

The Racial Dilemma in the Biographical Writings about Machado de Assis / *O dilema racial nas grafias biográficas sobre Machado de Assis*

*Paulo Alberto da Silva Sales**

ABSTRACT

Between the years 1908 and 1939, the readings made by several critics and writers about Machado de Assis's life revealed a writer averse to the racial issues of his time. They accused him of distancing himself from sensitive issues at the time, such as Abolitionism and the establishment of the Republic. The intellectuals and scientists' speech, motivated by the scientific-racist spirit in Brazil in the 19th century, also influenced in the erasure of Machado's Afro-descendance, who was considered white on his death certificate. Only during the 1930s, based on the successful critical-biographical study by Lúcia Miguel Pereira (1988), the writer's black identity began to be claimed. Through anthropological, sociological and critical-essay studies, we will situate the ways in which scientific racism, simultaneously with the end of slavery and the rise of the new political project, influenced the consolidation of white readings on the memory of the mestizo writer.

KEYWORDS: Machado de Assis; Biography; Afrodescendance; Racism

RESUMO

Entre os anos 1908 e 1939, as leituras realizadas por diversos escritores e críticos sobre a vida de Machado de Assis revelavam um escritor avesso às questões raciais de seu tempo. Elas o acusavam de seu distanciamento dos temas sensíveis à época, tais como o Abolicionismo e a implantação da República. Os discursos de intelectuais e cientistas, motivados pelo espírito cientificista-racista no Brasil do século XIX, também influenciaram no apagamento da afrodescendência de Machado, que foi considerado branco em seu atestado de óbito. Somente no decorrer da década de 1930, a partir do bem-sucedido estudo crítico-biográfico de Lúcia Miguel Pereira (1988), começou-se a reivindicar a identidade negra do escritor. Isso posto, por meio dos estudos antropológicos, sociológicos e crítico-ensaísticos, situaremos os modos pelos quais o racismo científico, concomitantemente com fim da escravidão e com novo projeto político, influenciaram a consolidação de leituras brancas sobre a memória de Machado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Machado de Assis; Biografia; Afrodescendência; Racismo

* Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia Goiano – IF-GOIANO, Campus Hidrolândia, Hidrolândia, Goiás, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9980-2561>; paulo.alberto@ifgoiano.edu.br

*And the little mulatto lived hours of drunkenness, completely possessed by his young
ambition, by his powerful vocation for letters.
What did poverty, color, or humble origin matter?*¹

Lúcia Miguel Pereira

“The idea we have of great figures is, almost always, as different from their real personality as the statues of men of flesh and blood who once were.”² This is how Lúcia Miguel Pereira (1988) begins her narrative-investigative journey on the figure of the man and author of *Dom Casmurro*. The creation of images that were crystallized around Machado de Assis’s complexion induced readings that labeled him as a subject/writer with little interest in the social transformations of his time. The first “posthumous memoirs” written about the great writer, written by his contemporaries from the year of his death in 1908, monumentalized him by labelling him that came to prevail in the imagination of writers and critics read his work.³ The most customary images of Machado, at the time, and that still persist in appearing in more recent writings, such as those created by Ironides Rodrigues,⁴ are those of the man from the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* [Brazilian Academy of Letters], of the classic, the Hellenistic, the humorist and the fiction writer of elegant style. In addition to these images created, there are the reticent pessimist, the homely bourgeois and the serious man, too. It is worth remembering, above all, the aura that haunted him in the first two decades of the 1900s: that of the “absentee” averse to political life, “who saw Abolition and the Republic as an uninterested spectator”

¹ In Portuguese: “E o mulatinho vivia horas de embriaguez, todo possuído pela sua jovem ambição, pela sua poderosa vocação para as letras. Que importava a pobreza, a cor, a origem humilde?”

² In Portuguese: “A ideia que fazemos dos grandes vultos é, quase sempre, tão diversa da sua personalidade real como as estátuas dos homens de carne e osso que foram um dia” (This is the sentence that introduces the first chapter of the work *Machado de Assis: Critical and Biographical Study* (1988), by Lúcia Miguel Pereira.)

