THE SPACE-IN-BETWEEN: MACHADO DE ASSIS AND THE POSTMODERNITY SENSIBILITY

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Abstract: Machado de Assis displayed an acute sensitivity to the liminal space that Silviano Santiago refers to as the "space-in-between" (o entre-lugar), which shapes experience. This enhanced his ability to convey a nuanced relationship between various categories of difference – particularly subject and object – compared with that of the normative modern worldview. Located in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Machado's perspective, which views categories of difference as inherently relative and interlocking extremes on a continuum, displays an affinity with postmodern sensibilities.

Keywords: Machado de Assis; criticism; Brazilian literature; modernity; materialist rationalism; realism-naturalism in literature; postmodernism.

O ENTRE-LUGAR: MACHADO DE ASSIS E A SENSIBILIDADE PÓS-MODERNA

Resumo: Machado de Assis desenvolveu aguda sensibilidade para o espaço liminar a que Silviano Santiago se refere como "o entre-lugar", que molda a experiência. Esta aumentou a sua capacidade de transmitir uma relação mais nuançada entre as várias categorias de diferença – particularmente sujeito e objeto – em comparação com a visão de mundo moderna normativa. Localizada no final do século XIX e início do século XX, a perspectiva de Machado, que vê categorias de diferença como inerentemente extremos relativos e interligadas em um continuum, exibe uma afinidade com a sensibilidade pós-moderna.

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THE CRISIS OF MODERNITY

Machado de Assis displayed a keen sensitivity to the liminality (from the Latin *limen*, "boundary" or "threshold")[1] that shapes experience, which Silviano Santiago refers to as the "space-in-between" (*o entre-lugar*).[2] This enhanced his ability to convey shades of meaning between various categories of difference – particularly subject and object – compared with that of the normative modern worldview.[3] Located in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Machado's perspective, which views categories of difference as inherently relative and interlocking extremes on a continuum, displays, according to novelist John Barth, a kinship with the postmodern sensibility.[4]

The symptomatic features of this trend surfaced with Kant (1724-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831) during the early nineteenth century in German Romanticism, and later in the works of Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Heidegger (1889-1976).[5] Preeminent among these was a recognition of and anxiety surrounding the collapse of faith and confidence in the sensate paradigm, which spanned the Renaissance and advanced in preeminence during the Enlightenment. According to Pitirim Sorokin, the previous ideational worldview during the medieval era

[1] TURNER, *The Ritual Process*, p. 94-130; WHALEN, Introduction, p. 1.

[2] SANTIAGO, O entre-lugar no discurso Latino-Americano, p. 9, 19-26.

3 Daniel argues that Machado's own liminality as a multiracial individual, who was both black and white, yet neither, provided him with a more nuanced understanding of differences. However, a multiracial background or mixed race experience are not in and of themselves prerequisites for this "both/neither" perspective, which could originate in myriad sources. DANIEL, *Machado de Assis*, p. 10-33, 62-76.

[4] Literary scholar Earl Fitz and contemporary novelist John Barth (1930-) have pointed out Machado's kinship with postmodernism (Barth in Fitz, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* as (proto) type of the modernist novel, p. 15, 20-1).

[5] ROSENAU, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, p. 93.

privileged a metaphysical, spiritual, and subjectivist mentation associated with the rise of Christianity. The structure of the universe was considered to be divinely ordained and the religious authority of the church prevailed over natural knowledge. With the rise of the sensate paradigm, the capacities of intellect, reason, and an objectivist mentation (as well as its cultural embodiments in science and technology) were not only given new emphasis, but also became preeminent over other types of mentation and cultural expression.[6]

This paradigm supports the belief that the external world has a logical order, which is the interplay of measurable bodies, calculable forces, and discernible rules – the empirical, rational perspective on nature. The resulting ″mirror of nature″ worldview,[7] often referred to as the ″representation paradigm″,[8] was premised on the belief in a true, preordained, objective reality, which was copied onto each individual's subjective consciousness. Knowledge (and thus truth) would be yielded solely by mirroring – mapping – this one true world in the form of mimesis, objectively represented in scientific models. Once grasped through scientific inquiry, the laws governing it world could also be manipulated for human gain.

