

Machado de Assis and *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*

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Whether in handbooks of literary history or in critical essays and books, any foreign student interested in Brazilian literature will surely encounter the assertion that Machado de Assis is one of the greatest Portuguese language writers. Grandson of freed slaves on his father's side, son of a Brazilian wall painter and a Portuguese woman from the Azores who was also of humble origins, the mestizo Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis was born in Rio de Janeiro on June 21, 1839. His parents, who were both literate, were servants ("agregados") at the Livramento farm. Its proprietor, the rich widow of an Imperial senator, was the writer's godmother. According to the most accepted biographical tradition between 1856 and 1858 Machado de Assis worked as an apprentice at the "Tipografia Nacional." During this time, he had already begun to collaborate with newspapers and magazines, an activity he would continue for almost his entire life as a poet, critic, chronicler, storyteller, translator, and novelist. He worked as a public servant, joining the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works in 1873 as a scribe. Before this he had worked in other positions related to public administration as a theater censor and as assistant to the director of the *Diário Oficial*. He completed no special schooling, nor a college degree, and he was, above all, self-taught. In 1896, together with other writers, he founded the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and was its president-elect until his death in 1908. Having practiced all literary genres—short story, novel, chronicle, poetry, and drama—he excelled most in the first three, as well as in literary criticism.

Machado began publishing his work in book form during the period immediately following the height of the "indianista"¹ trend in Brazil, or, in other words, during a period in which Romanticism still dominated the

Brazilian literary scene, as it did until Naturalism entered the field in the 1880s. Machado's first volume of short stories is *Contos Fluminenses* (1870), and his first novel *Ressurreição* (1872). In 1880, Machado published *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* as a serial *feuilleton*, and the text was collected into book form the following year (1881). This was the same year that *O Mulato*, by Aluísio Azevedo (1857-1913) was published, a novel that would come to represent the beginning of Brazilian Naturalism, even though another naturalist novel, Inglês de Sousa's *O Coronel Sangrado* (1877) had already been published. In this essay, I will provide an overview of Machadian studies, primarily through a survey of critical analyses of his most acclaimed novel, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*.

Critics traditionally divide Machado's novelistic production into two phases: the first, of romantic extraction, includes the first four novels—*Ressurreição*, *A Mão e a Luva* (1874), *Helena* (1876), *Iaiá Garcia* (1878)—and the second, inaugurated with *The Posthumous Memoirs*, includes four other novels—*Quincas Borba* (1891), *Dom Casmurro* (1899), *Esau e Jacó* (1904), and *Memorial de Aires* (1908). Meanwhile, critics from different periods and traditions have suggested that the differences in form and narrative technique between the two phases—the extraordinary jump in quality, the subtle changes between the two—do not reflect a radical rupture; rather, they are a “dialectical rupture” in which there is no “absolute negation of the previous works” (Astrogildo Pereira), or, in other words, a “progressive maturation” (Afrânio Coutinho).²

In a famous critical essay, titled “Notícia da Atual Literatura Brasileira: Instinto de Nacionalidade,” (1873) Machado defined what in his opinion constituted the degree of national identity that a writer should demonstrate. With this gesture he not only clarified his position, but also anticipated the incomprehension that many would show for his work, always responding to the allegation that his work was not representative of the country because it lacked an interest in domestic problems and reality. Machado believed that literature, and primarily a young literature such as Brazilian literature, should portray the topics with which its region provides it. This would correspond to a necessary stage in the development of a national literature—being new, it would pass through a period of self-affirmation. And not without irony, Machado made the following comment on the mandatory presence of a “national touch” in the works of Brazilian writers: “The literary youth, above all, make this point into a legitimate question of self-love” (1873, 801). The

“general desire to create a more independent literature” (1873, 802) confirmed that an orientation toward the national was justifiable. The author forewarned that this orientation should not become an absolute and tyrannical value. Thus, it should not suggest a narrow or impoverishing nationalism, which would only reduce the thematic and formal breadth of the new literature, removing its possibility for exploration and accomplishment.

