

FORCING AND FORBIDDING SPEECH: SILENCE AND RACIAL IDENTITY IN "MARIANA" (1871) AND "MARIANA" (1891)

JORDAN B. JONES

Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah, United States

Abstract: Though several scholars have noted parallels between "Mariana" (1871) and "Mariana" (1891), many dismiss them as disparate stories that happen to share the same name. My purpose in this article is to analyze the themes of speech, silence, and racial identity—particularly as they pertain to both Marianas—to identify resonances between the 1871 and 1891 texts. I use Flynn, Calvo-González, and Souza's (2013) reading of racial identity in "Pai contra mãe" as a model, exploring references to blackness in both stories. In doing so I argue that although it may appear that Machado whitewashed the 1871 story into a monochromatic 1891 narrative, significant traces and suggestions of Afro-Brazilianness remain.

Keywords: slavery; race; Afro-Brazilian literature; blackness.

FORÇAR E PROIBIR A FALA: SILÊNCIO E IDENTIDADE RACIAL EM "MARIANA" (1871) E "MARIANA" (1891)

Resumo: Apesar de muitos estudiosos terem notado paralelos entre "Mariana" (1871) e "Mariana" (1891), muitos concluem que são histórias diferentes que, por coincidência, compartilham o mesmo nome. Meu propósito neste artigo é analisar os temas da fala, do silêncio e da identidade racial – com ênfase particular na conexão às duas Marianas – para identificar ressonâncias entre o texto de 1871 e o de 1891. Uso a análise de Flynn, Calvo-González e Souza (2013) sobre identidade racial em "Pai contra mãe" como modelo, explorando referências à negritude nos dois contos. Ao fazer isso, proponho que, mesmo que Machado pareça ter extraído a negritude do conto de 1871 e escrito o de 1891 de forma monocromática, traços e sugestões significantes de afro-brasilidade permanecem no texto.

Palavras-chave: escravidão; raça; literatura afro-brasileira; negritude.

Introduction

When literary critics and others discuss the ways Machado de Assis portrays race and slavery in his short stories, perhaps the most cited examples are “O caso da vara” (1891) and “Pai contra mãe” (1906)—and for good reason. “O caso da vara” portrays the moral dilemma of young Damião, who makes a silent vow to help an enslaved girl named Lucrecia but reneges when he sees that this may jeopardize his chances of dropping out of the seminary. “Pai contra mãe” recounts a wrenching episode in which Cândido, a destitute father with no resources to care for his own infant son, captures and returns Arminda, an enslaved pregnant woman who had previously fled her captivity. The violence of Arminda’s recapture and return results in the miscarriage of her child. Meanwhile, the reward Cândido receives enables him to continue caring for his son, at least for a time. Both stories end with ironic and biting reflections on how the protagonists prioritize their own comfort over that of others—especially when it comes to enslaved individuals: “Damião sentiu-se compungido; mas ele precisava tanto sair do seminário!” (ASSIS, 1891a, online) and “Nem todas as crianças vingam – bateu-lhe o coração” (ASSIS, 1906, online).

The narrators in these stories provide explicit racial descriptors marking Lucrecia and Arminda as Afro-Brazilian: Lucrecia “era uma negrinha, magricela, um frangalho de nada,” while Arminda is described as a “mulata fugida” and a “mulata fujona” (ASSIS, 1891a, online; 1906, online). The racial identity of the other characters in these stories, however, is more ambiguous. In discussing the presumed racial heritage of Cândido and Clara in “Pai contra mãe,” for example, Alex Flynn, Elena Calvo-González, and Marcelo Mendes de Souza critique what they term the “whitening” of this pair, arguing that “Machado’s ambiguous narration” in this story “invites the reader to assert his or her own prejudices as regards racial characterizations. In other words, Machado employs a playful irony, inviting the reader to ‘color in’ the characters, something he never explicitly does himself” (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 5). These scholars explore the possibility that Cândido and Clara may be Afro-Brazilian, basing their analysis on evidence and ambiguity inherent in the text. In the end, they assert that, while there is insufficient evidence to determine their racial identity authoritatively, the tendency to view them as white is symptomatic of wider trends and biases in readers’ minds. Their interpretation, which runs counter to most readings of the story, opens rich interpretive possibilities in relation to the text and to Machado’s treatment of race and slavery in his writing more broadly.