³ For reference, see *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares 1908-1939* (Machado de Assis according to his peers (1908-1939)) (2019), by Hélio de Seixas Guimarães e Ieda Lebensztayn. Both critics present the trajectory of the “long posthumous life” of writings about the features that Machado had acquired since his death until the centenary of his birth. Of all the writings gathered, the ones that most differ from the recognition of Machado’s greatness are those written by of Lima Barreto and, above all, of Mário de Andrade: “[...] From everything that Machado de Assis’s work and critics tell me, I can see, with some regretful and uncomfortable clarity, the genius figure of the Master. He was a man that I disliked and that I would not want in my life” [In Portuguese: De tudo quanto me dizem a obra e os críticos de Machado de Assis, consigo ver, com alguma nitidez arrependida e incômoda, a genial figura do Mestre. Ele foi um homem que me desagrada e que eu não desejaria para meu convívio] (Andrade, 1939 *apud* Guimarães; Lebensztayn, 2019, p. 306).

⁴ An intellectual from the black movement, Rodrigues (1997, p. 256) states that Machado presented himself socially as a white writer who did not feel black blood flow in his heart. This same passage by Rodrigues is also pointed out by Eduardo de Assis Duarte (2020), in his critical study *Machado de Assis Afrodescendente* [Machado de Assis Afro-descendant].

(Pereira, 1988, p. 20).⁵ Criticism, until the 1940s, accused Machado of not engaging, at least explicitly, in the Abolitionist struggle and in the racial issues of his mixed-race and black brothers. In this regard, Gilberto Freire (1949), in *Perfil de Euclides da Cunha and outros perfis* [Euclides da Cunha's Profile and Others' Profiles], highlights the non-commitment of Machado de Assis's to social engagement and the racial issue of his time. In the view of the author of *The Masters and the Slaves*,⁶ the biography of Euclides de Cunha stands out compared to that of the "old Machado" – who is seen by Gilberto Freire as an overly "Greek" writer and as the "master" of backgammon games and as counterpart in piano sessions. This happens due to the fact the "tapuian"⁷ (Euclides) presented a piece of writing in which we feel the author through the pain of the *backlanders* in *Rebellion in the Backlands*.⁸ Freire, then, interprets Machado as being a guy who hid "[...] behind always white characters, always thin yo-yos, [who] made himself guessed in the humor of his novels [...], almost a sad Englishman lost in the tropics" (Freire, 1949, p. 640).⁹ In addition to the interpreter Gilberto Freire, other writers did not identify with Machado and began to accuse him of not explicitly engaging in the Abolitionist struggle. Among them, we highlight Lima Barreto and Mário de Andrade. Regarding this image of an alienated Machado, in relation to the themes of socialurgency at the end of the 19th century, Lima Barreto, in the text "Uma fatia acadêmica" [An academic slice], published in 1919 in the periodical *ABC*, describes the Machado figure as

[...] a well-made man, loving delicate things, without a great, broad and active vision of humanity and art. He liked decent, well-placed things, conversation with homely girls, chitchatting with ladies. Who invented this talk about his being like the English comedians was the great José

⁵ In Portuguese: "que viu a Abolição e a República como quem assiste a espetáculos sem maior interesse."

⁶ FREYRE, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves*. Transl.: Samuel Putnam. California: University of California Press, 1986.

⁷ Gilberto Freire (1946) highlights the strong presence of the Hellenistic spirit of the late 19th century, as well as that of academicism and the imitation of English humor that – according to whom Machado de Assis would have assimilated this practice in his writing in a brilliant way. This would also not be out of the Euclides' writings at all. However, "there is an expressive declaration in him: that he felt at the same time Tapuian, Celtic and Greek. But it was already too much, in the era of Coelho Neto and B. Lopes, to admit a victorious writer in Rio de Janeiro who was a third Tapuian, and not completely Hellenistic" [In Portuguese: há nele uma declaração expressiva: que se sentia ao mesmo tempo tapuia, celta e grego. Mas já era muito, em plena época de Coelho Neto e B. Lopes, admitir um escritor vitorioso no Rio de Janeiro que fosse um terço tapuio, e não completamente heleno] (FREIRE, 1943, p. 641).

⁸ CUNHA, Euclides. *Rebellion in the Backlands*. Transl.: Samuel Putnam. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

⁹ In Portuguese: "[...] por trás de personagens sempre brancos, ioiôs sempre finos, [que] se fazia adivinhar no *humour* dos seus romances [...], quase um inglês tristonho desgarrado nos trópicos."