The “national instinct” (*instinto de nacionalidade*) expected of a writer was, in the frequently cited Machadian formula, an “intimate feeling, that makes him a man of his time and of his country, even when he portrays topics remote in time and space” (1873, 804). It was not dependent, therefore, on landscapes, on characteristic types, on series of elements that might be superficially present or be described according to a foreign gaze, from an only slightly or non-Brazilian perspective. The feeling to which Machado referred could be expressed even when the topic, the language, and the form at first glance reflect very little of the national. Topics and forms of an initially universal character can reveal themselves as extremely Brazilian on another level of articulation, one less superficial and evident. Roberto Schwarz’ book, *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo* (1990), seeks to demonstrate that this is precisely what occurs in *The Posthumous Memoirs*. As Schwarz had already pointed out in a previous essay, Machado “presents a Brazilianism of that internal type which makes local color unnecessary.”³ In reality, the presence and visibility of the national in the work of Machado can be identified on more than one level, as much in a more immediate, concrete, and descriptive sphere as on a more abstract plane:

... the country’s evident singularities—those in which the fellow countrymen recognize themselves with pride or with laughter—are not absent from Machado’s novel, but they do not set the tone of the book. In brief, let us say that instead of *elements* of identification, Machado sought *relations* and *forms*. The national crafting of these is profound, without being obvious.⁴

The complexity of this issue has given rise to three approaches that can be identified in the reception of Machado’s work. The first, that of the “localists,” already referred to above, accused the writer of disregard or even disdain for the Brazilian—its nature, society, history, customs—, since he often portrayed local color ironically. A second current, that of the

“universalists,” found what the localists considered an absence to be of high quality, lauding Machado precisely for not conceding primacy to the most visible particularities of the country nor to the most evident and typical elements of national identification—those which, as Schwarz underscores, frequently appear in the author’s novels, though in a brief, casual, discrete, and deliberately diminished way and almost always as the target of Machadian irony. These critics esteem the de-provincialization in Machado, the focus on universal issues, and the concern with “human nature,” that were motivated, for example, by the novelist’s recourse to the seventeenth-century French moralists (and not only in terms of psychological analysis and quotes, but also in terms of style, given the sententious form that Machadian prose assumes in numerous passages). Nevertheless, Schwarz, by recovering Antonio Candido’s argument, doesn’t neglect to point out that these two currents are affiliated with the same movement to valorize Brazil, seeking to create a literature that could serve as an instrument of national affirmation, be it through equating Brazilian intellectual production to cultured European standards or through expressing Brazilian local realities and originality.⁵

A third current, in which Schwarz situates himself, proposes a “dialectic of the local and the universal” (1989, 168). This position claims that Machado was able to take perfect advantage of social material and existing Brazilian fiction without having to resort to the picturesque and the exotic, while at the same time making use of various foreign models. The influence of these models was assimilated into and *declared* in a poetics that is fundamentally marked by the *rereading of tradition*. Machado incorporated the production of earlier Brazilian authors, especially that of Joaquim Manuel de Macedo (1820-1882), Manuel Antônio de Almeida (1831-1861) and José de Alencar (1829-1877),⁶ as well as what the Western literary tradition put at the disposal of such an astute reader.⁷ Antonio Candido’s observation on the independence of mature Machadian fiction in relation to the literary fashion of the time is important in this regard:

At a moment when Flaubert was systematizing the theory of the ‘novel that narrates itself,’ erasing the narrator behind narrative objectivity; at a moment in which Zola advocated the exhaustive inventory of reality, observed in the smallest details, he freely cultivated the elliptical, the incomplete, the fragmentary, intervening in the narrative with delectable scheming, reminding the reader that his conventional voice was behind it. It was a way of maintaining, in the second

half of the nineteenth century, Sterne's whimsical tone... It was also an echo of the 'conte philosophique,' in the style of Voltaire...⁸

As Enylton de Sá Rego demonstrated in the indispensable *O Calundu e a Panacéia: Machado de Assis, a Sátira Menipéica e a Tradição Luciânica* (1989), in order to compose the texts of the so-called second phase of his work, the author chose models in Western literature that included authors belonging to the long-lived tradition of Menippean satire, begun in the second century BC. Upon publication, *The Posthumous Memoirs*, with its discontinuous format and digressive narrative, was subject to inquiry regarding the genre to which it would belong. Meanwhile, as the narrator himself indicated in the "prologue" of the book, the memoirs served as a prime example of the Menippean tradition. The narrator Brás Cubas claims to have adopted in his autobiography "the free form of a Sterne or a Xavier de Maistre" (1881, Prologue) two authors whose works—*Tristram Shandy* (1760-7), *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) and *Voyage Autour de ma Chambre* (1795)—are representative of the Menippean genre. The mere mention of antecedents in the Menippean lineage is one of the constants of this tradition. (In addition to the two authors mentioned in the prologue, later in the novel Seneca and Erasmus are mentioned directly, and Lucian indirectly.) The narrator also claims to have written "with the quill of jest and the ink of melancholy" (1881, 16, 1), and the hybrid, serious-comic nature is a typical mixture of the satiric tradition linked to Menippus of Gadara.

