (the ambitious and well organized, who aspire and who know how to fulfill their aspirations) and *failure for the weak* (the timid, the uncertain, and the insecure, who cannot control their passions and emotions or who simply have none). This formula may be observed implicitly in *Ressurreição* and *Helena* and quite explicitly in *A Mão e a Luva* and *Iaiá Garcia*. In the latter two the proof resides in the characters and in the outcome of the plots. However, let us complete the formula before scrutinizing the novels. Those who are victorious, as well as those who are not, function within a world or an ambient which is totally indifferent. That is to say, the world is neutral toward them and therefore neither helps nor hinders them in whatever they seek to accomplish. Assis's world is not adverse, negative, unsympathetic, or, as some have thought, even sadistic; it is neutral. (Bagby Jr., p. xiv)

Podia dar-lhe Luís Alves este gênero de amor? Podia; ela sentiu que podia. As duas ambições tinham-se adivinhado desde que a intimidade as reuniu. O proceder de Luis Alves, sóbrio, direto, resoluto, sem desfalecimentos, nem demasias ociosas, fazia perceber à moça que ele nascera para vencer e que a sua ambição tinha verdadeiramente asas, ao mesmo tempo, que as tinha ou parecia tê-las o coração. (OC.I, p. 165)

Similarly, in the presentation of Guiomar as a sincere and honest woman we have contradictions when she is clearly shown to be calculating, such as in the scene where the baroness asks her to name the man she will marry:

A moça não queria iludir a baronesa, mas traduzir-lhe infielmente a voz de seu coração, para que a madrinha conferisse, por si mesma, a tradução com o original. Havia nisto um pouco de meio indireto, de tática, de afetação, estou quase a dizer de hipocrisia, se não tomassem a má parte do vocábulo. (OC.I, p. 176)

What kind of hypocrisy is this that flows from the honest heart of our heroine? And what exactly is the difference between "iludir" and "traduzir-lhe infielmente"? Machado ties himself up in semantic knots trying to justify Guiomar's actions and ends up saying that she too is of the common clay from which God created our insincere humanity. The reason for Machado's contorsions not only here but throughout the novel is the fact that the romantic model he is using demands a clear distinction between good and bad characters according to an accepted moral and emotional yardstick. Unfortunately, as the short stories have been revealing, Machado sees men as being motivated primarily by a self-interest which can never be defended in the conventional language of vice, virtue and love. Hence there is a tension in the narrative the nature of which is ably expressed by Roberto Schwarz:

O leitor terá sentido a dubiedade da exposição, que traz os antagonismos costumeiros, entre espontâneo e voluntário, sincero e simulado, sentimento e interesse, - para negar-lhes a pertinência: os cálculos da heroína não se opõem ao seu coração, de que são o prolongamento, e se acaso incitam às efusões um pouco sublinhadas, não fazem mal, fazem até bem. . . Impostura honesta, simulação sincera e mais outros paradoxos, o movimento repete-se e consiste em suspender o sistema das oposições românticas, depois de o ter trazido à baila. [his emphasis]<sup>8</sup>

In *A Mão e a Luva*, Machado's attempt to effect a harmony between what Schwarz refers to as "a terminologia do cinismo e da virtude" (Schwarz, p. 74) results inadvertently in a conflict that is an important testimony to the fundamentally anti-romantic nature of his writing. Machado simply does not see people in terms of good and bad, nor does he see the validity of considering romantic love in the abstract - the pathetic figure

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<sup>8</sup> Roberto Schwarz, *Ao Vencedor as Batatas - Forma literária e processo social nos inícios do romance brasileiro* (São Paulo, Livraria Duas Cidades, 1977), p. 74.

of Estevão illustrates the futility of such a stance. Guiomar is Machado's way of saying that it is perfectly in order to have personal ambition and that you have to be strong and face realities to get on in life. But in elevating Guiomar to the level of a traditional heroine and in attempting to convince us that her duplicity and drive is virtue, Machado runs the risk of condoning everything that is done by the strong in the cause of victory.

It is interesting to note that in his next novel, *Helena*, Machado seems to have sensed the danger of simply stating "a vitória é dos fortes" and presents us with a heroine who suffers from an abuse of that doctrine. And because this novel is a re-dressing of the balance in favour of the weak, we that Machado is able to submit more readily to the romantic opposition of good and bad characters and motives. Helena is the much-maligned heroine whose pure love for the master of the house is denied by the run of events, by her own fear of being branded an *aventureira* (which contrasts sharply with Luís Alves' approval of Guiomar as an *ambiciosa*) and by the scheme Camargo who assumes the role of villain of the piece. Consequently, *Helena* does not possess the type of linguistic tension that is evident in *A Mão e a Luva* and is much more satisfying as a romantic novel of the tragic variety. There are times when Helena is presented as not being totally honest, such as when she tells Estácio: "O melhor modo de viver em paz é nutrir o amor próprio dos outros com pedaços do nosso" (OC.I pp. 219-220) and when she wants to hide from him the contents of a letter from Salvador, her real father:

- Segredos de moça?

- Quer lê-la? perguntou Helena, apresentando-lha.

Estácio fêz-se vermelho e recusou com um gesto. Helena dobrou lentamente o papel e guardou-o na algibeira do vestido. A inocência não teria mais puro rosto; a hipocrisia não encontraria mais impassível máscara. (OC.I, p. 216)

Here we find shades of Guiomar but it is important to remember that Helena's position is one of defence and not of attack. A major feature of the novel is that she is forced to pretend and this necessity contributes greatly to the final tragedy of her death. For Guiomar, dissimulation is a part of her character and a way of life; for Helena it is an imposition of which she is ashamed. So, in *Helena*, Machado expresses vice and virtue in more or less conventional terms and eliminates the kind of conflict we saw in his previous novel.

Despite the predominantly romantic tone of *Helena*, however, one can still perceive certain aspects which betray the sarcasm and pessimism of the writer of the short stories. On one level we have Machado describing the peripheral characters in a way that contrasts vividly with the melodramatic parts of the narrative. Among the friends of the family there is Dr. Matos:

um velho advogado que, em compensação da ciência do direito, que não sabia, possuía noções muito aproveitáveis de meteorologia e botânica, da arte de comer, do voltarete, do gamão e da política. (OC.I, p. 198)

and Macedo, the colonel who isn't a colonel:

Era major. Alguns amigos, levados de um espírito de retificação, começaram a dar-lhe o título de coronel, que a princípio recusou, mas que afinal foi compelido a aceitar, não podendo gastar a vida inteira a protestar contra ele. (OC.I, p. 198)

Similarly D. Úrsula, Eugénia and Mendonça at times are described in a rather dubious fashion, in a mocking manner that does not match up with the unambiguous presentation of the major characters who are involved in the romantic drama. Also the figure of the deceased but influential *Conselheiro Vale* appears to bear a measure of irony throughout the novel. He dies of a stroke of apoplexy "pouco depois de cochilar a sesta" (OC.I, p. 185), is described as mediocre in everything but his many love affairs and through his sensual lifestyle is manifestly a major catalyst of the tragedy that befalls his household. That such a worthless man should be at the root of so much heartache is no doubt a pointer to cynicism on the part of the author. An even clearer sign of Machado's cynicism is the way in which the novel is framed by the three kisses that Dr. Camargo plants on the forehead of his daughter: one at the beginning when news of the Vale's death is spread; the second after Eugénia receives a formal proposal of marriage from the rich Estácio; the third, and most sickening, on the death of Helena. It is as if the narrator is saying that it is the combination of the maintenance of the status quo (helped along by Camargo) and the caprices of the *conselheiro* which are really to blame for the final tragedy, and not destiny or the will of God as the more romanticized characters contend. Furthermore, from the moment she accepts the protection of *Conselheiro Vale* as a child, Helena is placed in an impossible situation. Of the two choices open to her in later life neither is favourable: financial security at the loss of moral integrity and personal and emotional independence; or total freedom at the cost of penury. As Schwarz puts it:



Resumindo, o favor é a norma, o favor é insuportável, e fora do favor só existe miséria. Na palavra de outro mestre nestes meandros [João Guimarães Rosa], viver é quase impossível... (Schwarz, p. 95)

Surely it is to this social trap that Salvador is referring in one of his conversations with

Estácio:

Na abastança é impossível compreender as lutas da miséria, e a máxima de que todo o homem pode, com esforço, chegar ao mesmo brilhante resultado, há de sempre parecer uma grande verdade à pessoa que estiver trinchantando um peru... Pois não é assim; há exceções. Nas coisas deste mundo não é tão livre o homem, como supõe, e uma cousa, a que uns chamam mau fado, outros concurso de circunstâncias, e que nós batizamos com o genuíno nome brasileiro de caiporismo, impede a alguns ver o fruto de seus mais hercúleos esforços. (OC.I, p. 263)

Salvador talks in terms of bad luck and the run of circumstances but fails to see the full social context of his *caiporismo*, although this is confirmed by the actual facts of his life. After all, he loses his wife to a rich playboy, allows his daughter to be kept by a man and later on, a family, who is better placed to protect her and then forfeits all hopes of happiness by abandoning Helena in order that her continued welfare may be ensured. This is not so much a hard luck story as a romanticized version of the poverty trap. Salvador is poor and honest because he is poor and honest. The same ultimately is true of Helena, whose sense of shame at being thought an adventuress prevents her from capitalizing on the love she shares with Estácio. To the extent that her own scruples contribute greatly to her demise, we can establish a link between her story and that of Valério. They may differ in terms of the narrator's sympathy and expression but the underlying message remains one of pessimism. So, in this Machado's third novel, we find that victory still belongs to the strong but now the maxim has lost its positive quality and become the slogan of the rich and advantaged or the ambitious and calculating.

Having presented the positive side of ambition in *A Mão e a Luva* and amended that view with the romantic tragedy of *Helena*, Machado in his next novel shifts stance yet again. Whereas the position adopted in the previous two novels, although problematic, was at least definite, that of *Iaiá Garcia* is ambiguous and more or less amoral. Here we find that characters are less easily definable in terms of good and bad, weak and strong; motives for action and reaction are mistaken and confused; and the plot lacks a sense of real direction and purpose. For all these reasons *Iaiá Garcia* proves to be an extremely unsatisfactory romantic novel. But in the general context of

Machado's development as a writer of fiction it marks an important and interesting point of transition, since its failure is a direct consequence of the author's deliberate attempt to marry the chaotic ideology of the short stories with that of the serious romantic plot. Its vaguely optimistic concluding paragraph, in which *laiá* rejoices at Estela's continued respect for the memory of Luís Garcia ("Era sincera a piedade da viúva. Alguma cousa escapa ao naufrágio das ilusões" (OC.I, p. 407)), does little to compensate for the disillusioned tone and discontinuous plot that loom large in the rest of the narrative.<sup>9</sup>

In keeping with the underlying tone of the short stories published from the middle of the 1870s, *laiá Garcia* is written from a standpoint of disenchantment with the events and passions of life. Right through the whole novel the author presents us with characters who either already possess this *desencanto* or are gradually taught it through time and experience. In the very first chapter we are introduced to Luís Garcia in "um estado de apatia e cepticismo, com seus laivos de desdém" (OC.I, p. 299). Moving on to the affair of Jorge and Estela, all we encounter is a repeated frustration, despite the apparent existence of love on both sides. He ends up going off to fight in the Paraguayan war, under pressure from his mother but mainly in a calculated and romantic effort to win Estela's affections ("Assim foi que. . .de um caso doméstico saia uma ação patriótica" (OC.I, p. 319)). Estela in the meantime marries Luís Garcia and Jorge's mother Valéria dies before he can heap on her lap the badges of his heroic action. It is as if destiny decides otherwise, "como se quisesse contrastar cada um de seus favores fazendo-lhe sangrar o coração" (OC.I, p. 327). Jorge does eventually find happiness in his marriage to *laiá* but the love he feels is not of the same passion of his earlier years and there may even be a tinge of regret:

Comparou-se ao que tinha sido, e esse cotejo, no primeiro instante, não foi inoportuno; foi antes lição e filosofia. Mentalmente sorriu. Era ele o mesmo homem? . . .O homem não era o mesmo. Embora a isenção presente, Jorge experimentou um pouco da nostalgia do passado; sorria sem amargura, mas com um travo de melancolia. (OC.I, p. 389)

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<sup>9</sup> As Schwarz has written:

Embora pelas situações *laiá Garcia* pertence à esfera do romance para moças, o seu enredo descontínuo e difuso não propicia a identificação romanesca nem satisfaz a sonho algum, salvo o de não sonhar, e aliás nem este, pois a norma de decoro corta o ímpeto crítico até às interrupções. (Schwarz, p. 143)

If Jorge has cause to feel disenchanted with life then so too does Estela, only much more so. Though a woman of great emotion, she is forced by her low social position and her pride to accept a marriage without love and is even denied the monotony of a tranquil existence by the early death of Luís Garcia ("O destino negava-lhe a compensação" (OC.I, p. 389)). Her story is similar to the hopeless predicament of Helena - deeply in love but unable to satisfy that emotion for social reasons. Estela does not, however, quite match up to Helena's position of the romantic heroine since what is stressed is not so much her tragic quality but the stoical resolution with which she faces life. When at the end she informs laiá of her intention to leave Rio, receiving a grateful embrace, we find her smiling cynically..."um sorriso que queria dizer: 'Bem sei que sou demais'" (OC.I, p. 405). And as she departs alone, saying goodbye to her father who prefers the life of a parasite, we read: "Compreendeu que devia contar só consigo, e encarou serenamente o futuro" (OC.I, p. 406). Estela is the one who suffers most from the frustrations of life but in keeping with the generally subdued tone of the novel her sufferings are not given the character of tragedy. She is simply one of a whole panorama of figures who with the character, opportunities and social position they are given attempt to make the most out of life. Sr. Antunes opts for the parasitic solution; the cynicism of Procópio Dias leads him to be both morally and commercially corrupt; laiá decides instead to play the game of life with vision and immense patience..."qualidade preciosas na vida, que também é um xadrez, com seus problemas e partidas, umas ganhas, outras perdidas, outras nulas" (OC.I, p. 364). She thus becomes a winner, rather like Guiomar, but her victory is tempered by a consciousness of the irresolvable anguishes of life. On one occasion we find laiá contemplating the calm night sky as its "milhões de estrelas que cintilavam pareciam rir dos milhões de angústias da terra" (OC.I p. 373). By way of contrast, when Guiomar is confronted with the vast eternity of the heavens we are told that she simply has no time for negative meditation:

Guiomar passou da poltrona à janela, que abriu toda, para contemplar a noite, - o luar que batia nas águas, o céu sereno e eterno. Eterno, sim, eterno, leitora minha, que é a mais desconsolada lição que nos poderia dar Deus, no meio das nossas agitações, lutas, ânsias, paixões insaciáveis, dores de um dia, gozos de um instante, que se acabam e passam conosco, debaixo daquela azul eternidade, impassível e muda como a morte.

Pensaria nisto Guiomar? Não, não pensou nisto um minuto sequer; ela era toda da vida e do mundo, desbrochava agora o coração, vivia em plena aurora. Que lhe importava, - ou quem lhe chegara a fazer compreender esta filosofia seca e árida? Ela vivia do presente e do futuro. . .Do passado nada queria saber; provavelmente o havia esquecido. (OC.I, p. 141)

Rather like the situation of Estela in comparison with that of Helena, Iaiá's victory is painted in more subdued tones than that of Guiomar and her love is moderated by the disillusionment of Jorge ("...Dê um pouco de poesia à vida, mas não caia no romanesco; o romanesco é pérfido" (OC.I, p. 380)) and Estela ("...não há nada eterno neste mundo; nada, nada. As mais profundas paixões morrem com o tempo" (OC.I, p. 402)). In her dreams, Iaiá expresses a wish to return to the time when life was simple. But one of the lessons of the novel is that life is not clear cut and it is up to us to make what we can of it.