This thinking was bequeathed to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries most notably through the various branches of philosophical positivism and scientific rationalism.[9] Hallmarks of the modern worldview, these phenomena, along with the certitude of ″progress″, were now called into question.[10] Thus when the crisis of modernity came at last, it reflected one of the great transformations in human history. Indeed, Sorokin maintains that the violent seismic shift during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was comparable in magnitude to the profound shift from the ideational-dominated worldview of the

[6] SOROKIN, *Social and Cultural Dynamics,* p. 268-75.

[7] ROSENAU, cit., p. 92-108.

[8] WILBER, *A Brief History of Everything*, p. 59.

[9] HARVEY, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 27.

[10] RATTANSI, 'Western' Racisms, Ethnicities, and Identities in a 'Postmodern Frame', p. 17.

medieval era to the sensate-dominated worldview of the Renaissance and Reformation that gave rise to modernity.[11]

The Postmodern Turn

The "counter-Enlightenment", which became pronounced by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[12] may be viewed as part of a broader transformation frequently referred to as "the postmodern turn".[13] The date for the emergence of postmodernism proper is generally located in the early 1970s.[14] It figures prominently in the works of twentieth-century West European (particularly French) thinkers.[15] Yet the term "postmodern" reflects a temporal ambiguity as well as an elusive, elastic, and equivocal sense of presence that defies any consensual definition.

Deconstructive postmodernism is popularly considered most representative of postmodernism (and often the most reviled).[16] It maintains that there are no universal truths or foundation upon which to secure an objective reality.[17] All truth is relative, culture-bound, and based on little more than shifting tastes and

[11] HOOGVELT, *The Sociology of Developing Societies*, p. 25-26; HOLLINGER, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, p. 25-26; SOROKIN, cit., p. 622-23.

[12] LYOTARD, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii-xxv, p. 18-31.

[13] SEIDMAN, Introduction, p. 2.

[14] BERTENS, The Postmodern *Weltanschauung* and its Relation to Modernism, p. 25-70. BERTENS, The Sociology of Postmodernity, p. 103-20; HOLLINGER, cit., p. xii, 35, 47. TORO, The Epistemological Foundations of the Contemporary Condition, p. 29-33.

[15] Notable French postmodernist thinkers include Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), Felix Guattari (1930-1992), and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004).

[16] Judging from their writings, Lyotard, Foucault, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Guattari, and Derrida are all deconstructive postmodernists (SMITH, *Beyond the Post-modern Mind*, p. 241).

[17] ANDERSON, Introduction, p. 4.

anchored in nothing but power or prejudice.[18] Consequently, this perspective lacks an all-embracing outlook or metanarrative and doubts that having one is possible (or even desireable) any longer.[19] In contrast to their deconstructive counterparts, constructive postmodernists have repudiated the scathing of grand narratives.[20] They argue that the deconstructive approach can lead to a debilitating relativism, radical pluralism, and ultimately nihilism. This seems to imply that what one does or believes it matters little.[21] The constructive approach maintains that worldviews are not simply arbitrary but rather, develop in history. They are constrained by currents in the objective environment that determine how much a culture can arbitrarily construct. Most constructivists believe that each worldview gives way to its successor because certain limitations in the previous worldview become apparent.[22] Consequently, the constructive perspective argues that the critique and deconstruction of modernity should be accompanied by proposals for reconstruction.[23] Although accepting the notion that truth is constructed, not found, constructive postmodernists[24] maintain that it is not necessary to deny the existence of the objective sensory world altogether in order to acknowledge the creative influence of the subject. Human beliefs concerning reality are products of a creative interaction between the subjective

[18] NATOLI and HUTCHEON, Introduction, p. ix; ROSENAU, cit., p. 5-7, 14-17; TORO, The Epistemological Foundations of the Contemporary Condition, p. 29-33; FOUCAULT, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 38-9; LYOTARD, cit., p. xxiii-xxv, 18-31; SMITH, cit., p. 232-34.

[19] LYOTARD 1979, xxiii-xxv, 18-31; SMITH, p. 232-34; DANIEL, *More than Black?*, p. 2002, 179-84.