Another text in which slavery features prominently is Machado's 1871 story "Mariana," which chronicles the tragic life and death of the eponymous protagonist, an enslaved *mulata* who knows the love she feels for Coutinho (her owner's son) cannot result in marriage, and who, after running away on two separate occasions, dies by suicide. Eduardo de Assis Duarte (2007, p. 253-254) points out that this story appeared "em plena campanha pela aprovação da Lei do Ventre Livre" and that Mariana personifies "a subalternidade feminina e afrodescendente punida de modo trágico a partir do momento em que relação de mando/obediência é afetada pelo desejo ou pela paixão". For her part, Leda Marana Bim (2010, p. 119) argues that this story exposes the hypocrisy of families like Coutinho's, who attempt to "conquistar através de gestos de gentileza a passividade e o reconhecimento de uma escrava, enxergando-a como uma filha apenas enquanto os estiver servindo". As Bim (2010, p. 118) notes elsewhere, even though Mariana is "criada como filha da casa" (ASSIS, 1871, online), she is often called "mulatinha, escrava, como forma de acentuar sua posição social". Mariana's violent death at the end of the story represents a strong critique of slavery and its attendant physical and psychological damage. As with "Pai contra mãe" and "O caso da vara," this text constitutes a clear example of Machado's engagement with questions of race and enslavement in his works.

Significantly, this 1871 story (published in the *Jornal das Famílias*) is the first of two Machadian texts entitled "Mariana"; the second appeared in 1891 in the *Gazeta de Notícias* and was later included in the 1896 collection *Várias histórias* (which is the version cited throughout the present article). In the second "Mariana," a third-person narrator recounts Evaristo's return to Rio de Janeiro after eighteen years in Europe, giving special attention to his imagined and actual reencounters with Mariana, a married woman with whom he had a four-year affair and whose husband, Xavier, is on his deathbed. Despite Evaristo's hopes that their former relationship might revive, Mariana's behavior before and after Xavier's death forecloses any such possibilities, and Evaristo returns to Europe disappointed.

Though several scholars have noted parallels between "Mariana" (1871) and "Mariana" (1891), at first blush they seem to have little in common. Indeed, most critics who study the 1871 version ignore the 1891 story entirely (and vice-versa).¹ Others pause just long enough to acknowledge what they seem to

¹ This is true for Chalhoub (2003), Duarte (2007), Bim (2010), and many others, who omit references to the 1891 story altogether, presumably due to the lack of racial markers in the narrative, whereas in the 1871 story they are unmistakable and take center stage—both in the story and in these scholars' insightful analyses.

view as a coincidence, explaining that although the stories and female leads share the same name, the narratives are distinct.² Still others note parallels between the two stories but maintain that the stories are glaringly different: for example, Garcia Junior (2010, p. 70) discusses narrative similarities in some detail and argues that the female lead in the 1891 version “não é Mariana mulata ou escrava, mas uma Mariana branca, cuja alvura da pele parece contradizer algo de sua alma”. In her comparative reading of the stories, Croveto maintains that while the 1871 “Mariana” is a clear reflection on slavery in Brazil, the 1891 “Mariana”—whose main character she describes as “uma mulher branca” (CROVETO, 2006, p. 1)—represents Machado’s rewriting of the original to produce “uma farsa do relato original” that reflects on the newly proclaimed Brazilian Republic (CROVETO, 2006, p. 7).³ In her analysis, Croveto (2006, p. 6) posits Brazil as “um texto que Machado lê e (des)lê, escreve e (des)escreve, arma e desarma em duas nada inocentes historinhas de amor”.

When discussing the 1871 story, Chalhoub (2003, p. 136) rightly argues that the content and composition of “Mariana” reflect Machado’s attunement to the social movements and problems of the day and his steadfast (if not always conspicuous) support for abolitionist movements. Similarly, Croveto (2006) and Teixeira (2020) persuasively posit that the 1891 story reflects on the nascent Brazilian Republic (established in 1889), but in the process they also presume the absence of any substantive commentary on race or inclusion of Afro-Brazilian characters. The implication, in other words, is that the 1891 version waters down this facet of the 1871 text, eliminating explorations of racial tension in favor of an expanded focus on the current political moment, in which slavery is no more.

My purpose in this article is not to address connections between these stories and the Free Womb Law or the Brazilian Republic; the scholars mentioned previously (and many others) persuasively discuss these connections at length. Instead, I analyze the themes of speech, silence, and racial identity—particularly as they pertain to both Marianas—to identify resonances between the 1871 and 1891 texts. In doing so I argue that although

² For example, in her article’s opening paragraph Vieira (2019, p. 54) notes “a presença de dois contos intitulados *Mariana*” in Machado’s oeuvre. She gives the publication information for both, but she does not mention the 1891 story again in her analysis of the 1871 text—the implication being that their shared name is the extent of the resemblances between the narratives. Macena and Freire (2021, p. 93) make a similar observation, but they relegate the information to a footnote, presumably to note the coincidence without distracting from their analysis of the 1871 story.