Disenchantment in *Iaiá Garcia*, then, is born of the realization that life does not contain the predictability of the typical romantic love story. Time and experience teach us that our fiercest hopes and ambitions will often remain unfulfilled, due to the shifting nature of circumstances and personalities. As Schwarz remarks: "A tese é que nada se completa, o que vale sobretudo para as aspirações individuais" (Schwarz, p. 149). We find that this sense of unfulfilment or discontinuity is in turn conveyed in the plot and structure of the novel. On the level of plot, especially with regard to Jorge and Estela, there are continual twists in the action whose purpose seems merely to deepen the protagonists' already acute sense of frustration. The marriage of Estela and Luís Garcia simply does not add up to Jorge ("era a seu ver um absurdo" (OC.I, p. 326)) and Estela's words to Iaiá point to the ridiculous aspect of Jorge's transfer of affections:

As mais profundas paixões morrem com o tempo. Um homem sacrifica o repouso, arrisca a vida, afronta a vontade de sua mãe, rebela-se, e pede a morte; e essa paixão violenta e extraordinária acaba às portas de um simples namoro, entre duas xicaras de chá... (OC.I, p. 402)

This is a derisory outcome, as Schwarz indicates, since it makes a mockery not only of Estela's constancy but more significantly of the very idea of love motivation upon which the romantic novel is based. In fact, it is exactly the kind of ending one could expect from a short story by Machado, where relationships do not live up to their promise and a lover's sentiments are shown to be frivolous or inconstant. Estela's conclusion with regard to Jorge is, for example, very similar to the message of "O passado, passado" whose moral is that a man may one day make great sacrifices for a precious object or person only to relinquish it some other day without pain or resentment. That particular story tells us that love, like any other desire is subject to change; *Iaiá Garcia*, with its wider considerations of the problems of life tells us that

nothing is ever certain or predictable. The events of our life may not even make sense. Thus we find the plot of the novel is hesitant and stuttering and never possesses the kind of direction maintained in *A Mão e a Luva* and *Helena* because of their more definite stance.

Together with the plot, the overall structure of the novel suffers from the general principle of discontinuity. From the very beginning of the story its linear progression is interrupted by flashbacks and constant changes of perspective. Schwarz rightly stresses this factor in his book:

Assim, a segunda parte do livro não continua propriamente a primeira, as razões das personagens não se correspondem entre si, os capítulos não se continuam uns aos outros, nem têm unidade em si mesmos, pois são compostos de episódios dispares, cujas personagens e cujos centros de interesse não são os mesmos. (Schwarz, p. 143)

The result is a novel which has no apparent unity or formal design. The inappropriateness of the title to what is predominantly the story of Jorge and Estela would seem to indicate that Machado planned *laiá Garcia* very carelessly, uncertain as to how he would develop and eventually end it. If this is the story of laiá then he places excessive emphasis on the interior lives of other characters in the attempt to provide us with a variety of points of view and again loses his sense of direction.

Finally, the discontinuity principle also has its effect on character portrayal and interaction. Jorge, Estela and laiá are all shown to be emotionally divided at various points in the narrative in what is an obvious attempt to give some fluidity to their characters and decisions. Unfortunately we find that, especially with Jorge and laiá, this leads to illogical developments and inexplicable actions despite Machado's valiant efforts with laiá to prove otherwise. The reasons for Jorge's change simply remain untold. Undoubtedly Machado is trying to show us that there is more to the complex human psyche than spontaneous love. But in doing so he fails to provide us with adequate reasons for the actions of some of his characters.

In *laiá Garcia*, then, Machado inadvertently places himself in a literary no-man's-land between the definite patterns of conventional romance and the uncertainties of his own cynicism. He would not make the same mistake in his following novel. On the contrary, the memoirs of Brás Cubas are a deliberate and successful working of the narrative ambiguity and sense of disillusionment that Machado found so difficult to avoid in *laiá Garcia*.

## Machado and the cult of science

The scepticism with which Machado talks about personal motivations, romantic hopes and social aspirations in the *Jornal das Famílias* stories and *laiá Garcia* can also be observed in his attitude (conveyed in a much smaller group of tales) towards the most recent developments in scientific and spiritual thought in Brazil. Following the precedent of two tales that he wrote prior to the appearance of *Histórias da Meia-Noite*, "O capitão Mendonça" (1870) and "Decadência de dois grandes homens" (1873), in "Os óculos de Pedro Antão" (JdasF Jun-May? 1874), "Uma visita de Alcibiades" (JdasF Oct 1876) and "Sem olhos" (JdasF Dec 1876-Feb 1877) he pours scorn over the exaggerated claims of materialist and spiritualist thinkers alike. Machado's interest in the speculative ideas that are presented in these stories is scarcely surprising when we consider that the decade in which he was writing was a time of unprecedented philosophical enquiry in Brazil,<sup>10</sup> due in large part to the economic and technological changes that were being experienced in the Empire:

Em 1870, novos matizes de idéias começam a se fazer sentir na vida intelectual brasileira. O positivismo, o naturalismo, enfim, todas as modalidades do pensamento europeu do século XIX - vão se exprimir agora no pensamento nacional e determinar um notável progresso de espírito crítico. Este progresso de crítica, de compreensão, era concomitante - resultado talvez - do notável progresso económico que se expressa, no Brasil, a partir de 1860, numa sensível ascensão do padrão de vida de certas classes da população e na incipiente aparelhagem técnica do País, tal como estradas de ferro, mecanização das indústrias rurais, instalação das suas primeiras manufaturas.<sup>11</sup>

The unarguable materialistic progress that had been gaining pace throughout the century, together with the huge advances that had been made in the biological sciences by men like Lamarck and Darwin, encouraged European intellectuals to profess a faith in the inevitability of human progress via scientific method. As Bertrand Russell has noted:

The prestige of biology caused men whose thinking was influenced by science to apply biological rather than mechanistic categories to the world. Everything was supposed to be evolving, and it was easy to imagine an immanent goal.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In *Contribuição à história das idéias no Brasil*, 2nd Ed., (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1967), Cruz Costa quotes Silvio Romero as saying: "O decênio que vai de 1868 a 1878 é o mais notável de quantos no século XIX constituíram a nossa vida espiritual" (Cruz Costa, p. 97).

<sup>11</sup> Cruz Costa, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 698.

Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, for example, (whose names are of particular relevance for the direction of Brazilian thought at the time when Machado was writing) based their ideas of positivism and social evolution respectively on the scrupulous investigation and interpretation of observable data. Taine, the literary historian whose notorious formula for human behaviour ("la race, le milieu et le moment") would inspire the Naturalists, conceived of the universe as "a vast indivisible mechanism; experimental method is capable of discovering the intermeshed complex of forces controlling it".<sup>13</sup> In the sphere of religion, Renan would pioneer a materialistic approach to the study of Christ and his miracles, and even the dubious practitioners of hypnotism and spiritualism, attracted by the activities of Mesmer and Allan Kardec, would claim that their beliefs constituted "uma verdade incontestável e uma ciência adquirida".<sup>14</sup> Everything, it appeared, was being subjected to the rigours of scientific procedure, in the hope that men would discover how best to take advantage of their historical, material, social and spiritual evolution. This European trend was followed with great keenness and surprising rapidity by Brazilian intellectuals. As Machado himself would remark in his 1879 article on the latest generation of Brazilian poets:

A nova geração frequenta os escritores da ciência, não há aí poeta digno desse nome que não converse um pouco, ao menos, com os naturalistas e filósofos modernos.<sup>15</sup>

In the same paper, Machado demonstrates his own familiarity with the writings of Renan, Spencer, Darwin and Wallace (OC.III pp. 830/836), but it is clear from the general tone of the article that he does not share the ideological certainty of his foreign or Brazilian contemporaries. After suggesting "que um dos caracteres da nova geração terá de ser um optimismo, não só tranquilo, mas triunfante" (OC.III, p. 810), he adds:

A justiça, cujo advento nos é anunciado em versos subidos de entusiasmo, a justiça quase não chega a ser um complemento, mas um suplemento; e assim como a teoria da seleção natural dá a vitória aos mais aptos, assim outra lei, a que se poderá chamar seleção social, entregará a palma aos mais puros. É o inverso da tradição bíblica; é o paraíso no fim. De quando em quando aparece a nota afitiva ou melancólica, a nota pessimista, a nota de Hartmann; mas é rara, e tende a diminuir; o sentimento geral inclina-se à apoteose; e isto não somente é natural, mas até necessário; a vida não pode ser um desespero perpétuo, e fica bem à mocidade um pouco de orgulho. (OC.III, pp. 810-811)

<sup>13</sup> See, P. E. Charvet, *A Literary History of France*, Vol. IV, (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), p. 361.

<sup>14</sup> Machado's own words, taken from an 1865 *crônica* to which I shall make further reference.

<sup>15</sup> "A nova geração", *Revista Brasileira*, 1 Dec 1879. Reprinted in OC.III, p. 838.

Machado's words are not so much an assertion of his belief in the Biblical doctrine of the Fall of Man (or of Hartmann's theory of a self-destructive universe for that matter) as a reaction against the perfectly understandable but nevertheless misplaced enthusiasm of younger writers. In Machado's opinion, their glorification of science was untenable on at least two grounds, both of which are expanded upon in various ways in the stories mentioned at the beginning of this section. First of all, it is apparent from the previous quotation that Machado could not accept the idea that the continuing successes of scientific investigation were heralding the imminent social and moral perfection of the human race. As he says at another point in his study, "essa aspiração ao reinado da Justiça. . . é uma aspiração e nada mais" (OC.III, p. 812). The faith in Humanity exhibited by the new generation was more the consequence of their youthful enthusiasm than a proven sociological fact. Secondly, Machado regarded the application of scientific laws of observation to all aspects of human behaviour as both naive and improper. He was particularly concerned that the new analytical approach to the study of mankind in literature would ignore the aesthetic and poetic concerns that are essential to the production of all works of art. Thus we find him contesting Sílvio Romero's conclusion "que a nova intuição literária nada conterà dogmático, - será um resultado do espírito geral de crítica contemporânea" (OC.III, pp. 812-813) on the grounds that this statement "tem a desvantagem de não ser uma definição estética" (OC.III, p. 813); in a similar way, the influence of Realism on the work of another Brazilian poet is dismissed as "a sensualidade levada efetivamente à antropologia" (OC.III, p. 816). Although he understood how the worst excesses of Romanticism had led his contemporaries to mistrust a subjectivist approach to literature, Machado contended that art should not be limited to the examination and reproduction of exterior reality. Quoting from two well-known literary commentators, he argues that true art must of necessity go beyond the duplication of visible phenomena:

Um poeta, V. Hugo, dirá que há um limite intranscendível entre a realidade, segundo a arte, e a realidade, segundo a natureza. Um crítico, Taine, escreverá que se a exata cópia das coisas fosse o fim da arte, o melhor romance ou o melhor drama seria a reprodução taquigráfica de um processo judicial. Creio que aquele não é clássico, nem este romântico. Tal é o princípio sã, superior às contendas e teorias particulares de todos os tempos. (OC.III, p. 813)

Machado's reservations towards the Realist/Naturalist tendency in the literature of his day are more systematically expressed in his famous 1878 criticism of Eça de Queirós'



*O Primo Basílio*,<sup>16</sup> in which the aesthetic shortcomings of the novel are taken as being representative of those of a whole school. To summarize his thoughts on the matter, Machado regarded the Realist vision of man and art as dehumanizing and short-sighted. Dehumanizing because it tended to focus upon "aquela reprodução fotográfica e servil das coisas mínimas e ignóbeis" (OC.III, p. 904); short-sighted because a strict Realist approach can never hope to investigate all aspects of reality:

Ora, o realismo de Srs. Zola e Eça de Queirós, apesar de tudo, ainda não esgotou todos os aspectos da realidade. Há atos íntimos e ínfimos, vícios ocultos, secreções sociais que não podem ser preteridas nessa exposição de todas as coisas. Se são naturais para que escondê-los? (OC.III, p. 913)

So, whilst he no doubt welcomed the invaluable contributions that had been made towards the improved awareness of our biological nature in the nineteenth century, Machado was careful to mark out what he believed to be the limitations of scientific methodology. He first of all denied that the advancements of science were being accompanied by humanitarian progress and would inevitably lead to the perfection of knowledge in all aspects of life; and secondly he warned against the inappropriate transfer of investigative techniques to other spheres such as literature. These two observations form the basis of Machado's satirical attack on the intellectual tendencies of his day in the *Jornal das Famílias* in the five stories that were listed at the beginning of this section.

The stories themselves can be divided into two distinct groups. The limitations of a strictly scientific approach are outlined in "O capitão Mendonça" and "Os óculos de Pedro Antão", with the three remaining stories ("Decadência de dois grandes homens", "Uma visita de Alcibiades" and "Sem olhos") being devoted to the criticism of spiritualist ideas. We shall deal with the smaller group first.

## The satire of scientific method

For most of "O capitão Mendonça" the reader is made to believe that he/she has entered the fantasy world of an E.T.A. Hoffmann or Mary Shelley. The narrator (Amaral) recalls how, during the interval of a boring ultra-Romantic play, he meets one of his

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<sup>16</sup> In *O Cruzeiro*, 16 & 30 Apr 1878. Republished in OC.III pp. 903-913.

father's former military colleagues, the eccentric Mendonça. When the old man invites him to his home near the start of the second act, Amaral is more than willing to escape the uninspired theatrical performance, only to find himself involved in an even more incredible adventure. Mendonça turns out to be the archetypal mad scientist, whose most startling achievement is the manufacture of his daughter, the beautiful young Augusta.<sup>17</sup> Amaral is understandably reluctant to believe such a claim, until the old captain simply removes Augusta's attractive eyes, to the horror of the narrator:

Olhei para Augusta. Era horrível. Tinha no lugar dos olhos dois grandes buracos como uma caveira. Desisto de descrever o que senti; não pude dar um grito; fiquei gelado. A cabeça da môca era o que mais hediondo pode criar imaginação humana; imaginem uma caveira viva, falando, sorrindo, fitando em mim os dois buracos vazios, onde pouco antes nadavam os mais belos olhos do mundo. Os buracos pareciam ver-me; a môca contemplava o meu espanto com um sorriso angélico. (CRec, p. 171)

Having made his point in the most graphic way possible, Mendonça goes on to outline some of the theories and motives that lie behind his work. A key feature of Mendonça's experimental method with regard to the creation of Augusta is his concept of Man as a material being, devoid of spirit or soul. In conversation with the narrator, he insists that "o homem é um composto de moléculas e corpos químicos; quem os souber reunir tem alcançado tudo" (CRec, p. 178). With the exception of what he calls "o princípio da vida" (CRec, p. 178), everything about human nature, it appears, can be explained in terms of substance as opposed to spirit. The level of one's conscience, for example, is controlled by the amount of mercury that one possesses, and the existence of genius can be guaranteed by the insertion of pure ether into the brain. "Pego num homem de talento, notável ou mediocre, ou até num homem nulo", says the old man confidently, "e faço dele um gênio" (CRec, p. 181). Mendonça is in the process of performing this same experiment on Amaral when the young man wakes up from his nightmare, which, we can assume, had begun at the start of the second act when the narrator had closed his eyes, "ouvindo um monólogo do protagonista que cortava o coração e a gramática" (CRec, p. 165).

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<sup>17</sup> The creation of Augusta is an obvious borrowing from one of E.T.A. Hoffmann's most famous fantastic tales, *Der Sandmann* (popularized by Offenbach in his opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* in 1881), which told of the poet Nathanael's fatal love for a mechanical doll. Although Machado's narrator does fall in love with Augusta, the theme of his misplaced passion is not developed to a significant degree, with preference being given to the dialogue between the young man and the inventor.