Although they reflect entirely distinct critical perspectives, it is important to highlight that the insightful study by Sá Rego⁹ of the relationships between some of the texts from Machado's second phase and this satiric tradition does not generally contradict Schwarz' sociological reading of *The Posthumous Memoirs* in the now classic *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo*. Adequately situating them in the context of literary tradition, Sá Rego's book contributes by identifying, specifying, and re-dimensioning the techniques, processes, and topics employed by Machado. Included in these are those described by Schwarz as aspects of the formal principle that structures the narrative of *The Posthumous Memoirs*, as we will see later. *O Calundu e a Panacéia* allows for a greater understanding of the writer's poetics.

Returning to the reading that Schwarz proposes of later Machadian fiction, both the localist and the universalist critical currents fall into the same mistake: that of viewing local representation in Machado's novel as

unimportant, as a result of the diminutive position that this representation occupies. This position, not the absence or scarcity of local elements, becomes the “delicate overcoat in Machado’s mocking contrast with so-called universal values that he uses a material for his fiction.”¹⁰ Schwarz points exactly to the absurdity of the association, the laughable disproportion between the local fact and the general reflection evoked by it as one of the keys to Machadian narrative and its national character as well as its *social* (and not merely psychological) realism, which are offered to the interpretation of the careful reader.¹¹ *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo* attempts to demonstrate how this social realism manifests itself in *The Posthumous Memoirs* through specific processes or mechanisms, among which is the “mismatched” and comic conjuncture between the local and the universal that lacks the necessary mediation between one plane and the other.

“To the Worm Who Gnawed the Cold Flesh of My Corpse I Dedicate these Posthumous Memoirs as a Nostalgic Remembrance.”¹² Upon reading this dedication, the reader becomes aware of the paradox and the jest of the title: it is not an autobiography published posthumously, but one written *post mortem* by a “deceased author,” as Brás defines himself in the first chapter. In this chapter, titled “The Author’s Demise,” he explains his decision to begin his story at the end, that is, with the death and burial of the very narrator that describes them. The alleged motives—that for the posthumous author “the grave was a second cradle” and that “the writing would be more distinctive and novel this way”—are summed up by a sacrilegious comparison of his book with the *Pentateuch*; though Moses “who also wrote about his own death” did not have the originality of doing it at the beginning (1881, chap.1). This beginning chapter provides a good sense of the meddlesome tone of the narrator-author, characterized by an irreverence, jest, or irony that are not deterred by any topic, person, or situation.

In the Prologue, the reader is immediately insulted and prepared for an entire litany of aggressions, jokes, and ironies that the narrator reserves for him during the course of the book. Therefore, the constant “dialogue” with the reader is not always friendly. Metanarrative comments also become frequent and the narrator often considers the composition, style, organization, and progress of his narrative. In addition, he engages in countless philosophical digressions that depart from a trivial episode, a local and simple circumstance, or a personal and selfish interest, in order to comically reach a universally valid conclusion.

Brás Cubas' story, which is thus systematically interrupted, begins with the "author" narrating his death and burial: discussing the *causa mortis*; digressing to trace his genealogy; returning to the *causa mortis*, the fixed idea of the invention of a universal panacea, a poultice capable of "alleviating our melancholy humanity;"¹³ returning to the period of his illness, when he received a visit from an old secret lover and experiences his famous delirium. After Chapter 10, Brás' life as a wealthy and idle member of Rio's elite is related in chronological order, the "narrative part" continuously being interrupted by "reflection"¹⁴ in a *drunken* style, as the narrator himself describes in Chapter 71, "The Defect of this Book":

... the main defect of this book is you, reader. You're in a hurry to grow old and the book moves slowly. You love direct and continuous narration, a regular and fluid style, and this book and my style are like drunkards, they stagger left and right, they walk and stop, mumble, yell, cackle, shake their fists at the sky, stumble, and fall....

