

Sentimental Commerce and Moral Accountancy in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*

Bluma Waddington Vilar

Translated by Jobst Welge

Abstract. This essay studies the metaphors, comparisons, images, reflections, and situations linked to the domain of money and economy in the fiction of Machado de Assis. It reveals the impact of such economic metaphors and imagery on sentiments and ethics, especially in *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*, demonstrating how the logic of economics is incorporated into the moral and affective spheres even on the level of stylistics.

The following is a non-exhaustive survey of the metaphors, comparisons, images, reflections, and situations linked to the domain of money and economy in the fiction of Machado de Assis. I will be treating here a single book, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (1881), but as part of a somewhat larger study, still in progress, which will extend this inquiry to most of the novels, with the purpose of comprehending the stylistic reach and richness of this semantic field within the work of Machado. The presence of this imagery is linked to the theme of favor in Machado's novels, a theme most prominently developed by Roberto Schwarz, as well as the more general theme of asymmetrical relations, which then turn into vicious or even perverse ones. The following analysis permits one to clarify the impact of the economic metaphors and imagery on the sentiments and ethics in this novel, demonstrating how the logic of economy is incorporated into the moral and affective spheres even on the level of stylistics. There is, in fact, a contamination of these spheres by mercantile values, and this contamination is more pronounced on the level of language than on the level of situations. Here is Machado:

With that said, I expired at two o'clock on a Friday afternoon in the month of August, 1869, at *my beautiful suburban place in Catumbi*. I was sixty-four intense and *prosperous* years old, I was a bachelor, I had wealth of around *three hundred contos*, and I was accompanied to the cemetery by *eleven friends*. Eleven friends! The fact is, there hadn't been any cards or announcements. On top of that it was raining—drizzling—a thin, sad, constant rain, so constant and so sad that it led one of those *last-minute faithful friends* to insert this ingenious idea into the speech he was making at the edge of my grave: "You who knew him, gentlemen, can say with me that nature appears to be weeping over the irreparable loss of one of the finest characters humanity has been honored with. [...]"

Good and faithful friend! No, I don't regret the twenty bonds I left you. (*Posthumous* 1.7-8; my emphasis)

In the second paragraph of the first chapter, after the precise date and hour of his death, the economic condition is the first aspect conveyed and emphasized by the narrator-protagonist of the *Posthumous Memoirs*: the indication of the place of the death—"my beautiful suburban place in Catumbi," refers as well to the fact that he is a rich proprietor. In the following, he reveals his age, while again stressing the socio-economic aspect: "I was sixty-four intense and *prosperous* years old." In the same sentence, he also conveys three pieces of information, the proximity of which is not coincidental: "I was a bachelor, I had wealth of around *three hundred contos*, and I was accompanied to the cemetery by *eleven friends*." This proximity of celibacy, money, and friends is symptomatic. In fact, the next paragraph clarifies the contamination of the affective sphere, of amorous relations, friendship, or gratitude, with money. The reciprocity of those sentiments mingles with another form of commerce, this time in the literal sense. This mercantilization of affects and gestures that subordinates the moral to the material and monetary is necessarily suspicious of those who occupy the inferior position within the asymmetrical relations between individuals of different social conditions, as is the case with the paternalistic relations of favor between the privileged and the needy, especially between proprietors and *agregados*,¹ one of the principal themes of the novelistic fiction of Machado. The *agregados* are assigned the roles of the "debtors" of the proprietors who take them into their houses. They lend their services in exchange for lodging and protection, but the "debt" remains as the determining factor for the cohabitation with their benefactors. The received benefit stigmatizes the beneficiary; it has something degrading. To be *agregado* means,

by definition, to be in debt, and to be indebted implies an inferiority *vis-à-vis* the creditor. Obviously, the possible range of favorable relations is much greater, including other beneficiaries than the *agregados*, as we will see shortly.²

To return to the passage quoted earlier, the celibacy of Brás, who is single both with regard to long-term love relations and to sincere friendships, is a consequence not just of his hegemonic self-love but also of the corruption mentioned above, in addition to his fundamental disbelief in humanity, perhaps a little more with respect to the rest of humanity than, in some moments, to himself, but in the end, as the last chapter reveals, the posthumous narrator also includes himself in “our misery.” During the course of Machado’s novel the spiritual and emotional sphere tends to become contaminated, if not exclusively dominated, by other interests (real or supposed ones), by the “calculation,” a term dear to the author, that orients the actions even in this field. This contamination, which at times disparages feelings, or else invalidates them completely, derives often from the comic or ironic use of economic vocabulary in the metaphors and comparisons that have been chosen to describe them. Now, as far as religious feelings and acts are concerned, this irreverent use turns into sacrilege. *Dom Casmurro* especially has recourse to blasphemies of this type. In the passage quoted above, just like the wealth, the friends are quantified with numerical exactness. They are not “some,” they are “eleven,” neither more, nor less. The position of “one of those last-minute faithful friends” to rhetorically elevate the dead man through an “ingenious idea” confirms the just prize for that “friendship,” correctly valued by Brás Cubas as worthy of twenty bonds.

In chapter 11, “The Child is Father to the Man,” the term “debtor” is used for the first time when Brás describes his morning ritual during childhood, a routine repeated, not without motive, at night before going to sleep. Although lacking any religious fervor, the child is praying, and the narrator exhibits this habit by adducing the penultimate verse of the Lord’s Prayer, which asks “to forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have offended us” (Matthew 6.12), in a more literal translation that is closer to the Latin translation and the Greek original. In the Vulgate the *Pater Noster* says: “*et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.*” That is to say, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Here is the passage from the novel:

My mother indoctrinated me in her own way, made me learn certain precepts and prayers by heart. But I felt that, more than by the prayers, I was governed by

nerves and blood. [...]. In the morning before porridge and at night before bed, *I would beg God's forgiveness the same as I forgave my debtors*. But between morning and night I would be involved in some terrible bit of mischief and my father, after the uproar had passed, would pat me on the cheek and exclaim, laughing: "Oh, you little devil! You little devil!" (11.25; my emphasis)

The more literal translation of the prayer was perhaps more current in the period, or even the common form of prayer, later substituted by the version that is dominant today, where "debts" are exchanged for "offenses," and "debtors" for "those who have offended us," which renders verse 12 similar to the two following verses of the prayer: "For, if you will forgive the offenses of men, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. Yet, if you do not forgive the offenses of men, your Father will also not forgive your offenses" (6.14-15).³