The idea that genius can be manufactured is a fanciful suggestion, but it is not so far removed from some of the sensational inventions and remedies that accompanied the real technological advances of the nineteenth century. In one of his early *crônicas* for the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, Machado makes the comment that “O folhetim aplaude os progressos sérios; mas ri dos progressos e dos melhoramentos ridículos”,<sup>18</sup> and applies the latter half of his sentence to the appearance of a new musical method (referred to in the *Jornal de Comércio*) that claims to enable “qualquer individuo a compor um trecho de música e a improvisar em um piano com tanta presteza como se escreve uma carta e se improvisa uma conversação” (J.23, p. 160). Machado’s reaction to this piece of news is predictably sarcastic. He praises the inventors of the method for having democratized the art of music by destroying what used to be “um monopólio dos génios e dos talentos que Deus criava e o estudo instruíam” (J.23, p. 161). But what is particularly interesting about this *crônica* with respect to “O capitão Mendonça” is the way in which Machado indicates how the new method fits in so well to the general materialistic bias of his time:

Tinhamos até aqui as máquinas de moer música, na expressão de um escritor ilustre; agora temos máquinas para fazer música, o que é - em que pese aos fósseis, - o supremo progresso do mundo e a suprema consolação das vocações negativas.

Daqui em diante todas as famílias serão obrigadas a ter em casa uma máquina de fazer café e uma máquina de fazer música, - para digerir o jantar.

Além da vantagem de vulgarizar a arte, o novo sistema é útil pela economia de tempo. O tempo é dinheiro. Achar um sistema que habilite a gente a compor uma sinfonia enquanto fuma um cigarro de Socoraba, é realmente descobrir a pedra filosofal.

Três vezes salve, rei Improviso!

Que vales tu agora, velha Inspiração? Os tempos enrugaram as faces, e te amorteceram os olhos. Tens os cabelos brancos, vê-se que a tua realza chega ao termo; é preciso abdicar. Sôfregos de viver e de produzir, queremos em teu lugar um rei ativo, sôfrego, pimpão, um rei capaz de nos satisfazer, como o não fazes tu que já andas trôpega de velhice. (J.23, pp. 161-162)

Beneath the humour, Machado is making some serious points about a society which he believed was becoming more and more utilitarian in its thinking. As at all times of rapid economic prosperity, it appeared that spiritual and aesthetic values were losing their attraction since they were ill-equipped to keep pace with the increasing demand for novelty and profitability. Inspiration had no option but to give way to a functional, reliable and more efficient system which, after all, provided further evidence of Man’s

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<sup>18</sup> 27th Sep 1864, republished in J.23, p. 159.

capacity for infinite progress. In a similar way, genius is mechanized in "O capitão Mendonça" and Augusta is living proof of how the scientific mind can achieve any conceivable objective. She is proud to call herself "filha da ciência e da *vontade* [my emphasis] do homem" (CRec, p. 176). Moreover, it is suggested that, on account of Mendonça's scrupulously detailed approach, the young woman is a more perfect example of feminine beauty than those produced by natural processes:

Augusta era tão bela como as outras mulheres, - talvez mais bela, - pela mesma razão que a folha da árvore pintada é mais bela que a folha natural. Era um produto de arte; o saber do autor despojou o tipo humano de suas incorreções para criar um tipo ideal, um exemplar único. (CRec, p. 179)

The fact, however, that Mendonça and Augusta are merely products of the narrator's over-fertile imagination (fuelled by the melodrama of the play he had been watching)<sup>19</sup> reduces all this talk about the will of man and the superiority of science over nature to the level of a romantic pipe-dream. "A criação romântica de ontem não podia ser a realidade de hoje?" (CRec, p. 175), wonders Amaral at one point, thinking back to Hoffmann's tale, and concludes that "A incredulidade de hoje é a sagração de amanhã" (CRec, p. 176). Machado's answer to the same question is very decidedly in the negative. Like the events narrated in Hoffmann and "O capitão Mendonça", the hopes of those who have made a religion out of science and humanity are pure romantic fantasy.

The link between romanticism and intellectual optimism is given further exposure in "Os óculos de Pedro Antão", where the narrator and his friend Mendonça decide to pay a midnight visit to the mysterious house that had belonged to Mendonça's late uncle, Pedro Antão. Coming across some unusual objects - a silk ladder, a lock of hair, a Hebrew fragment, a pair of tinted spectacles, - the narrator weaves an incredible tale of love and suspense, in an apparently serious attempt to reconstruct the events leading up to Pedro Antão's death. It soon becomes clear, however, that the narrator has simply seized upon the opportunity to exercise his melodramatic imagination. He be-

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<sup>19</sup> In the second paragraph, Machado gives us a summary of the first act:

começava por um homicídio e acabava por um juramento. Havia uma menina, que não conhecia nem pai nem mãe, e era arrebatada por um embaçado que eu suspeitei ser a marquês incógnito, e aparecia a orelha de um segundo e próximo assassinato na pessoa de uma condessa velha. O ato acabou com muitas palmas. (CRec, p. 163)

comes so engrossed in his story-telling that he even forgets he is speaking, not writing, and comes out with the clichéd phrase: "O leitor facilmente calculará..." (CAV, p. 166). At the end of the narrative, the discovery of a note written by the dead man finally discredits both the narrator and his tale. We learn that the placing of the strange objects has all been part of a deliberate hoax by the uncle, calculated to mislead any romantically inclined person who was foolish enough to try and establish a link between them. But Pedro Antão's act of deception is no mere practical joke. There is a serious motive behind what he has done:

"Meu sobrinho. Deixo o mundo sem saudades. Vivo recluso tanto tempo para me acostumar à morte. Ultimamente li algumas obras de filosofia da história, e tais coisas vi, *tais explicações encontrei de fatos até aqui reconhecidos*, [my emphasis] que tive uma idéia excêntrica. Deixei aí uma escada de seda, uns óculos verdes, que eu nunca usei, e outros objetos, a fim de que tu ou algum pascácio igual inventassem a meu respeito um romance, que toda a gente acreditaria até o achado deste papel. Livra-te da filosofia da história." (CAV, p. 170)

The books that were read by the disillusioned old man could have been anything from Hegel to Comte, Spencer or Buckle, but the specifics are unimportant. What Machado is warning against is the general tendency for positivist and evolutionary thinkers to re-evaluate history in philosophical and scientific terms. Isaiah Berlin gives a useful explanation of the kind of reasoning that was being used by them:

If only we could find a series of natural laws connecting at one end the biological and physiological states and processes of human beings with, at the other, the equally observable patterns of their conduct - their social activities in the wider sense - and so establish a coherent system of regularities, deducible from a comparatively small number of general laws (as Newton, it is held, had so triumphantly done in physics), we should have in our hands a science of human behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

Pedro Antão's posthumous message to his nephew is unmistakably aimed at all works that deal in what Berlin calls the concept of scientific history. Whilst other nineteenth century intellectuals thought differently, Machado is clearly of the opinion that the investigation of past practices and events can never be regarded as an exact science since it will always be liable to conscious or unconscious manipulation. And yet, Pedro Antão's complaint about the strange interpretation of hitherto recognised facts would seem to indicate that Machado also had a static, traditionalist view of history. This is not so, as can be proven by a brief look at two extracts from the series of *crônicas* en-

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<sup>20</sup> *Concepts and Categories* (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), p. 105.

titled "Histórias de quinze dias" that he wrote for the *Ilustração Brasileira* in 1876 and 1877.

The earlier of these pieces appeared on 15th September 1876, a week after the 54th anniversary of Brazilian Independence. One of Machado's main topics of conversation concerns his reaction to the discovery by an unnamed Brazilian scholar that Pedro I's famous cry at the banks of the Ipiranga river ("Independência ou Morte") never actually took place. Machado is horrified, not so much by the revelation itself, as by the impact that it will have on the national consciousness. In the domain of Roman History, for example, he is quite prepared to become accustomed to the scientific procedure of German critics "cuja pena, semelhante a uma picareta, desbastou os inventos de dezoito séculos, não nos deixando mais que uma porção de sucessos exatos" (OC.III, p. 346). But the application of the same methods to one of the most significant events of Brazilian life is unacceptable:

O caso do Ipiranga data de ontem. Durante cinqüenta e quatro anos temos vindo a repetir uma coisa que o dito meu amigo declara não ter existido.

Houve resolução do Príncipe D. Pedro, independência e o mais; mas não foi positivamente um grito, nem ele se deu nas margens do célebre ribeiro.

Lá se vão as páginas dos historiadores; e isso é o menos.

Emendam-se as futuras edições. Mas os versos? Os versos emendam-se com muito menos facilidade.

Minha opinião é que a lenda é melhor do que a história autêntica. *A lenda resumia todo o fato da independência nacional, ao passo que a versão exata o reduz a uma coisa vaga e anônima.* [my emphasis] Tenha paciência o meu ilustrado amigo. Eu prefiro o grito do Ipiranga; é mais sumário, mais bonito e mais genérico. (OC.III, pp. 346-347)

Once again, beneath Machado's wit there is a serious message to be considered. Even if the legend of Ipiranga cannot stand up to the scrutiny of modern scholarship, it ought to be accepted as a valid expression of Brazil's still emerging sense of national identity. In 1822, a very real surge for independence had taken place in Brazil, which Pedro I's albeit fictional words summarize more accurately than any historical statistic.

In any case, although he opposes the idea of legend to the concept of "a história autêntica" in the final paragraph of the previous quotation, it is difficult to believe that Machado really thought that the definitive version of past events could ever be achieved. If we bear in mind the introductory comments to a *crônica* that was published on 15th March 1877, we can conclude that in the Ipiranga issue he was merely choosing between two ultimately unverifiable accounts:

Mais dia menos dia, demito-me deste lugar. Um historiador de quinzena, que passa os dias no fundo de um gabinete escuro e solitário, que não vai às touradas, às câmaras, à Rua do Ouvidor, um historiador assim é um puro contador de histórias.

E repare o leitor como a língua portuguesa é engenhosa. Um contador de histórias é justamente o contrário de historiador, não sendo um historiador, afinal de contas, mais do que um contador de histórias. Por que essa diferença? Simples, leitor, nada mais simples. O historiador foi inventado por ti, homem culto, letrado, humanista; o contador de histórias foi inventado pelo povo, que nunca leu Tito Lívio, e entende que contar o que se passou é só fantasiar. (OC.III, pp. 361-362)

The concept of history as a truthful reconstruction of what has already occurred is one that is foreign to Machado. Consequently, he realized that those who sought to construct a philosophical system or establish the science of human behaviour by noting the "patterns" of the past were labouring under yet another illusion. The historian may or may not pay more attention to fact than the story-teller, but in the final analysis the work produced by both kinds of writers is coloured by their intent, their selectivity and the way they view reality. As was evident in "Os óculos de Pedro Antão", facts and relics from the past can always be distorted to fit any preconceived system of beliefs.

Machado's conclusions on the subjective nature of history would also have an enormous impact on his approach to writing fiction. This is particularly noticeable in the novels, where the technique of unreliable narration is pioneered in *Brás Cubas* and perfected in *Dom Casmurro* to the degree where the distortion of the facts is more important than the facts themselves.<sup>21</sup> But the short stories also reveal his interest in the play between what are generally regarded as factual and fictional narratives. As any reader of the *Papéis Avulsos* will recognise, one of the most significant features of Machado's short fiction in the early 1880s is his ability to relate unbelievable stories as if they were trustworthy accounts.

## The satire of spiritualist ideas and practices

Within the context of a generation that appeared to be obsessed by the logic of scientific observation, the rising popularity of spiritualism and its related arts in the Brazil of the mid to late nineteenth century may seem a puzzling phenomenon. Not so puzzling, however, when we consider that hypnosis (also known as animal magnetism

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<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the manipulative strategies used by the narrator of *Dom Casmurro*, see John Gledson, *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1984).

or mesmerism), somnambulism, kardecism, etc., were all regarded as scientific disciplines by their propagators, subject to their own scientific laws. As Ronald Pearsall has noted, with the development of new methods of testing and investigation, "it was thought that many phenomena would yield to a fresh examination, and that science would unravel the mysteries of this world and the next".<sup>22</sup> The principles of animal magnetism, for example (which did not begin to make an impact on Brazil until the 1840s), were provided with a scientific explanation by their founder, Dr. Mesmer, in the latter half of the eighteenth century:

Repudiado por seus colegas, considerado mais um taumaturgo do que um médico, Mesmer explicava que o seu método propiciava a cura através da transmissão do fluido universal. Já em 1766, em sua tese de formatura, intitulada *De Influxu Planetarium in Corpus Humanum*, o jovem médico, conjugando a lei da atração universal, recém-descoberta por Newton, com postulados clássicos da astrologia, asseverava que os planetas, da mesma forma que se afetam uns aos outros, influenciam também os homens. Essa influência se manifestaria, em particular, sobre o sistema nervoso, através de um fluido que enche todo o universo. O magnetismo nada mais seria que a ação dos astros sobre os seres vivos.

Esse fluido magnético também se transmitiria através de todos os homens. Assim, os fluidos de um indivíduo sadio influenciariam beneficentemente a um doente. Era o que Mesmer batizou com o nome de magnetismo animal.<sup>23</sup>

But despite the supposedly scientific bases for Mesmer's ideas, they would never be accepted by the academics of Paris or his native Vienna. And once they were taken hold of by the popular imagination, it would always be difficult to divorce the concept of a powerful magnetic force from the notion of some kind of magical power. Indeed, Mesmer's use of a magnetic "magic wand" in his healing sessions appeared to invite such an interpretation. If we add to this the discovery by one of Mesmer's disciples that some sensitive individuals were capable of revealing incredible items of information during the course of their hypnosis or somnambulism, it is scarcely surprising that there should be a preference for spiritual explanations instead of physical ones. The unavoidable development of supernatural hypotheses was, however, strenuously resisted by the pioneers of somnambulism, a point that Frank Podmore rightly emphasizes with reference to J.P.F. Deleuze and others:

If the somnabule can see without eyes and hear without ears - a fact of which Deleuze has no manner of doubt - it is, according to him, because the impressions from without are conveyed directly by the magnetic fluid, a medium of extreme tenuity, to the

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<sup>22</sup> Ronald Pearsall, *The Table-Rappers* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ubiratan Machado, *Os Intelectuais e o Espiritismo: De Castro Alves a Machado de Assis* (Rio: Edições Antares/INL, 1983), pp. 40-41.



brain without the intervention of the external organs or even the sensory nerves. The same explanation will apply to the supersensible influence of the operator on the subject, and to the subject's perception of diseases in himself or in those placed in *rapport* with him. Deleuze, relying indeed partly on his own observations, but mainly on those of others, has as little doubt of the reality of such supersensible phenomena as he has of their explanation by material causes.

Puységur, again, expressly repudiates any attempt at a transcendental explanation. It was said in Parisian Society that his subject Madeleine could divine people's thoughts. Puységur characterises the statement as absurd. In obeying his silent will she simply acts "as an animated magnet." His will, directing the magnetic fluid, moves her organism in the same way that his will, directing the nerve currents, acts on his own body. The effect in each case is a purely physical one. Pététin, again, gently ridicules those who believe in clairvoyance at a distance; and the faculty of prevision, on which some observers had laid so much stress, is, Deleuze points out, susceptible of explanations by physiological causes. The patient's previsions are concerned, for the most part, with the course of his own malady; and he could in such a case predict correctly, because in the magnetic trance he had a wider and more accurate knowledge of his own bodily processes and of their probable results.<sup>24</sup>

The materialistic rationale of Mesmer and his immediate followers fell largely on deaf ears and it would not be long before their mysterious magnetic fluid became fully associated with speculations on the existence of a spiritual world. This was especially so after 1848, when the Fox sisters of New York began the world-wide craze known as "table-rapping" or "talking-tables". Suddenly, the medium was deemed capable of communication with dead spirits as well as the description and cure of difficult ailments.