In the famous final passage of Chapter 27, titled "Virgília?," the narrator defines human existence as a succession of editions in which each new version reviews and corrects the previous one:

Let Pascal say that man is a thinking reed. No. He's a thinking erratum, that's what he is. Every season of life is an edition that corrects the one before and which will also be corrected until the definitive edition, which the publisher gives to the worms gratis.

Thus, a clear homology is established between life and composition—the writing of his autobiography—, since the narrative of *The Posthumous Memoirs* also develops through a series of shifts in direction, digressions, contemplations, exceptions, and corrections. In other words, it is organized and proceeds according to what can be appropriately labeled a *principle of erratum* (*"princípio da errata"*),¹⁵ which is responsible for its interrupted and irregular pace. The "theory of human editions," of man as a "thinking erratum," therefore has a textual equivalent in this principle.

Though there is not enough space to address them in this article, points of contact clearly exist between the perspective outlined through the principle of erratum and Roberto Schwarz' exhaustively developed

hypothesis in *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo*.¹⁶ In Schwarz' words, what occurs is a "correspondence between Machadian style and the particularities of a simultaneously slave-holding and bourgeois Brazilian society." A link is also established between the structure and function of nineteenth-century Brazilian society and the literary form, "Machado's narrative formula," in which there is a "systematic alternation of perspectives" by the narrator. This narrator constantly changes perspective in an arbitrary way, continuously disidentifying himself with the position assumed in the preceding sentence, paragraph, chapter, or episode and establishing this *volubility* as a "rule of writing." This capricious and voluble movement that the narrator imposes on *The Posthumous Memoirs* should be understood as both a "rule of the narrative composition" and as a "stylization of the conduct of the Brazilian dominant class." As Schwarz underscores, "in the course of his affirmation, the narrator's versatility scorns all the forms and contents that appear in the *Memoirs* and subordinates them... In this sense the volubility is... the formal principle of the book."¹⁷ According to this perspective, the point of interest is the link between the literary and the extra-literary, or in Schwarz's terms, between "literary form and social process;" between narrative structure and the "structure of the country;" between "Machadian style" and "social relations"¹⁸ that were characteristic of Brazilian reality of the time. Thus, in this approach intertextual relationships are of less importance.

The proposed principle of erratum also foregrounds the relationship between the literary and the extra-literary, since this famous editorial metaphor brings life and the human condition themselves into the book's universe. In this regard, there are few relevant passages. In his delirium, Brás Cubas felt himself "transformed into Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, printed in one volume and morocco-bound, with silver clasps and illustrations. This was an idea that gave my body a most complete immobility..." (Chap. 7, "Delirium"). Later the narrator defines himself in the following manner: "we're not an *in-folio* public but an *in-12* one, not much text, wide margins, elegant type, gold trim, and ornamental designs... designs above all" (Chap. 22, "Return to Rio"). Another approach can yet be conceived of through the analysis of an intriguing procedure evidenced in Chapter 55—"The Old Dialogue of Adam and Eve"—and Chapter 139—"How I Didn't Get to Be Minister of State"—which evoke numerous passages in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and do without words altogether, limiting themselves to the use of punctuation marks, such as the line of dots that entitles Chapter 53.

The dedication, Chapters 26 (“The Author Hesitates”), 125 (“Epitaph”) and 142 (“The Secret Request”) explore the possibilities of diagramming and reproducing the book.

It is worthwhile, therefore, to analyze the implications this emphasis has for the literary and, ultimately, for everything in the realm of writing and printed books, making the peculiarities of this media salient: its materiality, its typographical and editorial aspects, and its reproducibility. Within this line of inquiry, it would also be necessary to study the relationship between publication in newspapers and journals and fiction writing. The “decisive role” of the “continuous dialogue with the press, with printing,”¹⁹ in Machadoian fictional craftsmanship is the subject of Flora Süssekind’s valuable article “Machado de Assis e a Musa Mecânica,” included in *Papéis Colados* (1993). The author asserts:

If Machado de Assis is one of the Brazilian writers who was best able to articulate local literary production’s ties to newspaper publication and give shape to the tension between writing and printing,... something in his work, beyond this relationship and within the literary form itself, in the tensions between composition and medium of transmission, seems to repeatedly suggest them.²⁰

As elements that suggest such tensions—either through the assimilation of certain characteristics of publication in newspapers or magazines, of mechanical reproduction, or through resistance to other aspects of publication—Süssekind indicates the great fragmentation of the chapters; the “display of the graphic materiality of the printed text;” the very strong presence of the narrator, who is thus unfit for typical narration of news and *faits divers*, and, due to his repeated principle of erratum, is also incompatible with “neat pagination, control of letters and lines, and of the apparently definitive aspect of the printed page.” According to Süssekind, these elements are compounded with the “powerful image of the book,” “the bookish form of the quotidian,” “of love, life, and people”²¹ in Machado’s fiction.