Veríssimo, who rightly admired Machado de Assis: but I know exactly why he invented this story... (Barreto, 1919 *apud* Guimarães; Lebensztayn, 2019, p. 183).¹⁰

As you can see, these are *reading perceptions*¹¹ that were being ingrained regarding Machado's work and figure. It is worth remembering that, in that period of denial of the past and revision of aesthetics, the emphasis of modernist writers was on the creation of literature that represented, through language and content, the identities and the diverse Brazilian countries, with their most diverse problems and challenges. In the same period, there are minimal records of texts that deal with Machado's work, nor with him as writer. Hélio de Seixas Guimarães (2019, p. 20) highlights that, in these two decades, the digital collection of the paper *O Estado de S. Paulo* [The State of S. Paulo] recorded, throughout the 1920s, only 126 texts that, in one way or another, made some type of mention of the author of *Philosopher or Dog?*¹² Mário de Andrade, mainly, was Machado's executioner, labeling him as the "mocking bird of foreigners," especially the French and English. In 1939, in the centenary year of Machado's birth, Mário de Andrade, in a letter to Maurício Loureiro Gama, reports:

I don't even want to tell you about the suffering that these three articles were for me because, if I love Machado's work as art, I find little lesson in it and I simply hate the man he was. It's natural that I hate him because if there are two morally, intellectually and socially antagonistic beings, it's him and me. So imagine the intellectual juggling I did to, without betraying myself, say all of this with a general celebratory and apologetic intention. Not only have I run out of ideas, but I feel morally exhausted, in a kind of vague sadness (Andrade, 1939 *apud* Guimarães; Lebensztayn, 2019, p. 18).¹³

¹⁰ In Portuguese: "um homem de sala, amoroso das coisas delicadas, sem uma grande, larga e ativa visão da humanidade e da arte. Ele gostava das coisas decentes e bem-postas, da conversa da menina prendada, da garridice das moças. Quem inventou esse negócio de humoristas ingleses para ele foi o grande José Veríssimo, que admirava com toda razão Machado de Assis: mas eu sei bem por que ele inventou essa história..."

¹¹ Eduardo de Assis Duarte also highlights this matter in: DUARTE, Eduardo de Assis. *Machado de Assis afrodescendente*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Malê.

¹² MACHADO DE ASSIS, Joaquim Maria. *Philosopher or Dog?* Transl.: Gregory Rebassa. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

¹³ In Portuguese: "Nem lhe quero contar o martírio que foram para mim esses três artigos porque, se adoro a obra de Machado como arte, pouco encontro nela lição e simplesmente detesto o homem que ele foi. É natural que o deteste porque se há dois seres moral, intelectual, socialmente antagônicos somos ele e eu. Imagine pois os malabarismos intelectuais que fiz pra, sem me trair, dizer tudo isso dentro de uma intenção geral celebrativa e apologética. Não só esgotei as ideias como me sinto esfalfado moralmente, numa espécie de tristeza vaga."

From this excerpt taken from Mário's letter, even though the modernist hated the man Machado was, the author of *Macunaíma*¹⁴ still ends up recognizing Machado's genius. Mário de Andrade's reading perspective, in relation to Machado's supposed disconnection from the issues of his time, begins to be renewed over the years through other critical horizons. Without a doubt, in the middle of the 20th century onwards, other forms of reading began to emerge that examined Machado with other eyes. The studies by John Gledson (1998; 2003), and Sidney Chalhoub (2003) – based on the relationship between fiction and history, more closely related to the deterioration of the *Segundo Reinado* [Second Reign], the implementation of *Lei do Ventre Livre* [Free Womb Law], *Lei Áurea* [the Golden Law], the Abolition and the rise of the Republic – made it possible to read Machado's writings again as that writer who examined and rewrote the social and political history of his time. Chalhoub, when examining historical texts from the 1870s, pointed out how much Machado's writings are embedded in the ideology of the upper classes, which is, in his novels and stories, explored by a relentless satirical logic. We also highlight the historian's exquisite reading of the novel *Helena* (1984),¹⁵ highlighting an important element that was common in the policies of domination exercised over slaves and descendants. In this novel, "in both cases, and always remaining from the perspective of the class of lords and owners, social relations of domination are based on the assumption of the inviolability of the lordly will" (Chalhoub, 2003, p. 51).¹⁶ This element of historical extraction, linked to slavery and which is problematized in the *Helena*, is just a small demonstration of Machado's critical bias invested in the social problems of his time. Other stories, which are also worthy of note regarding the wounds of slavery, are, among others, "Mariana" (1871),¹⁷ "O espelho" [The Mirror] (1881), "O caso da vara" [The Case of the Rod] (1899) and "Pai contra mãe" [Father against Mother] (1906).