It is worth noting, then, the appropriateness of the literal version, given the tendency of Machado's novel to commercialize the moral sphere, to subject it to the power of money. In this context, then, religious prayers and promises take on the character of trading, or, if you will, this dimension is emphasized. In a universe where material, mundane, and temporal questions tend to prevail over spiritual ones, the forgiving of one's debtors about which the narrator speaks might very well be understood in a monetary sense. Accordingly, the forgiving of sins is on the same level as the forgiving of a debt, equated with the simple dispensation of paying the amount of money that one owes to someone. In other words, what is for Brás an excellent *bargain*, is somewhat less for God: the first obtains the remission of his "spiritual debt"⁴ with the Creator, whereas he, on his side, limits himself to forgive debts of a much more prosaic kind. However, the act of forgiving one's debtors is attributed by the narrator to the child Brás, which evidently could not have debtors in the pecuniary sense. This is to say that the term designates those who refused him some wish or other, who impeded, directly or indirectly, his getting something. And the "Devil Child" (11.24), worthy of this name, never forgave any of them. On the contrary, he sought to revenge himself, as he did when he hit the head of the female slave who refused him a spoonful of the coconut confection she was still preparing (11.25), and when he denounced the marital infidelity of Doctor Vilaça, who unintentionally had deprived him of the eagerly desired dessert (12.30-31). Yet, if the expression "to forgive one's debtors" does not apply to a child, it applies even less to a boy, who is "willful," "opinionated, selfish, and somewhat contemp-

tuous of people” (11.25). This impropriety does not attenuate; it rather reinforces the unorthodox and comic character of his manner of imploring divine forgiveness. As he negotiates with God, the bad faith of the boy, explicitly designated as sly (11.24), resides in the attempt to deceive the All-Powerful, to cheat in the transaction, citing in his defense something that was not true, for, since he was little, Brás was far from christianly loving his enemies. Yet, if he always counted on the fatherly indulgence here below, why wouldn't he count on the one there above? Why wouldn't the heavenly Father follow the example of the infinite mercy of his father here on earth?

In chapter 14, “The First Kiss,” Brás recounts the beginning of his passion for Marcela, the most commercial of his loves, *et pour cause!* Let us see how Brás describes to himself the beloved lady:

Yes, I was that handsome, graceful, *well-to-do* young fellow, and it's easy to imagine how more than one lady lowered her pensive brow before me or lifted her covetous eyes up to me. [...] The one who captivated me was a Spanish woman, Marcela, “beautiful Marcela,” [...]. She was a good girl, cheerful, *without scruples*, a little hampered by the austerity of the times, [...] fond of luxury, impatient, *a friend of money and young men*. That year she was madly in love with a certain Xavier, a *wealthy and tubercular fellow—a pearl*. (14.33; my emphasis)

What turns Brás into an object of the “covetous eyes” of “more than one lady,” we may assume, is his being “handsome” and “graceful.” Yet, at the end of the paragraph, when he characterizes Marcela as “a friend of money and of young men”—in this order—one perceives an obvious hierarchy: the most important quality of the protagonist's self-portrait as a 17-year-old young man is his privileged socio-economic situation. The desire awakened by him is less of an erotic or sentimental than of an economic nature. The reference to his rival for the favors of Marcela shows again what is really at stake: the value of both of them on the market of amorous relations. The common characteristic of both young men is the *status* of being “well-to-do,” which makes of Brás a valuable article and of Xavier, due to his precarious health, “a pearl.”

There are some especially noteworthy passages in chapters 15 (“Marcela”), 17 (“Of the Trapeze and Other Things”), and 18 (“A Vision in the Hall”):

Our *passion*, or *union*, or whatever name it went by, because I don't hold much with names, had two phases: the consular phase and the imperial phase. During

the first, which was short, Xavier and I ruled without his ever thinking he was sharing the government of Rome with me. But when credulity could no longer resist evidence, Xavier lowered his standards and I gathered all power into my hands. It was the Caesarean phase. *It was my universe, but, alas, it wasn't free. I had to gather money together, multiply it, invent it.* (15.35; my emphasis)

Marcela loved me for fifteen months and eleven *contos*, no more, no less. (17.38)

I thought I was happy. *The diamonds, true, were corrupting my happiness a bit, but no less true was the fact that a pretty lady was quite capable of loving the Greeks and their gifts. And, after all, I trusted my good Marcela. She may have had defects, but she loved me.* (18.41; my emphasis)

In the famous chapter 21, "The Muleteer," we witness a succession of recifications, in a sort of *inverse auctioning*, wherein the courageous act of the muleteer who had saved the life of Brás is then depreciated by him. The muleteer, for his part, appears to wait for a reward, as he exhibits an excessively zealous and somewhat flattering behavior:

The muleteer may have saved my life. I was sure of it. I felt it in the blood that was pounding through my heart. Good muleteer! While I was taking account of myself, he was *carefully* adjusting the donkey's harness *with great skill and zeal*. I decided to give him *three gold coins* from the five I was carrying with me. *Not because it was the price of my life*—that was inestimable—but because it was *just recompense for the dedication with which he'd saved me*. All settled, I'd give him the three coins.

[...]

I went to the saddlebags, took out an old waistcoat in the pocket of which I was carrying the five gold coins, but during that interval *I'd got to thinking that maybe the gratuity was excessive*, that *two coins* might be sufficient. *Maybe one*. As a matter of fact, one coin was enough to make him quiver with joy. I examined his clothing. *He was a poor devil* who'd never seen a gold coin. *One coin, therefore*. I took it out, saw it glitter in the sunlight. The muleteer didn't see it because I had my back turned, *but he may have suspected something. He began talking to the donkey in a meaningful way*. He was giving it advice, telling it to watch out, that the "good doctor" might punish it. A paternal monologue. Goodlord! I even heard the smack of a kiss. It was the muleteer kissing it on the head.