Even with the advent of modern spiritualism, however, its more intellectual supporters were keen to stress the idea that their beliefs were subject to scientific laws. This is probably the main reason behind the popularity of Allan Kardec's writings amongst Brazilian teachers, lawyers and other professionals in Machado's time. Kardec's refusal to speak in terms of magic, miracles or the supernatural (in the popular interpretation of the word) appealed to many. He maintained that the invisible and nonmaterial realm of souls or spirits was very much a part of the natural world, and, as such, was susceptible to experimentation and investigation via the unusual sensitivity of the medium. Also, Kardec's belief in the continual progression towards perfection of all spiritual beings through successive reincarnations provided his followers with a philosophy that could rival current theories on the social and biological evolution of mankind.<sup>25</sup> Still, it was inevitable that the finer points of kardecism should fail to make a firm impression on the minds of uneducated or unscrupulous individuals. The con-

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<sup>24</sup> *Modern Spiritualism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1902), vol. I, pp. 65-66.

<sup>25</sup> See the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol VIII, Mircea Elaide (ed.) (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 260.

fusion between Western spiritualism and Afro-brazilian religions became commonplace, and the apparent ability to establish contact between the deceased and a grieving relative was regarded as a lucrative business.

Machado's criticism of spiritualism and mediumistic activities in general is largely conveyed by the same *reductio ad absurdum* technique that he uses in "O capitão Mendonça" and "Os óculos de Pedro Antão". In "Decadência de dois grandes homens", he addresses himself to the theory of metempsychosis (defined in most reference materials as the transmigration of the soul) by having his narrator meet Jaime, an old man who believes fervently in the doctrine. Like captain Mendonça, Jaime goes to great lengths in his attempt to convince his recent friend of the validity of his ideas, especially when the young man reveals his absolute scepticism on the matter:

- Acredita na metempsicose? perguntei eu.

O velho, que estava ocupado em tirar o paletó e vestir um chambre de chita amarela, interrompeu aquele serviço, para dizer-me:

- Se acredito? em que queria o senhor que eu acreditasse?

- Um homem instruído, como o senhor, não devia crer em tolices desta ordem, respondi abrindo o livro.

Jaime acabou de vestir o chambre, e veio a mim.

Meu caro senhor, disse ele; não zombe assim da verdade; nem zombe nunca de filosofia nenhuma. Toda a filosofia pode ser verdadeira; a ignorância dos homens é que faz de uma ou de outra crença de moda. Contudo para mim, que as conheci todas, só uma é a verdadeira, e é essa a que alude o senhor com tanto desdém.

- Mas...

- Não me interrompa, disse ele; quero convencê-lo. (CESq, p. 30)

The only thing of which the narrator becomes convinced, however, is Jaime's insanity, particularly when the old man refers to himself as the reincarnation of Marcus Brutus. Furthermore, Jaime believes that the shade of Julius Caesar has already warned of his intention to avenge his inopportune death in the following words:

"Bruto, os deuses querem punir-te da minha morte. Voltaremos ao mundo outra vez debaixo da forma humana, e depois minha alma passará ao corpo de um gato. Daí em diante, Bruto, teme sempre os idos de março, porque a um desses aniversários serás transformado em rato, e engolido por mim". (CESq, p. 34)

Jaime is adamant that Caesar's soul has entered the body of his pet cat, and since their conversation is taking place on the 15th March, the narrator agrees to remain with his host until after midnight. Some time after ten o'clock, however, the horrified narrator witnesses Jaime's rapid transmutation into a rat and the subsequent revenge of Caesar

in feline form. Events take an even stranger turn when the cat itself dies and the narrator watches the ascension of what appear to be the souls of the two great men:

De repente, duas luzes surgiram dos restos miserandos daquele par da antiguidade; duas luzes azuis, que subiram lentamente até o teto; o teto abriu-se e eu vi distintamente o firmamento estrelado. As luzes subiram no espaço.

Força desconhecida me levantou também do sofá, e eu acompanhei as luzes até meio caminho. Depois seguiram elas, e eu fiquei no espaço, contemplando a cidade iluminada, tranqüila e silenciosa. Fui transportado ao oceano, onde vi uma concha à minha espera, uma verdadeira concha mitológica. Entrei nela e comecei a andar na direção do oeste.

Proseguí esta amável peregrinação de um modo verdadeiramente mágico. De repente senti que o meu nariz crescia desmesuradamente; admirei o sucesso, mas uma voz secreta me dizia que os narizes são sujeitos a transformações inopinadas, - razão pela qual não me admirei quando o meu apêndice nasal assumiu sucessivamente a figura de um chapéu, de um revólver e de uma jabotica. (CEsq, pp. 37-38)

When the narrator final'y arrives home, he is unable to fall asleep all night and decides to have an early breakfast at his regular café. Much to his surprise, he meets up with Jaime and realizes that the incredible happenings of the previous night had been engendered a combination of auto-suggestion and the effects of an opium cigar offered to him by the older man during the course of the evening. With the final confirmation of Jaime's insanity, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that a belief in metempsychosis must also be accompanied by some kind of mental derangement. The link between madness and an involvement in spiritual matters was one that other opponents of the doctrine were not slow to advance. In one 1875 periodical, we can read of B.L. Garnier being severely criticized for publishing a translation of "os devaneios de ALLAN KARDEC, famigerado apóstolo do - *espiritismo* - e responsável por tantos e tão lamentáveis desarranjos mentais".<sup>26</sup> Machado's narrator, however, shows little concern for the mental illness of his unfortunate friend. The confirmation and subsequent cure of Jaime's condition are regarded as a disappointing conclusion to a promising adventure:

Almocei com o homem; no fim do almoço ofereceu-me ele um charuto, que eu recusei dizendo:

- Nada, meu caro; vi coisas terríveis esta noite...
- Falta de costume...
- Talvez.

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Ubiratan Machado in *Os Intelectuais e o Espiritismo: De Castro Alves a Machado de Assis*, p. 116.

Sai triste. Procurava um homem original e achei um maluco. Os de juízo são todos copiados uns dos outros. Consta-me até que aquele mesmo homem de Plutarco, freguês do Carceler, curado por um hábil médico, está agora tão comum como os outros. Acabou a originalidade com a maluquice. *Tu quoque, Brute?* (CEsq, p. 39)

The narrator's complaint about Jaime's return to normality can be looked upon as a final touch of sarcasm on Machado's part. Whilst he was mad, the old man could at least have been regarded as an entertaining eccentric. Now that he is sane, he is of no interest to a man in search of novelty.

The suggestion that spiritualism may provide a useful source of diversion is the starting point for Machado's satire in "Uma visita de Alcibiades". This time, the narrator is a jovial *desembargador*, Alvares, who decides to entertain a group of young people on Christmas Day by telling one of his famous anecdotes. "Não contarei uma anedota mentirosa" (CEsp, p. 213), he states at the beginning of his story, but as he proceeds to recount the incidents that follow a leisurely Saturday night's read of Plutarch's biographical histories, it becomes increasingly difficult to take his words seriously. When he confesses his interest in spiritualism, for example, Alvares' main intention is not to persuade his audience, but to make them laugh, despite his apparent protest:

Não sei se sabem que sou um tanto espiritista. Não se riam; sou até muito. Posso dizer que vivo, como, durmo, passeio, converso, *bebo café* [my emphasis] e espero morrer na fé de Allan Kardec. Convencido de que todos os sistemas são pura niilidade, adotei o mais jovial de todos. (CEsp, p. 214)

Curious to discover the opinion of Alcibiades (the elegant and wily Athenian general portrayed by Plutarch) on the developments of modern menswear, Alvares decides to conjure up his spirit, "convidando-o a comparecer na minha casa, rua de tal, número tantos (placa)" (CEsp, p. 214). Alcibiades responds quickly to the invitation. To the astonishment of the host, however, the spiritualist experiment exceeds all expectations. "Não era uma sombra impalpável que eu tinha diante de mim, era um homem de carne e ossos, o próprio Alcibiades, tal qual se fora de vida, ainda, trajado como se estivesse prestes a arengar aos patáus de Atenas" (CEsp, p. 215). Recovering quickly from the shock, Alvares tells Alcibiades the latest international news, after which he invites the Greek to accompany him to a *soirée*. The Athenian agrees, but neither man takes into account the disastrous effect that the *desembargador's* fashionable clothes will have on Alcibiades. He recoils in horror as he watches Alvares put on his black trousers ("dois canudos fechados") and black waistcoat and jacket ("dois canudos abertos"), and

cries out for some other item of clothing that will correct the morbid impression left by these:

- Oh! Venha alguma coisa que possa corrigir o resto! disse ele. Assim pois, toda a elegância que nós vos legamos, está reduzida a dois canudos fechados e dois canudos abertos e tudo dessa cor enfadonha e negativa! Não, não posso crê-lo. Alguma coisa há de vir que corrija semelhante coisa. Põe o que te falta, meu caro, põe o que te falta.

Obedeci. Fui dali ao cabide, despendurei o chapéu, e pu-lo na cabeça. Alcibiades olhou para ele e para mim, empalideceu e cambaleou. Corri ao ilustre ateniense; era tarde. Tinha caído no chão. Quando lhe pus a mão no peito, vi que estava diante de um cadáver. Que havia de fazer? Mande-i-o para o necrotério." (CEsp, pp. 216-217)

The circumstances under which Alcibiades dies for the second time are unbelievable, but no more so than any other aspect of Alvares' story. His motive for calling up the Athenian in the first place is frivolous to say the least; and the idea that Alcibiades should need to know the *desembargador's* address is a ridiculous detail. Most important of all, the bodily appearance of Alcibiades is clearly intended by Machado as a logical extension of the medium's supposed ability to invoke the spirits of the dead. If it was possible to summon ghosts and ectoplasmic beings, why not go one further and resurrect the whole body? In point of fact, Alcibiades' materialization was not to far removed from some of the more sensational claims that were being made on behalf of spiritualism. In June 1875 (sixteen months previous to the publication of Machado's story) a French couple had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment in a famous *Procés des Spirités* for faking the production of spirit photographs. As Ubiratan Machado suggests, such cases of fraud may have provided the initial impetus for "Uma visita de Alcibiades":

O argumento do conto machadiano foi elaborado a partir de um dos fenômenos de propaganda mais utilizados pelo espiritismo, à época: a materialização de espíritos, cujas fotografias eram exibidas aos incrédulos como provas irrefutáveis, mesmo após o ruidoso Processo dos Espíritos. Elas afirmariam, mais que a sobrevivência do espírito, a possibilidade de ele reassumir a sua antiga forma corpórea, desde que recebendo os indispensáveis fluidos. Aos olhos céticos, no entanto, tudo isso se afigurava como o absurdo dos absurdos. Uma espécie de tentativa para se avançar no terreno das possibilidades impossíveis.<sup>27</sup>

Whatever may have prompted Machado to write his story in the way that he did, there is no mistaking his scepticism on the subject of spirit communication. Alvares' narration of his experience with the most jovial of philosophies is calculated to amuse his listeners, and the reader is left with the impression that spiritualism is an absurd discipline.

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<sup>27</sup> Ubiratan Machado, p. 131.

Machado continues to examine the question of the supernatural with "Sem olhos" at the end of 1876. Its setting is almost identical to that of "Uma visita de Alcibiades" in as much as it is told by a genial *desembargador* to a small group of intimate guests. But it differs from the earlier story in that it explores the additional themes of adultery, madness and the great potential for self-delusion in the human mind, as well as revealing Machado's increasing sense of literary playfulness.

The story begins with the group of friends discussing everything from the latest *soirée* to the existence of spirits, whilst supping a cup of tea. Bento Soares is convinced that talk of ghosts and souls is utter rubbish but Cruz, the *desembargador*, begs to differ and, after a little prompting, proceeds to tell the true story of his own encounter with the supernatural. Although the story may be true, however, its actual message and the real reason for its narration turn out to be very different from their original stated purpose. In the first place, the *desembargador's* story proves nothing for the existence of spirits. To summarize, his experience consists of an hallucination suggested to him by the macabre and romantic tale of a man who turns out to be insane. Damasceno (the madman), had related how his beloved Lucinda had had her eyes gouged out by her husband for the suspicion of adultery, all of which is later proven to be pure invention. What then are Machado's motives for telling the story? The answer, I believe, is four-fold.

Firstly and paradoxically, the story argues against the existence of spirits by presenting the gory spectre as a product of the narrator's imagination. Secondly, however, the point is also made there are many strange and complex (if not supernatural) things in the world and in the mind of man, waiting to be explained by future investigation:

- Sendo assim, como vi eu a mulher sem olhos? Esta foi a pergunta que fiz a mim mesmo. Que a vi, é certo, tão claramente como os estou vendo agora. Os mestres da ciência, os observadores da natureza humana lhe explicarão isso. Como é que Pascal via um abismo ao pé de si? Como é que Bruto viu um dia a sombra de seu mau gênio? (ReliqCV, p. 119)

We should also recall that the story was told in response to the disbelief of Bento Soares, a man whose limited outlook on life even exceeds the general materialistic and scientific spirit of Machado's age:

Bento Soares estava profundamente convencido que o mundo todo tinha por limites os do distrito em que ele morava, e que a espécie humana aparecera na terra no primeiro

dia de abril de 1832, data de seu nascimento. Esta convicção diminuía ou antes eliminava certos fenômenos psicológicos e reduzia a história do planeta e de seus habitantes a uma certidão de batismo e vários acontecimentos locais. Não havia para ele tempos pré-históricos, havia tempos pré-soáricos. (ReliqCV, p. 90)

Machado may well have been a sceptic in many areas of faith and belief, but it appears that he was at least prepared to admit the possibility of inexplicable phenomena such as visions and the like. The brief portrait of Bento Soares tells us exactly what Machado thought of those who were so materially minded as to consider only those things that lent themselves to unambiguous testing and observation.

The third reason for the telling of "Sem olhos" is as a cautionary tale directed at the beautiful wife of Bento Soares, Maria do Céu, and another guest, Antunes. The possibility of their adultery is only ever hinted at twice in the story (at the beginning when we are introduced to the characters, and at the end when Cruz makes his final comments), but these are enough to confirm that the *desembargador's* narrative has a moral purpose:

O bacharel Antunes apressou-se a receber a xícara de D. Maria do Céu, com uma cortesia e graça, que lhe rendeu o mais doce dos sorrisos. (ReliqCV, p. 90)

- Pois é pena! exclamou o desembargador; a história de Lucinda era melhor que fosse verdadeira. Que outro rival de Otelo há aí como esse marido que queimou com um ferro em brasa os mais belos olhos do mundo, em castigo de haverem fitado outros olhos estranhos? Crê agora em fantasmas, D. Maria do Céu?

Maria do Céu tinha seus olhos baixos. Quando o desembargador lhe dirigiu a palavra, estremeceu, ergueu-se e de corrida se encaminhou para o bacharel Antunes. O bacharel também se levantou, mas foi dali a uma janela, - talvez tomar ar, - talvez refletir a tempo no risco de vir a interpretar algum dia um hebraísmo da Escritura. (ReliqCV, p. 120)

The mention of "um hebraísmo da escritura" brings us to Machado's fourth motive for writing "Sem olhos". One of the most obvious symptoms of Damasceno's madness is his capacity for absurd philosophical speculation, which may well be Machado's way of satirizing the false but confident logic of nineteenth century theorists in general. Two examples of dubious argument are given in the story. The statement made in the last verse of the Biblical book of Jonah concerning the city of Nineveh which had "more than twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left", is interpreted by Damasceno as follows:

- Jonas não alude às crianças, más aos canhotos que são os homens que não podem discernir a direita da esquerda. Sendo assim, veja o senhor a importância da minha interpretação. Duas coisas se concluem dela: 1.º que os ninivitas eram geralmente canhotos; 2.º que o ser canhoto era no entender dos hebreus um grande mérito. Desta

última conclusão nasceu uma terceira, a saber, que chamar canhoto ao diabo é estar fora do espírito bíblico. Isto é claro como água e evidente como a luz. (ReliqCV, p. 97)

In a later passage the existence of the moon is dismissed as a figment of the imagination:

- A Lua, meu rico vizinho, não existe, a Lua é uma hipótese, uma ilusão dos sentidos, um simples produto da retina dos nossos olhos. É isto que a ciência ainda não disse, é isto o que convém proclamar ao mundo. Em certos dias do mês, o olho humano produz o fenômeno lunar. Nessas ocasiões, ele supõe que vê no espaço um círculo redondo, branco e luminoso; o círculo está nos próprios olhos do homem. (ReliqCV, p. 101)

We may in turn dismiss Damasceno's propositions as the aberrations of a disturbed mind which are, nevertheless, as valid as the conjectures that were being used to support the glut of materialist and spiritualist theories of Machado's day.

