

## RECEPTION AND CIRCULATION OF MACHADO'S DRAMATIC WORKS

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**Abstract:** This article examines how Machado's consecration as a national literary hero, and more recently as a world literature figure, has included or excluded his dramatic works. In doing so, the piece considers the role of collections, critical evaluations, book reviews, and performances. The effort to trace the presence and reception of his plays in various publications and languages demonstrates that in Brazil, the dramatic works initially were preserved out of obligation, but now they are undergoing a limited re-evaluation. Outside of Brazil, appreciation for Machado is genre specific; his plays largely are excluded from the world literature scene. In essence, his prose overshadows his dramatic works, and his extant plays do not enter into his construction as a world literature author.

**Keywords:** theater; world literature; circulation; reception.

### RECEPÇÃO E CIRCULAÇÃO DA OBRA DRAMÁTICA MACHADIANA

**Resumo:** Este artigo considera de que maneira a consagração de Machado como herói literário nacional e também como grande autor da literatura mundial tem incluído ou excluído as suas peças teatrais. Analisa a função de coletâneas, avaliações críticas, resenhas de livros e representações teatrais. A presença e a recepção das peças em várias publicações e línguas demonstram que, no Brasil, inicialmente, elas foram preservadas por obrigação, porém hoje em dia estão sendo reavaliadas. Fora do Brasil, o apreço pela obra machadiana é ligado ao gênero dos textos porque a sua obra dramática é predominantemente excluída do panorama da literatura mundial. Essencialmente, sua prosa ofusca as peças teatrais, e elas não entram na construção de Machado como escritor da literatura mundial.

**Palavras-chave:** teatro; literatura mundial; circulação; recepção.

Since the late nineteenth century, scholars in Brazil, including José Veríssimo, Antonio Candido, Alfredo Bosi, Roberto Schwarz, Marta de Senna, Hélio de Seixas Guimarães and numerous others have closely analyzed Machado de Assis's texts in order to understand the oeuvre's complexity. This critical attention has served to accentuate some of the genres in which he wrote. Appreciation for all Machadian writings has grown since the author's demise, but compared to his fictional prose, his many journalistic pieces, as well as lyrical and dramatic texts, often have received less – and in some instances rather negative – appraisals. In the case of the writer's plays in particular, they are most commonly interpreted as being less complex than his other literary works, especially those from the post-1881 period.

Outside of Brazil, as many monographs, anthologies, articles, and reviews attest, in recent decades Machado's translated novels and short stories have been adopted into the world literature canon, and he has entered the global pantheon of established writers. The *Bruxo do Cosme Velho*, widely recognized as the "most significant figure of nineteenth-century Brazilian literature and one of the country's most appreciated writers in the West" (COUTINHO, 2018, p. 8), has attained a reputation for composing ludic, inventive prose, worthy of comparison to cosmopolitan authors like Sterne, Fielding, and James.<sup>1</sup> Despite increasing admiration for the writer's skill, this celebration of the internationalized Machado has largely omitted his dramas, poems, *crônicas*, and other periodical writings, although some recent publications shed light on these genres.<sup>2</sup> In particular, global critical consideration of Machado's oft-neglected theatrical offerings pales in comparison to that given to his novels and short stories, although some plays appear to be undergoing a limited re-evaluation.<sup>3</sup> This uneven recognition and reception of his body of dramatic work raises the question of why Machado's dramatic works are not included in world literature, having been excluded from translation, publication, circulation, and review,

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Rouanet (2006).

<sup>2</sup> Growing critical consideration of Machado's poetry, essays, and especially *crônicas* can be seen in Lúcia Granja (2018); Greicy Pinto Bellin (2018); the bilingual *Good Days!: The Bons Dias! Chronicles by Machado de Assis (1888-1889)*, translated by Ana Lessa-Schmidt and Greicy Pinto Bellin, and introduced by the latter (2019); Ana Flávia Cernic Ramos (2016); and Alfredo Bosi (2004).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Fitz (2016). A recent special edition of *Machado de Assis em Linha* focused in part on Machado's theater and included articles on *Lição de Botânica* by Paul Dixon (2019) and Anna-Lisa Halling (2019).