[20] These constructive postmodernists include Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and, in certain respects, Karl Marx (1818-1883), Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, as well as North American thinkers such as Charles Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) and British thinker Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). GRIFFIN, Introduction, p. 1-42; ROSENAU, cit., p. 5-7, 14-17.

[21] GRIFFIN, cit., p. 1-42; ROSENAU, cit., p. 132.

[22] WILBER, cit., p. 61.

[23] ROSENAU, cit., p. 124.

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consciousness and the external world. Constructive and deconstructive postmodernists, however, reject the notion of a substantial or unified and static self or ego.[25]

Moreover, both postmodern viewpoints jettison modernity's dichotomous and hierarchical ranking of differences as well as its totalizing universalism that leveled these differences.[26] They critique the resulting "monological" imperative,[27] that is to say, the "either/or" mentation that underpins the modern worldview. It considers singularity as the norm in terms of the construction of all categories of difference,[28] which emphasizes "the precision of interpretation" and "the reduction of ambiguity".[29] In contradistinction to this mentation, postmodernism displays a "both/neither" perspective where various differences are comingled.[30] Therefore, postmodernists have frequently sought to deconstruct modernity's dichotomous hierarchy by exhibiting "liminal" and "hybrid" phenomena that are undecipherable with reference to its framework. This demonstrates the difficulties of defining one category of experience without including elements of the other.[31] Rather than reverse the dichotomy, however, this strategy questions the hierarchical "grounds on which the dichotomy is erected".[32]

Machado de Assis and Postmodernity

[25] ANDERSON, cit., p. 8; ROSENAU, cit., p. 124; BALDWIN, *Ending the Science Wars*, p. 47, 58-61; SMITH, cit., p. 232-234; DANIEL, *More than Black?*, p. 179-184.

[26] BAUDRILLARD, *The Mirror of Production*, p. 88-89.

[27] WILBER, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, p. 141.

[28] WILBER, An Integral Theory of Consciousness, p. 71-92; WILBER, *Integral Psychology*, p. 167, 272, 278.

[29] SIMONE, *Race in Postmodern America*, p. 141.

[30] SOROKIN, cit., p. 28-29, 623-628, 699-704.

[31] DERRIDA, *Writing and Difference*, p. 278-283; ROSENAU, cit., p. 5-7; SEIDMAN, cit., p. 8-9; DANIEL, *More than Black?*, p. 179-184.

[32] RATTANSI, cit., p. 30.

Machado's consciousness was imbued with the sensibility that underpins the broader nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century critique of modernity as well as the postmodernist impulse that emerged in the late twentieth century.[33] For example, Machado displayed what Jean-François Lyotard refers to as "an incredulity toward metanarratives".[34] He "maintained a position of disbelief toward all philosophical systems and categorizations"[35] He argued that there is no "ultimate system of belief and everything can be relativized".[36]

Machado also repudiates modernity's dominant sensate culture and materialist rationalist epistemology by virtue of the threat they pose to Brazil and, by extension, humanity.[37] Yet as someone whose perspective resonates variously with constructive postmodernism, Machado was neither simply antimodern nor did he reject sensate culture's materialist rationalist thought and scientific inquiry. Indeed, he did not blame rationalism and material "progress" in and of themselves as the source of Brazil's loss of spiritual direction, and subsequent loss of self-identity. Rather, Machado spoke out against the materialist positivists who displayed a new, almost religious devotion to mechanistic determinism and reductionism. They were merely perpetuating scientism and scientific fundamentalism that considered the sensate mode as the absolute and only justifiable means of accessing the truth.[38] For example, in his essay "Passado, presente, futuro" (Past, Present, Future),[39] Machado urged Brazilians to transcend modernity's limitations (e.g., materialist rationalism) and redeem their

[33] HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro,* the Fruit and the Rind, p. 250-251; NUNES, *The Craft of an Absolute Winner*, p. x.

[34] LYOTARD, cit., p. xxiv-xxv.

[35] REGO, Preface, p. xviii.

[36] GLEDSON, *Dom Casmurro*, p. xix.