## In the spirit of his age

With "Sem olhos" we come to the end of Machado's investigation of intellectual thought and supernatural topics in the *Jornal das Famílias*. He would, however, continue to touch on such matters in "A sonâmbula" (Cruz 26 Mar 1878) and "Um cão de lata ao rabo" (Cruz 2 Apr 1878) during his brief association with the *O Cruzeiro* in the early part of 1878. The eight extremely short and eccentric pieces of work that he produced for the latter magazine constitute one of the most crucial stylistic contributions to Machado's literary maturity. They cannot all be classed as brilliant works of art, and it is perhaps for that reason that they have largely escaped the notice of Machado's critics.<sup>28</sup> However, they are collectively important in as much as they all suggest, surprisingly, that the kind of humour contained in the very few *Jornal das Famílias* stories that follow the pattern of "O capitão Mendonça" and "Decadência de dois grandes homens" is more than just a passing fancy in Machado's fiction. The *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* and *Papéis Avulsos* would finally confirm that Machado was capable of making consistently good creative use out of apparently frivolous material, but the short time he spent writing for the *Cruzeiro* ought to be considered an important period of experimentation.

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<sup>28</sup> Apart from "Na arca" (Cruz 14 May 1878), which is well known on account of its inclusion in *Papéis Avulsos*, the only other *Cruzeiro* works that appear to have received any critical attention (see later) are "Um cão de lata ao rabo" and the "Elogio de vaidade" (Cruz 28 May 1878).



The personal motives that lay behind Machado's preference for a more whimsical style will never be known for sure. Nevertheless, before we begin to look at these eight unusual pieces of literature, it is important to stress that by 1878 there were very good philosophical, literary, and sociological reasons for Machado to develop this particular aspect of his fiction. Having come to the conclusion that life, with its constant deceptions and inevitable disappointments, is an absurd experience, it is not entirely surprising that Machado should make a conscious decision to adopt the language of absurdity in the *Cruzeiro* works. As far as his literary direction is concerned, it can be argued that in his persistent denial of romantic conventions in stories which still retain the framework of romance, Machado is running the danger of creating another boring fictional cliché. In 1878 Machado's disillusionment would reach its peak. The continuation of his by now predictable mode of writing would be mere repetition. Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the stylistic frivolity which is the unifying feature of the *Cruzeiro* works was also influenced by Machado's views on modern society. We have already seen how (in light of a new musical method) Machado had sarcastically bemoaned the public's disdain for real spiritual values in an early *crônica*, calling out instead for "um rei ativo, sôfrego, pimpão, um rei capaz de nos satisfazer" (J.23, p.162). By the time he began to write for the *Cruzeiro* at the end of March 1878, Machado would provide his readers with two further documents which, with the aid of hindsight, support the idea that he was now ready to supply his audience with literature that both satisfied and condemned the diversion they so badly desired. The difference in style between the "História de 15 dias" that appeared on 15th January 1877 and the short story "O machete" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1878) is enormous. And yet their judgement of a superficial society, with all the implications that that opinion will have on Machado's fiction, is essentially the same.

The 1877 *crônica* is divided into three "books" in which Machado sarcastically highlights the nineteenth century demand for novelty and miracle cures. In the first and final sections he refers to two such wonder drugs as "uma panacéia anticatarral" (OC.III, p. 356) and Dr. Vindimila's recently developed "vinho estomacal" (OC.III, p. 358), designed to substitute the digestive work of the stomach muscles. But for Machado, the invention which most effectively satisfies the spirit of his age, "a que nos sustinha neste vale de lágrimas, a que nos dava brio e força, era...era ele, o eterno, o

redivivo, o nunca assaz louvado *Rocambole*, que eu julgava perdido para sempre, mas que afinal ressurgiu das próprias cinzas de Ponson du Terrail” (OC.III, p. 357). The recent reappearance in the pages of the *Jornal do Comércio* of the most durable *folhetim* character of the century marks him out as “a flor do seu e do meu século, é a representação do nosso Romantismo caduco, da nossa grave puerilidade” (OC.III, p. 357). In the second section, Machado takes four very different literary heroes - Achilles, Aeneas, Don Quixote, Rocambole - and uses them to make the point that every historical period “tem a sua *Iliada*; as várias *Iliadas* formam a epopéia do espírito humano” (OC.III, p. 357). He traces a process of degeneration from the youthful arrogance of Achilles and the crusading spirit of Aeneas to the ridiculous idealism of Don Quixote and, finally, the unbelievable exploits of Rocambole:

Tocou a vez a Rocambole. Este herói, vendo arrasado o palácio de Priamo e desfeitos os moinhos da Mancha, lançou mão do que lhe restava e fez-se herói de polícia, pôs-se a lutar com o código e o senso comum.

O século é prático, esperto e censurável; seu herói deve ter feições consoantes a estas qualidades de bom cunho. E porque a epopéia pede algum maravilhoso, Rocambole fez-se inverossímil; morre, vive, cai, barafusta e some-se, tal qual como um capoeira em dia de procissão.

Veja o leitor, se não há um fio secreto que liga os quatro heróis. É certo que é grande a distância entre o herói de Homero e o de Ponson du Terrail, entre a Tróia e o xilindró. Mas é questão de ponto de vista. Os olhos são outros; outro é o quadro; mas a admiração é a mesma, e igualmente merecida.

Outrora excitavam pasmo aqueles desconumais lanças argivas. Hoje admiramos os alçapões, os nomes postiços, as barbas postiças, as aventuras postiças.

Ao cabo, tudo é admirar. (OC.III, p. 358)

In his recently published thesis on the influence of Menippean satire on Machado's work, Enylton de Sá Rego argues successfully that Brás Cubas can be looked upon as an ironic version of the incredible epic hero who fulfills the requirements of modern society.<sup>29</sup> By the same token, the comment that “tudo é admirar” can be applied to the *Cruzeiro* works, all of which apparently defy the laws of common sense and are calculated to surprise the reader.

Besides providing a sharp contrast to Machado's comments on Rocambole, the sympathetic and straightforward narration of “O machete” comes as something of a surprise when it is compared to other tales of the period. Its tragic ending is reminis-

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<sup>29</sup> *O calundu e a panacéia - Machado de Assis, a sátira menipéica e a tradição luciânica* (Rio: Forense Universitária, 1989). See pp. 143-146 in particular.

cent of the earlier stories "Frei Simão" and "Virginius" in which Machado clearly sought an emotional response from his reader. What we are made to feel here, however, is not so much the injustice of a cruel world but the more personal anguish of an individual whose preference for aesthetic values alienates him from the rest of society. In order to convey his message, Machado uses the allegory of musical appreciation. Inácio Ramos is a man whose depth of thought and feeling is reflected by his love for the 'cello. On his introduction to the instrument we read:

Seu entusiasmo foi imenso; não somente a alma do artista comunicava com a sua como lhe dera a chave do segredo que ele procurava. (OC.II, p. 857)

Unfortunately, his vain wife and many others are unmoved by the 'cello's resonant and elegiac tones, preferring instead to listen the *machete* (the equivalent of which nowadays would be the banjo or ukelele). In describing how one of these instruments was played, Machado leaves us in no doubt as to his own opinion:

Era efetivamente outro gênero, como o leitor facilmente compreenderá. Ali postos os quatro, numa noite da seguinte semana, sentou-se Barbosa no centro da sala, afinou o machete e pôs em execução toda a sua perícia. A perícia era, na verdade grande; o instrumento é que era pequeno. O que ele tocou não era Weber nem Mozart; era uma cantiga do tempo e da rua, obra de ocasião. Barbosa tocou-a, não dizer com alma, mas com nervos. Todo ele acompanhava a gradação e variações da notas; inclinava-se sobre o instrumento, retesava o corpo, pendia a cabeça ora a um lado, ora a outro, alçava a perna, sorria, derretia os olhos ou fechava os nos lugares que lhe pareciam patéticos. Ouvi-lo tocar era o menos; vê-lo era o mais. Quem somente o ouvisse não poderia compreendê-lo. (OC.II, p. 861)

Barbosa's recital is rousing success. Despite the absurdity of the spectacle and the superficiality of its musical quality, the *machete* is what people want to hear. The point is made with tragic force at the end of the story when Inácio's wife abandons him for Barbosa, and the 'cellist is left with his young son and a sympathetic friend. After picking up his chosen instrument, Inácio suddenly interrupts himself in the middle of a piece and turns to his companion:

- É bonito, não?

- Sublime! respondeu o outro.

- Não; machete é melhor.

E deixou o violoncello, e correu a abraçar o filho.

- Sim, meu filho, exclamava êle, hás de aprender machete; machete é muito melhor.

- Mas que há? articulou o estudante.

- Oh! nada, disse Inácio, ela foi-se embora, foi-se com o machete. Não quis o violoncello, que é grave demais. Tem razão; machete é melhor.

A alma do marido chorava mas os olhos estavam secos. Uma hora depois enlouqueceu. (OC.II, p. 865)

With the disappearance of his wife, Inácio realizes that his sensitive personality has placed him at a serious disadvantage. So as he approaches the madness that will occur as a direct and inescapable result of this realization, he advocates that his son be taught the *machete* attitude to life. Machado makes a similar decision in favour of frivolity in the pieces that will appear in the *Cruzeiro* between March and May of 1878. In the best of these *machete* works, however, the bass notes of the 'cello are never very far away, reminding us that Machado's often quirky humour is meant to convey a serious message.

## The praise of vanity

The significance of the *Cruzeiro* works, then, lies in Machado's decision to consistently apply the principles of philosophical vanity and social frivolity to his short fiction. There is a sense in which this was nothing new for Machado. As some of the *crônica's* that have been quoted throughout the chapter reveal, he had long since become accustomed to presenting serious ideas in the guise of trivial banter. But the composition of journalistic articles is not quite the same thing as producing a fictional work of art. Most of the *Cruzeiro* pieces are funny, but not particularly inspired since they are, in the main, experimental works which play a useful role in freeing Machado's mind from the patterns of his literary past in readiness for a more suitable style. For this reason, the following survey not only discusses the works themselves, but also attempts to show (where appropriate) how they lead up to certain aspects of *Brás Cubas* and *Papéis Avulsos*

Machado made his debut for the *Cruzeiro* on 26th March 1878 with two mock dramas entitled "O bote de rapé" and "A sonâmbula". The first (which is also written in verse), includes amongst its list of players Tomé and Elisa, as well as a wall-clock and Tomé's nose. The comedy opens with Elisa offering to pick up a desperately needed box of snuff for her husband Tomé on one of her regular shopping sprees. Both the taking of snuff by Tomé and the extravagance of his wife identify the couple as typical members of the rich and frivolous sectors of Brazilian society. For Tomé "O vício

do rapé é vício circumspecto./Indica desde logo um homem de razão" (CsemD p. 269), and Elisa buys far more goods than even she originally intended during the hours she is out, besides wasting time catching up on the latest gossip. In the meantime Tomé and his nose have a brief conversation on the virtues of snuff over more natural nasal experiences until they can stand the waiting no longer:

O NARIZ

O nariz sem rapé é alma sem amor.

TOMÉ

Olha, podes cheirar esta pequena flor.

O NARIZ

Flores! nunca! jamais! Dizem que há pelo mundo  
Quem goste de cheirar esse produto imundo.  
Um nariz que se preza odeia aromas tais.  
Outros os gozos são das cavernas nasais.  
Quem primeiro aspirou aquele pó divino,  
Deixa as rosas e o mais às ventas do menino.

TOMÉ (consigo)

Acho neste nariz bastante elevação,  
Dignidade, critério, empenho e reflexão.  
Respeita-se; não desce a farejar essências,  
Águas de toucador e outras minudências.

O NARIZ

Vamos uma pitada!

TOMÉ

Um instante, infeliz!

(aparte)

Vou dormir para ver se aquieto o nariz.

(Dorme algum tempo e acorda)

Safa! Que sonho; ah! Que horas são!

O RELÓGIO (batendo)

Uma, duas. (CsemD, p. 272)

Unfortunately, when Elisa finally returns she realizes that in her rush to visit both her friends and the fashionable shops of Rio she has forgotten all about Tomé's snuff. In a later edition of the *Cruzeiro*, Machado would concentrate exclusively on the petty preoccupations of women like Elisa. "Antes da missa" (Cruz 7 May 1878) is a parody in verse of a typical conversation between two wealthy Rio housewives, one of whom is on her way to Mass. After discussing certain items of clothing, jewellery, gossip and even the elegance of a missal book, the two part company, with D. Luisa rushing off to the ceremony. "Quase onze, Beatriz! Vou a ver a Deus. Adeus!" (PagR, p. 217), she exclaims, despite her obvious disinterest in spiritual affairs. Characters such as Luisa,

Beatriz, Elisa and Tomé would remain important targets of Machado's humour in the much improved irony of several *Papéis Avulsos* stories.<sup>30</sup>

"A sonâmbula" is a return to the specific satire of neo-spiritualist practices. Written in the form of a short play, this "Ópera-cômica em sete colunas", in which the authorities eventually expose the activities of two charlatans, comes complete with "música do maestro Policiani" and the Greek-like chorus of an accompanying group of *urbanos*. More important in terms of criticism are the hyperbolic and self-condemnatory claims made by Dr. Magnus on behalf of himself and his medium when a prospective client asks them whether it would be possible to identify the owner of a certain military bonnet:

Dr. MAGNUS - Se podemos dizer? Mas, senhor, nós podemos dizer tudo, sobre todos os bonés do universo. Nós sabemos todas as ciências, a cartomancia, a quiromancia, a onomancia, a ganância e a petulância. Eu sou o célebre Dr. Magnus, isto é o grande doutor, o doutor máximo, o doutor onividente, oniciente, onipresente e onipotente. Esta é a não menos célebre D. Flora de Villar, a sonâmbula lúcida, extra-lúcida, super-lúcida e oni-lúcida. (Disp, p. 433)

For all their arrogance, neither the hypnotist nor his sensitive are able tell Garcez anything more than the self-evident statement that "Esse boné pertence a um jovem militar" (Disp, p. 435). for which they attempt to charge some exorbitant fee. Fortunately for Garcez (and his wife Simplicia, whom he now suspects of infidelity), tenente Lopez enters the premises to arrest the two pretenders and recognizes the hat as his own.

As with "Uma visita de Alcibiades", the situation set up by Machado in "A sonâmbula" is a parody of the assertions that were being made by many clairvoyants at the time when he was writing. In one of his "Notas Semanais" (21 Jun 1878), Machado would mention in passing how the role of the somnambule had shifted slightly in recent times: "O sonambulismo tem sido aplicado à cura de moléstias, e ultimamente à busca das coisas perdidas e à predição do futuro, o que aliás a nossa policia contestou de um modo formal e urbano" (OC.III, p. 393). Also, only a month prior to writing those words, Machado had chronicled the imprisonment of two Italian sounding tricksters in Rio. His sarcasm leaves us in no doubt as to his feelings on the activities and fate of Miroli and Locatelli:

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<sup>30</sup> "D. Benedita", "Teoria do medalhão" and "O espelho".

