

Machado de Assis in Portugal

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Translated by Claire Williams

Abstract. This essay studies the relationship between Machado de Assis' work and Portugal. It suggests that this relationship is much more relevant than usually assumed. Both the son and husband of Portuguese women, a good friend of several Portuguese, and a collaborator in various Portuguese journals and cultural magazines, Machado de Assis was read and admired in Portugal from at least 1864. In the last few decades, however, with the publication of his books in Portugal, his presence has become even stronger than it was in the past.

A great deal of research has been done on Machado de Assis' links with foreign cultures or literatures, including his relationship with England (Eugênio Gomes), France (Jean-Michel Massa) and Germany (Antônio da Fonseca Pimentel). It is curious to note, then, that his relationship with the literature and culture of Portugal, which is by far the most relevant, still awaits a systematic or global analysis. Some contributions have been made towards this end, however, by Raymond Sayers, who, in *Onze Estudos de Literatura Brasileira*, spoke of Machado's presence "in nineteenth-century Portugal" (123-142); Pedro Calheiros, who, in a text published in *Travessia*, dealt with "Machado de Assis' reception in Portugal" ("Machado" 52-95); and João Alves das Neves, who, in *Temas Luso-Brasileiros*, made a brief reference—using, moreover, information gleaned from research by Jean-Michel Massa and others—to "Machado de Assis and the Portuguese" and to "Machado de Assis' Portuguese family." To these three examples we could add other more limited ones such as Cândido Jucá Filho's work on both Machado's "lusitanisms" and

his debt to Garrett, the writings of Guilherme Santos Neves and Othon Costa on the relationship between Machado de Assis and Camilo, as well as studies by numerous other authors on the relationship between Machado de Assis and Eça de Queiroz: João Gaspar Simões, Alberto Machado da Rosa, Heytor Lyra, Arnaldo Faro, Wilson Martins, Beatriz Berrini, Marli Fantini Scarpeli, João Camilo, Pedro Calheiros, A. Campos Matos, Lucette Petit, among others.

All in all, there seems to be very little material with which to gauge the presence of Portuguese culture and literature in the life and work of an author whose mother came from the Azores, whose wife came from Porto, who lived among and socialized with Portuguese friends throughout his childhood and adolescence (his godmother Maria José de Mendonça, Francisco Gonçalves Braga, Augusto Emílio Zaluar, Francisco Ramos da Paz, António Moutinho de Sousa, José Feliciano de Castilho, Ernesto Cibrão, Faustino Xavier de Novais, Furtado Coelho, Artur Napoleão), who always enjoyed reading the Portuguese classics, who praised Portuguese writers and Portuguese emigrants to Brazil, and who, according to one Brazilian historian, wrote in a Portuguese that had “little of the Brazilian” but an “absolute purity of form” (Cordeiro 49).

Research into Machado de Assis’ relationship with Portugal has necessarily to consider the family on his mother’s and his wife’s side, his friendships with Portuguese people, his texts that refer specifically to Portugal, especially those that dealt with Portuguese works or authors, his correspondence with Portuguese citizens, his books or texts that were published in Portugal, criticism of his work by Portuguese writers, trans-textual or intertextual links between his work and that of Portuguese authors, and also his use of the Portuguese language. Since it is not possible to contemplate all these aspects adequately in this essay, I will therefore put forward a summary of the situation.

Throughout the twentieth century, it became commonplace to complain that Machado de Assis was virtually unknown in Portugal. Only a few years after the Brazilian writer’s death, Alberto de Oliveira wrote: “Eminent novelists like Machado de Assis [...] are not known or studied in Portugal as they should be” (92). In 1923, Rui Gomes referred to Machado de Assis and Lima Barreto as “great unknowns in Portugal.” Not long afterwards, in 1946, Carlos Queiroz said that writers such as Castro Alves and Machado de Assis were “figures who meant nothing to the Portuguese readership” (30). In 1954, commenting on the way that “our language is taught,” Vitorino Nemésio declared that Machado de Assis, one “of the greatest prose writers to compose [in Portuguese], is a foreign novelist” (75). In 1993, Pedro Calheiros concluded his study of the reception of