[37] CALDWELL, *Machado de Assis*, p. 89, HANSEN, cit., p. 251; MISKOLCI, Machado de Assis, p. 352-377.

[38] CALDWELL, cit., p. 89-91, 113, 124-125, GLEDSON, cit., p. xx; HANSEN, cit., p. 251; ROCHA, Introduction, p. xxxi; VIRGILLO, Machado de Assis and the Myth of Brazil, p. 73.

[39] ASSIS, *Obra completa*, vol. 3, p. 787.

native genius without jettisoning the positive value of material accomplishments.[40]

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of Machado's affinity with the postmodern sensibility is his portrayal of the relationship between subject and object, particularly evident in his novels. João Hansen argues that Machado calls attention to the fact that all humans possess an intricate and often contradictory identity and subjectivity.[41] This reflects his critique of the "unity of normality, defined as noncontradiction, as repetitive memory of proper behavior and the rational aptitude for carrying out useful tasks" demanded by the order and progress of a positivist (and modernist) society.[42] Along these lines, Machado argues that humans possess two souls, one on the inside (*a alma interior*) – the subjective self – and one on the outside (*a alma exterior*) – the objective self. These are roughly equivalent, respectively, to the individual morality or conscience (i.e., the subjective self) and the image reflected in the mirror through social interactions (the objective self), which is motivated by egoism and the dictates for public success.[43] Nowhere is Machado's sensitivity to these questions more explicit than in the short story "O espelho" [The Mirror], where the narrator puts forth the notion that humanity possesses two souls: the subjective self (*alma interior*) and the objective self (*alma exterior*).[44] The importance of this dual essence is symbolized by Jacobina, a former military officer who needs to parade in front of a mirror in his decorated uniform – alma exterior – in order to reaffirm his existence.

Alfredo Bosi considers Machado to be a master analyst of the complicated and often murky relationship between the two identities, which he refers to as "first nature" and "second nature". First nature, which consists of individual inclinations, desires, and drives, is more often than not veiled by second nature, which is composed of conventions, habits, customs, and norms imposed by

[40] MISKOLCI, cit., p. 352-377; VIRGILIO, cit., p. 73.

[41] BOURDIEU, *Distinction*, 1979/1984, p. 175; BOURDIEU, *The Logic of Practice,* p. 52-53; ROSENAU, cit., p. 42-61; POWELL, The Multiple Self, p. 1481-1520.

[42] HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro:* Simulacrum and Allegory, p. 32.

[43] NUNES, cit., p. 12, 82-84, 140, 142-143; VIEIRA, *Interiors and Narrative,* p. 51.

[44] ASSIS, *Obra completa,* vol. 2, p. 345-352.

society. The interplay between essences and appearances results in a host of vices that come masked as virtues through skillful calculation, hypocrisy, arrogance, lying, and other strategies.[45] Machado's gallery of characters includes wives and mothers who use their husbands and children as a means of self-aggrandizement, unable to give of themselves to their supposed loved ones. There are mad psychiatrists and philosophers who, far from healing or understanding humanity, are incapable of solving their own problems, and lawyers and physicians who seldom, if ever, apply their training except to join the elite legislature or pay lip service to the latest dictates of intellectual materialism. Clergymen seem better versed in the art of carving chickens than of understanding the intricacies of the human soul. Their military counterparts include high-ranking officers whose primary claim to fame is their star-studded uniforms and whose whole existence hinges upon delivering speeches at banquets.[46]

José Luiz Passos maintains that Machado's protagonists display the tension between their desires and social norms in the face of factual occurrences. The effects of memory play a crucial role in this process by allowing a certain distancing between the actual facts and the consciousness operationalized in the narration. More than simply relating the facts, Machado is interested in exposing the conflict between the subjectivity of the characters and their respective objective social personae. Invariably protagonists seek to fashion the public presentation of their selves by imagining alternatives to their actual origins, desires, and social predicaments. Machado's writings are reflections on how his characters often seek to camouflage – or mask, according to Bosi – their underlying motivations from themselves and others.[47]

The dialectic between these identities can be seen in the divided narrators: the deceased narrator Brás versus the living character, the spiritually dead Dom Casmurro versus the living Bento, Ayres the narrator versus Ayres the character, and Ayres the diarist who cannot love versus Ayres the character who finally can.[48] These narrator-characters are joined by a cast of other individuals who

[45] BOSI, *Machado de Assis*, p. 81; BOSI, Raymundo Faoro, *Estudos Avançados*, p. 366-369.