Another contribution to be examined is Juracy Saraiva’s study, “*Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*: Edição e Errata,” in the book *O Circuito das Memórias em Machado de Assis* (1993), given its clear proximity to my suggested reading in at least one fundamental aspect. A *correspondence* becomes apparent in the author’s interpretation, between the ambivalent discourse of the *Memoirs*’ narrator and human life, whose course is permeated with contradictions. Thus, Saraiva writes towards the end of her study:

The contradictory, inherent to life, is represented by the narrator through an ambivalent discourse that excludes not only semantic univocality, but also structural uni-textuality. When the I-enunciator conceives biography itself as a reading of life and books, he unites two semantic universes and institutes a process of refraction, whose reciprocal effects allow life to be glanced in texts and the configuration of texts, in the process of life.²²

For Saraiva, there are two “formal principles of the story” told by the narrator: “*discontinuity*” and “*multiplicity*.” These principles are related, as perceivable in the chapter that, according to her, illustrates both of them—Chapter 4, “The *Idée Fixe*.” Saraiva observes that diegetic progression is interrupted in this chapter, as it is repeatedly in the rest of the narrative, according to the whims of the narrator’s eccentric imagination. In addition to avoiding thematic uniformity, diverse perspectives are invoked through the meeting of “historical truth and the fantastic, the dogmatic and its deconstruction through humor, philosophical reflection and banalities.” Thus, the narrator emphasizes the discontinuous and the multiple, which are converted into a “systematic process,” and “expose the *formal orientation of the text*.”²³

After reading Juracy Saraiva’s comments, it is clear that the formal principles that she refers to as *discontinuity* and *multiplicity* are not so distant from what Schwarz had already labeled *volubility*. Nevertheless, to Saraiva, a relationship between the narrator’s characteristic style and class behavior typical of the nineteenth-century land-holding elite is not established. Volubility betrayed arbitrariness; excess; smug superiority; the tendency toward an exhibitionist and mocking domination of almost all Western cultural tradition; a confrontational and arrogant triumphal attitude; an “ideological ambivalence of the Brazilian elite,” (Schwarz, 1990, 41) imposed or granted them by the historical circumstances of Post-Independence Brazil. In other words, this reflected the accommodation promoted by the Brazilian dominant class between liberal bourgeois ideology adopted by the civilized nations and concepts and practices contradictory to this ideology, such as slavery and patronage, which were characteristic of a society still tied to the colonial productive system.

In this essay, I have attempted to synthesize some interpretations of *The Posthumous Memoirs*. Although I gave particular attention to Roberto Schwarz’ sociological reading, I would like to stress the importance of

exploring different angles when approaching the Machadian text. It is important to integrate these perspectives, when possible, in an analysis that takes into account and articulates the various levels of reading that this text can sustain. If *The Posthumous Memoirs* consists of a rereading both of the old Menippean tradition and of contemporary Brazilian fiction, this re-elaboration of forms and content was done in a way that brings the perverse operation of the ambivalent and unjust Brazilian social structure of the second half of the nineteenth century to the sphere of textual organization. This transposition remains current, given the persistence of the same mechanisms in contemporary Brazilian society. The incorporation of other thematic axes and other links between theme and form into the analysis, some of which have been discussed and others in need of more diligent study, will only lead to a more complex and richer critical understanding of *The Memoirs* and of Machado's work.

Notes

¹ Since the Native Brazilian is called in Portuguese "índio," the romantic movement grounded on the celebration of the Indigenous heritage was given the name "Indianismo." (Translator's note.)

² See Astrogildo Pereira, "Antes e Depois do 'Brás Cubas,'" *Machado de Assis: Ensaios e Apontamentos Avulsos* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria São José, 1959) 183-9; Afrânio Coutinho, "Machado de Assis na Literatura Brasileira," *Obra Completa*, by J. M. Machado de Assis, 4th ed., vol. 1 (1959; Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1979) 23-65, especially 25-28; and, above all, Roberto Schwarz, "A novidade das *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*," *Machado de Assis, uma Revisão*, eds. Antonio Carlos Secchin et al. (Rio de Janeiro: In-Fólio, 1998) 47-64.