¹⁴ ANDRADE, Mário. *Macunaíma*: The Hero with No Character. Transl.: Katrina Dodson. New York: New Directions Publishing, 2023.

¹⁵ MACHADO DE ASSIS, Joaquim Maria. *Helena*. Transl: Helen Caldwell. California: California University Press, 1984.

¹⁶ In Portuguese: "em ambos os casos, e permanecendo sempre na ótica da classe dos senhores e proprietários, as relações sociais de dominação estão assentadas no pressuposto da inviolabilidade da vontade senhorial."

¹⁷ Integrates *Contos na imprensa* [Short Stories in the Press]. The original had appeared in *Jornal das famílias* [Newspaper of the Families], in 1871. Machado signed as J.J. See: https://machadodeassis.net/texto/mariana/39389/comment_id/39392.

Despite being a “writer of significant gaps” (Piza, 2008) ¹⁸ and because he uses facts and ideas from his time and also issues that are typical of human beings at any time and in any place, until the beginning of the 1930s, little was written about his Afro-descendance. In the first chapter that opens the book *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares (1908-1939)* [Writer by Writer: Machado de Assis According to his Peers (1908-1939)], organized by Hélió de Seixas Guimarães and Ieda Lebensztayn, there is the construction of a kind of “posthumous memories of Machado.” These scholars reflect about the existence of diverse texts by writers and critics that were published shortly after the death of the great writer until the year in which the centenary of his birth was celebrated. Texts such as Rui Barbosa’s (“O adeus da Academia,” [The Farewell from the Academy], from 1908); Arthur Azevedo’s (“Palestra” [Lecture], 1908); Euclides da Cunha’s (“A última visita” [The last visit], 1908); Carlos de Laet’s (“A morte de Machado de Assis” [The Death of Machado de Assis], 1908); Mário de Alencar’s (“Machado de Assis, páginas de saudade” [Machado de Assis, Pages of Longing], 1910); José Veríssimo’s (“Machado de Assis crítico” [Machado de Assis, the critic], 1913), among others. These scholars popularized Machado’s memories in honor of the one who would be called by Carlos Drummond as the *Bruxo do Cosme Velho* [Wizard of Cosme Velho]. In the vast majority of those texts, we see, as Hélió de Seixas Guimarães (2019, p. 14) points out, religious terms, such as “relics,” “pilgrimages,” “pilgrimage,” “cult” that prove posthumous recognition from his peers to the patron of Brazilian literature.

However, this ongoing canonization and transformation of the writer into a model to be followed “is accompanied by the production of clichés and many empty considerations” (Guimarães, 2019, p. 14).¹⁹ These facts happened because there had been an expectation on the part of readers, since the postulation of a national literature in the post-independence period, from the 1830s onwards, that literature would be a direct representation of the specificities of the nation. In this sense, at first sight and on the descriptive surface of the texts, Machado ends up frustrating his readers by dealing little with the Brazilian landscape and by almost not focusing on customs. Machado’s criticism

¹⁸In Portuguese: “escritor de hiatos significativos.” Although Daniel Piza’s (2008) study was well done in terms of recreating Machado’s figure and work, he did little to deal with the issue of Afro-descendance. For this reason, we chose Lúcia Miguel Pereira’s biography as the one that best allows us to examine the racial issue in Machado.