with rare exceptions.<sup>4</sup> Why, then, has Machado's reputation as a dramaturg suffered in Brazil, and why are his dramas often mentioned only in passing outside of his homeland, where he remains primarily known as a globally appealing writer of challenging, inventive prose? As an examination of pertinent scholarship reveals, in Brazil many critics commonly have considered Machado's plays inferior to his other writings, and worthy of preservation, but perhaps not careful scrutiny. The dramatic works received little praise from the writer's contemporaries, and over time, such dismissive attitudes have become entrenched. Correspondingly, since Machado's plays lack the traits visible in his 1881-and-beyond fictional prose (such as *Brás Cubas's* "narrative's digressive quality – its tendency to wander from the 'straight' line" [SCOTT, 2013, p. 60]), they are not recognized as having the "qualidades que possam fazê-lo participar no *forum* internacional" (DIXON, 1998, p. 318).<sup>5</sup> In many ways, appreciation for Machado seems to be genre specific; the author's theatrical texts generally do not enter into his construction as a world literature figure.<sup>6</sup>

In order to understand the plays' limited inclusion in the world literature market, it is important first to examine the responses to them in Brazil. There, during his lifetime and beyond, Machado's dramas have elicited varying reactions, ranging from dismissal to homage. His 1863 book *Theatro de Machado de Assis* includes the plays *O protocolo* and *O caminho da porta*, as well as a letter to Quintino Bocaiuva, and the latter's oft-cited and influential reply about the two theatrical pieces. Over time, quoting from this missive has become "quase obrigatória" and the basis for a critical "coro de desqualificação do teatro machadiano," playing an extensive role in shaping the perception that Machado's dramas are not stage-ready, as Helen Tornquist (2002, p. 32, 37) asserts. With phrases describing *O protocolo* and *O caminho da porta* as "valiosas, como artefactos litterarios, mas... frias e insensíveis," Bocaiuva (1863,

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<sup>4</sup> In a bibliographic list of Machadian works, K. David Jackson (2006, p. 629) includes Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr.'s *You, love, and love alone*, a translation of *Tu, só tu, puro amor*, published in 1972 in Macau by the Imprensa Nacional.

<sup>5</sup> Here Paul Dixon speaks specifically of Machado's reception in the U.S. academy, but his trenchant observations can certainly be applied to attitudes displayed by the powers-that-be who decide who merits entry into the world literature publishing circuit.

<sup>6</sup> Along with the eleven surviving dramas (*Hoje avental, amanhã luva; Desencantos; O caminho da porta; O protocolo; Quase ministro; As forcas caudinas; Os deuses de casaca; Uma ode de Anacreonte; Tu, só tu, puro amor; Não consultes médico; Lição de botânica*), Machado wrote many now-lost original dramatic works such *O pomo de discórdia* (1864), and translated libretti for *A ópera das janelas* (1857) and the zarzuela *As bodas de Joanhina* (1861) (MASSA, 2009, p. 47).

n.p.) obviously opined that these two plays would be unsuccessful beyond the written page. Gabriela Maria Lisboa Pinheiro explains that the critic (himself a playwright) misunderstood the genre in which Machado wrote, the *provérbio dramático*, which was,

comu[m] na obra de Alfred de Musset e outros autores franceses, cujas peças serviram de inspiração a Machado de Assis, representaram o caminho encontrado pelo autor para a criação de seu teatro. Os provérbios tiveram sua origem e foram muito populares nos salões aristocráticos franceses da segunda metade do século XVII. Funcionavam como um entretenimento intelectual... Essas pequenas peças eram compostas por poucas cenas, e toda sua dramaticidade e conteúdo eram concentrados nos diálogos entre as personagens...apresenta[vam] personagens que representavam a alta sociedade, com seus ideais e estilo de vida. (PINHEIRO, 2009, p. 145)<sup>7</sup>

By judging Machado's French-inspired *comédias* against the popular realist dramas of the period, most critics misunderstood their worth, and lacked "entendimento desse período da história teatral brasileira e da compreensão... [d]os provérbios dramáticos – fez com que boa parte da crítica colocasse suas peças em um patamar de inferioridade" (PINHEIRO, 2009, p. 145). Despite these remonstrances, Machado, a practiced theater critic himself, obviously considered his plays to be publishable *and* performable, as various examples show.