I laughed, hesitated, put a *silver cruzado* in his hand, mounted the donkey, and went off at a slow trot, a little bothered, I should really say a little uncertain of the effect of the piece of silver. But a few yards away I looked back and the muleteer was bowing deeply to me as an obvious sign of contentment. I noted that it must have been just that. *I'd paid him well; maybe I'd paid him too much.* I put my fingers into the pocket of the waistcoat I was wearing and felt *some copper coins.* They were the *vin-téns* I should have given the muleteer instead of the silver *cruzado*. Because, after all, he didn't have any recompense or reward in mind. He'd followed a natural impulse, his temperament, *the habits of his trade.* Furthermore, the circumstance of his being right there, not ahead and not behind, but precisely at the point of the disaster, seemed to be the simple *instrument of Providence.* And, in one way or another, *the merit of the act was positively nonexistent.* I became disconsolate with that reflection. I called myself prodigal. I added the *cruzado* to my *past dissipations.* I felt (why not come right out with it?), I felt remorse. (21.47- 48; my emphasis)

Brás finishes the chapter with this equation of the “payment” for the help of the muleteer (“maybe I’d *paid* him too much”) with the money unjustifiably spent with Marcela. Thus, the heroic act is brought down to the same level of the feigned, interested, and exploratory attitude of the professional lover: the inverse auction—wherein the buyer was disputing only with himself—thus assumes its lowest level, the maximum of devaluation. Although the muleteer does not confirm the disinterested character of his act, since he does not refuse the offered recompense, neither this nor his subservient, flattering attitude disqualify the achievement up to this point.

In chapter 33, “Fortunate Are They Who Don’t Descend,” we encounter yet one more of the many examples of the narrator-protagonist Brás Cubas with his tendency towards profanation and prodigious blasphemies, which even applies to the ex-seminarist Bento Santiago in *Dom Casmurro*. Moreover, it is important to emphasize in this chapter the asymmetry of the relationship between Brás and Eugênia, a young woman whose social position is somewhat dubious, since she is the bastard child of the erudite Doctor Vilaça and the sister of a sergeant major, Dona Eusébia. Furthermore, Eugênia has a physical defect, which explains the double irony of her name. Let us look at the following passages of the chapter:

Beautiful, cool, inviting mornings. Down below, the family, the bride, parliament were calling me and I was unable to attend to anything, bewitched at the feet of my

Crippled Venus. Bewitched is just a way of enhancing style. There was no bewitchment but, rather, pleasure, a certain *physical and moral satisfaction*. I loved her, true. At the feet of that so artless creature, *a spurious, lame daughter, the product of love and disdain, at her feet I felt good, and she, I think, felt even better at my feet*. [...] Dona Eusébia kept watch over us, but not so very much. She *tempered necessity with expedience*. [...]

I didn't go back down and I added a verse to the Gospel: "Blessed are they who do not descend for theirs is the first kiss of young girls." Indeed, Eugênia's first kiss came on a Sunday—the first, which no other male had taken from her, and it wasn't stolen or snatched, but *innocently offered, the way an honest debtor pays a debt*. Poor Eugênia! If you only knew what ideas were drifting out of my mind on that occasion! You, *quivering with excitement*, your arms on my shoulders, contemplating your welcome spouse in me, *and I, my eyes on 1814, on the shrubbery, on Vilaça, and suspecting that you couldn't lie to your blood, to your origins ...* (33.65; my emphasis)

In the first passage one clearly notices the asymmetry of the relation between Brás, an excellent match, and Eugênia, "a spurious, lame daughter," for whom a marriage with him would be very socially advantageous. Two elements reinforce this situation. One is the pandering and calculating attitude of the young woman's mother, who toned down the vigilance normally required by social decorum with the intent of favoring the romance of her daughter and the consequent social ascent of both of them via the possible marriage with a rich young man. The second element consists in the "physical and moral satisfaction" that Brás experiences at the side of Eugênia. Finally, she is represented as physically inferior to him, for she is lame as well as morally inferior, for being illegitimate and accepting such a profitable courtship, and economically inferior, since she is of a much less privileged condition than he is.

Yet, in chapter 35, "The Road to Damascus," Brás does recognize the purity and dignity of the sincere Eugênia, in all respects so different from her mother. In fact, the innocence and nobility of spirit of the 16-year-old woman only serve to make the prejudiced behavior of the protagonist more vile, since he judges her incapable of overcoming her "blood," her "origins," and makes use of her without any greater scruples. In fact, he acts as if he did her a favor, as if he conceded her the honor of using her to entertain himself with for a little more than a week. This becomes evident from the comparison that takes on the form of a parody of the verses of the "Sermon on the Mount," as they appear in Matthew 5.1-12. Before analyzing this compari-

son, let us examine the verses parodied, verses 3 and 10: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!” and “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!” Brás maintains the anaphora—“Blessed those who”—and the beginning of the final part of these verses—“for theirs is”—while he renders their meaning profane, substituting it with a sexual content that is ingenuous and at the same time malicious, for the reasons indicated above.

Furthermore, he compares the way in which the debutante Eugênia kisses him to the way in which “an honest debtor pays his debt.” This is the second and last time that the word “debtor” is used in the book. It is not by coincidence that the term refers to the person that is in an inferior position from a socio-economic perspective. Eugênia can be assimilated to an “honest debtor” since she considers herself in debt and pays it when the creditor asks her to do so. In this way, even honesty, a virtue that the young woman actually demonstrates, is turned into something defective for it does not go beyond the recognition of her inferiority and the moral servility allegedly linked to her. Even the “commotion” of the young woman becomes insincere, two-faced, in the light of the comfortable prejudice demonstrated by the narrator-protagonist. There is no place for authentic feelings, which from the outset are discarded or debased in this asymmetrical situation.

The oxymoron “Crippled Venus,” with which Brás sums up his perplexity and frustration—“Why pretty if lame? Why lame if pretty?”—duplicates on the level of language the alliance of contraries on the physical level, and this alliance between beauty and deformity is also reflected in the social impasse experienced by the young woman: Why worthy, if a bastard? Why a bastard, if worthy? On the level of language, one could say that the expression “Crippled Venus”—“Vênus Manca” in the original—conjoins incompatible elements not only on the level of signification but also on the stylistic level: the mythological reference, the recourse to the name of a Roman goddess would appear to belong to an elevated style, while the adjective “manca” (“crippled”), although it connotes nothing vulgar, would be more at home in a low style or at least one more common. In contrast to other oxymorons such as “silent music,” “black sun,” “sad happiness,” the chosen oxymoron already implies, then, a correspondence analogous to the one between such pairs as beauty-deformation and dignity-bastardy, as they are conjoined in the figure of Eugênia.

Although, as we have said, chapter 35 shows the dignity and sincerity of the “flower from the shrubbery,” Brás still goes back down from Tijuca, thus avoid-

ing getting more involved with a being socially “unworthy” of him and to connect this deficiency to another one, invoked up to a certain point as a pretext: “the terror of really falling in love with her and marrying her. A lame woman!” (35.67). One might ask whether Brás would demonstrate the same frivolousness and the same misgivings of an aesthete in relation to a rich heiress, or to the legitimate descendant of nobility, even if she were impoverished.