³ Croveto’s (2006, p. 3) theory that the two stories “são como dois pólos opostos unidos pela força de contrários” may be what leads her to conclude that the 1891 Mariana is white.

it may appear that Machado whitewashed the 1871 story into a monochromatic 1891 narrative, significant traces and suggestions of Afro-Brazilianness remain.⁴

Exploring Racial Identity

There are obvious and indisputable differences between the two stories: one Mariana is enslaved, but the other is free; one dies by suicide, while the other does not; one is unable to marry, whereas the other does—though she does experience a period of apathy several years into her marriage. As mentioned earlier, for these reasons (and others) the two stories are often read as texts that coincidentally share the same name and are best read in isolation. These apparent divergences, however, can be plotted in narrative arcs that bear striking resemblance, as I will endeavor to show. What is of primary relevance here is one of the most apparently incontestable differences: that of the supposed gulf between the racial identity of the main characters.

Descriptions of the 1871 Mariana⁵ repeatedly refer to her skin color and to her status as an enslaved “*cria de casa*”: she is “*o tipo mais completo da sua raça*” (ASSIS, 1871, online). Because of the education and kindness she receives, Coutinho considers her an “*escrava quase senhora*,” a “*mulatinha*” with a “*tez morena*” whose “*elevação e nobreza*” stand in stark contrast to “*a fatalidade da sua condição social*.” Indeed, Mariana describes herself as “*uma simples escrava*” and later as “*uma infeliz escrava*.” It is precisely this condition that motivates Mariana to attempt to keep her affection for Coutinho secret, concluding that it cannot result in anything beyond impossible love.

Determining the racial identity of the 1891 Mariana is less straightforward, notwithstanding the temptation toward a facile assumption that because she has money she must be white. In this story, readers learn what Evaristo thinks of Mariana: “*Bela mulher! Grande mulher! Belos e grandes amores!*” (ASSIS, 1896, online). Though almost fifty at the time of the story, Mariana is “*frescalhona*” and looks much younger. When Evaristo calls

⁴ While many scholarly works have engaged with questions of slavery and race in “Mariana” (1871), to my knowledge no scholarship produced about “Mariana” (1891) addresses traces of blackness in the story.

⁵ To help readers discern between the two Marianas, I use the year of each story’s original publication as a descriptor; thus, “1871 Mariana” refers to the enslaved character in love with Coutinho, while “1891 Mariana” describes the married woman from the later story.

at her home, he spends several minutes in front of a portrait of Mariana (painted when she was much younger), during which readers learn of her "formosura" and her "lindos olhos redondos e namorados." The narrator later describes Mariana combing or letting her hair down, but there is no mention of its texture, of her skin color, or of any other markers that suggest a specific racial identity for Mariana (or, for that matter, for Evaristo).

After acknowledging that it was common "not to describe the characters' race unless they were nonwhite," Flynn, Calvo-González, and Souza (2013, p. 5) contend that "this practice itself reflects the process of naturalization of whiteness and its entanglement with notions of norm and humanity that are at stake in Machado's short story". Later on, they point to the abundance of narrator comments about the characters' "socioeconomic classification, behaviors, and employment status," which "are highly significant in the resonance they would have had for a contemporary readership" (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 13). In other words, knowing that Cândido and Clara have little socioeconomic capital and that they engage in certain kinds of work (slave catching and sewing, respectively) lends support to the argument that they may have been black or mixed race.

On the other hand, the absence of racial descriptors in relation to the 1891 Mariana is not indisputable evidence of blackness, especially when combined with the fact that Mariana seems to occupy the upper echelons of society. Given the racialized stratification of Brazilian society (then and now), her inclusion in the elite makes it less likely—but not impossible—that Mariana was visibly Afro-Brazilian. Furthermore, given that "ideas about race went beyond mere appearance, invoking discourses pertaining to behavior and morals" (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 14), it is worth commenting on Mariana's affair with Evaristo. Eroticism and sexual promiscuity—though obviously not restricted to any one group in reality—have in discourse long been projected onto black women throughout the Americas.⁶ Thus, Mariana's apparently strong sexual appetite (manifested through her years-long relationship with Evaristo) could be read as pointing toward Afro-Brazilian heritage. Finally, because readers who consider these 1871 and 1891 stories together often read them as diametrically opposed, they may become (as readers of "Pai contra mãe" often are) "[m]ired in schemes of polarity" that predispose them to reading characters as "binary reflection[s]"

⁶ Patricia Hill Collins (1990, p. 81) dubs this particular stereotype "the *jezebel*"—one of several harmful "controlling images" to which black women are subjected (COLLINS, 1990, p. 72-81). Evaristo's presumption that he can rekindle his relationship with Mariana manifests such a perception of his ex-lover.

of one another (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 11). In other words, if they have the 1871 story in mind, readers may tend to view the 1891 Mariana as the polar opposite (read white and free) of the enslaved Afro-Brazilian Mariana, whereas if they read this story in isolation they might be less categorical in their estimations of the racial identities of its characters.