During the dramatist's lifetime, a handful of his *provérbios* came to the Brazilian stage, belying the conviction that they were "literary artefacts" (BOCAIUVA, 1863, n.p.). For instance, the 1898 *Diccionario Bibliographico Brasileiro* reports that *O caminho da porta* and *O protocolo* were "representad[os] pela primeira vez no Atheneo dramatico" in September and November of 1862, respectively (SACRAMENTO BLAKE, 1898, p. 196), and Jackson (2015, p. 314) adds an 1863 performance of *Quase ministro. Os deuses de casaca* followed three years later, presented for the "sociedade Arcadia Fluminense"; several years after, in 1881, the specially scripted comedy *Tu, só tu, puro amor*, written to commemorate the tercentenary of Camões's death, was

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<sup>7</sup> Machado translated Musset's 1832 play *À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles* (*Como elas são*), and Penjon (2015, p. 14, 16) asserts that Musset's *Une porte doit être ouverte ou fermée* influenced the Brazilian's *provérbio O caminho da porta*.

enacted (SACRAMENTO BLAKE, 1898, p. 196). Along with the latter play's presentation, "Della se fez uma ed[ição] nitida de cem exemplares numerados" (SACRAMENTO BLAKE, 1898, p. 196). Although the plays' stagings were infrequent, *Tu, só tu, puro amor's* special edition indicates that at least some portion of the theater-minded public wished to celebrate Machado's dramatic works. His penultimate play, *Não consultes médico* (1896), appeared at the beautiful *Cassino Fluminense* sometime prior to 1898 (SACRAMENTO BLAKE, 1898, p. 197), and was "produced at the Brazilian National Exposition of 1908 in celebration of the centenary of the opening of Brazilian ports to international commerce" (JACKSON, 2015, p. 155). The official (English-language) book of the exposition declares that, "The best playwrights and artists of Brazil have been engaged to make the theatrical entertainments a success, and the country has reason to be proud of its dramatic talent as here presented" (WRIGHT, 1908). The text's author, Marie Robinson Wright, briefly describes the contribution *Don't Consult a Doctor!* by "Dr. Machado de Assis, one of the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters" as a "delightful sketch" (WRIGHT, 1908). Incidentally, the same section includes a full-page photograph of a statue of José de Alencar and designates the famed romanticist as the "greatest Brazilian dramatist" (WRIGHT, 1908). This acclamation, voiced by a foreign writer, lends credence to the view that other playwrights' dramatic reputations far outweighed Machado's.

Despite Alencar's and others' theatrical prowess, some important commentators took note of Machado's body of work at the nineteenth century's end, although they generally failed to appreciate his plays. A prime example comes from Sílvio Romero's *Machado de Assis: Estudo Comparativo de Litteratura Brasileira* (1897). The evaluation limits itself to being "Um estudo, mais ou menos completo, do escriptor fluminense – na poesia, no conto, no romance" (ROMERO, 1897, p. 13), though the author's poems merit little praise: "Machado de Assis póde e deve ser tambem apreciado pelo criterio nacionalista. Não o poeta... sim o romancista e o contista; porque estes dignaram-se de olhar, uma vez por outra, para nós" (ROMERO, 1897, p. 341). The critic would go on to uncharacteristically praise Machado's poetry collection *Ocidentais* (1901) a few years later (BELLIN, 2018, p. 18). Romero briefly highlights works from the 1860s including the plays *Desencantos*, *O caminho da porta*, *O protocolo*, and *Os deuses de casaca*, but suggests that they are "de ordem tão inferior," that Machado himself "hoje as occulta em sua quasi totalidade" (ROMERO, 1897, p.

8). The critic tepidly praises the latter three *comédias*, claiming that they demonstrate the playwright's "humorismo... de natureza inocente, placida, tranquilla" (ROMERO, 1897, p. 196). Although humor and innocence may be the works' saving grace as Romero's opines, the overall absence of real interpretative consideration of Machado's plays, reinforced by the claim that he wished to hide them, marks the texts as "unworthy" of populating the (national) Machadian library.

Other reactions to the author's non-dramatic texts demonstrate that his canonization would be a lengthy process. In his discussion of three contemporary responses to *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), Hélio de Seixas Guimarães (2017, p. 22) contends that reviewers felt "desconforto e... desconcerto," unsure of how to interpret the atypical novel in an age of predictable plots and commonplace characters. As Enylton de Sá Rego explains, nineteenth-century authorities generally failed to recognize the writer's genius since, "a crítica brasileira... limitava-se a apontar suas afinidades com Sterne e Fielding, e, quando muito, com Erasmo e com o Eclesiastes... não poderia perceber o internacionalismo literário de Machado, suas deglutições intertextuais nas quais, sistematicamente, revisitava o passado, com ironia" (SÁ REGO, 1987, p. 56). Given this lack of critical understanding, it seems unlikely that Machado's contemporaries would have sought deeper meaning in his plays, which were so unlike his ironic fictional prose and dissimilar from the popular dramatic styles of the day. In later decades, Brazilian *modernistas* rejected the Machadian body of work as being part of the status quo academy (SÁ REGO, 1987, p. 56). In fact, Guimarães (2017, p. 82) terms the 1920s "Uma década de silêncio" in Brazil because of scholarly inattention, but he traces the Machadian renaissance that occurred later in the century, bringing about the author's critical and popular reconstruction as an important national writer. For the most part, though, this notice centered on Machado's prose.