Machado in Portugal by affirming that “the Portuguese are not at all familiar with him” (“Machado” 87). In a review of Calheiros’ article, the São Paulo newspaper *O Escritor* saw “evidence of a complete lack of acquaintance with the writer in Portugal.” In 1997, in reference to two surveys of “books that influenced my life,” carried out by the magazines *Jornal de Letras* and *Ler* magazine, Fernando Venâncio noticed that Machado’s name appeared only four times—out of a possible 520—in the *Jornal de Letras*, and not at all in *Ler*—where there were 330 chances to choose his works. Furthermore, in the *Jornal de Letras* of 25 February 1998, Venâncio insisted that “Machado is virtually unknown among us,” a fact that Ana Marques Gastão reaffirmed in the *Diário de Notícias*, stating: “it is a great shame that the average Portuguese person is not aware of him.”

There is no denying that “the average Portuguese person” is more or less unaware of Machado de Assis; but, then again, s/he is also unaware of most Portuguese classics. So, where Machado is concerned, the idea that “complete ignorance” reigns among the “educated Portuguese” rather suggests a certain ignorance ... As Raymond Sayers has shown, Machado became known in Portugal early in his career. Half a dozen years after his literary début, when he was only 21 years of age, his name appeared in volume V (1860) of the famous *Dicionário Bibliográfico Português* by Inocêncio Francisco da Silva. In 1866, the multi-faceted writer Gomes de Amorim was able to say, in a letter to Machado, that his “reputation” had crossed the seas “ensured that you are known of in Europe as one of the future glories of your country” (49). A year later, the Castilho brothers, António and José Feliciano, in their translation of Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, referred to him in the dedication as “the poet of the soul, and Brazil’s great literary hope” (qtd. in Sayers 125). Furthermore, in the foreword to his translation of *Faust* (1872), António Feliciano de Castilho deemed him “the remarkable poet Machado de Assis, the most brilliant star in Brazilian literature” (14).

A large number of texts were published by Machado de Assis or others—with or without his permission—in Portuguese books, almanacs, magazines, and newspapers, dating from 1864 (1865?) in the earliest instance, when the first part of the poem “Versos a Corina” (1864) appeared in the *Revista Contemporânea de Portugal e Brasil*,¹ and was included in the collection *Crisálidas* in the same year. In the nineteenth century alone, texts by Machado can be located in books or anthologies such as Gomes de Amorim’s *Cantos Matutinos* (1874); the collection *O Marquês de Pombal* (1885); Teófilo Braga’s *Parnaso Português Moderno* (1877); João Dinis’ *Tesouro do Trovador*

(1878); Antero de Quental's *Tesouro Poético da Infância* (1883);² in almanacs such as *Novo Almanaque de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro* (1873 onwards) and *Almanaque de Senhoras* (1875 onwards); in magazines such as the aforementioned *Revista Contemporânea de Portugal e Brasil*, *Revista Ocidental*, *Revista Luso-Brasileira*, *A Ilustração*, *Revista de Estudos Livres*, *Revista Moderna*, *A Madrugada*, *Branco e Negro*, *Brasil-Portugal*; and, finally, in newspapers such as *O Comércio do Porto*—for which Machado worked as a correspondent for several years; a fact unknown to all his biographers and critics—*A Folha Nova*—where between 12 October and 22 November 1883 he published the first 28 chapters of *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*³—and *O Jornal do Porto*, or the Lisbon-based newspapers *Jornal do Comércio* and *Correio da Manhã*. What is truly surprising is that Machado's manuscripts can even be found in Porto. On 4 March 1986, in a secondhand bookshop I unearthed a poem from 1867 that is not included in his complete works and which was certainly given to "a Portuguese actress" whom he admired or loved.