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “é acompanhada pela produção de clichês e muitas considerações vazias.”

of Brazilian society itself, as well as historical and social formation, is rarely mentioned. It should also be noted that the writer actively circulated among major newspapers, as well as participated in the main events involving the intellectual elite. He founded the Academia Brasileira de Letras (ABL) and created for himself a place of respectability and literary recognition, becoming its president for life. This proves that the man/author was attentive to the political-social issues he experienced. Therefore, the question to be reflected upon, in our view, is the following: due to his elegant style, full of ironies and philosophical aphorisms, Machado's criticisms of slavery – and even the Republic – appear “too elaborate” and, therefore, his contemporaries labeled him as alienated. As we know, his texts require readers to penetrate deeply into the textual structure to then recognize the critical and harsh acuity of his writing.

The Illustrious Afro-Descendant

In the mid-1930s, Machado began to be seen as representing, in his own way, the problems of his time. Especially in 1936, through the pioneering studies of Lúcia Miguel Pereira (1988), the writer's mixed-race condition was recognized. From then on, new reading perspectives began to focus on Machado's life and work. When we revisit Pereira's biography of Machado, we see this scholar's commitment to reconstructing the other's life trajectory, especially in recognizing his Afro-descendant origin. In this critical-biographical study, the reader is invited to interact with the life bits and pieces of Machado's self, reconstituted by words, bearing in mind that this reconstitution of Machado, according to Bakhtin (1990),²⁰ means that

The world of biography is not a closed and definitively completed world; it is not isolated out of the unitary and unique event of being by any firm and essentially necessary boundaries. To be sure, this continued participation of biography in the unitary event of being is indirect, for what it participates in directly or immediately is the proximate world (kin, nation, state, culture), and this proximate world, to which both the author and the hero belong—the world of otherness—is somewhat consolidated or bodied with respect to value, and, consequently, is somewhat isolated. This isolation, however, is a

²⁰ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity (ca. 1920-1923). In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp. 4-256.

natural-naive isolation, a relative isolation, and not an isolation in principle, not an aesthetic isolation. Biography is not a produced work, but an aestheticized, organic, and naive act performed in a proximate, axiologically authoritative world that is in principle open and yet organically sufficient unto itself (p. 166).

Biography is bestowed as a gift: I receive it as a gift from others and for others (p. 167).

As a salutary example of this process of reconstitution of Machado's life and work, Lúcia Miguel Pereira's biography is the one that best situates the Machado's mixed-race condition. In it, we come across life's setbacks - epilepsy - from his childhood in Livramento to his rise in ABL, his recognition while still alive and his death. Parallel to the reconstitution and reinterpretation of lived traces, Pereira articulates them with elements of Machado's fictional work, as well as making critical comments. Furthermore, as Machado's books are published, she comments on them. It is also interesting to highlight the relationship between Machado's life and work that the biographer presents. In her reading perspective, the first phase of Machado's fiction – especially his novels – would be one that represented, in a certain way, the writer's social ascension. This analogy is quite productive when we relate Machado's life trajectory with the life stories of the heroines of the novels *Ressurreição* [Resurrection], *A mão e a luva* [The Hand and the Glove], *Helena*²¹ and *Iaiá Garcia*.²² In all of these narratives, the protagonists are women who rise socially. In the second phase of Machado's work, beginning with *The Posthumous Memories of Brás Cubas*²³ and ending with *Memorial de Aires* [Aires's Memorial], the novels can be read through the perspective of male protagonists who have good social status and who, in turn, face existential moral, ethical problems, among others.²⁴ For historian Andréa Camila de Faria (2012), Lúcia Miguel Pereira renewed the method of writing biographies in Brazil. According to Faria, the biographer uses 86 questions and statements as narrative resources in the biography:

Miguel Pereira launches his “interpretations” that are aimed at the same time, at the subject and the reader. In other words, biographies were,

²¹ See footnote 16.

²² All mentions of Machado's novels and short stories, cited directly and indirectly, were removed from the Website <https://www.machadodeassis.net/obra>.

²³ MACHADO DE ASSIS, Joaquim Maria. *The Posthumous Memories of Brás Cubas*. Transl: Margaret Jull Costa and Robin Patterson. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2021.