Shortly after the author's death, and before his unfashionableness and subsequent rediscovery, Machado's theatrical pieces and translations of others' plays and libretti were weighed in the balance. Just as reviewers evaluated Machado's prose, some assessed his *provérbios*, but the latter texts garnered different (and fewer) reactions. Mário de Alencar's short prologue to the volume *Machado de Assis Teatro* (1910), entitled "Advertencia," plainly asserts that Machado's plays are not on a par with other texts, since "elle não pode adquirir o talento dramático" (ALENCAR, 1910, p. 10). In support of his claim, the critic

quotes extensively from Bocaiuva's previously discussed letter that emphasizes two 1863 plays' suitability for the *gabinete*, instead of the stage; Alencar (1910, p. 11) suggests that Machado himself agreed with the discouraging assessment.

Despite these rather negative appraisals, Alencar's *Theatro* collection shows that the desire to preserve *all* of Machado's texts existed as early as 1910. Regardless of his faultfinding, Alencar recognizes the plays' importance. He insists that, "era preciso não deixar esquecidas todas estas obras, que se não tivessem outro merecimento, tinham o de ser obras de MACHADO DE ASSIS" (ALENCAR, 1910, p. 12). His use of capital letters here and throughout emphasize the author's name, as though Alencar were engraving it in the nation's literary pantheon. The less-than-subtle use of the subjunctive – "que se não tivessem outro merecimento" – damns the plays with faint praise. Still, the fact that the critic wished to preserve his friend's allegedly inconsequential dramatic pieces for posterity demonstrates that in turn-of-the-century Brazil, Machado's every word merited safeguarding, if not acclaim. Indeed, the critic laments the fact that a complete set of Machadian plays (including translations) cannot be printed: no copies of *Desencantos* or the translated Spanish *zarzuela As bodas de Joaninha* were found, and no authoritative version of *O supplicio de uma mulher* could be located (ALENCAR, 1910, p. 7).<sup>8</sup> Regrettably, only two years after Machado's death, copies of specific plays and translations had already been lost. Yet, the publication of *Theatro de Machado de Assis* also highlights that after the dramatist's demise, interest in preserving his works grew, and the publishing house expected at least some admirers to purchase the volume. Despite the plays' lack of "merecimento" in Alencar's eyes, the *Theatro* collection added depth, if not glory, to Machado's legacy (ALENCAR, 1910, p. 12).

In later decades, critical reactions to the dramas varied. Scholars including Ciro da Cunha in 1938, Eugênio Gomes in 1958, and Massaud Moisés in 1961 echoed Bocaiuva's and Alencar's argument that in general, Machado's plays are too intellectual to be performed; Moisés even called them "mediocre" and unable to attain real dramatic merit (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 117-118; MOISÉS, 1961, p. 254). In 1960, Joel Pontes offered another critique. He grouped together six plays (*Não consultes médico; Hoje avental, amanhã luva; Desencantos; O caminho da porta; O protocolo; As forcas caudinas*) and claimed instead that they

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<sup>8</sup> Two missing pieces that Alencar mentions, *Desencantos* and *O supplicio de uma mulher*, were included in later editions of Machado de Assis *Theatro* published by W.M. Jackson.

demonstrated banality of situations, overly simplistic dialogue, and lack of Dionysian tension (PONTES, 1960a, p. 13). In essence, the four critics found little to praise, either censuring the theatrical pieces for being too intellectual and therefore better left unstaged, or lacking in the elements that make plays engaging.