[46] VIRGILLO, cit., p. 70-80.

[47] BOSI, *Machado de Assis*, 1999, 79-81; PASSOS, *Machado de Assis*, p. 44, 52, 68, 73, 79, 104-105, 108-110.

[48] NUNES, cit., p. 142.

straddle the margin between themselves and the outside world, public appearances and private feelings, reason and sentiment, conscious desires and deeper motivations and the choices they make between them. These individuals are confronted with the challenge of integrating their sensory awareness, perceptions, and relationship with the outside world "in a display of the unpredictable oscillation of events in the contradictory and reversible symmetry of life".[49] As part of this process, Machado uses humor and irony to convey the basic duality and paradox between life external to human consciousness and life as humans think it is or should be – or as they would like it to be. Accordingly, Machado's techniques are permeated with a sense of dark comedy and light tragedy.[50] He "treated serious matters lightly and light things seriously".[51]

Machado's characters inhabit a world where the cut of one's clothes, the size of one's bank account, and other such material considerations invariably supersede loving relationships. These characters are not, however, helpless victims of circumstances beyond their control. Rather, they are individuals for whom the external self and ambition for public success are at odds with the promptings of the individual conscience and morality. This impedes – or precludes – a sense of reciprocity between the two identities.[52] Machado makes no direct statements. Yet his ironical narration and allusions point to the dominance of materialist rationalism as the source of the extremity to which this schism had progressed in modern Western consciousness and behavior.[53]

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[49] JACKSON, *Machado de Assis,* p. xii.

[50] SCHWARTZ, Playing with Realism, p. 38.

[51] JACKSON, *Machado de Assis,* p. 5.

[52] NUNES, cit., p. 142.

[53] CALDWELL, cit., p. 125; NUNES, cit., p. 12, 82-84, 140-143. Machado, by extension, provides a scathing, if oblique and masterfully disguised, critique of the European Brazilian elite. As members of a society that for all its virtuous pretenses was in fact sustained by African slavery, they were themselves enslaved by materialist rationalism, egoism, and greed (BORGES, The Recognition of Afro-Brazilian Symbols and Ideas, p. 61; BROOKSHAW, *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature,* p. 179-181; GLEDSON, *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis,* p. 6-7; SAYERS, *A sociedade brasileira na ficção de Machado de Assis,* p. 389-390; CHALHOUB, *Machado de Assis,* 50-58, 64-90, 131-139; MAGALHÃES JÚNIOR, *Machado de Assis desconhecido,* p. 144-147; MAROTTI, p. 156; SCHWARZ, *Ao vencedor as batatas,* p. 13-14; SCHWARZ, *Um*

As someone who has an affinity with the postmodern sensibility, Machado also questions the modern belief that the self or subject is separate from the sensory world of objects and materials. In addition, he challenges the conception of a linear connection of subjects to an objective world in which there is a presumed match between the consciousness and objective reality. Consequently, Machado dismisses the notion that the truth can be found in an impartial and fixed sense. Yet in keeping with the constructive postmodern sensibility, Machado does not deny altogether the existence of an objective sensory world external to the subjective consciousness. Rather, his characters' personal traits, structures, development, and history influence what they see in the objective world surrounding them.[54] The subject perceives the objective world based not so much on what is actually "out there" in some "pregiven" world, but based in many ways on what the subject brings to the picture.[55]

Accordingly, Machado combines the first-person with detached third-person narration in his earlier novels[56] to further his aim of blurring the line between subjectivity and objectivity, as well as between events taking place within and without the narration. Machado's narrators remain outside the action of his novels. Yet they manipulate the atmosphere, interpret events, and guide, converse with, or interrogate readers in the form of a depersonalized "I" whether in "exposition" or in "interstitial comment".[57] In addition, they make it possible for Machado to constantly call attention to the act of writing within his novels. This challenges readers to question normative assumptions about literature, and reminds them that art is not a mirror of life, no matter how meticulously crafted the illusion.