In some cases, the texts that Machado de Assis sent to Portugal were published in Brazil at a later date. For instance, R. Magalhães Júnior noticed that part of the "Versos a Corina," which Machado said was unpublished elsewhere, had, in fact appeared twice: in Portugal first, and then a copy was published in Rio de Janeiro (*Vida* I.314). In other cases, however, Portuguese publications reproduced texts that had already been published in Brazil. Positive reviews could thus be printed alongside the texts, which would help them to attain greater success than they had originally achieved across the Atlantic. R. Magalhães Júnior reminds us that the sonnet "Círculo vicioso," published in 1879 in the *Revista Brasileira*, "had an immediate effect in Portugal" (II.256), where Pinheiro Chagas praised and reproduced it in the *Diário da Manhã*, before any Brazilian newspaper (the first was *O País*, based in São Luís do Maranhão, which became aware of it through Pinheiro Chagas' article). Years later, in 1886, the same poem also appeared in the *Novo Almanaque de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro*, as well as in Valentim Magalhães' *A Literatura Brasileira*, printed in Lisbon by the Livraria António Maria Pereira in 1896. On page 19 of this last volume it is stated that: "The name of Machado de Assis is well-known and respected in Portugal; but his work is not known well enough." In actual fact, Machado was better known at the time as a poet, critic, and newspaper columnist than as a novelist or playwright. Raymond Sayers even wrote that, in Portugal, Machado "never received the acknowledgement he deserved as a novelist" (126). Yet along

with the Portuguese citizens who knew him personally, such as António Feliciano de Castilho, Ernesto Biester, and Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, or who were part of his circle of friends, there were other Portuguese contemporaries who were clearly aware of the importance of his work. One of these was Pinheiro Chagas, who, in 1866, praised *Os Deuses de Casaca* ("Os Deuses" 212-15), compiled two essays about *Ressurreição* (*Artes* 80),⁴ and who, as has been mentioned already, wrote about the poem "Círculo vicioso" as soon as it came out. Another was Júlio César Machado, who lauded *Falenas*,⁵ which he must have received via José Feliciano de Castilho—who lived in Rio de Janeiro and to whom Machado sent his first novel with the dedication: "to Júlio César Machado, prince of the *feuilleton*, Machado de Assis offers this work." But the list could go on to include Teófilo Braga—who included Machado in an anthology and described him as a "great talent" (3)—Antero de Quental,⁶ Ramalho Ortigão,⁷ Inocêncio Francisco Silva,⁸ Eça de Queiroz⁹ and even Sampaio Bruno—who admired "the chastened, lucid, perfect Portuguese" employed by Machado de Assis in his serialized novels (58)—or a journalist from *A Ilustração* who, writing on behalf of "the board of editors" considered Machado de Assis "one of the most notable and well-regarded poets and prose writers in Brazil, a writer who is as admired and fêted in Portugal as he is in his own country."¹⁰

It seems evident, then, that even during his lifetime Machado's name was in no way unknown to a good part of the Portuguese elite, although it is strange that Camilo Castelo Branco failed to include him in his *Cancioneiro Alegre de Poetas Portugueses e Brasileiros* (1879). Camilo should have been well-acquainted with the Brazilian author since they had collaborated on a number of publications and both were friends of Faustino Xavier de Novais. In the same year that *Cancioneiro* was published, Camilo described Machado as one of the "founders of a literature that would be like Hercules in infancy, if it had not become so aged already in Portugal."¹¹ It is also curious that Machado does not appear in Teixeira Bastos' *Poetas Brasileiros*. Maybe not so strange is his absence from *Estudos Críticos sobre Literatura do Brasil—I—O Lirismo Brasileiro*, by José António de Freitas from Maranhão, a book prefaced by Araújo Porto-Alegre, who was at the time the Brazilian General Consul in Lisbon, and to whom Machado had sent some of his works (Magalhães Júnior II.79). Another Brazilian living in Lisbon, Valentim Magalhães, praised Machado de Assis warmly in *A Literatura Brasileira*, and included a photograph of the writer (19-21, 57).