Given her social class, the evidence may tip in the direction of Mariana's being white, but the text offers no definitive answer on this question. Interestingly, though, the text opens a distinct and compelling possibility that her husband is Afro-Brazilian. Like Mariana, Xavier receives no racialized descriptors in the story (in fact, his physical appearance is not described at all, except for references to his failing health and to his unclosed eyes in the moment of his demise). What the narrator does describe is the backstory of their marriage: "a resistência do pai, a dor da mãe, e a perseverança dela e de Xavier" (ASSIS, 1896, online). After ten months, "Venceu a constância, o tempo desarmou os velhos, e o casamento se fez." The narrator offers no details as to the grounds for her parents' objections, but it is not difficult to imagine that Xavier (whose parents are never mentioned) belongs to a lower social class than that of his beloved.⁷ And, following the logic cited earlier about social class and racial identity, it is plausible that Xavier has visibly Afro-Brazilian traits and that this informs her parents' strong opposition to their union. As with Mariana, the text offers no conclusive evidence regarding Xavier's racial identity, but facets of their lives open the possibility of Afro-Brazilian heritage. Interestingly, though Evaristo feels the presence of Mariana's husband in physical and figurative senses throughout the story, Xavier does not utter a single word. In any case, what is true of Cândido in "Pai contra mãe" can also apply to Mariana and to Xavier: "Machado never has to detail [their] skin color, as the reader does so in his stead" (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 14). Or, as the narrator of "Mariana" (1891) notes about the old decorations in Mariana's house, "Tudo ossos dispersos, que a imaginação podia enfeixar para restaurar uma figura, a que só faltasse a alma" (ASSIS, 1896, online). In this sense, readers link the "ossos dispersos"—the outline of the events and of characters, which are only described in bare-bones phrases—and breathe life and color into them through their imaginative decisions about what Mariana and Xavier might look like. And though the analysis of these stories thus far has focused on the main characters, one final suggestion of Afro-Brazilianness common to supporting characters in both versions of

⁷ Mariana's age seems not to have been a factor, as she would have been about twenty years old during this period.

"Mariana" will be discussed later. First, however, it will be helpful to outline the narrative resonances between the stories.

Charting Narrative Parallels

There are, of course, several obvious differences between the stories, as noted earlier. Notwithstanding these contrasts, the two texts contain striking similarities in both thematic and narrative terms. The first of these is the geographic and temporal dislocation described at the outset of each story. The 1871 text is narrated by Macedo, who has just returned to Brazil after 15 years in Europe. After bumping into Coutinho on the streets of Rio de Janeiro, Macedo (along with two other friends who join them at a restaurant) listens to and records his friend's narration of Mariana's life and death. In other words, although Coutinho's voice predominates in readers' minds throughout the narrative, he is not the ultimate narrator; Macedo is the one who actually writes the story down. As mentioned earlier, the 1891 story also features a return from Europe, this time after 18 years away. Like the 1871 story, the male protagonist does not record the 1891 narrative; rather, the events are conveyed by a third-person narrator whose identity is not revealed to readers. In both cases, readers' access to Mariana is never direct; it is always filtered through the gaze of another (and is thereby potentially muddled in readers' minds).

The second way in which the two stories mirror each other is through the theme of frustrated love. In the 1891 story, readers observe Evaristo slowly coming to grips with the fact that the love Mariana and he felt for each other during their affair no longer exists—at least on her part. A daydreamed conversation with his former lover makes it clear that he still desires Mariana, and though he searches for a look, a word, a touch from the real-life Mariana that will revive the relationship they once had, he is continually disappointed by her singular devotion to and focus on her husband. In this sense, the story depicts parallel grieving processes: the heartbreak Mariana experiences by Xavier's decline and death, and the grief Evaristo feels about the amorous relationship he once shared with Mariana (and which is now undeniably defunct).