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mestre na periferia do capitalismo, p. 41-43; SCHWARCZ and BOTELHO, Ao vencedor as batatas 30 anos, p. 147-153; DUARTE, Machado de Assis's African Descent, p. 140-141; WASSERMAN, Race, Nation, Representation, p. 85-88, 93, 95-97).

[54] MORECI, False Truths; ROSENAU, cit., p. 42-61.

[55] HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro,* the Fruit and the Rind, p. 248, 251; ROSENAU, cit., p. 42-61.

[56] These include *Resurrection, The Hand and the Glove, Helena,* and *Iaiá Garcia,* which were written between 1872 and 1878.

[57] FANGER, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism,* p. 40, 66.

In several of his later novels[58] Machado took this device of obscuring the line between subjectivity and objectivity a step further by utilizing uncertain and unreliable narration, where first-person narrators search for the truth and meaning of their experience and seek explanations and implications unrealized at the time of action. For example, as an observer who can distance himself in time, the deceased narrator Brás feels free to speculate – and take the reader along as an accomplice – about the subtle game of intentions he exposes in the events he relates.[59] The persistent self-conscious statements by the narrators Brás in *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* and Bento in *Dom Casmurro* reflect the restrictions and questionable reliability of their commentary. They are conscious of their perceptual limitations and the significance of their restricted vantage points. They often find it necessary to rely on conjecture as to what "must", "might", or "appears" to have transpired.[60] Objective reality becomes a function of the interpretive consciousness and subject to distortions of affective memory and other phenomena internal or external to the characters. Consequently, readers are forced to be skeptical of the reliability of the narrator's assertions of judgment and fact.[61]

Machado's self-reflexive narrators address readers with "genial insolence, or with avuncular wisdom, or in the complicit tones of a confiding crony".[62] They openly display an interest in the processes of the narrative itself and the means by which it constructs both text and readers. Indeed, Machado requires readers to be active co-creators of meaning rather than passive consumers of literature. He brings readers into direct participation with the characters, making both narrators and readers characters of a sort.[63] Neither participates directly in the events narrated (except for the narrator-characters in the later novels). Both are

[58] These include *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas, Quincas Borba, Dom Casmurro, Esaú and Jacob,* and *Ayres's Memorial,* which were written between 1881 and 1908.

[59] PASSOS, cit., p. 58, 110-114, 123-130, 153-158; JACKSON, cit., p. 16.

[60] NUNES, cit., p. 40; STOWELL, *Literary Impressionism, James, and Chekhov*, p. 28.

[61] NAGEL, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism,* 1980, p. 21, 40; VENÂNCIO Filho, *Primos entre si,* p. 101-124.

[62] SCHWARTZ, cit., p. 38.

[63] NICOL, *The Cambridge Introduction,* p. 1-50; JACKSON, cit., p. 5, 7.

integral, however, to the narrative process. The narrators advise us to read attentively and sometimes go out of their way to assist. Yet the ironic assurance narrators offer readers of about a shared viewpoint, which is deliberately undermined, makes them, the readers, not only accomplices to the irony in the novel, but also, in part at least, victims of it.[64]

Antonio Tosta refers to this type of narration as being "entreabertura" (the state of being halfway open). Narrators are able to utilize their authorial power while giving readers creative license to fill in the gaps of the text. Moreover, the narrators frequently lead readers to draw conclusions about the text only to deconstruct them afterwards.[65] Machado prepares readers for a seemingly familiar literary experience. Then, by means of a radical, if subtly maneuvered, shift, he presents readers with a situation in which they cannot resort to conventional literary responses. This leaves readers acutely disoriented. Machado frequently achieves this by manipulating and exposing the devices that have been used to trap readers.[66] This technique, which "plays with discontinuities",[67] relies on the contrast between expectation and fulfillment, the disturbance of space-time perception, as well as the linear relationship between cause and effect typified by the traditional novel. To achieve this, Machado focuses on the relationship between the language and represented world of fiction with the "real" world outside.[68]

Finally, Machado opposed the compulsive adherence of Brazilian authors – and writers more generally – to the objectivist aesthetics of Realism-Naturalism as practiced by Émile Zola and Eça de Queirós and imported from Europe.[69] Thus

[64] HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro,* the Fruit and the Rind, p. 246-248.