Despite these varying opinions, in the decades following Alencar's 1910 *Theatro* publication, the desire to codify Machado's plays had become a matter of national import. This undertaking marked a change in attitude given the fact that literary histories by several well-known authors (including Sílvio Romero, Ronald de Carvalho, and Nelson Werneck Sodré) omitted any mention of Machado's theater, with rare exceptions (PONTES, 1960b, p. 12). By 1958, the Ministry of Education and Culture had both *Não consultes médico* and *Lição de Botânica* on its radar: "Os textos dessas duas peças foram fixados pela Comissão Machado de Assis, instituída em 1958 pelo MEC 'com a finalidade de elaborar o texto definitivo das obras' do autor" (FARIA, 2008). The efforts to establish a government-sponsored, authoritative text, as well as to found a Machado Commission, further emphasize the author's status as a national literary hero. Moreover, Brazilian performances of the dramas in the 1950s attest to his growing dramatic recognition. *Lição de Botânica*, paired with Joaquim Manuel de Macedo's *O Primo da Califórnia*, came to São Paulo's Teatro Íntimo Nicette Bruno in 1954, courtesy of exiled Italian director Ruggero Jacobbi, who demonstrated a desire to contribute to the "desenvolvimento de um teatro eminentemente nacional" through his choice of plays (RAULINO, 2005, p. 80). Another performance of *Lição* occurred in 1956 at Rio's Teatro Municipal; a critic of the period, Accioly Netto, felt surprised at how good the play was and came to speak of Machado being "redescoberto" (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 111). Presumably, Netto had heard the oft-repeated idea of Machado's being "considerado pela crítica um dramaturgo de pouca qualidade" (PINHEIRO, 2009, p. 141).<sup>9</sup> In the late 1950s, a production of *O protocolo* honored the fifty-year anniversary of the author's demise (SOUZA, 2015, on-line), perhaps signaling a new (albeit infrequent) way to reverence him aside from

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<sup>9</sup> Along these lines, J. Galante de Sousa (1968, p. 229) wrote a few years after Netto's revelation that "a crítica nega geralmente a Machado de Assis as qualidades de teatrólogo" and that "não se firmou na literatura teatral." The critic backs up this claim by quoting Bocaiuva's letter.



commemorative celebrations, statues, and collected volumes.<sup>10</sup> Directed by Zbigniew Marian Ziemiński, the play garnered praise from Décio de Almeida Prado due to the Ziemiński's ability to perceive the piece's "deficiências" and "ter sabido retirar do próprio texto, e do próprio Machado, os elementos que possibilitariam a vitória," as the directorial changes presumably made the presentation palatable (SOUZA, 2015, on-line).

Further performances and Machado's "rediscovery," as Netto termed it, were insufficient to spark the theatrical renaissance that some scholars sought, including Pontes. In *Machado de Assis e o teatro* (1960), published by the Ministério de Educação e Cultura's "Campanha Nacional de Teatro," Pontes sought to understand the motives for this lack of interest. Initially he asks, "por que não se estuda o teatro de Machado de Assis?" (PONTES, 1960b, p. 11). Although the writer does not specify the ways it could or should be studied, he obviously wishes for further dissemination of the Machadian portfolio. "O simples fato de as peças existirem," he argues, "já obriga o crítico a deter-se nelas" (PONTES, 1960b, p. 11). This sentiment mirrors Massaud Moisés's affirmation that even if a reader were to find a play unenjoyable, "bastava ser Machado de Assis seu autor para justificar o conhecimento de mais uma faceta de seu caráter e de seu talento, encerrando-se, dessa forma, a viagem encetada com *Ressurreição*, num circuito esférico que é símbolo da perfeição integral" (MOISÉS, 1961, p. 256). Machado seemingly eclipses the body of work while simultaneously creating a circuit in which wholeness and perfection can be found. Pontes's question also echoes Mário de Alencar's decades-earlier insistence that the author's plays be remembered, lest, it could be inferred, ignoring them might endanger Machado's fame.

The desire to appreciate and safeguard all of Machado's dramas in print existed early on, although exposure to them did not necessarily increase much. Yet, his dramatic pieces gained some traction in his homeland, whether through the Ministry of Education's efforts, drama troupes' occasional performances, or scholars' studies. Nevertheless, as Resende (2018, p. 275) emphasizes, Machado's dramatic works "only became part of the history of Brazilian literature because of the signature of our principal novelist rather than for the

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<sup>10</sup> One contemporary collected volume (*Crítica Teatral*, Rio de Janeiro: W.M. Jackson, 1955) explores Machado's writings about theater (reviews and crônicas), but does not discuss the author's own plays. In this case, Machado as a journalist proved more interesting than the writer as a dramatist.

importance they had in the cadre of Brazilian theater.” Such an assertion, shared by many critics, was not entirely the case across the Atlantic.