In the 1871 story, the frustrated love is felt most deeply by Mariana, who knows that what she nurtures is hope in "um amor impossível" (ASSIS, 1871, online). Knowing that society would never allow her to marry Coutinho, Mariana attempts to hide her feelings from him, but they eventually come out. And although the focus on Mariana's frustration is warranted, seemingly

offhand comments by Coutinho suggest that he feels more than platonic affection for Mariana. When relating this story to his friends, however, Coutinho denies loving her: “apesar de não compartilhar de modo nenhum os sentimentos de Mariana, entrei a olhar para ela com outros olhos. A rapariga tornara-se interessante para mim.” Despite his protests, there are clear signs that he entertains the possibility of a relationship with her and that part of him is disappointed it never materializes. Coutinho knows societal expectations preclude marriage to Mariana, but the possibility of a (potentially violent) sexual relationship is not lost on him: “surgiu em meu espírito uma ideia, que a razão pode condenar, mas que nossos costumes aceitam perfeitamente.” The seeds of this idea may have come from his uncle (his fiancée’s father), who, as Chalhoub (2003, p. 135) puts it, is “sempre interessado em colocar aquela ‘flor peregrina’ sob a sua ‘proteção’”.⁸ Whatever Coutinho’s postulations about a relationship with Mariana, she disappears shortly thereafter and only returns after Coutinho finds her near his fiancée’s home—as if attempting to occupy the space her free counterpart enjoys—and only after she explains why she left: “fugi porque eu o amo, e não posso ser amada, e sou uma infeliz escrava. Aqui está por que eu fugi. Podemos ir; já disse tudo” (ASSIS, 1871, online). After her second disappearance, rather than attempting to force her to return, Coutinho opts for using “meios brandos [...] sem esquecer nunca a reserva que me impunha a minha posição” (ASSIS, 1871, online). These comments, though subtle, suggest that he entertains notions of a sexual and/or romantic relationship with her but feels trapped by his social position. Indeed, because of the extraordinary interest Coutinho shows in Mariana’s plight and his insistence on finding her after she runs away, his fiancée breaks off their engagement. Despite this setback, in the ensuing fifteen years Coutinho could have (presumably) found a number of other eligible women to court and marry—especially given his family’s apparent social standing. The fact that he remains unmarried and that he speaks of Mariana with such emotion suggests that he repeatedly experiences frustrated love, just as the 1871 Mariana and Evaristo do.

A third important corollary between the stories is that they hinge on the death of a major player. In the 1871 story, Mariana’s death by suicide is of course the tragic resolution that comes after the story’s climax, thereby snuffing out any hope of a relationship between her and Coutinho. In the 1891

⁸ In connection with this argument, Chalhoub (2003, p. 133) asserts that Coutinho begins to sexually harass Mariana, and that this is in fact the reason for her subsequent disappearance from the house: “Mariana mostrou-se ‘acima das veleidades’ do senhor moço, escapando-lhe ao assédio e desaparecendo de casa dias depois”.

story, notwithstanding Mariana's standoffishness in their first re-encounter, Evaristo entertains notions that after the death of her husband he may have a chance to resume his relationship with her. Seeing Mariana's devastation upon Xavier's passing, however, along with the way she subsequently avoids her ex-lover, Evaristo recognizes that any hope of reviving his amorous relationship with Mariana died with her husband, and he returns to Paris within the month.⁹

Forcing and Forbidding Speech

Beyond the similarities outlined above, the two stories resemble each other in the way characters attempt to force and forbid speech. Because the 1871 Mariana is enslaved, she is forced into certain spaces and forbidden from entering others: "Não se sentava à mesa, nem vinha à sala em ocasião de visitas" (ASSIS, 1871, online). At the same time, her position allows her unchaperoned access to the inside of the house, which enables her to orchestrate a supposedly chance private encounter with Coutinho. Noting that she is acting strangely, Coutinho asks what is wrong. When she does not respond, Coutinho calls out for his mother and is promptly silenced by Mariana, who briefly puts her hand over his mouth before dodging his grasp and "fugi[ndo] pelo corredor fora." This interchange is important, as it manifests two things. The first is that, although in the position of an enslaved "cria de casa" who should (under the social norms of the time) defer to Coutinho, Mariana resists his attempts to force an explanation from her and instead forbids him to speak. The second is that she avoids Coutinho's attempts to physically restrain her, "esquivando-se às [suas] mãos." Thus, Coutinho is unable to control Mariana at both the verbal and corporal levels, whereas she is successful in curtailing Coutinho's speech.¹⁰

Although initially oblivious, Coutinho eventually learns (thanks to his sister, Josefa) that Mariana is in love, and she repeatedly resists attempts by Coutinho and later by his sister to persuade her share her secret: "Nem

⁹ Another clear parallel between the stories is the name given to the primary female characters, which in both cases doubles as the title. The name "Mariana" derives from the name Mary, which in Hebrew means "sea of bitterness or sorrow" (KOLATCH, 1967, p. 253). The most famous Mary is of course the mother of Jesus Christ, who suffered bitterly while witnessing her Son's crucifixion and death. Similarly, Machado's 1871 and 1891 stories are both steeped in bitterness and sorrow.