[65] TOSTA, Machado de Assis: a obra entreaberta, p. 37-55.

[66] HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro,* the Fruit and the Rind, p. 246.

[67] JACKSON, cit., p. 82.

[68] WAUGH, *Metafiction,* p. 14.

[69] MACNICOLL, Machado de Assis in 1878, p. 32-35; PAVANELO, A ciência como questão em Camilo e Machado, críticos do naturalismo, p. 47-53; ROCHA, *Machado de Assis,* 45-88. Realism and Naturalism involve linear narratives that reflect an objectivist orientation. Naturalism takes this orientation to an extreme where facts are reported with detailed scientific clinicality. Fiction becomes a kind of microscope slide upon which the author places certain organisms – some healthy, most diseased – and then observes

Abel Baptista and João Hansen believe the term "Realist" is not an accurate description of Machado's aesthetics. They argue that he interrogated the very premises of mimesis – and the cultural assumptions sustaining it – that was a basic tenet of Realism-Naturalism. Consequently, Machado questioned the existence of a meaningful objective reality and even the possibility of representation.[70] Murray MacNicoll points out that, in 1878 on the eve of writing *Brás Cubas,* Machado remained implacably opposed to Realism-Naturalism.[71] On the other hand, John Gledson argues that, even though Machado's unreliable narrator, emphasis on memory, time, ambiguity, discontinuous structure, and seemingly irrelevant narrative digressions have parallels in some twentieth-century anti-Realist fiction, they do not make Machado an anti-Realist.[72] Rather, Gledson explains, "they are part of Machado's continuous experiment to extend Realism's boundaries and capacities".[73]

Paul Dixon proposes, however, that Machado was both Realist and anti-Realist.[74] Indeed, Machado does not suggest cultivating Romanticism to the exclusion of Realism-Naturalism. The deconstruction of Romanticism was a laudable goal. Yet the Realist-Naturalists were simply exchanging one excess for another.[75] Machado argues against becoming entangled in either extreme. He inveighed, "This creates nothing new; it merely substitutes one agent of corruption for another".[76] In late 1879, Machado published an even lengthier

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and describes their interaction with an objectivity devoid of moral judgments. Yet with Realism, for example, in *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) or *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), moral choices are central to the plot. Consequently, characters generally bear some responsibility for their actions. In Naturalism characters are trapped by deterministic environmental or biological forces that often propel them toward violence and immorality with the consequent dissolution of individual agency and responsibility (DANIEL, *Machado de Assis,* p. 190-210).

[70] BAPTISTA, p. 396-400; HANSEN, *Dom Casmurro*: Simulacrum and Allegory, p. 23-25, 31; MORECI, cit.

[71] MACNICOLL, cit., 37; ASSIS, cit., vol. 3, p. 913.

[72] GLEDSON, Realism and Intentionalism Revisited, p. 12, 15.

[73] *Idem,* p. 15.

[74] DIXON, *Retired Dreams,* p. 18.

[75] ASSIS in MACNICOLL, cit., p. 37.

[76] ASSIS, cit., vol. 3, p. 912.

critique, "A nova geração" [The New Generation].[77] He wrote, "Let us look reality in the face",

> but let us put Realism[-Naturalism] aside, so that we do not sacrifice aesthetic truths [...]. Realism [...] totally negates the principles of art [...]. There is an untranscendable boundary between reality according to the canons of art, and reality according to nature [...]. If the mission of art were copying the facts, exactly the way they are in real life, then art would be useless; memory would be substituted for imagination [...]. If an exact copying of things were the ultimate goal of art, then indeed the best novel or play would be the shorthand reproduction from a court trial [...]. I do not, however, suggest that we cultivate a stuffy and decadent Romanticism either...for, on the contrary, there is something of value in Realism that can be utilized to the advantage of our artistic and creative imagination. However, to free oneself from the excesses of one by falling into the excesses of the other is to transform nothing.[78]

Machado sought to forge what Peter Stowell calls "subjective objectivism".[79] According to Donald Fanger this aligns Machado's earlier writings less with the objectivist aesthetics of straightforward Realism-Naturalism and more with a mid-nineteenth century aesthetic he defines as Romantic Realism.[80] A guiding principle becomes what writers Charles Dickens called "the poetry of fact" or what Fyodor Dostoyevsky called "realism in a higher sense",[81] particularly in portraying the city – specifically Rio de Janeiro in Machado's case. Authors present a carnivalesque vision of a supersensory truth "as far above common

[77] *Idem*, p. 809-834.