Outside of Brazil, Machado’s limited dissemination in Portuguese did not feature his fictional prose. Instead, as Arnaldo Saraiva (2006, p. 653) explains, in late nineteenth-century Portugal the author was “better known at the time as a poet, critic, and newspaper columnist than as a novelist or playwright.” Periodicals played an important role in this trans-Atlantic exchange of literary works and of being-in-the-know. Indeed, “In some cases, the texts that Machado de Assis sent to Portugal were published in Brazil at a later date,” while other works subsequently appeared in Portuguese journals (SARAIVA, 2006, p. 652). One of these interchanges included a mention of Machado’s *Os deuses de casaca*. Originally performed in Rio at an Arcádia Fluminense society *sarau* in December 1865, the play was subsequently published in two Rio-based journals in 1866, and was praised by Manuel Pinheiro Chagas in an article in Lisbon’s *Anuário do Arquivo Pitoresco*; in it he compares *Os deuses* with plays by Heinrich Heine and Alfred Musset (MELO FRANÇA, 2018, p. 97-98). Such acclaim from Pinheiro Chagas stands in contrast to the reception of Bocaiuva and others who did not appreciate Machado’s chosen genre, the *provérbio dramático*.

While Machado’s recognition in nineteenth-century Portugal was based on lyrical and journalistic texts, the English-dominated world literature canon has embraced him on different terms: as a fictional prose writer. Although a relatively new development, members of the global literati including Susan Sontag, Harold Bloom, and many others have consecrated him as an author of note, marking Machado as one of Brazil’s most famous authors and shaping how international reading audiences perceive him. His works’ appearance in English began a little over a decade after his death. As Hélio de Seixas Guimarães (2017) has discussed, the collection *Brazilian Tales* (1921), selected and translated by Isaac Goldberg, treats three Machado pieces: “A cartomante,” “O enfermeiro,” and the dialogue-driven “Viver!”. (Some consider the last selection a play, as will be discussed). Designed as a “sample of modern Brazilian short stories,” Goldberg (1921, on-line) notes in his preliminary remarks that the works of de Assis and another included author, José Medeiros e Albuquerque, should be understood in terms of the “popularity of Poe and Hawthorne in South

America.”<sup>11</sup> Given the translator’s focus on marking Machado as an equal to famous raconteurs like Poe and Hawthorne, it is no wonder that he ignores the Brazilian’s theatrical offerings. Indeed, it would not be until the 1950s and 1960s that the global literary market would view Machado as an author ready to be inserted into the circuit of translation, publication, and transaction. During these decades, the printing path linking Great Britain, the United States, and Brazil grew. This connection occurred not only via translations of Machado’s texts (mostly excluding his dramatic, journalistic, and poetic texts), but also through book reviews about the English-language translations and critical works examining the author and his oeuvre.

Some of the first translations from this period are Helen Caldwell’s 1953 *Dom Casmurro*, published in New York, and Clotilde Wilson’s *Philosopher or Dog? (Quincas Borba)* in 1954.<sup>12</sup> Both works offered the English-language reading public a taste of Machado’s novelistic prowess. A 1954 *New Republic* book review by Dudley Fitts, a translator himself (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, on-line), discusses Machado’s newly translated “three great novels” while referencing Swift, James, and Sterne; the reviewer also declares the Brazilian to be “one of the few modern writers who seem sure of survival” (FITTS, 1954, p. 19). This perceived durability presumably derives from Machado’s successful entry into the English-language market and his skill at using a “lucid lyric style” and “know[ing] the secret of the incongruously laconic” (FITTS, 1954, p. 20). A 1955 *Revista Hispánica Moderna* review of Caldwell’s *Dom Casmurro* similarly highlights Machado’s cosmopolitanism, the “universalidade de sua arte e... profundidade de sua filosofia,” and compares him to “romancistas da categoria de James, Thackeray ou Flaubert” (SAYERS, 1955, p. 50). It also praises Caldwell’s translation, but since the piece appears in Portuguese, its readership would have been somewhat limited. The journal *Modern Philology* gave her *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: A Study of Dom Casmurro* (1960) a favorable and detailed review in 1962. In a sentence subsequently used as a pull quote for Caldwell’s book’s back cover, author John M. Fein stated: “For its depth, documentation, and literary insight, this is an

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<sup>11</sup> The volume *Brazilian Tales* also includes stories by three other Brazilian authors (José Medeiros e Albuquerque, Anselmo Ribas Coelho Netto, and Carmen Dolores [a pseudonym used by Emília Moncorvo Bandeira de Melo]).