It is much easier to praise the moral rectitude of his equals on the social ladder, even if it is a rival like Lobo Neves, who is married to Virgília, a woman who could have been his wife and became his lover:

Virgília nourished great hopes that this old relative, avaricious as a tomb, would protect her son’s future by means of *some legacy*. And if her husband had similar thoughts he covered them or choked them off. Everything must be told: there was a certain *fundamental dignity* in Lobo Neves, a layer of rock that *resisted dealings with people*. (87.130; my emphasis)⁵

In contrast to current usage, where the term “commerce,” in the metaphorical sense of “social relations,” has no pejorative connotation, here the figurative and the literal sense are conjoined, thus emphasizing the aspect of a bargain, of a mercantile transaction, as it applies to human relations, to “*commerce with people*,” as we read in the original. The resistance to such commerce is all the more difficult the greater the material needs one is facing. This explains the capitulation of the honest and laborious Dona Plácida, an old “seamstress and *agregada*” in the house of Virgília (67.107), who ends up as a remunerated accomplice of the clandestine romance between her and Brás:

[...] everything was under the care of Dona Plácida, the purported and in certain respects the real lady of the house.

It was very difficult for her to accept the house. *She’d sniffed out the intention and her position pained her*, but she finally gave in. I think she wept at the beginning, *was sick with herself*. What was certain at least was that she didn’t lift her eyes to me during the first two months. She spoke to me with her look lowered, serious, frowning, sad sometimes. I wanted to win her over and didn’t act offended, treating her with affection and respect. I made a great effort to win her good will, then her trust. When I obtained her trust, I made up a pathetic story about my love for Virgília [...]. Dona Plácida didn’t reject a single page of the novel. She accepted them all. It was *a necessity of her conscience*. At the end of six months *anyone who*

saw the three of us together would have said that Dona Plácida was my mother-in-law. I wasn't ungrateful. I made her a special gift of five contos—the five contos found in Botafogo—as a nest egg for her old age. Dona Plácida thanked me with tears in her eyes and from then on never ceased to pray for me every night before an image of the Virgin she had in her room. That was how her nausea ceased. (70.110-111; my emphasis)

The previous debt of Dona Plácida with Virgília (who, without any question, is at ease to ask her for this service) and the following contract with the pair of lovers are explained in chapter 74, “The History of Dona Plácida”:

“I had nobody else in the world and I was getting old and sick. It was around that time that I got to know Iaiá's family, good people *who gave me something to do and even gave me a home*. I was there for several months, a year, over a year, a house servant, sewing. I left when Iaiá got married. Then I lived as God willed it. Look at my fingers, look at these hands ...” And she showed her thick, wrinkled hands, the tips of her fingers pricked by needles ... “You don't get this way by chance, sir. God knows how you get this way ... *Luckily Iaiá took care of me, and you too, doctor ...* I was afraid of ending up *begging on the street ...*” (74.115; my emphasis)

In the same chapter two more passages are worth being mentioned. After telling Brás that she became a widow very early and that she had to support the little daughter and her mother by herself, Dona Plácida also confides to him that she would have married again, but that no one ended up wanting to marry her. After this, we read the following:

Her mother was ill-tempered because of her age and her poverty. She railed at her daughter to take on one of *the seasonal, temporary husbands* who asked for her. And she would roar:

“Do you think you're better than me? I don't know where you get those stuck-up *ideas of a rich person*. My fine friend, life doesn't get straightened out just by chance. You can't eat the wind. What is this? Nice young fellows like Policarpo from the store, poor boy ... are you waiting for some nobleman to come along?” (74.114; my emphasis)

From the perspective of the mother, Dona Plácida has to be more placid and less demanding, more prudent and less presumptuous, stopping to act as a “rich person.” The pragmatic lady advises her daughter to seize the opportunities as they turn up. The narrator's choice of words to convey the stand-

point of the mother is significant: according to her judgment, Dona Plácida should, as we read in the original, “toma[r] um dos maridos de empréstimo e de ocasião” (“take one of those husbands for loan or on sale”) without fail. Among the many idiomatic expressions in which the verb *tomar* (“to take”) appears, the dictionary *Caldas Aulete* (1980) lists “tomar marido” (“to take a husband”), in other words, “casar-se a mulher.” Of course, there is also the common expression “tomar emprestado” (“to borrow”), in which the object borrowed is often money. Among the meanings of the verb “tomar” we find “alugar; contratar (aposento ou serviços): *tomar* uma casa; *tomar* um criado” (*Caldas Aulete*), that is, “rent; hire (residence or services): rent (*tomar*) a house; hire (*tomar*) a servant”; “pedir emprestado” (“to borrow”), as in “vive tomando dinheiro aos (dos) amigos” (*Houaiss*, 2001); in other words, “he is always borrowing money from his friends.” It is hardly necessary to recall that the terms “emprestar” (“to lend, to loan”) and “empréstimo” (“loan”) carry economic meanings and that, even if they are employed in the sense of the temporary and free provision of something other than money, they presuppose the obligation of return, the bond of debt. If one takes into account the context (see the fifth paragraph of chapter 74), as well as the locutions “de empréstimo” (“for loan/on loan”), which signifies temporarily given away for someone else’s use and having to be returned to the rightful owner, and “de ocasião,” which signifies advantageous, a bargain, and is used with regard to a business transaction, a deal, or to a price, the narrator is not talking about marriage but rather about concubinage, and, in the case of a *husband on loan*, perhaps even about adulterous concubinage. The only candidate for a concubinage cited by the mother is a merchant, owner, or employee of a grocery store—“Policarpo, from the store,” mentioned in passing.

The second passage that merits attention in chapter 74 is the following:

Dona Plácida worried a great deal, taking her with her when she had to deliver sewing jobs. The people in the shops stared and winked, convinced that she’d brought her along in order *to catch a husband or something else*. Some would make bad jokes, pay their respects. The mother began to get *offers of money* ... (74.115; my emphasis)

As the text suggests, in order to have one’s dignity put into doubt, or rather, to see it totally discredited, it suffices to be poor and to be associated with someone of a less modest condition. As for the fortunate, it suffices that they request the help of someone more fortunate or someone equal and yet

in a position to favor them. Note that it is precisely “the people of the shops” (“a gente das lojas”)⁶ who not only tolerate but also encourage the commercialization of feelings and people, to the point of making offers of purchase.