Nevertheless, it also seems unusual that although several Brazilian authors were published in Portugal in the second half of the nineteenth century, Machado de Assis' works only circulated in editions published by Garnier, which did not sell well. Batalha Reis, who planned to write a series of articles on Brazil that would start with a piece on Machado de Assis—"should this come to pass, request his photograph from Graça Aranha"—would, in 1904, go on to say: "Mr. Garnier, who lives in Paris and Rio de Janeiro, might not even manage to sell ten copies of each of his books in Portugal" (52). He was exaggerating, of course. But in fact some of Machado de Assis' works were advertised: for example, the prices of *Crisálidas* and *Falenas*, on sale at the Chardron bookshop in Porto, appear on the back cover of Faustino Xavier de Novais' *Poesias Completas* (1881). Raymond Sayers also comments on the absence of Machado's works from a number of Portuguese libraries or catalogues. In Porto, searching the catalogues and "the library"—presumably the Biblioteca Municipal—he found only *Falenas* and *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (Reis 139). However, if he had gone to the Athenaeum he would have found first editions of *Histórias sem Data*; *Helena*; *Tu, Só Tu*; *Puro Amor*; and *Poesias Completas*. We now know that at the time people used to pass on important works by an important author from hand to hand; this is what happened, for example, with *Papéis Avulsos*, according to what Miguel de Novais wrote in a letter to his brother-in-law sent from Lisbon on 27 May 1883 (Magalhães Júnior III.37).¹²

Even now, some of Machado de Assis' works are yet to be published in Portugal, and there is no Portuguese edition of his complete works available. One can, however, find at least five editions of *Memórias Póstumas*, four of *Dom Casmurro*, three of *Helena*, three of *Memorial de Aires*, two of *Quincas Borba*, four anthologies of short stories (organized by José Osório de Oliveira, João Alves das Neves, Temístocles Linhares, and Lello e Irmão, respectively), short stories published individually ("Missa do Galo," "O Alienista," "Cantiga de Esponsais"), while several short stories or poems appear in collections or anthologies. One might also note that biographies of Machado by Luís Viana Filho, Josué Montello, and Mariazinha Congílio have already been published in Portugal.

Much more significant, however, is the publication in the Portuguese-speaking world of essays or articles about Machado de Assis written by Portuguese or foreign critics. As it would be impossible in the scope of this short study to list them or to comment upon them all adequately, I will men-

tion just a few of the most important authors to write about him after his death (which was reported in the newspapers and inspired an “ode” by Paulino de Oliveira), namely: Júlio Dantas, Júlio Brandão, João Gaspar Simões, José Osório de Oliveira, Alberto Machado da Rosa, José Pereira Tavares, Jorge de Sena, António Cirurgião, Helder Macedo, Eugénio Lisboa, Nuno Guimarães, Pedro Calheiros, and Abel Barros Baptista. Other studies that deserve to be highlighted are those by: José Osório de Oliveira, one of the studies Mário de Andrade considered “admirable” (Assis, *Contos* 7); João Gaspar Simões, who explored the relationship between Machado and Sterne, studied Machado’s humor in contrast to Eça’s irony, and defended the thesis that Machado was a writer of short prose rather than a novelist; Alberto Machado da Rosa, with its provocative title; Jorge de Sena, who threw light on Machado’s “psychological realism” and argued that the so-called “Carioca quintet” of novels—*Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, *Quincas Borba*, *Dom Casmurro*, *Esaú e Jacó*, and *Memorial de Aires*—constitutes an “experimental novel”; and Abel Barros Baptista, who wrote his MA and PhD theses on Machado. Before Barros Baptista, the unfortunate poet Nuno Guimarães—who died young—wrote an undergraduate thesis at the University of Coimbra on *Machado de Assis, suas Relações com Garrett—Aspectos da sua Cosmovisão* (1967). Despite its limited bibliography and structural weaknesses, Guimarães’ study established points of convergence and divergence between the two writers, more in their prose than their poetry, and identified duplications and dissimulations, including the “dissimulation of a dissimulation” in Machado’s works. Pedro Calheiros, who wrote his Master’s thesis on *Dom Casmurro* at the Sorbonne, defended his doctoral thesis, entitled *Du Naturalisme au Symbolisme: Madeleine Ferrat de Zola e Dom Casmurro de Machado de Assis: Interférences et Lectures Critiques*, at the same university in 1990. Calheiros briefly compares not only the two novels but also the authors themselves, as well as the age and societies in which they lived. In 2003, Carla Mourão Neves defended her MA thesis, entitled *Em Demanda da Identidade—A Duplicidade em Esaú e Jacó*, at the University of Porto. She catalogues the figures, the images, and also the stylistics and rhetoric of duplicity in the little-studied but fascinating novel, in which she sees signs of a crisis in post-Romantic identity and clear Modernist tendencies.