²⁴ We are not saying that these issues do not appear in the first phase. However, in the voices of narrators Brás, Bento Santiago and Counsellor Aires, these questions take on conflicting dimensions.

according to her [Lúcia Miguel Pereira] – and according to the premises of those who advocate in favor of modern biography – more than a literary text, they were a model for writing history, perhaps even the ideal model. Thus, asking questions was to seduce the reader, invite them to participate in the narrative and, above all, make them interested in history, spying on it through the eyes of representative names for the country. It was to allow a certain level of creation to make it easier to restore the past, and a creation mediated by historical knowledge. It was mainly using a stylistic resource to try to sensitize the reader (Faria, 2012, p. 5).²⁵

Because it is more “realistic” than other genres and other self-writings, biographical writing has, according to Bakhtin, fewer elements of isolation, finishing and presents us as “not a definite and distinctly completed fabula, but the manifold fabulas inherent in life” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 158).²⁶ These subtleties about biographical writing take us directly to the problem of how to understand the story of a life. That said, let us return to the elements of our biographed mestizo, more specifically, his birth.

On June 21, 1839, exactly 184 years ago, the mulatto (a term – now pejorative – widely used by Lúcia Miguel Pereira) Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis was born, on *Morro do Livramento* [Livramento Hill]. Regarding his birth, Pereira, in the preface to the third edition of *Machado de Assis: estudo crítico e biográfico* [Machado de Assis: Critical and Biographical Study],²⁷ warns the reader about valuable information that she got hold of: Machado’s baptism record. In this document, motherhood of the first-born child is conferred to Maria Leopoldina Machado de Assis and paternity to Francisco José de Assis. Regarding the racial issue of Machado’s parents, his mother was of Azorean, of Portuguese origin, and his father had an origin that was “infinitely more important than his maternal origin” (Pereira, 1988, p. 12).²⁸ Furthermore, Machado was the grandson of

²⁵ In Portuguese: “Miguel Pereira lança suas “interpretações” que são voltadas, ao mesmo tempo, ao biografado e ao leitor. Ou seja, as biografias eram segundo ela [Lúcia Miguel Pereira] – e de acordo com as premissas dos que advogam em favor da biografia moderna – mais do que um texto literário, eram um modelo de escrita da história, talvez até, o modelo ideal. Assim, lançar questões era seduzir o leitor, convidá-lo a participar da narrativa e, sobretudo, fazer com que ele se interessasse pela história, espiando-a através dos olhos de nomes representativos para o país. Era permitir-se certo nível de criação para tornar mais fácil a restauração do tempo passado, mas uma criação mediada pelo conhecimento histórico. Era, principalmente, utilizar-se de um recurso estilístico para buscar sensibilizar o leitor.”

²⁶ See footnote 21.

²⁷ The first edition is from 1936. In 1939, the second edition was released in honor of the centenary of Machado’s birth. The third edition is dated 1944. In this study, we used the sixth edition, from 1988.

²⁸ In Portuguese: “infinitamente mais importante que a materna.”

freed slaves. He lived, as Pereira points out, a simple life. Machado de Assis's ascendance, mainly as regards his father,

[...] would mark him forever, conditioning his reactions to others and to life, would be the color he inherited from his father, and which his mother may have attenuated, without however making it invisible. In fact, being mixed-raced, everyone assumed, even before these documents came to light, that [the father] also had white blood, probably Portuguese (Pereira, 1988, p. 12).²⁹

In this excerpt, we see the author's emphasis on recognizing and valuing the black traits of the *carioca* writer. Even though Machado de Assis had never confirmed the fact that he was mixed-race, mulatto, black or mestizo. This is mainly due, we understand, to the author's own trajectory; his constant personal conquests; the position of respectability he achieved, and also considering the determinist-racist racism permeated in society in the last years of the Empire and at the beginning of the following century. This racist issue present in the elite and in all social spheres becomes clear when we come across the pseudo-scientific discourses imported, at that time, to this side of the Atlantic.

Race, Racism

The concept of racial formation, which emerged around the debates of the 1930s (Guimarães, 2001), began to be articulated in Brazilian territory during the monarchical period. The Abolition of slavery marked the beginning of the emergence of what, later, we could relate, in cultural and social terms, to black political identity in the country. Like this,

[Race], color and culture had been categories of social position for a long time [in Brazil]. At least until the beginning of the 20th century, they were completely natural categories; we are a nation that was formed with slavery, and this slavery was not a generalized enslavement

²⁹ In Portuguese: “o marcaria para sempre, o que condicionaria as suas reações diante dos homens e da vida, seria a cor que herdara do seu pai, e que a mãe pode ter atenuado, sem contudo deixar menos visível. Aliás, sendo mestiço, toda a gente supunha, ainda antes de se conhecer esses documento, que [o pai] tinha também sangue branco, provavelmente portugueses.”