In chapter 51, “She is mine!” wherein Brás formulates “the law of the equivalencies of windows,” we notice again the promiscuity, pointed out above, between sentiment and money, between moral and monetary order. After two waltzes with Virgília, during a gathering in her house, the feeling of ownership of the desired woman takes possession of Brás:

“She’s mine!” I said to myself as soon as I passed her on to another gentleman. And I must confess that for the rest of the evening the idea was becoming embedded in my spirit, not with the force of a hammer, but with that of a drill, which is more insinuating.

“Mine!” I said when I got to the door of my house.

But there, as if fate or chance or whatever it was remembered to feed my *passionate flight of fancy*, a round, yellow thing was gleaming at me on the ground. I bent over. It was a gold coin, a half doubloon.

“Mine!” I repeated, and laughed.

That night I didn’t think about the coin anymore, but on the following day, remembering the incident, I felt a certain revulsion in my conscience and a voice that asked me why the devil a coin that I hadn’t inherited or earned but only found in the street should be mine. (51.85; my emphasis)

In a way that is conveniently fortuitous and comic, a passage from the moral sphere to the economic one is enacted. Since Virgília is already a married woman at this point, the “possessive impulses”⁷ of Brás are illegitimate, condemned by law and morality. The same night Brás finds a gold coin and improperly takes it into his possession. In the two situations, an identical desire for ownership leads him to exclaim: “She is mine!” Yet the analogy between the two situations, or rather, the morally illicit nature of the circumstances in which our protagonist usurps what belongs to someone else, be it a woman or money, authorizes the third exclamation that approximates and equates facts from distinct spheres.

Brás narrates the reactions of his conscience to both episodes, and, on reflection, ends up proclaiming “the law of the equivalencies of windows,” which is meant to orient moral conduct if one wants to preserve one’s conscience in peace, or, in the words of the narrator, keep it sufficiently aired, or

ventilated. This is, in fact, something like a law of compensation, a calculation or *accountancy*, the objective of which is to balance expenses and proceeds, losses and gains. Here one loses, there one gains:

My conscience had waltzed so much the night before that it had lost its breath, but giving back the half doubloon was a window that opened onto *the other side of morality*. A wave of *pure air* came in and the lady breathed deeply. Ventilate your conscience! That's all I can tell you. (51.85; my emphasis)

The restitution of the gold coin constitutes a gain, a considerable income, which amply compensates for the expense of having waltzed with Virgília. And this gain is translated into monetary terms in the following image:

I saw, I clearly saw the half doubloon of the night before, round, shiny, multiplying all by itself—becoming ten—then thirty—then five hundred—expressing in that way the *benefits* I would be given *in life and in death* by the simple act of restitution. And I was pouring out my whole being into the contemplation of that act, I was seeing myself in it again, *I found myself good—great perhaps*. A simple coin, eh? (51.86; my emphasis)

Because of its semantic ambiguity, its signifying both “a good that is done freely; favor, grace, mercy,” as well as “advantage, gain, profit,” “earning, interest,” the term “benefit” (“*beneficio*”) unites meanings that refer to both orders, the moral and the monetary one, so often intertwined in Machado's novels, at the expense of the former. The definitive formula of the law mentioned above follows:

So I, Brás Cubas, discovered a sublime law, *the law of the equivalencies of windows*, and I established the fact that the method of *compensating* for a closed window is to open another, so that morality can continuously aerate one's conscience. (51.86; my emphasis)

Chapter 54, “The Grandfather Clock,” offers a dramatic version of the proverb “time is money.” “Time is worth gold,” for every minute is not merely a temporal unit but “measures” also one's own life. This is also stated by a proverb such as “gain time, gain life.” Yet what is gained is lost as well. And if time lost equals life lost, then, according to the maxim attributed to the

Athenian Antifones, “the most costly expense is time” (see Lacerda). This is how the clock strikes during the chapter in question:

Usually when I couldn't sleep, the chiming of the grandfather clock would upset me very much. The mournful tick-tock, slow and dry, seemed to say with every note that I was having one instant less of life. Then I would picture an old devil sitting between two sacks, that of life and that of death, *taking out the coins of life and giving them to death*, counting them like this:

“Another less ...” (54.89; my emphasis)

Thus imagined by Brás as the old, the eternal devil who transfers the coins of life to the side of death, time spends, consumes life. The tick-tock of the grandfather clock, which provides a sound to temporal flux, is like a count-down—“with every note [...] one instant less of life.” It is like the tinkling of every coin that is subtracted from the vital reserve and then tossed into the other sack. In contrast to life, death does not suffer the consumption imposed by time, “death doesn't age” (“a morte não envelhece”), as Brás will say in chapter 138, “To a Critic.” Moreover, as he has already said in chapter 6, time is at its service; it is “the minister of death” (“o ministro da morte”). Let us remember here the passage from *Dom Casmurro* during which the narrator-protagonist, Bento Santiago, carries with him the recently bought poison, a portable death, like a pocket watch. In this passage, the eternity and incorruptibility of death are expressed with yet another metaphor related to the semantic field of money:

I know I wrote some letters, and bought a substance, I'll not say what, so as not to awaken the urge to try it out. The pharmacy has failed, it's true: the owner became a banker, and the bank is doing well. When I felt death in my pocket I felt happy as if I had won the grand prize in the lottery, or even more than that, *for lottery prizes can be frittered away, which is not true of death*. (*Dom Casmurro* 134.225; my emphasis)⁸

Even death, a “prize” that cannot be frittered away, can be *bought* in a regular pharmacy. In this role, that is, to provide a means not to save but to extinguish life, the pharmacy would have failed as well, failed with regard to its intent. At the same time, when there is a threat to life, a “failure” of the pharmacy, the finances are booming: “The owner became a banker, and the bank prospers.” At the beginning of this essay I highlighted the negative, degrading influence of money and the economic sphere in the life of the dependents, that

is, the debtors, as well as of those who are more fortunate socially and to whom they are indebted: feelings, as counterfeit money bills, can be deceptive, spiritual and moral values collapse, as they are accommodating to lower ones, and thus the horizon of personal relations becomes narrower and is impoverished.