¹⁰ A similar sequence repeats a few days later, when Mariana places her finger over her lips twice, thereby silencing Coutinho from a distance.

pedidos, nem ameaças conseguiram de Mariana uma declaração positiva a este respeito.”¹¹ When Josefa ventures a guess to Coutinho that Mariana has fallen in love with *him*, he is astonished: “Estás louca, Josefa. Pois ela atrever-se-ia!” (ellipsis original). The ellipsis is significant, as it signals yet another moment in which Mariana has halted Coutinho’s speech, albeit indirectly.

When Mariana lies dying (apparently out of unrequited lovesickness), she rejects medicine and food. Put another way, she refuses to concede control of what goes into her mouth, just as she carefully regulates what comes out of it. When Coutinho goes to see her and ask her to live, she responds, “Manda-me viver?” Upon his affirmative answer, “Mariana restabeleceu-se em pouco tempo” (ASSIS, 1871, online). Though this episode in part demonstrates Coutinho’s influence over her, it also manifests her ability to reformulate and exert (limited) control over her situation—it is only after she rephrases Coutinho’s request to her liking that she agrees to it. Ultimately, she retains mastery over her own health and wields the power to decide whether and when to recover. Mariana refuses to eat anything on two other occasions, despite Coutinho’s protests, once again underscoring her control over the food going into her mouth and the words coming out of it.

After Mariana’s second disappearance, Coutinho only finds her after overhearing a *criado* tell a hotel owner that their guest refuses to eat (ASSIS, 1871, online). Upon seeing Coutinho enter her room, Mariana “[d]eu um grito estridente e lançou-se-me nos braços,” perhaps thinking that he has come to share her bed. When he pushes her away and calls her a fugitive, Mariana is left momentarily speechless, but she soon recovers and asserts her intention to “não sair dali.” Interestingly, in this and other interchanges between Coutinho and Mariana, Machado employs the ellipsis (...) to indicate when a character trails off or is interrupted. When it appears in connection with Coutinho’s words, it is usually because Mariana has interrupted him. Conversely, with just one exception it appears in Mariana’s speech only when she trails off of her own accord (in other words, it rarely indicates that she is being interrupted by Coutinho). These narrative elements, though subtle, parallel what the plot reveals: aside from the unsolvable marriage problem, Mariana exerts much more control over Coutinho than he does over her.

¹¹ Coutinho’s dogged attempts to force Mariana to speak about something she obviously wants to remain silent on contrast sharply with an anecdote in the beginning of the narrative. When Coutinho and Macedo’s friend seems embarrassed to talk about his own life, they have “a delicadeza de não insistir nesse ponto” (ASSIS, 1871). Coutinho extends no such courtesy to Mariana—a reflection of his posture toward the woman he attempts to control throughout the narrative.

Indeed, in their final conversation, none of Coutinho's attempts to persuade or threaten Mariana to come home is successful.

When Coutinho resorts to calling for help to remove her bodily from the hotel, Mariana ingests poison. Noticing "um movimento suspeito," Coutinho asks for what she is holding, and she gives him an empty vial (ASSIS, 1871, online). Mariana's acquiescence to Coutinho's request in this moment represents an unexpected concession, given her resistance to Coutinho's orders throughout the story. It soon becomes clear, however, that she honors his request only because it cannot change what will happen next—she has already drunk the poison and ensured her demise.

The choice of poison to effect her death is notable, because it (of course) enters her body through her mouth—the site of both forbidden and forced speech for Mariana and others. In her dying breaths, Mariana asks Coutinho to remember her periodically (ASSIS, 1871, online). As readers can see from Coutinho's account, her request echoes across the years and continues to influence his life and memories. Indeed, as a preamble to his story he asks his friends to let him "confess[ar] uma cousa, que nunca saiu de mim." In other words, this episode has troubled him ever since, and the fact that he remains unmarried—and that he speaks of Mariana with such pained nostalgia—suggests he has never fully moved on.