<sup>12</sup> As Guimarães (2017, p. 196) mentions, the process of “internationalizing” Machado’s oeuvre began with William Grossman’s 1952 translation of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas (Epitaph of a Small Winner)*.

important contribution to the understanding of a classic that deserves an extensive American audience." By using the words "deserve" and "classic," the reviewer seemingly wishes to conjure an audience that can appreciate the intricacies of Machado's translated-by-Caldwell-Dom-Casmurrian-text. Despite her expertise in Machadian literature, Caldwell unsurprisingly ignored his plays, with only a couple of mentions: in *Machado de Assis: The Brazilian Master and His Novels* (1970), she acknowledges his "19 plays and opera librettos... a volume of two one-act comedies, three more comedies published in single volumes," and the performances of the translated opera *Pipelet* and the zarzuela *As bodas de Joaquina* (CALDWELL, 1970, p. 16-18). Compared to a master work like *Dom Casmurro*, Caldwell apparently found his dramatic work to be less remarkable.

This pattern of bringing Machado the cosmopolitan novelist (but not poet, journalist, or playwright) to light in journal articles, books, and book reviews would repeat itself through the famed British author, V.S. Pritchett. In his 1966 piece on Machado, this transatlantic writer and "man of letters" also played a role in the transformation of the Brazilian master into a figure of importance in Great Britain and beyond. As a "free-lance literary critic, [he became] an important broker in the literary exchanges between Britain, continental Europe, and the United States" (TREGLOWN, 2005, p. 5). Pritchett's role as intermediary in the exchange of information gave him the opportunity to feature previously unknown or less recognized authors, since, "There [was] nobody in Pritchett's league as a book reviewer" (CORE, 1981, p. xxxviii). He wrote for the *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, and the influential London magazine *New Statesman*. Along with the *London Diary*, and "together with the Sunday papers, these two weeklies [played] a great part in determining which books [were] bought, borrowed, talked about, and read" (HAYMAN, 1956, p. 440). Pritchett's transatlantic reviewing role increased his brokering power and effect on consumers' literary attitudes and purchases, and likely expanded the market for Machado's prose.

This talent for evaluating authors and their texts resulted in Pritchett's 1979 book *The Myth Makers: Essays on European, Russian and South American Novelists*.<sup>13</sup> The chapter on Machado de Assis is subtitled "A Brazilian," yet

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<sup>13</sup> Pritchett's collection of great authors seems akin to Harold Bloom's *Genius*, which fails to mention Machado's theater, poetry, crônicas, or short stories, referring to him as a "Brazilian novelis[t]" and naming him the "most refreshing" of the lot. (BLOOM, 2002, p. 675).

Pritchett attempts to rewrite Machado and secure him a place in the British literary pantheon. The English critic mentions that Machado "eventually became an Anglophile" and declares aspects of his writing to be "very modern" and "free of that addiction to rhetorical French romanticism which influenced all South American literature during the nineteenth century" (PRITCHETT, 1979, p. 158-159).<sup>14</sup> Pritchett goes on to compare him to Jonathan Swift, Laurence Sterne, E.M. Forster, and the anglophile Stendhal (PRITCHETT, 1979, p. 158-162). By subtly distancing the Brazilian "Myth Maker" from late nineteenth-century Rio, and situating him in mid-twentieth-century London, the critic commits the sin that John Gledson and Luana Ferreira de Freitas uncover, that of trying to sell Machado as a "literary experimenter, someone ahead of his time, who *already* in 1880... was making fun of traditional realist ways of writing fiction, and playing with such things as unreliable first person narration, digressions, an ironic and playful dialogue with the reader, etc." (GLEDSON; FREITAS, 2013, p. 10-11). With such a focus on Machado's contemporary flair, it is no wonder that translations in English that enter the international circuit of adapting, publishing, and selling leave little room for discussing plays that are built on proverbs and that feature less irony.

Given the tendency to concentrate on Machado's biography and cosmopolitanism, as Pritchett does, or his prose works, as Caldwell does, one might assume that twentieth-century Spanish-language translations and discussions of Machado's texts also focus either on life story or on fictional prose. An examination of a handful of Machadian texts found in several Spanish-speaking nations reveals this tendency, although one theatre-like piece was translated and entered into circulation. The volume *Machado de Assis: Narraciones escogidas*, published by Editorial América in Madrid in 1919, forms part of a series of works by foreign "Autores célebres" including Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, and Shakespeare. It contains several short stories along with the dialogue "Viver!" (retitled "Ahasvero" after the main character). Some consider the latter selection a story, while others, including Cecília Loyola and Teresinha Marinho, list it as a play, although its style differs from Machado's

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<sup>14</sup> Pritchett's London-published book *The Myth Makers* was in turn reviewed in the U.S.: a 1980 piece in the journal *America* explains to readers that Machado was a "19<sup>th</sup>-century writer born in the slums of Rio" (CASTRONOVO, 1980, p. 506-507).