O primeiro deles merece dois dedos de admiração. Sucessivamente médico, domador de feras, volatim, mestre de dança, e ultimamente adivinho, não se pode dizer que seja homem vulgar; é um fura-vidas, que se atira à *struggle for life* com unhas e dentes, sobretudo com unhas. De unhas dadas com a dama Locatelli, fundou uma Delfos na Rua do Espírito Santo, entrou a predizer as coisas vedadas. O processo era o sonambulismo ou o espiritismo. Os crédulos, que já no tempo da Escritura eram a maioria do gênero humano, acudiram à lições de tão ilustre par, até que a policia o convidou a ir meditar nos destinos de Galileu e outras vítimas da autoridade pública. (OC.III p. 383)

Machado's interest in fraudulent individuals who advertized their supposedly supernatural powers, however, can be traced back at least as far as 1865. On 21st March of that year, he chose to bring up the subject of spiritualist prophecy during a discussion of a hopeful development in the Paraguayan War in one of his regular *crônicas* for the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*. Apparently, one believer had recently forecast the bombing of Montevideo, which did not take place. Rather than stress the failure of the prediction, Machado concentrates on the nature of spiritualist prophecies in general:

A maior parte dos acontecimentos anunciados pelo espiritismo não eram predições, eram induções. Quase todos eram a consequência provável dos fatos conhecidos. O bombardeamento de Montevideo estava no caso. A atitude da praça, a tenacidade dos chefes, a surdez do governo oriental, tudo fazia crer no ataque, nada fazia crer no convênio. Era indução lógica. (J.23, p. 334)

Clearly, then, Machado had formed an opinion on the predictive and possibly other aspects of spiritualist theory and practice well before he gave fictional expression to his thoughts in the short stories. And the words with which he prefaces his comments in the 1865 *crônica* are equally applicable to the anti-spiritualist tales of the 1870s:

Não sabemos se o leitor crê ou não crê no espiritismo.

Pela nossa parte, nunca prestamos fé a essas superstições, apesar de conhecermos algumas pessoas para quem o espiritismo é uma verdade incontestável e uma ciência adquirida. (J.23, p. 333)

The main difference between this early piece of writing and the stories is that in the latter Machado does not bother to put forward a coherent argument against spiritualism. The belief in reincarnation is diagnosed as madness in "Decadência de dois grandes homens". In "Uma visita de Alcibiades" spirit materialization acquires the status of an amusing fairy story. The ghost who appears in "Sem olhos" is a figment of the narrator's imagination. Finally, spiritualism receives its most burlesque treatment from Machado in "A sonâmbula", with the swindlers condemning themselves out of their own mouths.

The least story-like of Machado's *Cruzeiro* writings, "Um cão de lata ao rabo" (Cruz 2 Apr 1878), has been described as a compositional exercise and "uma sátira contra o estilo hugoano numa época em que os seus explosivos ainda atroavam os ares brasileiros".<sup>31</sup> Neither judgement is incorrect but they give a rather limited picture of the philosophical, intellectual and social criticisms that Machado is trying to get across. The work consists of three short essays prefaced by an introduction. Here the narrator explains that the essays were written in response to a literary competition set by a schoolmaster in Chapéu d'Uvas on the childish practice of tying a tin to a dog's tail. He concludes his remarks by giving us a brief indication of what we are about to read:

O mestre-escola nomeou um júri, de que eu fez parte. Sete escritos foram submetidos ao nosso exame. Eram geralmente bons; mas três sobretudo, mereceram a palma e encheram de pasmo o júri e o mestre, tais eram - neste o arrojo do pensamento e a novidade do estilo, - naquele a pureza da linguagem e a solenidade acadêmica - naquele outro a erudição rebuscada e técnica, - tudo novidade, ao menos em Chapéu d'Uvas. Nós os classificamos pela ordem do mérito e do estilo. Assim temos:

- 1.º Estilo antitético e asmático.
- 2.º Estilo *ab ovo*
- 3.º Estilo largo e clássico.

Para que o leitor fluminense julgue por si mesmo de tais méritos, vou dar adiante os referidos trabalhos, até agora inéditos, mas já agora sujeitos ao apreço público. (PagR, p. 174)

Machado's thinly disguised sarcasm continues in parodic form, beginning with a caricature of an exclamatory and antithetical style. As Eugênio Gomes has stated, there may be an intentional reference to the Hugo-influenced work of other Brazilian writers. In his article on the "Nova geração", Machado would make the following comment on a poem entitled "Dois Edifícios" (where the cell of a condemned man is facing a school building) in *Cantos e Lutas* by Valentim Magalhães:

Quanto à forma, nenhuma outra página deste livro manifesta melhor a influência direta de V. Hugo; lá está a antítese constante, - "a luz em frente à sombra"; - "a fome em frente à esmola"; "o deus da liberdade em frente ao deus do mal"; e esta outra figura para exprimir de vez o contraste da escola e da cadeia:

Vitor Hugo fitando Inácio de Loiola.

(OC.III, p. 825)

In the first of the papers on the trivial title of "Um cão de lata ao rabo", Machado takes the principle of antithesis to extraordinary lengths:

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<sup>31</sup> Eugênio Gomes in *Espelho contra Espelho: Estudos e Ensaios* (São Paulo: Progresso, 1949), pp. 86-87.



O cão ia. A lata saltava como os guizos do arlequim. De caminho envolveu-se nas pernas de um homem. O homem parou; o cão parou: pararam diante um do outro. Contemplação única! *Homo, canis*. Um parecia dizer: - Liberta-me! O outro parecia dizer: - Afasta-te! Após alguns instantes, recuaram ambos; o quadrúpede deslaçou-se do bípede. *Canis* levou a sua lata; *homo* levou a sua vergonha. Divisão equitativa. A vergonha é a lata ao rabo do caráter. (PagR, p. 176)

Apart from the antithesis itself, there are at least two other features of this essay that ought to be pointed out. The most obvious of these is the accumulation of hyperbolic expressions (which may well be another reference to the hugoist style), building up into a crescendo towards the middle of the piece:

Então, ao longe, muito longe, troou alguma coisa funesta e misteriosa. Era o vento, era o furacão que sacudia as algemas do infinito e rugia como uma imensa pantera. Após o rugido, o movimento, o ímpeto, a vertigem. O furacão vibrou, uivou, grunhiu. O mar calou o seu tormento, a terra calou a sua orquesta. O furacão vinha retorcendo as árvores, essas torres da natureza, vinha abatendo as torres, essas árvores da arte; e rolava tudo, e aturdiã tudo, e ensurdecia tudo. (PagR, pp. 176-177)

Cão e furacão envolveram-se um no outro; era a raiva, a ambição, a loucura, o desvario; eram todas as forças, todas as doenças; era o azul, que dizia ao pó: és baixo; era o pó, que dizia ao azul: é orgulhoso. Ouvia-se o rugir, o latir, o retinir; e por cima de tudo isso, uma testemunha impassível, o Destino; e por baixo de tudo isso, uma testemunha visível, o Homem. (PagR, p. 178)

It should also be noted that throughout the essay Machado is satirizing the idea that pseudo-philosophical concepts can be extracted from everyday phenomena. This is particularly evident in the early part of the narrative, where the running dog provides the author with the opportunity to speculate on the metaphysical significance of empty space:

O cão devorava. Que devorava o cão? O espaço. O espaço é comida. O céu pôs esse transparente manjar ao alcance dos impetuosos. Quando uns jantam e outros jejuam; quando, em oposição às toalhas da casa nobre, há os andrajos da casa pobre; quando em cima as garrafas choram *lacrima-christi*, e em baixo os olhos choram lágrimas de sangue, Deus inventou um banquete para a alma. Chamou-lhe espaço. Esse imenso azul, que está entre a criatura e o criador, é o caldeirão dos grandes famintos. Caldeirão azul: antinomia, unidade. (PagR, pp. 175-176)

In his efforts to express the sublime nature of everyday reality, the author has also lost all sense of a social conscience. The suggestion that the poor man can feast his soul on fresh air sounds like one of Brás Cubas' scandalous but nevertheless convenient theories.

Moving on to the second essay we find Machado satirizing the sober, scientific approach characteristic of positivist scholarship. Preoccupied with his desire to discover "a origem do uso de pôr uma lata ao rabo do cão" (PagR, p. 179), the author buries himself in a mass of classical and Biblical references. However, the writer's

display of erudition is as futile as it is extensive, since all his research leads him precisely nowhere:

Na *Iliada* não há episódio algum que mostre o uso da lata atada ao cão. O mesmo direi dos Vedas, do Popol-Vuh e dos livros de Confúcio. Num hino a Varuna ( *Rig-veda*, cap. I, v. 2), fala-se em um "cordel atado em baixo". Mas não sendo as palavras postas na boca do cão, e sim na do homem, é absolutamente impossível ligar esse texto ao uso moderno.

Que os meninos antigos brincavam, e de modo vário, é ponto incontroverso, em presença dos autores. Varrão, Cícero, Aquiles, Aulo Gélcio, Suetônio, Higino, Propércio, Marcial, falam de diferentes objetos com que as crianças se entretinham, ou fossem bonecas, ou espadas de pau, ou bolas, ou análogos artificios. Nenhum deles, entretanto, diz uma só palavra do cão de lata ao rabo. (PagR, p. 181)

Given the failure of the exercise, we can conclude that Machado is ridiculing both the technique of using "authoritative" sources to back up an argument and the academics who prided themselves on the extent of their knowledge. If the list of famous and obscure figures seems impressive at first, in the final analysis it is pointless and inappropriate, especially when one remembers the title of the paper. Once again, Brás Cubas will make use of an identical technique to support his dubious hypotheses.

Third prize in the prose competition is awarded to the almost unreadable composition of an enthusiast in classical rhetoric. As he comes to the end of his essay, the narrator's ornate style, his flattering compliments and false humility are reminiscent of Machado's earlier parodies of the after-dinner speaker:

Folgareis certamente com o caso que deixo narrado, embora não possa o apoucado e rude estilo do vosso condiscipulo dar ao quadro os adequados toques. Feracíssimo é o campo para engenhos de mais alto quilate; e embora abastado de urzes, e porventura coberto de trevas, a imaginação dará o fio de Ariadne com que sói vencer os mas complicados laberintos.

Entranhado anelo me enche de antecipado gosto, por ler os produtos de vossas inteligências, que serão em tudo dignos do nosso digno mestre, e que desafiarão a fouce da morte colhendo vasta seara de louros imarcescíveis com que engrinaldareis as fontes imortais. (PagR, p. 184)

In all three pieces, then, Machado is making a statement about a society which praises rhetoric above substance, and prepares the way for the unreliable advice contained in the "Teoria do medalhão".

Machado's following contribution for the *Cruzeiro*, "O califa de Platina" (Cruz 9 Apr 1878), is possibly the most unconventional of them all. It also seems to be the most topical work of the period, with Machado making apparent reference to some long-

forgotten trade war between Brazil and the Platine provinces.<sup>32</sup> The caliph, with his interest in political conciliation, the fostering of industry and commerce, and the encouragement of the arts, appears to be the perfect statesman, when one night his sleep is disturbed by the vision of a yellow dwarf:

Comendador dos crentes, teu califado tem sido um modelo de príncipes; falta-lhe porém originalidade; é preciso que faças alguma coisa original. Dou-te um ano e um dia para cumprir este preceito: se o não cumprires, voltarei e irás comigo a um abismo, que há no centro da Tartária, no qual morrerás de fome, sede, desespero e solidão. (PagR. pp. 241-242)

Understandably shaken by this and other appearances by the sinister dwarf, the caliph eventually convokes a meeting of all his advisers to decide on an original idea. The suggestion by one official that the noses of all subjects be cut off is rejected as being "excessivamente original", and in any case would ruin both the handkerchief and medicine industries. After ruling out the establishment of a voluntary, clandestine and anonymous tax system as put forward by the chief eunuch, they finally support the visir's proposal that they place a ban on all goods imported from Brasilina. His reasoning is that other traders will follow suit in shunning the country, with the result that Brasilina will also be forced to close its gates, at least on Sundays:

- Ora, como há em Brasilina uma classe caixeiral, que suspira pelo fechamento das portas aos domingos, para ir fazer suas orações nas mesquitas, aconteceu isto: o fechamento das portas de cá produzirá o fechamento das portas de lá e Vossa Grandeza terá assim a glória de inaugurar o *calembour* nas relações internacionais. (PagR, p. 247)

The visir is rewarded by the grateful caliph with a scimitar, a bag of sequins and the unmistakably Brazilian "patente de coronel da guarda nacional" (PagR, p. 248). Time, however, proves the visir wrong. The only result of his original strategy is the growing discontent of the people of Platina, who start to miss their usual merchandise. Faced with the anger of the caliph, the vizir consults Abracadabro, "varão exímio na geomancia" (PagR, p. 250), who tells him simply to wait for the fatal day appointed by the yellow dwarf. All ends happily when the dwarf accepts the vizir's measure as being eminently original. The trading policy is immediately reversed and things soon return to normal. Without the benefit of documents that can help us identify the precise objectives (if any) of Machado's satire, the fantastic and frivolous elements of "O califa

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<sup>32</sup> None of the standard histories of Brazil I consulted make any mention of such a dispute in or around 1878. It is quite possible that Machado may have been writing a general political satire or responding to appeals for a total ban on Sunday trading (see later).

de Platina” seem pointless and excessive. And yet its subtitle - *...rerum cognoscere causas* - indicates that Machado was attempting to convey the serious message that political decisions should be well thought out before they are implemented. In “A Sereníssima República”, the political allegory that he included in the *Papéis Avulsos*, Machado would achieve a more even balance between the fabrications of the narrative and the seriousness of its implications.

There can be no mistaking of Machado’s intentions in “Filosofia de um par de botas” (Cruz 23 April 1878), which represents the first of three *Cruzeiro* works where the melancholy bass notes of the ‘cello can be clearly heard behind the bold melody of the *machete*. The famous refrain of the writer of the Ecclesiastes (“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”) comes through: particularly strongly in this fantastic tale as Machado applies himself to a skeleton outline of the Brazilian social spectrum. The first paragraph, with its emphasis on the hearty meal that precipitates a restful walk on the beach, identifies the narrator as being a man of at least reasonable social status:

Uma destas tardes, como eu acabasse de jantar, e muito, lembrou-me dar um passeio à praia de Santa Luzia,... Sentei-me alonguei os olhos, espreguecei a alma, respirei à larga e disse ao estômago: - Digere a teu gosto, meu velho companheiro. *Deus nobis haec otia fecit.* (PagR, p. 187)

Coming across a pair of old boots, the narrator allows his mind “a considerar as vicissitudes humanas, e a conjeturar qual teria sido a vida daquele produto social” (PagR, p. 188). Suddenly, he fancies he hears the sound of muffled voices. Realizing it comes from the boots he sharpens his ears to listen to their philosophical and nostalgic dialogue - a history of descending social fortunes that has brought them from a shop window in the Rua do Ouvidor to the beach of Santa Luzia. The boots reveal the petty domestic deceit of their first owner Dr. Crispim, who spends all night playing cards, tiptoes in at night so as not to wake his wife (who pretends to be asleep), and then tells her he was at the *maçoneria*. They also give some idea of the couple’s social status:

BOTA DIREITA

- Santo casal! Naquela casa fomos sempre felizes, sempre! E a gente que eles freqüentavam? Quando não havia tapêtes, havia palhinha; pisávamos o macio, o limpo, o asseado. Andávamos de carro muita vez, e eu gosto tanto de carro! Estivemos ali uns quarenta dias, não?

BOTA ESQUERDA

Trinta e dois.

BOTA DIREITA

Só?

**BOTA ESQUERDA**

- Pois então! Ele gastava mais sapatos do que a Bolívia gasta constituições.