Just as the 1871 Mariana refuses to surrender control of her voice, the 1891 Mariana resists Evaristo's attempts to elicit speech from her. Upon calling at her home (under the guise of visiting the moribund Xavier and expressing his condolences), Evaristo is greeted by a *criado*, who shows him into the sitting room to wait while he delivers the protagonist's message to Mariana (ASSIS, 1896, online). As he waits, Evaristo looks at Mariana's portrait and engages in the daydream mentioned earlier. In this dreamlike state, he demands that Mariana profess her love for him and deny feeling anything for her husband. Only when Mariana states (after repeated prodding) that she no longer loves Xavier is Evaristo somewhat placated. Nevertheless, he insists on hearing it once again: "Só a mim? Ainda uma vez, jura!" The obsessive impulse to control Mariana and extract confessions of love from her—something that is only possible outside of reality—signals Evaristo's jealous paranoia and self-doubt. It is through this imagined interchange that readers (accompanying the pair's reflections on the past) learn how Mariana's mother had discovered and put an end to their affair, prompting Evaristo to leave Brazil. In response, "Mariana resolveu morrer, chegou a ingerir veneno, e foi preciso o desespero da mãe para restituí-la à vida" (ASSIS, 1896, online). This scene reveals

another convergence with the 1871 story: faced with what they view as a hopelessly frustrated love that has no future, both Marianas ingest poison (though only the 1871 Mariana dies from it). And whereas the enslaved Mariana chooses when to recover from her earlier lovesickness and when to die by suicide, it is the 1891 Mariana's mother that succeeds in bringing her daughter back from death's doorstep. In each case women, not men, play the crucial role in determining whether they live or die.

Though Evaristo's daydream seems to last several hours, he is brought back to reality by the words of the *criado*: "Faz favor de entrar" (ASSIS, 1896, online), upon which he realizes that only a few minutes have passed. When, in the story's present, Evaristo enters the room where Xavier lies, readers witness Mariana faithfully at her husband's side: "Mal pôde levantar os olhos para Evaristo e estender-lhe a mão." A few minutes later, after watching her speak with the physician, Evaristo begins to take his leave. Mariana speaks with him only long enough to explain that he cannot speak to Xavier now ("o médico recomenda repouso e silêncio") and to thank him for coming. In short, she renews an imposition of silence on Evaristo, curtailing any attempts to make conversation.

As he leaves, Evaristo reflects on the interchange: "Nem os olhos nem a mão de Mariana revelaram em relação a ele uma impressão qualquer, e a despedida fez-se como entre pessoas indiferentes" (ASSIS, 1896, online). He cannot fathom that she could face him, "um homem que tanta parte tivera em sua vida, sem o menor abalo, espanto, constrangimento que fosse." For his part, upon taking leave of Mariana he feels "um aperto, uma cousa, que lhe fez a palavra trôpega, que lhe tirou as ideias e até as simples fórmulas banais de pesar e de esperança. Ela, entretanto, não recebeu dele a menor comoção." The fact that Mariana seems totally unfazed by his return breeds in him "um despeitozinho acre"—he feels offended by her lack of engagement with him.

During his second visit to the house, Evaristo witnesses the dying breaths of Xavier and the subsequent "grito agudíssimo" that Mariana lets out before fainting (ASSIS, 1896, online). Xavier's death takes such a toll on her that she is unable to attend his burial. Whereas Mariana is supernaturally and exaggeratedly present in the first pages of the story (via Evaristo's daydream), she is notably absent at the end. Evaristo attends the burial, but Mariana does not. He attends the requiem mass, but she does not, and when he calls at the house several days later, "ouviu que ela não recebia ninguém" (ASSIS, 1896, online). When he visits six weeks later, he learns that she is not home. On his way back, "zangado, mal consigo," he recognizes Mariana walking down the

street and greets her, but, in a final blow, she “fez que o não conhecia, e foi andando, de modo que o cumprimento de Evaristo ficou sem resposta.” Thus, while the 1871 Mariana’s impositions of silence on Coutinho are based on her presence—the pressure of her hand over his mouth and of her words interrupting his—the 1891 Mariana forbids speech largely through absence: the lack of an encouraging look or touch, her decision not to attend Xavier’s burial, and finally, her decision to ignore Evaristo in the street. Though the means vary, what is consistent between the two stories is the power both Marianas exert over the male protagonists. Despite Coutinho’s and Evaristo’s attempts to control their female counterparts, they find themselves unable to effect any real change in the course of events: Evaristo is totally frustrated in his efforts to rekindle a romantic relationship with Mariana, while the enslaved Mariana explains that she had planned to ingest the poison on Coutinho’s wedding day and that his appearance at the hotel where she was hiding simply changed the timing of the inevitable: “Nhonhô apressou a minha morte; nada mais” (ASSIS, 1871, online).