[78] ASSIS, cit., vol. 3, p. 813, 912, 913.

[79] STOWELL, cit., p. 4.

[80] FANGER, cit., p. 1-27. Fanger includes writings by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Nikolai Gogol (1809-1891), and Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1829-1881). According to Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) and Herman Melville (1819-1891) can also be included in this category (SCHOLES and KELLOGG, *The Nature of Narrative*, p. 89-91.

[81] Dickens, Dostoyevsky in FANGER, cit., p. 65, 215.

sense as it is above common illusion".[82] The comic and the tragic spill over into each other, and the melodramatic verges on the trivial and the mundane.[83]

Afrânio Coutinho, Dirce Riedel, José Merquior, and Earl Fitz[84] maintain that Machado's more daring later works have less of an affinity with the objectivist aesthetics of unmitigated Realism-Naturalism than with the innovative subjective objectivism of late nineteenth – and early twentieth-century literary Impressionism.[85] Machado challenged the objectivists' mirror-like view of reality and the belief that it existed apart from the perceiving subject. This is particularly evident in Machado's novels *Brás Cubas*, *Dom Casmurro,* and *Ayres's Memorial.* It is most apparent in his focus on how the external reality beyond the senses is influenced by the consciousness through which it was filtered. Machado's characters are limited empiricists who are faced with perceptual ambiguity, hidden motives, and partial knowledge. Yet they have the moral responsibility to choose from imperfectly understood alternatives.[86] Furthermore, Machado employed psychological, spatialized narration based on experiential time. The normal causal and linear relationship between beginning, middle, and end, which characterized the traditional novel, is altered through juxtaposition, fusion, reversal, or jumbling.[87]

Machado sought to expand the boundaries of aesthetic subjectivism and aesthetic objectivism, as well as maintain the nonhierarchical nature of their relationship. His goal was to move beyond the complicity of aesthetic division in order to transform these dynamics into aesthetic reconciliation that emphasized

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[82] FANGER, cit., p. 63.

[83] *Idem,* p. 115.

[84] FITZ, *Machado de Assis,* p. 11-12; COUTINHO, *Machado de Assis na literatura brasileira,* p. 30-31; MERQUIOR, *De Anchieta a Euclides,* p. 150-153, 166; RIEDEL, *O tempo no romance machadiano,* p. 48, 59.

[85] Some of the most representative examples of this literary aesthetic have been found in the writings of Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897), Marcel Proust (1871-1922), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957), Henry James (1843-1916), Stephen Crane (1871-1900), Italo Svevo (1861-1928), Thomas Mann (1875-1955), and Anton Chekhov (1860-1904).

[86] NAGEL, p. 24-40.

[87] DANIEL, *Machado de Assis,* p. 219.

the essential nature of aesthetic equality. This transformative vision aligns Machado with a more generalized criticism of the "either/or" paradigm of modernity. He endeavored to replace that paradigm with a "both/neither" framework congruous with the postmodern sensibility, which takes into consideration the "space-in-between". Accordingly, Machado conveyed a more nuanced relationship between various categories of difference – particularly subject and object – that distinguishes his perspective from the typical modern worldview. Accordingly, Machado's writings are singular achievements far ahead of his literary contemporaries in Brazil and Latin America.[88] They ensure him a place in the vanguard of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western literature as well.[89]

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[88] ARMSTRONG, *Third World Literary Fortunes*, p. 71, 75-76.

[89] SANTIAGO, cit., p. 13; WOLFF, Inexplicating the Nineteenth-Century Novel, p. 44-45.

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