of all people, but only of those located in a certain part of the African continent (Guimarães, 2021, p. 40).³⁰

In this regard, sociologist Antonio Sergio Alfredo Guimarães (2021), in *Modernidades negras* [Black Modernities], examines recent historiographies regarding slavery and the Abolitionist process in the 19th century. From his studies, we can highlight the emergence of a “black nativism” that emerged in several intellectuals and artists of African descent, such as Manuel Querino, Astolfo Marques, Nascimento Moraes, Arthur Timóteo, Lima Barreto, among others.³¹ In their view, the structure of feelings that unites them was “a fusion between the desire to get rid of the preconception of color and the stigma of slavery and a social thought that imagines the nation as mestizo” (Gato; Rios, 2021, p. 11).³² In the perception of Antonio Guimarães, the diction present in the speeches of these pioneering writers and thinkers would mark the process of symbolic inclusion of Brazilian African descendants into Western society in what would become black modernity.

Studies related to racial identity, mainly consolidated between the 1930s and 1980s, made it possible to read Machado’s texts, as well as his biographies and the writings of his contemporaries about him from a black perspective, no longer made solely by a white perspective, when mixed-race and/or black people were dealt with. Regarding the biographies that are considered most consistent with the author’s racial issues, we give credit, once again, to Lúcia Miguel Pereira. This mulatto identity highlighted in Pereira’s critical-biographical text definitely influenced the subsequent reception of Machado’s texts. In our opinion, the first two chapters of Pereira’s important work give visibility to the author’s racial issues, as well as the reflections of this issue in his writing.

Another biography that is little known by critics and which also highlights Machado’s mixed-race identity is written by the writer Humberto de Campos (1886-1934). The text is entitled *O menino do morro* [The Boy from the Hill] and was originally published in the *Diário de São Paulo* [Paper of São Paulo], in 1933. Campos, on the

³⁰ In Portuguese: “[Raça], cor e cultura foram durante muito tempo categorias de posição social [no Brasil]. Pelo menos até começo do século XX, eram categorias totalmente naturais; somos uma nação que se formou com a escravidão, e essa escravidão não era uma escravização generalizada de todos os povos, mas somente daqueles localizados numa determinada parte do continente africano.”

³¹ Although the sociologist recognizes Machado’s greatness, he does not see him as an exponent of this black modernity.

³² In Portuguese: “uma fusão entre o desejo de livrar-se do pré-conceito de cor e do estigma da escravidão e um pensamento social que imagina a nação como mestiça.”

occasion of the 25th anniversary of the great master's death, creates a small biographical narrative. At the beginning of his text, the critic evokes the image of Machado that touches him most: that of the mixed-raced boy, aged 10. Son of the master painter "Chico," sacristan of Father Silveira Sarmiento at the Lampadosa Church and typography apprentice, the Afro-descendant identity of the then little Machado is immediately highlighted: "He is, in short, the humble boy, and the obscure boy, from which had been born, little by little, one of the strongest and most expressive individuals in Brazilian culture, of all time" (Campos, 1933 apud Guimarães; Lebensztayn, 2019, p. 250).³³ The image that comes to Campos' eyes, different from that constructed by Gilberto Freire, Lima Barreto and Mário de Andrade, is that of the boy on the hill, in the most ignored period by biographical and literary critique, when he presented himself "[..] with his dark and pale face, with all the stigmas of a poor child" (Idibem).³⁴ It is worth transcribing a passage in which Humberto de Campos reconstructs these mishaps of the Machado boy. From the descriptions, the narrative resembles the experiences of people of African descent in the present time. On reading this text, readers, especially younger ones, from humble origins, who fight daily battles and who still face racial prejudice, will be able to be inspired by the life trajectory of the greatest Brazilian writer. Here is one of the most touching excerpts from *O menino do morro*:

In the morning, with the sun still wrapped in the clouds on the horizon, he leaves the sad little worker's house, his striped pants above the knee, his feet bare, his shirt open to his chest. He goes down to the street and buy a pound of meat and some rice for his sick and tired mother. The father, an early riser, has already gone to work, putting the last brushstrokes on the front of a house, in the outskirts of Botafogo. Having to make the journey on foot, he left while it was still dark. And the boy Joaquim Maria throws himself down the hill, whistling, and bending down from time to time, in order to pick up a stone with which he scared away a lizard or aimed at a bird...