Final Thoughts

In considering the themes outlined at the beginning of this article—speech, silence, and racial identity—it is clear that the 1871 story features a strong Afro-Brazilian character who exerts a remarkable amount of control over Coutinho and others. Her influence is all the more striking given her condition as an enslaved woman. Beyond the possible markers of Afro-Brazilian heritage discussed earlier in conjunction with the 1891 narrative, one unnamed character is key in the story’s events: the *criado* Mariana employs. Given that the servant class in nineteenth-century Brazil was highly racialized—especially just three years after the abolition of slavery—it is more than likely that this *criado* is Afro-Brazilian.¹² It is he who receives Evaristo, who relays his message to his former lover, and who shatters his fantasy of a manipulable Mariana, bringing him back to the present reality, in which she hardly acknowledges him. It is presumably this same *criado* who later states that Mariana is not receiving visits, and who informs him later still that she is not

¹² The probability of Afro-Brazilian heritage in this *criado* is supported by Machado’s novel *Quincas Borba*, in which the protagonist, Rubião, is “acostumado aos seus crioulos de Minas” and only takes on a “criado espanhol” after his friend Cristiano Palha insists that he needs to have “criados brancos”; consequently, Rubião’s erstwhile “bom pajem” is “degradado a outros serviços” (ASSIS, 1891b). In other words, Palha’s objections notwithstanding, having Afro-Brazilian *criados* was the norm.

home. In short, it is the voice of someone from a lower social class—someone who likely has much in common with Cândido and Clara—that facilitates or blocks Evaristo's access to Mariana and is thereby an instrument of silencing his would-be speech.

The 1871 narrative contains a similar figure—also a *criado*—who mediates Coutinho's access to Mariana. By the end of the story, Coutinho has learned from experience that his own speech is unable to control Mariana; he must rely on the voice of a person of lower social standing—likely an Afro-Brazilian laborer—to make initial contact with her. Thus, at the most crucial moments Evaristo's and Coutinho's access to each Mariana is mediated by a presumably Afro-Brazilian character. This subtle parallel between the stories is important, as it reinforces the saliency of racialized work in Brazil before and after abolition, pointing back to the societal problems briefly discussed at the outset of this article. As Flynn, Calvo-González, and Souza (2013) note, free individuals in slavocrat Brazil "cannot be placed into naturalized categories such as white or black, slave or owner. They inhabit an undemarcated borderland" in terms of both class and race (FLYNN; CALVO-GONZÁLEZ; SOUZA, 2013, p. 8). This is true for Machado's characters in "Pai contra mãe," and it can also apply to characters in both versions of "Mariana."

In this vein, examining resonances between "Mariana" (1871) and "Mariana" (1891) allows readers to examine Brazilian society (and themselves) as they read the text. If, in relation to the racial identity of Machado's characters, readers interpret his ambiguous and noncommittal narration as calculated provocations and critiques of their own biases, they can view rich interpretive and comparative possibilities in and across both versions of "Mariana." They can regard them as temporally distinct but parallel narratives featuring corresponding motifs: the long shadow of slavery, which surfaces in various ways; the slippery and often ambiguous nature of racial identity in Brazilian society; attempts by men to forbid and force speech in their female counterparts; and strong female characters who push back against societal constraints, silencing those who purport to exercise power over them.

With this in mind, it becomes easier to approach Machado's work in the same way the author himself is increasingly studied: as a complex mixture of identities and experiences that deserves thoughtful engagement and that bears periodic reexamining to minimize interference by preconceived notions about what his work is, means, and does. Or, as Duarte (2007, p. 9, italics original) argues in relation to accusations of Machado's apparent indifference to the social matters of his time: "[É] preciso destacar que o perfil de

indiferente ou de omissão perante os problemas de seu tempo é, antes de tudo, uma *leitura* e, como tal, uma *construção*, fruto do processo de recepção literária, e sujeita a contestações inúmeras”. In like manner, readings of Machado’s works—some of which have been pigeonholed into fixed interpretive spaces—bear revisiting and perhaps challenging. After all, to the extent that readers close themselves off to the interpretive possibilities that a given text affords, they unwittingly attempt to force and forbid meaning in the stories, negating the power of characters like both Marianas and the breadth of Machado de Assis as a writer. As readers revisit “Mariana” (1871) and “Mariana” (1891)—and other Machadian narratives—they may find changes in interpretation that reconfigure their estimation of the texts, of Machado de Assis, and perhaps of themselves.

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JORDAN B. JONES, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese at Brigham Young University. He has authored numerous articles on human rights and racial justice in the Americas and has translated multiple short stories by Machado de Assis. He is also the translator of *The Myth of Economic Development*, by Brazilian economist Celso Furtado (Polity Press, 2021).  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0249-174X>. E-mail: jordan_jones@byu.edu.

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