The theses by Abel Barros Baptista, presented to the New University of Lisbon in 1989 and 1995, were published under the titles *A Formação do Nome — Duas Interrogações sobre Machado de Assis*¹³ and *Autobibliografias*.¹⁴

They take their starting point from key ideas such as the name, the signature, and the book itself. By looking at only a few texts—the essay “Instinto de Nacionalidade,” *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, *Dom Casmurro*—and working with the modern theories of thinkers such as Foucault and Derrida, Barros Baptista dares to propose a “new reading of Machado’s works,” writing about its irreducible otherness, its dislocations, its simulations, mannerisms, detours, lapses, and tensions, moving between the proper and improper, the national and universal, the authorial and the anonymous, life and narrative, truth and fiction, the author and the reader.¹⁵

Several studies have already shown, usually with scant proof or a lack of consistency, the (unquestionable) presence in Machado’s work of Portuguese authors such as Camões, Garrett, Eça, and Camilo. Research needs to be undertaken into these and other intertextual relationships, as well as into Machado’s presence in the work of Portuguese authors, which has never been attempted except in relation to Eça. José Osório de Oliveira stated once that the Brazilian writer “never had any influence in Portugal”; but Jeffrey Needell went even further, suggesting that during his lifetime Machado had not inspired the founding of a literary school or style in Brazil, nor had he affected the Brazilian way of life.

In actual fact, in recent times, the life and works of Machado de Assis have become a rich source of material not only for various kinds of criticism but also for different kinds of fiction, such as the stories from *Missa do Galo — Variações sobre o mesmo tema*, or works by Haroldo Maranhão, Domício Proença Filho, Fernando Sabino, and many others. Another Portuguese writer, Maria Velho da Costa, used the figure of Capitu in her play *Madame* (1999), where with Machadian skepticism or cynicism the character dialogues with Maria Eduarda from *Os Maias* about reading, writing, the novel, and the theatre, or simply about life, in which “no one is innocent.” In his book of short stories *A Expressão dos Afectos*, António Mega Ferreira included a “Letter from Capitu,” in which she complains that she was never allowed to tell her side of the story. And Helder Macedo, who had already mentioned Machado de Assis in his novel *Partes da África* (1991), makes veiled allusions to *Esau e Jacó* and *Dom Casmurro* and uses similar plots in his novel *Pedro e Paula* (1998).

Therefore, in a somewhat irregular and uneven fashion, with gaps here and there, Machado de Assis has been a constant presence in Portuguese cultural life. Although it is symptomatic that an encyclopedia that calls itself Portuguese and Brazilian at first forgot him, including him only later in a

supplementary volume, or that a recent dictionary of literature devoted to him fewer lines than to some so-called poets, or that a well-known public figure thought that the author was still alive, it is thanks to a number of universities that Machado de Assis is now widely read and greatly admired. Nor must we forget that recently a bust of the author was placed in the Academy of Sciences in Lisbon, an institution with which he corresponded and of which he was a member; that Artur Semedo made a film inspired by “O Alienista”; that the library of the Catholic University of Viseu was named after him; that a special double issue of the journal *Colóquio/Letras* (121-122, July-December 1991) was dedicated to him; that, as well as *Madame*, the play *Joaquim Maria* by Márcia Milhazes, based on his life and work was also produced for a Portuguese audience; that on 14 June 2000 a beautiful garden in Porto was named after him? And other examples of similar initiatives could be recalled as well.