³ Schwarz, "Duas Notas" 166.

⁴ Schwarz, "Duas Notas" 166.

⁵ Schwarz, "Duas Notas" 167, 169-70; Candido, *Formação* 9-22, especially 9-11.

⁶ On the relationship between Machado's fiction and that of these three authors, see, among others, Antonio Candido, "Um Instrumento de Descoberta e Interpretação," *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*. Vol. II. 109-118, especially 117-8; Temístocles Linhares, "Macedo e o Romance Brasileiro," *Revista do Livro* (Rio de Janeiro) 4.14 (junho 1959): 97-105; Roberto Schwarz, "A Importação do Romance e suas Contradições em Alencar," *Ao Vencedor as Batatas: Forma Literária e Processo Social nos Inícios do Romance Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977) 29-60; Schwarz, "A Novidade" 63-4; Flora Süssekind, *O Brasil Não é Longe Daqui: O Narrador, a Viagem* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990) especially 152-55, 260-76; and *O Sobrinho pelo Tio* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1995) especially 9, 10, 15, 16, 21-29.

⁷ On the relationship of Machado's work to Western literary tradition, see, among others, Eugênio Gomes, *Machado de Assis: Influências Inglesas* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas; Brasília: INL, 1976); Helen Caldwell, *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: A Study of Dom Casmurro* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1960); Luiz Costa Lima, "A Recepção do *Tristram Shandy* no

Romance Machadoiano," *Dispersa Demanda: Ensaios Sobre Literatura e Teoria* (Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1980) 59-64; Antonio Candido, "À Roda do Quarto e da Vida," *Revista USP* 2 (June/July/August 1989): 101-4; Gilberto Pinheiro Passos, *Poética do Legado: Presença Francesa em Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* (São Paulo: Annablume, 1996); Marta de Senna, *O Olhar Oblíquo do Bruxo: Ensaios em Torno de Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1998); Regina Zilberman, "Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas: Diálogos com a Tradição Literária," *Revista Tempo Brasileiro* 133/134 (1998): 155-170.

⁸ Antonio Candido, "Esquema de Machado de Assis," *Vários Escritos*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977) 22.

⁹ See Enylton de Sá Rego, *O Calundu e a Panacéia*.

¹⁰ Schwarz, "Duas Notas" 168.

¹¹ See John Gledson, *Machado de Assis: Ficção e História*, and *Machado de Assis: Impostura e Realismo. Uma Reinterpretação de Dom Casmurro*.

¹² All quoted passages are taken from Gregory Rabassa's translation: J. M. Machado de Assis, *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (New York; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997). (Translator's note)

¹³ Assis, *The Posthumous* 9.

¹⁴ Assis, *The Posthumous* 11.

¹⁵ On the denomination, suggested by the novel itself, see Sússekind, "Brás Cubas e a Literatura como Errata."

¹⁶ Schwarz had already developed the same hypothesis on various occasions. See, for example, Alfredo Bosi et al., "Mesa-redonda," *Machado de Assis* (São Paulo: Ática, Coleção "Escritores Brasileiros: Antologia e Estudos," 1982) 316-21, 329-30, 334-5, 339; Schwarz, "Complexo, Moderno, Nacional, e Negativo," *Que Horas São?* 115-25; Schwarz, "A Novidade." He discusses this hypothesis again in "Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo (Entrevista)," *Seqüências Brasileiras: Ensaios* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999) 220-6.

¹⁷ Schwarz, *Um Mestre* 11, 12, 17 and 31.

¹⁸ Schwarz, *Um Mestre* 11-12. "Forma Literária e Processo Social nos Inícios do Romance Brasileiro" was the subtitle of the book *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* (1977).

¹⁹ Sússekind, "Machado de Assis e a Musa Mecânica" 184.

²⁰ Sússekind, "Machado" 188.

²¹ Sússekind, "Machado" 188-9. Regarding this issue, the most important recent contribution to the interpretation of Machado's fiction is the work of Abel Barros Baptista, *Autobiografias*, which discusses Machado's fiction in its relation to the "question of the book."

²² Saraiva 88.

²³ Saraiva 88.

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