**BOTA DIREITA**

- Deixemo-nos de política. (PagR, p. 191)

Soon the boots are passed on to “um procurador de poucas causas” (PagR, p. 194), whose busy lifestyle contributes greatly to their deterioration. This marks the beginning of a downward social spiral. They move quickly from the solicitor to a cashier who eventually hands them over to a cobbler. “O remendão (ah! já não era a Rua do Ouvidor!) deu-nos alguns pontos, tapou-nos este buraco, e impingiu-nos ao aprendiz de barbeiro do beco dos Afritos” (PagR, p. 195). With the barber’s assistant, the boots suffer a loss of prestige, since they are worn only at night and used as dancing shoes. “Nem nos comprou para outra coisa, porque para os passeios tinha um par de botas novas, de verniz e bico fino” (PagR, p. 195). Their next owner is a labourer, who treats them even less kindly. “Daí fomos atiradas à rua, onde nos apanhou um preto padeiro, que nos reduziu enfim a este último esta! Triste! triste!” (PagR, p. 196). Having come to the end of their personal history, the boots start to express what it feels like to be at the bottom of the social ladder. For one of them, their journey through all sectors of society has at least been educational: “se na verdade é triste acabar assim tão miseravelmente, numa praia, esburacadas e rotas, sem tacões nem ilusões - por outro lado, ganhamos a paz, e a experiência” (PagR, pp. 196-197). But for the other boot, the memory of what they were and the awareness of what they have become are impossible to reconcile:

**BOTA DIREITA**

Que eu, na verdade, quisera descansar agora estes últimos dias; mas descansar sem saudades, sem a lembrança do que foi. Viver tão afagadas, tão admiradas na vidraça do autor dos nossos dias; passar uma vida feliz em casa do nosso primeiro dono, suportável na casa dos outros; e agora...

**BOTA ESQUERDA**

Agora quê?

**BOTA DIREITA**

A vergonha, mana. (PagR, p. 197)

The left boot, however, maintains her philosophical attitude to life. She accuses her partner of vanity, arguing that what has happened to them is simply:

a lei do mundo; assim caem os Estados e as instituições. Assim perece a beleza e a mocidade. Tudo botas, mana; tudo botas, com tacões ou sem tacões, novas ou velhas; direitas ou acalanhadas, lustrosas ou ruças, mas botas, botas, botas! (PagR, p. 200)

The boots then fall into a pensive silence and the narrator wonders whether to grab them with an eye to studying, interrogating and even selling them to a circus. He decides to leave them in peace. But even at this stage in their life, the boots are denied any rest since a wandering beggar gratefully picks them up as if they were a gift from heaven. So their journey down the social ladder continues. Who knows where it will end? "Filosofia de um par de botas" is by far the most contemplative of the *Cruzeiro* pieces and one of the most successful works of the decade. By deciding to reconstruct the autobiography of a pair of old boots, Machado is able to make explicit reference to his personal philosophy of vanity, and provide a panoramic view of the society whose inequalities he was becoming increasingly eager to criticize.

In "Na arca" (Cruz 14 May 1878), the only *Cruzeiro* work to be included in *Papéis Avulsos*, Machado turns his thoughts once again to the concept of vanity. This time the emphasis is on the universal implications of greed and selfishness. Its subtitle informs us that it is supposed to consist of "Três capítulos inéditos do Gênesis", and throughout the narrative Machado contrasts the distinctive style of Biblical language with the colloquialisms of everyday speech. But the parodic humour of the piece does nothing to disguise Machado's pessimistic views on the power of egotistical desires and the ideal of world peace. Noah's hope that the purge of a universal flood will bring a brave new world in which "tornaremos a descer à terra, e a viver na seio da paz e da concórdia" (OC.II p. 303) is threatened even before they disembark by an argument that breaks out amongst his sons as to the future division of the land. The noise of their vocal conflict even inspires unrest amongst the animals who had hitherto lived in perfect peace. When Shem and Japheth eventually resort to fisticuffs their father is forced to intervene. Having separated the two, Noah lifts his eyes to heaven and cries out:

26. - "Eles ainda não possuem a terra e já estão brigando por causa dos limites. O que será quando vieram a Turquia e a Rússia?"

27. - E nenhum dos filhos de Noé pôde entender esta palavra de seu pai.

28. - A arca, porém, continuava a boiar sobre as águas do abismo. (OC.II p. 307)

The inclusion of the prophetic element enables Machado to make a concrete contemporary reference to the question of national boundaries. Really, nothing has changed and the human race is still hovering dangerously over the abyss of war and self-destruction.

In his final *Cruzeiro* work, Machado takes yet another approach to the problem of vanity and at the same time points to an important influence on his literary development. The title, style and content of the "Elogio de vaidade" (Cruz 28 May 1878) are strongly reminiscent of the *Praise of Folly*, written by the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus in 1510. What Machado calls vanity is identical to certain aspects of Erasmus' constantly changing definition of folly.<sup>33</sup> Also, Machado makes use of Erasmus' device of personifying Folly in order to allow Vanity to sing her own praises:

Logo que a Modéstia acabou de falar, com os olhos no chão, a Vaidade empertigou-se e disse:

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Damas e cavalheiros, acabais de ouvir a mais chocha de todas as virtudes, a mais peca, a mais estéril de quantas podem reger o coração dos homens; e ides ouvir a mais sublime delas, a mais fecunda, a mais sensível, a que pode dar maior cópia de venturas sem contraste.

Que eu sou a Vaidade, classificada entre os vícios por alguns retóricos de profissão; mas na realidade, a primeira das virtudes. (PagR, p. 227)

Asking her audience to ignore the ridiculous aspect of her jester's costume,<sup>34</sup> Vanity proceeds to reveal her own capacity for persuasive rhetoric by arguing (in much the same way as Erasmus' Folly) the case for her usefulness and ubiquity. She soothes the conscience, promotes friendship in the well-timed compliment and the desire to be acknowledged, and is generally at the root of many apparently selfless actions. She can be found everywhere, since everyone, no matter how poor, takes a pride in something:

Valeria a pena ter, se eu não realçasse os teres? Foi para escondê-lo ou mostrá-lo que mandaste vir de tão longe esse vaso opulento? Foi para escondê-lo ou mostrá-lo, que encomendaste à melhor fábrica o tecido que te veste, a safira que te arreia, a carruagem que te leva? Foi para escondê-lo ou mostrá-lo, que ordenaste esse festim babilônico, e pediste ao pomar os melhores frutos, e ao Reno e ao Douro os melhores vinhos? E tu, que nada tens, por que aplicas o salário de uma semana ao jantar de uma hora, senão porque eu te possuo e *te digo que alguma coisa debes parecer melhor do que és na realidade?* [My emphasis] Por que levas ao teu casamento um coche, tão rico e tão caro, como o do teu opulento vizinho, quando podias ir à igreja com teus pés? Por que compras essa jóia e esse chapéu? Por que talhas o teu vestido pelo padrão mais rebuscado, e por que te remiras ao espelho com amor, senão porque *eu te consolo da tua*

<sup>33</sup> Wayne A. Rebhorn gives an excellent summary and explanation of Folly's different guises in "The Metamorphoses of Moria: Structure and Meaning in the *Praise of Folly*", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 89, 3, (1974), pp. 463-476.

<sup>34</sup> In *O calundu e a panacéia - Machado de Assis, a sátira menipéia e a tradição luciânica*, Enylton de Sá Rego makes the useful comment that:

Ao atribuir à Vaidade o gorro de guizo típico dos bobos da corte (*fous de cour, jesters*) Machado está certamente usando outra forma de intertextualidade, seguindo não só a tradição da Loucura de Erasmo mas também a tradição iconográfica originada por Hans Holbein, que dotou a Loucura de tal aparência em suas ilustrações ao *Moriae Encomium*. (Sá Rego, p. 111)

*miséria e do teu nada*, [my emphasis] dando-te a troco de um sacrifício grande um benefício ainda maior. (PagR. pp. 229-230)

The omnipresence of Vanity, then, has an existential as well as a social significance which foreshadows Machado's ironic theory of the soul in "O espelho". The idea that she is the only consolation of the poor leads us to the conclusion that Man is nothing in and of himself. He is a spiritual vacuum, waiting to be filled by material possessions, power, prestige or popularity. These are all consequences of that basic drive for individual recognition that can be attributed to Vanity. But despite her confident discourse, Vanity fails to convince her audience. She is frowned upon, laughed at, some even shake their heads as if she were mad. Vanity concludes, however, that their refusal to mentally accept the truth of her words is a final proof of her power: "Tendes a volúpia suprema da vaidade, que é a vaidade da modéstia" (PagR. p. 238) and she leaves the platform.

Without wishing to embark upon a study of Erasmian "influences" on Machado, it should be pointed out that the latter's familiarity with the Renaissance scholar's most famous work probably goes deeper and much further back in time than some critics maintain. Both John Kinnear and Enylton de Sá Rego refer to an 1877 French translation of the *Praise of Folly*, discovered in Machado's personal library, as a possible starting-point.<sup>35</sup> But as early as 2nd March 1862, Machado had made a fleeting reference to Erasmus as he came to the end of one of his *crônica*'s for the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*:

E com isto deixo o leitor, que arderá por ir tomar parte na folgança destes três dias, a não ser que, como eu, olhe para estas coisas de mascarados como uma distração muito vulgar. Em verdade, será preciso esperar o carnaval para ver mascarados? Há muita gente que, apenas o Sr. Laemmert publica as suas folhinhas, corre a ver em que época é o carnaval. Essa gente é de patriarcal simplicidade. O carnaval desta terra é constante, e é a política que nos oferece o espetáculo de um continuo disfarce e *dançatriz farófia*, como dizia Filinto.

Se pensás como eu, ó sério leitor, limita-te a ver passar os que se divertem, e vai depois entreter o resto da noite com a leitura do livro que imortalizou Erasmo. (J.22, pp. 143-144)

Whilst it is not possible to prove from this quotation that Machado had actually read the *Praise of Folly*, he certainly seems to know enough about it to be able to apply Erasmus'

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<sup>35</sup> Kinnear, "Machado de Assis: To Believe or Not to Believe", *Modern Language Review*, vol.71, 1 (1976), p. 62; Sá Rego, *O calundu e a panacéia - Machado de Assis, a sátira menipéia e a tradição luciânica*, p. 43.



central image of life as “nothing more than an entertainment staged by Folly”<sup>36</sup> to the Brazilian political scene. Also, in a slightly later *crônica*, for the same newspaper (3 Aug 1864), Machado would extend the concept of masquerade to the spheres of social morality and international conflicts.<sup>37</sup> It had been predicted by a scientist at Melbourne, Professor Newmager, that in 1865 the continued existence of life on Earth would be threatened by the proximity of a passing comet. Seizing the opportunity to comment on moral and political matters, Machado interprets the impending catastrophe as a sign of divine anger:

Estávamos tão contentes, tão tranqüilos, tão felizes, - iludiamo-nos uns aos outros com tanta graça e tanto talento, - abrimos cada vez mais o fosso que separa as idéias e os fatos, os nomes e as coisas, fazíamos da providência a capa das nossas velhacarias, - adorávamos o talento sem moralidade e deixávamos morrer de fome a moralidade sem talento, dávamos à vaidade o nome de um justo orgulho, - usávamos o nome de cristãos e levávamos ao juiz de paz o primeiro que nos injuriasse, - dissolvíamos a justiça e o direito para aplicá-los em doses diversas às nossas conveniências, - fazíamos tudo isto, mansa e pacificamente, com a mira nos aplausos finais, e eis que se anuncia uma interrupção do espetáculo com a presença de um Átila cabeludo! (J.23, p. 28)

Se escaparmos ao cataclismo ficaremos livres por algum tempo, e então naturalmente esquecidos dos cometas vingadores, prosseguiremos na comédia universal, sem coros nem intervalos, assistendo ao mesmo tempo às comédias parciais e políticas, à comédia dinamarquesa, à comédia polaca, à comédia peruana, à comédia francesa, etc., etc. Basta lançar os olhos a qualquer ponto da carta geográfica para achar com que divertir o tempo. (J.23, pp. 30-31)

The distance between facts and ideas, the hypocrisy of moral standards and social relationships, the spectacle of personal and universal affairs - all these form an important part of Erasmus’ tragi-comic vision of life in the *Praise of Folly* (despite the fact that he concludes with an affirmation of Christian folly). Significantly, these same aspects become key features of Machado’s short stories, but only gradually so. As we have seen in previous chapters, during his time at the *Jornal das Famílias*, Machado’s style underwent several major alterations as he learnt how to express his cynicism in fiction by applying various techniques of parody and satire. It was not, however, until he fully adopted the principle of artistic vanity which had also inspired Erasmus’ ironic praise of folly that Machado was consistently able to produce works of real literary importance. In a sense though, as he approached the writing of the *Cruzeiro* works and moved on to the composition of *Brás Cubas* and the rest of the *Papéis Avulsos*, Machado was only

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<sup>36</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, Trans. by Clarence H. Miller (London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Kinnear cites this piece as an early example of Machado’s unreliable narration in “Machado de Assis: To Believe or Not to Believe”, p. 61, without, however, linking it to Erasmian thought.

following his own advice: "Afinal de contas, os homens que não são sérios e graves, são exatamente os homens graves e sérios. Demócrito continua a ter razão: só é sério aquilo que o não parece".<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> "Ao Acaso", *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 22 Nov 1864. Reprinted in J.23, p. 239.

# Conclusion

## A new beginning

The closure of the *Jornal das Famílias* in 1878 brings us to the end of Machado's literary apprenticeship. Over a period of twenty years, his writing and thought had matured considerably as he slowly and deliberately endeavoured to impose his version of life and fiction on his audience. In the pre-1870 stories, Machado set himself the task of weaning his readers from the melodrama of popular literature. And despite the obvious weaknesses of some of his earliest efforts, Machado very quickly revealed his interest in difficult social issues ("Frei Simão", "Virginius"), psychological analysis ("Confissões de uma viúva moça", "Miss Dollar") and the critical potential of sarcasm ("O que são as moças", "O segredo de Augusta"). Between *Contos Fluminenses* and *Histórias da Meia-Noite*, Machado's attempts in the novel and the short story to construct romantic narratives on the basis of negative motivations (*Ressurreição*, "Qual dos dois?") ended largely in artistic failure. He managed to find a way forward, however, by presenting his views on individual and social morality in the form of satire ("A parasita azul") or in tones of ironical cynicism ("Almas agradecidas", "Um homem superior"), which were much more effective. Also, by 1873 a philosophical pessimism had begun to emerge in Machado's writing with the unusual tales "O rei dos caiporas" and "Rui de Leão". From 1874, the majority of Machado's short stories would be characterized by an uncompromisingly bleak outlook on the nature of human character, the materialism of society and the general fragility of our existence. Alongside these concerns, Machado began to reveal his interest in matters of faith and belief by embarking upon the satire of scientific and spiritualist theories.

However, despite the many changes and improvements that occurred in his writing during his time with the *Jornal das Famílias*, Machado did not fulfil his literary potential until the demise of the magazine. For all their innovations, the *Jornal das Famílias* stories were, for the most part, written within the framework of romantic fiction. They were, so to speak, self-defeating narratives in which Machado made ample use of literary conventions in order to disillusion the reader. And even though at times Machado showed himself to be artistically creative, he was never so adventurous as to completely ignore the patterns of romance. "Mariana" (published in 1871), whose ironic narration is obscured by its more sentimental aspects, is one of the most obvious examples of Machado's tentative approach. It was only when he became involved in another, less traditional periodical, the *Cruzeiro*, that Machado allowed himself the freedom to express his intellectual wit in a number of works over a short period of time.

Immediately after the closure of the *Jornal das Famílias*, Machado became heavily involved in the establishment and direction of the literary section of the *Estação*,<sup>39</sup> a women's magazine, which, if anything, was even more fashionable than the *Jornal das Famílias*. And yet, after a predictable start in 1879 with "Um para o outro" (Est Jul-Oct 1879) and "A chave" (Est Dec 1879-Feb 1880),<sup>40</sup> it was in the *Estação* that Machado would publish the longest and most complex of the *Papéis Avulsos* stories, "O alienista" (Est Oct 1881-Mar 1882). The chronicle of Simão Bacamarte's experiments in Itaguaí can be read as political allegory, a satire on science and an essay on the necessity of madness/vanity in society. Clearly, by 1881 Machado had taken the decision to abandon his protest against romantic ideology in his tales (regardless of his audience) and concentrate on developing a more personal style. This important shift of focus can be illustrated by a brief look at the alteration made by Machado to the concluding words of "A chinela turca" (Época Nov 1875) on its inclusion in *Papéis Avulsos*.