The relations of moral debt receive a particularly interesting formulation in the "theory of benefits" of the cherished friend of Brás, Quincas Borba. The narrator dedicates chapter 149, which carries that title, to a dialogue with the father of Humanitism, wherein he develops the theory, which is amusingly expounded, but not less coherent for that. Let us look at this reflection, which is inspired by the disregard of a debt of gratitude (see chap. 148, "The Unsolvable Problem"):

"You can't deny one fact," he said, "which is that the pleasure of the benefactor is always greater than that of the benefactee. What is a benefit? It's an act that brings a certain deprivation of the one benefited to an end. Once the essential effect has been produced, once the deprivation has ceased, that is, the organism returns to its previous state, a state of indifference. [...] *The hope for other favors, of course, always holds the benefactee in a remembrance of the first one*, but the fact, also one of the most sublime that philosophy can find in its path, is explained by *the memory of deprivation* or, using a different formula, by deprivation's continuing on in memory, which echoes the past pain and advises alertness for an opportune remedy. *I'm not saying that even without this circumstance it doesn't sometimes happen that the memory of the favor will persist, accompanied by a certain more or less intense affection*. But they're *true aberrations* with no value whatever in the eyes of a philosopher."

But, I replied, "if there's no reason for the memory of the favor to last in the favored, there must be even less in relation to the favorer. I'd like you to explain that point for me."

"What's obvious by its nature can't be explained," Quincas Borba replied, "but I'll say one thing more. *The persistence of the benefit in the memory of the one performing it is explained by the very nature of the benefit and its effects*. In the first place, there's *the feeling of a good deed* and, deductively, *the awareness that we're capable of good acts*. In the second place, *a conviction of superiority over another being* is received, a superiority in status and means, and this is one of the most legitimately pleasant things for the human organism according to the best opinions." (149.193-194; my emphasis)

The pleasure of the benefactor is always greater than the one of the beneficiary. As it is more pleasurable, the memory of the favor is more persistent

for the one who does it than for the one who receives it. The greater pleasure and the greater persistence of the benefit in the memory of the one who offers it is due not only to the feeling of a good deed and the consciousness that one is capable of good deeds, but also to the conviction of superiority over one's fellow creatures. In sum, in the system conceived by Borbas, *vanity* is revealed as an important if not the principle motor of generosity. Although the "feeling of a good deed" might be understood in the context of Quincas Borbas' discourse as one connected to altruistic and compassionate impulses, what follows has to do primarily with self-love. The great attraction of being generous resides in the flattering, moral self-image derived therefrom as well as in the proud affirmation of a second pre-eminence, the "superiority in station and in means." As far as the self-image is concerned, let us recall a telling passage from chapter 61, "A project," where the idea occurs to Brás to rehabilitate Quincas Borba after he has encountered him reduced to the state of a "beggar and thief" (98): "The need to regenerate him, get him back to working and having respect for his person was filling my heart. I was starting to get a comfortable feeling, one of pulpit, of *admiration for myself*" (61.98; my emphasis).

In chapter 157, significantly entitled "Brilliant Phase," the narrator reiterates the same phenomenon of social and psychological accountancy that benefits as well as motivates the benefactor:

And now have a peek at my modesty. I joined the Third Order of *** and filled a few positions in it. That was the most brilliant phase of my life. Nevertheless, I shall be silent, I shan't say anything, I won't talk about my service, what I did for the poor and the infirm, or the recompense I received, nothing, I shall say absolutely nothing. Perhaps the *social economy* could profit somewhat if I were to show how each and every outside reward is worth little alongside the subjective and immediate reward. But that would be breaking the silence I've sworn to maintain at this point. [...] I shall only state that it was the most brilliant phase of my life. The pictures in it were sad. They had the monotony of misfortune [...]. But the joy given to the souls of the sick and the poor is a recompense of some value. *And don't tell me that it's negative because the only one receiving it is the one taken care of.* No. *I received it in a reflexive way*, and even then it was great, so great that *it gave me an excellent idea of myself.* (157.200-201; my emphasis)

The "social economy," in other words, philanthropy, the kind of charity that transfers the gains of the rich to the needy, would surely increase if the

former convinced themselves that those expenses are compensated less by the opportunity to occupy honorable posts than by the "subjective and immediate prize," the most worthy of all rewards. Therefore, the donation of the philanthropist is not positive for the one who receives it and negative for he whose patrimony may suffer a small reduction: like a mirror, the beneficiary reflects the image that the benefactor wishes or even pays to see.

Once the difficulties are taken care of, the tendency of the beneficiary is to forget the act of his benefactor. Even so, Quincas Borba admits that there are motives for the beneficiary to remember the benefit received. The "memory of deprivation," the desire to avoid it in the future, as well as "the hope for more favors" that will again come to his help, if need should be, are the common reasons for the fact that the "memory of the favor received" endures in the beneficiary. Our philosopher at last mentions another reason so as not to leave out the exception to the rule, an anomaly, an extravagance: the disinterested recognition, the pure gratitude for the one who has done us a favor.

Quincas Borba's exposition refers to morals and especially psychology, the mental condition in a situation that is commonly experienced. It is the analysis of the psychologically, morally commendable action to help someone, to benefit the other.

In the final half of his reply to the objection raised by Brás, Quincas uses two examples. Let us look at the first one, when the childhood friend of the protagonist mentions Erasmus of Rotterdam and alludes to a passage from the *Praise of Folly*:

Erasmus, who wrote some good things in his *In Praise of Folly*, called attention to the complacency with which two donkeys rub against each other. I'm far from rejecting that observation by Erasmus, but I shall say what he didn't say, to wit, that if one of the donkeys rubbed *better* than the other, he would have some special indication of *satisfaction* in his eyes. (149.194; my emphasis)

The example of the donkeys that rub against each other is especially revealing. The reciprocity of the action explains the two-sided nature of all beneficial transactions: even if it is not a reciprocal action like this one among rather skillful donkeys, every benefit has two sides, one turned to the beneficiary, the other to the benefactor, who gains the profits identified in the text and already discussed above.