*provérbios*.<sup>15</sup> Play or not, a note (presumably) from the *Narraciones escogidas* editor asserts that Machado was “universalmente conocido, gracias a las muchas traducciones que de su obra se han hecho en diversas lenguas... más de un periódico ha publicado cuentos suyos, traducidos probablemente del francés” (CANSINOS-ASSENS, 1919, n.p.). Such a comment reveals the vital role of translation in Machado’s works’ dissemination (important for any author), and shows how its lack could affect his dramatic renown. It also demonstrates that the Spanish publication included the author’s texts based on his fame as a fictional prose writer. Since some of Machado’s plays were published in periodical form, the possibility of their having appeared in a French or Spanish newspaper exists, although it is unlikely. Another book, coming from W.M. Jackson’s Colección Panamericana series (Buenos Aires, 1945), includes a translated *Dom Casmurro* and three short stories. The prologue praises Machado’s books, reminds readers that he still merits discussion nearly forty years after his death, and only mentions his theater as an aside (PEREIRA, 1945, p. xii). The *Antología del cuento brasileiro* (1962), published in Lima, offers only “Missa do galo,” along with other Brazilian writers’ works (GÓMEZ BENOIT, 1962). A Venezuelan tome published in 1978 is a translation of Afrânio Coutinho’s 1962 *Obra completa*, second edition, with a selection and prologue by Alfredo Bosi, but is the *Cuentos* volume of the complete works, more appealing to readers who had perhaps heard of Machado’s stories. More recent translations into Spanish focus on Machado’s short stories, or, most commonly, his novels. Criticism also followed suit: in the brief book *Machado de la Mancha* (2001), famed author Carlos Fuentes (2001, p. 9-10) considers Machado a kind of successor to Erasmus as well as Cervantes: “Machado asume, en Brasil, la lección de Cervantes, la tradición de la Mancha que olvidaron... los novelistas hispanoamericanos.” His analysis of Machado omits any mention of theater and instead most closely examines *Brás Cubas*, praising its humor and innovativeness and drawing comparisons to authors including Laurence Sterne. Along with this analysis, Fuentes successfully inserts Machado into the world literature cosmos. As one of the cosmopolitan “hijos de la Mancha,” alongside Salman Rushdie, Wole Soyinka, and others, Machado claims entry into this “manchado, impuro, sincrético, barroco, corrupto” world “por razones de

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<sup>15</sup> Loyola (1997) includes *Viver!* in the “Peças de Machado de Assis” section, along with three other plays, in *Machado de Assis e o teatro das convenções*, while Teresinha Marinho lists it with other plays in an editorial piece in *Machado de Assis: Teatro completo* (1982).

imaginación y lenguaje” (FUENTES, 2001, p. 29, 23). Even though Machado’s texts entered the Spanish-language literary scene long before becoming available in English, their availability was seemingly limited to prose.

When discussing genres, national literatures, and circulation, the challenges associated with selection and translation will always exist. This point may be particularly true with regard to “world” theater, as Resende (2018, p. 268) writes:

One of the many difficulties facing studies and critical selections that strive to form literary canons, lists that intend to be definitively consecratory, lies in the specificity itself of theatrical creation, of its perception and reception, in dialogue with literary fiction and later with other arts, but always retaining its proper language and deserving autonomous study.

Perhaps the radical (and expensive) idea of translating all of an author’s belletristic texts can help with the knotty issues related to world literature (or world theater), even when those works do not fit a certain mold such as “very modern” as Pritchett (1979, p. 158) says, or, “refreshing,” as Harold Bloom (2002, p. 675) declared. After all, is a full picture of Machado available when only part of his genre is known and appreciated, whether at home or abroad? This imbalance creates an arguably incomplete picture of the famed author who wrote plays throughout his career. Whether Machado’s theatrical works were singular or banal, didactic or dull, remains to be seen as more scholarship on them emerges. The fact that studies are increasingly being pursued proves hopeful. Broader interest in Machadian dramatic works has recently risen in Brazil, as dissertation and article titles demonstrate, and this trend may also extend to future studies and the plays’ translations into English, Spanish, and other languages. Versions of some Machadian dramatic pieces such as *O protocolo* and *Lição de Botânica* have made their way into the video-sharing website universe and more adaptations, in a variety of languages and forms, may follow. This democratization of Machadian theater opens up many possibilities for those who want to see his *provérbios* in action. So, while the plays remain mostly untranslated from Portuguese and thus are effectively barred from the world literature stage, Machado’s growing reputation and entry into popular culture implies that eventually his theatrical works will make their entrance.

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