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<sup>39</sup> See Marlyse Meyer, "Estações", unpublished typescript.

<sup>40</sup> Not much can be said about "Um para o outro" since most of the issues in which the story appeared have been lost. But the chapters that remain, published in *Dispersos de Machado de Assis* ed., J. M. Massa, (Rio: INL), 1965, pp. 437-444, indicate that it was a typical example of anti-Romantic fiction by Machado. In "A chave", the beautiful but vain Marcelina is rescued from a possible death by drowning but does not correspond to her rescuer's love until she discovers his talent for dancing the waltz: "a verdadeira chave do coração de Marcelina não era a gratidão mas a coreografia" (OC.II, p. 885).

"A chinela turca" is the account of an incredible nightmare dreamt by a young man (Duarte) on being subjected to the tedious reading of an ultra-Romantic play by Major Lopo Alves, a family friend and relative of Duarte's beloved Cecília. As the 1875 moral indicates, Machado's exotic and fanciful story (involving a Turkish slipper, a beautiful woman, the threat of murder by poisoning etc.) was originally designed to attack the absurdities of the Romantic drama:

Livre do pesadelo, Duarte despediu-se do major jurando a si próprio nunca mais assistir à leitura de melodramas, sejam ou não obras de major. É a moralidade do conto. (CEsq, p. 292)

When he came to edit the story for *Papéis Avulsos*, however, Machado transformed the whole purpose of the narrative:

Duarte acompanhou o major até a porta, respirou ainda uma vez, apalpou-se, foi até à janela. Ignora-se o que pensou durante os primeiros minutos; mas ao cabo de um quarto de hora, eis o que ele dizia consigo: - Ninfa, doce amiga, fantasia inquieta e fértil, tu me salvaste de uma ruim peça com um sonho original, substuiste-me o tédio por um pesadelo: foi um bom negócio. Um bom negócio e uma grave lição: provaste-me ainda uma vez que o melhor drama está no espectador e não no palco. (OC.II, p. 303)

Duarte words indicate that by *Papéis Avulsos* Machado was ready to give free rein to his creative imagination instead of channelling his efforts into the criticism of romanticism. All of the *Papéis Avulsos* tales benefit from the presence of Duarte's "fantasia inquieta e fértil". The confidence with which Machado went about his new approach to fiction, however, was not gained in the genre of the short story, where most of his previous literary developments had occurred. It was in the *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* that Machado ended his lip-service to romance and established the autonomy of his writing.

Brás' arrogance is both a symptom of his social class<sup>41</sup> and a robust defence by Machado of his right to artistic freedom. If the book failed to please, that was no concern of the narrator - "pago-te com um piparote, e adeus" (Cubas, p. 12). Brás' writing reflects his general attitude to social intercourse: "opiniático, egoísta e algo contemptor dos homens" (Cubas, p. 26), and the reader is forced to follow the caprices of his narration. From gentle teasing and frustrating breaks in the narrative to outright insult,

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<sup>41</sup> For two excellent studies on the social implications of Brás' discourse see Roberto Schwarz' essays: "Uma Desfaçatez de Classe", *Novos Estudos*, 11 (1985), pp. 40-48; "O sentido histórico da crueldade em Machado de Assis", *Novos Estudos*, 17 (1987), pp. 38-44.

Brás' disregard for his audience is made painfully obvious throughout, reaching its climax in chapter LXXI:

#### O SENÃO DO LIVRO

Começo a arrepender-me deste livro. Não que ele me canse; eu não tenho que fazer; e realmente, expedir alguns magros capítulos para esse mundo sempre é tarefa que distrai um pouco da contração cadavérica; vício grave, e aliás infimo, porque o maior defeito deste livro és tu, leitor. [my emphasis] Tu tens pressa de envelhecer, e o livro anda devagar; tu amas a narração direita e nutrida, o estilo regular e fluente, e este livro e o meu estilo são como os ébrios, guinam a direita e à esquerda, andam e param, resmungam, urram, gargalham, ameaçam o céu e escorregam e caem... (Cubas, p. 85)

As far as Brás is concerned, there is nothing wrong with his digressive and enigmatic style. If the book is found to be boring, it is the reader who is at fault. Such a bold statement is clearly indicative of Machado's decision to follow the impulse of his artistic senses.

In writing *Brás Cubas* Machado ran the serious risk of alienating himself from his audience. Even some of Machado's close friends expressed a puzzlement in their initial reaction to the work. "As *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* serão um romance?" Capistrano de Abreu would ask in his brief review of 30th January 1881.<sup>42</sup> And in a letter to Machado of three weeks previous, Capistrano had quoted the perplexity of another friend, Valentim Magalhaes, who wanted to know: "O que é *Brás Cubas* em última análise? Romance? dissertação moral? desfastio humorístico?"<sup>43</sup> Whereas Machado's previous novels had been recognisably that, novels, his latest effort with its fragmented narration and evidently capricious narrator seemed to defy all categorization.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the encouraging words in a letter written by Machado's brother-in-law to the author in 1882 would seem to indicate that, at least in its early stages, reception to the work was less than favorable:

Parece que não tem razão para desanimar e bom é que continue a escrever sempre. Que importa que a maioria do público lhe não compreendesse o seu último livro? Há livros que são para todos e outros que são só para alguns - o seu último livro está no segundo

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<sup>42</sup> Reprinted in *Ensaio e Estudos*, 4<sup>ª</sup> série, ed., J. Honório Rodrigues (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1976), p. 197.

<sup>43</sup> Reprinted in *Correspondência de Capistrano de Abreu*, vol. I, ed., J. Honório Rodrigues (Rio: Civilização Brasileira, 1977), p. 50.

<sup>44</sup> The question of whether *Brás Cubas* should be called a novel continues to exercise the minds of Machado's critics. Most recently, Enylton de Sá Rego has argued that the work should be looked upon as an example of Menippean satire. In *O calundu e a panacéia - Machado de Assis, a sátira menipéica e a tradição luciânica* (Rio: Forense Universitária, 1989), he firmly places Machado in the tradition of Lucian, Erasmus, and Burton, by identifying their common qualities of parody and literary misquotation, satire and anatomy, pessimism and distanced point of view.

caso e sei que foi muito apreciado por quem o compreendeu - não são e o amigo sabe-o bem os livros de mais voga os que têm mais mérito. Não pense nem se ocupe da opinião pública quando escrever. A justiça mais tarde ou mais cedo se lhe fará esteja certo disso.<sup>45</sup>

Thankfully Novais was right, as subsequent editions of "esta obra que alguma benevolência parece ter encontrado no público" (Machado's words)<sup>46</sup> were to prove in 1896 and 1899. Nevertheless, the eventual popularity of *Brás Cubas* ought not to distract us from the fact that within the context of Machado's own novelistic output before 1880 it came as both a great shock and a great innovation. It was, however, a necessary shock as far as Machado's future development was concerned. As the study of the early short stories has revealed, the seeds of narrative irony, ideological pessimism and literary anarchy had been germinating for a long time in Machado's fiction until he finally gave birth to the book that Brás claims to have been written "com pachorra, com a pachorra de um homem já desafrontado com a brevidade do século, obra supinamente filosófica, de uma filosofia desigual, agora austera, logo brincalhona, coisa que não edifica nem destrói, não inflama nem regela, e é todavia mais do que passatempo e menos do que apostolado" (Cubas, p. 16). Such a description is just as fitting for the *Papéis Avulsos* and informs us that, after years of experimentation, Machado had finally found an artistic method that adequately conveyed his tragi-comic vision of life.

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Luís Viana Filho in *A Vida de Machado de Assis*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editora, 1974), pp. 113-114.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted by Gondin da Fonseca in *Machado de Assis e o Hipopótamo*, (Rio: Edições de Ouro, 1968), p. 213.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF STORIES

### 1858 - 1870

- "Tres tesouros perdidos" (Marm Jan 1858) PagR, pp. 221-224
- "O país das quimeras" (Futuro Dec 1862) ReliqCV, pp. 417-441
- "Frei Simão" (JdasF Jun 1864) OC.II, pp. 152-157
- "Virgínius" (JdasF Jul 1864) OC.II, pp. 737-748
- "O anjo das donzelas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1864) CAv, pp. 21-41
- "Casada e viúva" (JdasF Nov 1864) OC.II, pp. 748-758
- "Questão de vaidade" (JdasF Dec 1864 - Mar 1865) HistR, pp. 7-90
- "Confissões de uma viúva moça" (JdasF Apr-May 1865) OC.II, pp. 99-117
- "Cinco mulheres" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1865) CRec, pp. 273-295
- "Linha reta, linha curva" (JdasF Oct-Dec 1865) OC.II, pp. 117-152
- "O oráculo" (JdasF Jan 1866) CRec, pp. 37-44
- "Uma excursão milagrosa" (JdasF Apr-May 1866) OC.II, pp. 758-771
- "O que são as moças" (JdasF May-Jun 1866) CRec, pp. 236-255
- "A pianista" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1866) CEsq, pp. 223-251
- "Astúcias de marido" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1866) CRec, pp. 143-162
- "Fernando e Fernanda" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1866) CRec, pp. 77-95
- "Francisca" (JdasF Mar 1867) CRec, pp. 21-36
- "Onda" (JdasF Apr 1867) CAv, pp. 73-91
- "O último dia de um poeta" (JdasF May-Jun 1867) CRec, pp. 207-235
- "Não é mel para a boca do asno" (JdasF Jan 1868) CEsp. 72-94
- "O carro N°13" (JdasF Mar 1868) CRec, pp. 256-272
- "A mulher de preto" (JdasF Apr-May 1868) OC.II, pp. 59-80
- "O segredo de Augusta" (JdasF Jul-Aug 1868) OC.II, pp. 80-99
- "Luís Soares" (JdasF Jan 1869) OC.II, pp. 44-59
- "O anjo Rafael" (JdasF Oct-Dec 1869) CEsp, pp. 29-71
- "Miss Dollar" (CF 1870) OC.II, pp. 27-44



## 1870 - 1873

- "O Capitão Mendonça" (JdasF May 1870) CRec, pp. 163-189
- "O rei do caiporas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1870) CRec, pp. 42-58
- "Aires e Vergueiro" (JdasF Jan 1871) CF.II, pp. 37-53
- "Mariana" (JdasF Jan 1871) OC.II, pp. 771-783
- "Almas agradecidas" (JdasF Mar/Oct 1871) HistR, pp. 91-130
- "O caminho de Damasco" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1871) HistR, pp. 131-193
- "Rui de Leão" (JdasF Jan-Mar 1872) CRec, pp. 96-124
- "Quem não quer ser lobo" (JdasF Apr-May 1872) HistR, pp. 195-239
- "Uma loureira" (JdasF May-Jun 1872) CEsq, pp. 100-122
- "A parasita azul" (JdasF Jun-Sep 1872) OC.II, pp. 161-191
- "Uma águia sem asas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1872) HistR, pp. 337-362
- "Qual dos dois?" (JdasF Sep 1872 - Jan 1873) HistR, pp. 241-335
- "Quem conta um conto" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1873) CF.II, pp. 57-82
- "Ernesto de tal" (JdasF Mar-Apr 1873) OC.II, pp. 203-220
- "Tempo de crise" (JdasF Apr 1873) OC.II, pp. 783-793
- "O relógio de ouro" (JdasF Apr-May 1873) OC.II, pp. 234-240
- "Decadência de dois grandes homens" (JdasF May 1873) CEsq, pp. 25-39
- "As bodas do Dr. Duarte"<sup>1</sup> (JdasF Jun-Jul 1873) OC.II, pp. 191-203
- "Um homem superior" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1873) CF.II, pp. 85-109
- "Nem uma nem outra" (JdasF Aug-Oct 1873) CF.II, pp. 113-184
- "Quem desdenha"<sup>2</sup> (JdasF Oct-Nov 1873) OC.II, pp. 220-234
- "Aurora sem dia" (HMN 1873) OC.II, pp. 220-234

## 1874 - 1878

- "Os óculos de Pedro Antão" (JdasF Jun-May?<sup>3</sup> 1874) CAv, pp. 151-170
- "Um dia de entrudo" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1874) CAv, pp. 196-217

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<sup>1</sup> Later incl. in HMN under the title "As bodas de Luís Duarte"

<sup>2</sup> Later incl. in HMN under the title "Ponto de vista"

<sup>3</sup> As recorded in Galante de Sousa's *Bibliografia*.

"Muitos anos depois" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1874) CEsq, pp. 40-61

"Miloca" (JdasF Nov 1874-Feb 1875) OC.II, pp. 793-809

"Valério" (JdasF Dec 1874-Mar 1875) ReliqCV, pp. 7-51

"Brincar com fogo" (JdasF Jul-Aug 1875) CEsq, pp. 123-135

"Antes que cases" (JdasF Jul-Sep 1875) CEsp, pp. 95-122

"A mágoa do infeliz Cosme" (JdasF Aug-Sep 1875) ReliqCV, pp. 49-69

"A última receita" (JdasF Sep 1875) OC.II, pp. 809-814

"Um esqueleto" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1875) OC.II, pp. 814-826

"Onze anos depois" (JdasF Oct-Nov 1875) OC.II, pp. 187-215

"A chinela turca" (Época Nov 1875) CEsq, pp. 281-292

"O sainete" (Época Dec 1875) OC.II, pp. 826-836

"Casa não casa" (JdasF Dec 1875-Jan 1876) OC.II, pp. 845-856

"História de uma fita azul" (JdasF Dec 1875-Feb 1876) OC.II, pp. 832-845

"To be or not to be" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1876) CF.II, pp. 251-278

"Longe dos olhos" (JdasF Mar-May 1876) CRec, pp. 190-206

"Encher tempo" (JdasF Apr-Jul 1876) HistR, pp. 403-461

"O passado, passado" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1876) CEsq, pp. 144-155

"D. Mônica" (JdasF Aug-Oct 1876) CEsq, pp. 156-182

"Uma visita de Alcibiades" (JdasF Oct 1876) CEsp, pp. 213-217

"O astrólogo" (JdasF Nov 1876-Jan 1877) ReliqCV, pp. 71-87

"Sem olhos" (JdasF Dec 1876-Feb 1877) ReliqCV, pp. 89-120

"Um almoço" (JdasF Mar-May 1877) ReliqCV, pp. 121-149

"Silvestre" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1877) CEsq, pp. 199-222

"A melhor das noivas" (JdasF Sep-Oct 1877) CEsq, pp. 62-81

"Um ambicioso" (JdasF Nov 1877-Jan 1878) ReliqCV, pp. 151-185

"O machete" (JdasF Feb-Mar 1878) OC.II, pp. 856-865

"O bote de rapé" (Cruz 26 Mar 1878) CsemD pp. 268-276

"A sonâmbula" (Cruz 26 Mar 1878) Disp, pp. 431-437

"Um cão de lata ao rabo" (Cruz 2 Apr 1878) PagR, pp. 173-184

"O califa de Platina" (Cruz 9 Apr 1878) PagR, pp. 241-251

"Filosofia de um par de botas" (Cruz 23 Apr 1878) PagR, pp. 187-202

"A herança" (JdasF Apr-May 1878) ReliqCV, pp. 187-201

"Antes da missa" (Cruz 7 May 1878) PagR, pp. 205-217

"Na arca" (Cruz 14 May 1878) OC.II, pp. 303-307

"Elogio de vaidade" (Cruz 28 May 1878) PagR, pp. 227-238

"Conversão de um avaro" (JdasF Jun-Aug 1878) CF.II, pp. 281-309

"Folha rota" (JdasF Oct 1878) ReliqCV, pp. 203-216

"Dívida extinta" (JdasF Nov-Dec 1878) CF.II, pp. 313-352

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