In the nineteenth century it was as a poet that Machado de Assis became known in Portugal; nowadays it is as a novelist, who some illustrious novelists—such as Augusto Abelaira and Maria Velho da Costa—rank higher than Eça de Queiroz. What no one in Portugal today seems to doubt is that Machado is a master of the Portuguese language as well as an expert in the art of describing internal tensions and the labyrinths of human emotion, his wisdom spreading outside Brazilian society and beyond the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, if this were not enough, Machado is also perhaps the best example, through his life and work, of the benefits that Brazilians and Portuguese can gain from exchange and dialogue. As he himself wrote, “the literary embrace will eventually confirm the political embrace between the two nations. It is certainly not in the field of intellectual pursuits that our differences should be consecrated.”¹⁶

Notes

¹ Assis, “Versos a Corina” 256-258. There are differences between this version and the one in *Obra Completa* (28-29) where, for example, there appears the phrase “pedra bronca e rude.” In the magazine, however, the line reads “pedra branca e rude.” Ivan Teixeira says that Machado’s poem was “published in sections in several newspapers in Rio and one in the city of Porto,” without saying which one, or even mentioning the *Revista Contemporânea* (173). He may have been using Sayers’ confusing reference: “In 1884, Ramalho showed some interest in Machado, but without making very perspicacious criticisms, in an article entitled ‘Versos de Machado de Assis,’ published in the *Jornal do Porto* alongside ‘Versos a Corina,’ and reprinted in 1900” (130). The information becomes more confused because in a note on page 141 the

year 1884 becomes 1864. Nor is the information any clearer about the publication of the same poem provided by R. Magalhães Júnior, in vol. I of *Vida e Obra de Machado de Assis* (314).

² In a letter sent at the end of 1881, Antero writes: “As for works by Machado de Assis, I was only able obtain the *Crisálidas*, which I liked, but from which I gained nothing of use” (Quental, Letter no. 319). But he eventually chose the poem that he saw as most representative of Machado, “Fé” from *Crisálidas*. He uses a slightly different and apparently more correct version than the one that appears in *Obra Completa* (189-190).

³ Sayers mistakenly says “vinte e três” (136).

⁴ Two months later the same magazine praised *Ressurreição*, once again in an article by Francisco Rangel de Lima—and *O Brasil* (1-2).

⁵ Machado, *Gazeta do Povo*. See also *A América*.

⁶ See note 2.

⁷ As has already been mentioned, Ramalho praised Machado’s poetry in *O Jornal do Porto*, but also in the preface to the works of Casimiro de Abreu (Abreu IV), and read *Papéis Avulsos* with great enthusiasm, as a letter to Miguel de Novais suggests—see Magalhães Júnior, *A Vida* III.37.

⁸ His famous *Dicionário Bibliográfico Português* mentions Machado in volumes V (1860), XII (1884), and XVI (1893).

⁹ There can be no doubt that Eça and Machado read each other’s works, and not only at the time when Machado wrote his famous criticism of *O Primo Basílio* (1878). We must bear in mind that when Eça died, Machado wrote that he was “the best of the family, the most handsome and worthy” (in a letter to Henrique Chaves, Assis, *Obra Completa* 933). Domício da Gama wrote to Machado de Assis in a letter sent from Paris on 12 June 1892: “He also wanted to speak to you about *Quincas Borba*, which I read; I read the copy that you sent to Eça de Queiroz, to his office at the *Gazeta*. Eça is in Portugal and your book is here at home. When he returns, he will write to you, naturally. He is perhaps your greatest admirer in Europe” (see Berrini).

¹⁰ *A Ilustração*, ano 3, vol. III, no. 6.

¹¹ See Saraiva.

¹² The letter was published fully in the literary supplement of the *Estado de São Paulo* on 2 June 1964.

¹³ The original title was *Em Nome do Apelo do Nome: Responsabilidade e Destinação do Nome Próprio (Duas Interrogações sobre Machado de Assis)*; when it first appeared in print in Portugal it was entitled *Em Nome do Apelo do Nome* (Lisbon: Litoral Edições, 1991).

¹⁴ In this edition, there is a subtitle on the flyleaf, *Solicitação do Livro na Ficção e na Ficção de Machado de Assis*, which originally appeared on the cover.

¹⁵ Ronaldes de Melo e Sousa included the first of these works in the “Bibliografia Machadiana Comentada,” which concludes the volume *Machado de Assis—Uma Revisão* (Melo e Sousa 227-240) with the comment that it “indicates a fruitful method of gaining access to the meaning of Machado’s novels of memoirs,” but considers that “the thesis is not sufficiently argued or satisfactorily proved.”

¹⁶ Taken from a crónica in the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 22 March 1862.

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