However, the asymmetry of the relation between benefactor and beneficiary

must be emphasized. It is this inequality that the immodest Quincas Borba illustrates, as he amends Erasmus by raising the hypothesis of a donkey that is rubbing *better* than the other one. As he outdoes his partner, the animal that has more talent for this practice introduces not only a distinction but a hierarchy as well. If every benefit is always mutual, not every benefit presupposes a symmetrical reciprocity. According to the hypothesis of Borba, even in the rubbing interchange among the donkeys the symmetry disappears. The positions of benefactor and beneficiary, of agent and recipient, cease to be exchangeable. In the act of benefiting someone, as it is analyzed by Quincas Borba, only the benefactor may occupy both places. He is the agent and recipient of the benefice he practiced. The beneficiary, on the other hand, is only the recipient, be it as end, as means, or as an instrument, so that the benefactor turns the benefice narcissistically toward himself. Yet, even if every sense of generosity, every altruistic intent of the act would be eliminated (which is not the case: the argumentation of Quincas Borba rather suggests the coexistence of altruistic and egoistic motivations), the enacted benefice would still possess an appearance of virtue, thus situating the benefactor in a morally advantageous position, lifting his reputation in the eyes of others as well as in his own, for, as Brás says in chapter 24, “by deceiving others, a man deceives himself” (52). This moral superiority, whether it is deserved or fraudulent, is joined by the “superiority in status and means,” as already indicated above.

This last superiority does not depend on the lending of favors; it derives simply from social differences. According to one’s understanding of the word “means,” this type of superiority can also refer to innate faculties and attributes. Let us now look at the second example mentioned above, precisely the one of a physical superiority, of a natural gift, an example that brings up a comparison with the sphere of morals:

Why is it that a pretty woman looks into a mirror so much if not because she finds herself pretty and, therefore, it gives her a certain *superiority* over a multitude of women less pretty or absolutely ugly? *Conscience is just the same*. It looks at itself quite often when it finds itself pretty. Nor is remorse anything else but the twitch of a conscience that sees itself repugnant. (149.194; my emphasis)

In chapter 51 was presented the moral strategy, or, if you will, the cosmetic procedure advisable for a consciousness that looks into the mirror and is frightened by what it sees: it suffices that it takes in some fresh air, opening a window whenever another one is closed, for it to maintain a rested face

and a pleasing appearance.

Aside from the fact that the superiority—always mentioned in *The Posthumous Memoirs*—may have, at the beginning, an objective character (innate or social), the text invariably approaches it by way of its psychological, behavioral, and moral effects.

Brás, who is explicitly motivated by vanity—“love of glory,” “thirst for fame” (2.9) in his own words—Quincas Borba and other characters in the *Memoirs* seek a superiority that their social condition and their physical as well as intellectual gifts allow them to have.

From early on, Quincas Borba manifests the following disposition of spirit:

It was a pleasure to see Quincas Borba play the emperor during the festival of the Holy Spirit. In our children's games he would always choose the role of king, minister, general, someone supreme, whoever he might be. (13.32)⁹

Later, the supremacy chosen by him was to be the creator of a philosophical system, Humanitism, “that not only explains and describes the origin and consummation of things, but takes a great step beyond Zeno and Seneca, whose stoicism was really child's play alongside [his] moral recipe.” He thought of calling his system “Borbism,” but this “first inclination showed great presumption”—as he must recognize. It was he regrets, “a vain title as well as being crude and bothersome,” only to then express his “pleasure of finally having grasped truth and happiness” “after so many centuries of struggle, research, discovery, systems, and failures” (91.136).

With Brás the situation is not different. Although they have failed, he never restrained his ambitions. Either his megalomania suffered from its generic, vague character or else he was lacking in dedication and tenacity. The idea of a medicine (of external use!) against human melancholy, the only “*idée fixe*” that he truly strove to realize, led him to neglect his own health and he died of pneumonia. Thus together with him died the invention of the “Brás Cubas Poultrice,” which would assign him the “first place among men above science and wealth,” since it is “the genuine and direct inspiration of heaven” (160.203). On his way to Europe, where he was to study at the University of Coimbra, the young Brás already speculated about his destiny:

Great future? Maybe a naturalist, a literary man, an archeologist, a banker, a politician, or even a bishop—let it be a bishop—as long as it meant responsibil-

ity, preeminence, a fine reputation, a superior position. (20.46; my emphasis)

Even Prudêncio, the young black slave that had been regularly mistreated by the boy Brás (11.25), once he is grown up and freed from slavery, is able to abandon prudence and buy a slave that confirms his new *status* and to whom he transfers the mistreatment that he himself had suffered, “the blows received” (68.109). He ascends, as it were, from the position of oppressed to the one of oppressor, and with this social ascent he conquers an accessible and compensatory superiority:

Now that he was free, however, he had the free use of himself, his arms, his legs, he could work, rest, sleep unfettered from his previous status. Now he could make up for everything. He *bought* a slave and was *paying* him back *with high interest* the *amount* he’d received from me. (68.109; my emphasis)

Ironically, the narrator-protagonist chooses a monetary metaphor in order to describe a relation that does not involve money, does not require payment, be it in bills, be it *in natura*, except for the act of purchase that gave rise to it—the relation between a slave and his master (or, more precisely, the son of his master). The “amount” (“quantias,” in the original) that Prudêncio received from little master Brás were the latter’s mistreatments. As he could not protest, much less reply in kind, that is, *to pay with the same currency*, blow for blow, he ended up postponing the revenge, as it was transferred, years later, to a substitute object. Since Brás would never suffer the consequences of his misbehavior and never have to *pay* for the abuses performed, let alone “with high interest,” Prudêncio found a stunt man to substitute for him in such scenes. In the passage quoted above, the narrator modifies the passive sense of the expression “to pay with interest” (that is, to “severely endure the consequences of an act,” according to the dictionary *Houaiss*), thus assimilating it, in a way, to the new condition of Prudêncio, freeman and owner of a slave: in this position, he could have money and make use of it, by buying, say, a slave to whom he would religiously “pay” the same “salary” he had received from Brás, only augmented by “interest,” a very high one, naturally, as it has accumulated over such a long time.

Yet vanity, self-love, almost always submits itself to the “superior position.” The freed Prudêncio did not cease to act in a servile way in front of the son of his ex-master. Brás held the intellect and the lessons of Quincas Borba in high esteem: “The value of the authority of a great philosopher is found in the

smallest things" (137.181). Already the father of Humanitism, after inheriting a fortune, returned the stolen watch to his friend Brás, who gave him generous alms in a time of great need and whom he treated with a certain condescendence. Moreover, he esteemed his thinking to be much better, profound, and true than anyone else's (Zeno, Seneca, Pascal, Voltaire, Erasmus ...).

Finally, one should mention the well-known last paragraph of the last chapter, "On Negatives." Here, the autobiographical narrator draws up the posthumous balance of his life and concludes:

Putting one and another thing together, any person will probably imagine that there was neither a lack nor a surfeit and, consequently, that *I went off squared with life*. And he imagines wrong. Because on arriving at this other side of the mystery I found myself with *a small balance*, which is the final negative in this chapter of negatives—I had no children, I haven't transmitted the legacy of our misery to any creature. (160.203; my emphasis)

According to the calculation of Brás, he did not "[go] off squared with life," that is, without owing anything and without anyone owing him anything in material, moral, or emotional terms, for he does not consider that the losses were equal to the gains, as he did not have either deficiencies or surplus. He thinks that he is left with a *positive* balance, which, like most of the gains and advantages of his leisured existence, is actually negative: "I had no children, I haven't transmitted the legacy of our misery to any creature." Thus, the only inheritance left by Brás was monetary, the three hundred *contos* that he owned when he died. To the degree that money extends its "jurisdiction" to the sphere of feelings, the territory of authentic and disinterested sentiments is reduced. The twenty bonds bequeathed to the friend who spoke at the funeral of the protagonist do not insure friendship, but its simulacrum: feigned feelings cost true money. Ironically, the bequest of Brás thus finances our misery, favoring human weakness and indignity.

We have seen, then, how in *The Posthumous Memoirs* the themes of self-love, vanity, dignity, and money, as they apply to the asymmetrical relations between individuals, are intertwined and how they generate social and moral debts (which, perversely, are impossible to fulfill for those of humble condition), such as the relations of benefice or favors—themes that are repeatedly expressed through a vocabulary associated with economy, the use of which is far from being neutral. This language contaminates everything it touches,

like an infamous Midas. Once they acquire their market value, feelings, gestures, and attitudes depreciate. Everything praised in the moral and affective sphere has its nature distorted.

Notes

¹ Throughout this essay the term “agregado” is left in the original, as the common English translation as “servant” is inappropriate. An “agregado” is a lodger or dependent in a “big house” (*casa-grande*), such as Machado himself had been brought up as. (Translator’s note)

² Aside from Faoro, Roberto Schwarz has treated exhaustively the theme of paternalistic relations, of relations of dependency, of clientelism, and favor in his analyses of Machado’s novels. Among other indispensable studies of the same author, see *Ao Vencedor as batatas. Forma literária e processo social nos inícios do romance brasileiro*; *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo: Machado de Assis (A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism)*; “A novidade das Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas” 47-64; “A contribuição de John Gledson” and “Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo” (interview): 106-112 and 220-226. Although in contrast to this essay, it does not carry out a stylistic analysis, and does not treat specifically the economic metaphors and the role of language in the dissemination of favor and mercantile relations throughout the moral and affective universe, the study by Xavier comments upon some of the passages of *The Posthumous Memoirs* analyzed here. Obviously, there are convergences and divergences between the two analyses, which I will not discuss in this study. In this regard, I refer to the chapter “O favor às avessas” (49-69), dedicated to a reading of the *Memórias*.

³ In the Bible of David Martin (1707; revised in 1744), the French translation of which is referred to as the Bible de Genève, verse 12 is translated thus: “Et nous quitte nos dettes, comme nous quittons aussi [les dettes] à nos débiteurs.” In the Bible of Jean-Frédéric Ostervald (1744, revised in 1996), a protestant pastor and theologian, who revised and corrected the translation by Martin, we read (aside from his elaborations “Arguments e réflexions sur l’Écriture Sainte”): “Pardonne-nous nos péchés, comme aussi nous pardonnons à ceux qui nous ont offensés.” In the so-called Lausanne Bible, published in 1872, we find: “Et remets-nous nos dettes, comme nous les remettons nous-mêmes à nos débiteurs.” In the translation of the New Testament by the protestant pastor Louis Segond, published in 1880 and revised in 1910, reads as follows: “pardonne-nous nos offenses, comme nous aussi nous pardonnons à ceux qui nous ont offensés.” In Portuguese, the translation of the New Testament by João Ferreira d’Almeida (published in 1712) has: “e perdoa as nossas dívidas, assim como nós também temos perdoado aos nossos devedores.”

⁴ The expression is used by the narrator-protagonist of Assis, *Dom Casmurro* (42; trans. Gregory Rabassa).

⁵ The original reads: “comércio dos homens” (Assis, *Memórias* 228).

⁶ Note that the original reads “a gente das lojas” (“the shop people”) and thus refers to those who work there or to the owners, but not to the customers.

⁷ The original reads “arroubos possessórios.”

⁸ The original reads: “porque o prêmio da loteria gasta-se, e a morte não se gasta” (Assis, *Dom Casmurro* 244). The verb “gastar-se” means both “to be spent” and “to be used up.” (Translator’s note)

⁹ The original reads: “uma supremacia, qualquer que fosse” (Assis, *Memórias* 126).

Works Cited

- Assis, Machado de. *Dom Casmurro*. Rio de Janeiro/Brasília: Civilização Brasileira/INL, 1977.
- . *Dom Casmurro*. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- . *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro/Brasília: Civilização Brasileira/INL, 1977.
- . *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Faoro, Raymundo. *Machado de Assis: a pirâmide e o trapézio*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1974.
- Lacerda, Roberto Cortes de, et al. *Dicionário de provérbios: francês, português, inglês*. Provérbios franceses definidos por Didier Lamison. Rio de Janeiro: Lacerda, 1999.
- Schwarz, Roberto. "A contribuição de John Gledson" and "Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo (interview)." *Seqüências brasileiras: ensaios*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999.
- . *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*. Trans. John Gledson. Durham: Duke UP, 2001.
- . *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo: Machado de Assis*. São Paulo: Duas cidades, 1990.
- . "A novidade das *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*." Ed. Antonio Carlos Secchin, José Maurício Gomes de Almeida, and Ronaldo de Melo e Souza. *Machado de Assis, uma revisão*. Rio de Janeiro: In-Fólio, 1998.
- . *Ao vencedor as batatas. Forma literária e processo social nos inícios do romance brasileiro*. São Paulo: Duas cidades, 1977.
- Xavier, Therezinha Mucci. *Verso e reverse do favour no romance de Machado de Assis*. Viçosa: Imprensa Universitária da Universidade Federal de Viçosa, 1994.

Bluma Waddington Vilar teaches Brazilian literature at the graduate level at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica-Rio de Janeiro and conducts research on the work of Machado de Assis. She also has taught Brazilian literature at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. She is a translator and a writer. As a poet, she has published *Álbum* (Sette Letras, 1996) and contributed to poetry magazines. She is also the author of *Idéias de um menino cismado* (Nova Fronteira, 2004), which received the "João-de-Barro Award" for children's book in 2000. E-mail: bwv@terra.com.br