Who could say by meeting Maria Leopoldina's son at those times, and at that time by chance that one day he could write the Memorial de Aires or or the *Posthumous Memories of Brás Cubas*?

At nine o'clock, there he goes back to the street, going down the hill. Where are you going, with changed clothes? Same slacks. The shirt, however, has been replaced by a shirt made of the same poor fabric. He

³³ In Portuguese: "É, em suma, o menino humilde, e o rapazola obscuro, de que devia sair, aos poucos, uma das individualidades mais fortes, e mais expressivas, da cultura brasileira, de todos os tempos."

³⁴ In Portuguese: "[...] com sua carinha escura e pálida, com todos os estigmas da criança pobre."

wears now leather slippers, which he drags on the tip of his foot (Campos, 1933 *apud* Guimarães; Lebensztayn, 2019, p. 250).³⁵

In this puerile narrative-biographical reconstruction of Machado, we perceive the humanization of his figure, who, very rarely, can be read as an Afro-descendant subject. The difficulties that families, especially those of black origin, face daily in the large communities of Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere are glimpsed by the reconstruction of our greatest writer. The lack of resources for food, clothing and limited means of transportation, so common to marginalized populations, are represented in “Menino do morro.”

This little-known writing dialogues well with Lúcia Miguel Pereira’s narrative-biographical reconstructive perspective. In addition to Pereira and Campos, another, more recent, scholar who also claims Machado’s Afro-descendance is Eduardo de Assis Duarte (2020). In his studies, this critic highlights how Machado’s biography highlights the rise of an Afro-descendant, who came from the margins of the social structure to get closer to the Rio elite of the time. He passed through the press, literature and the government machinery. For this critic, some opponents attacked Machado’s “bourgeoisization,” which would correspond to his adoption of dominant social and literary practices of European origin.

It was even stated that the use of a beard and mustache, almost mandatory among men of the time, was intended to disguise black features. Not to mention the controversial retouching to lighten the skin in photographic studios at the time. Such commonplaces, added to the absence of a black hero in his novels, largely supported the thesis of Machado’s famous absenteeism regarding slavery and interethnic relations in 19th century Brazil (Duarte, 2020, p. 10).³⁶

³⁵ In Portuguese: “Pela manhã, com o sol ainda embrulhado nas nuvens do horizonte, sai ele da casinha triste de operário modesto, a calça de riscadinho acima do joelho, os pés descalços, a camisa aberta ao peito. Vai lá embaixo, na rua, comprar, para a mãe doente e cansada, a libra de carne, e um pouco de arroz. O pai, madrugador, já se foi para o trabalho, dar as últimas pinceladas no frontispício de uma casa, para as bandas de botafogo. Tendo de fazer a viagem a pé, saiu ainda com escuro. E o menino Joaquim Maria lá se atira, morro abaixo, assoviando, e abaixando-se de vez em quando, a fim de apanhar uma pedra com que espante um lagarto ou faça pontaria num passarinho... Quem encontrar naquelas alturas, e àquela hora, o filho de Maria Leopoldina dirá, por acaso, que ele possa escrever, um dia, o *Memorial de Aires*, ou as *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*?

Às nove horas, lá se vem ele, de novo, para a rua, descendo o morro. Aonde vai, que vem de roupa mudada? A calcinha é a mesma. A camisa, porém, substituída por uma blusinha do mesmo pano grosseiro, e traz, agora, chinelas de couro, que arrasta na ponta do pé.”

³⁶ In Portuguese: “afirmou-se, inclusive, que o uso de barba e bigode, quase obrigatório entre os homens de seu tempo, teria como objetivo o disfarce dos traços negroides. Isto sem falar dos polêmicos retoques para

Endorsing Duarte's perspective, with regard to the recognition of Machado's miscegenation, is Lúcia Miguel Pereira's understanding, according to which it would not be possible to separate the fictional creation from the mishaps experienced by the child and Machado on Morro do Livramento. For her, "as Machado the writer is an undeniable reality, and a strong and marked personality, we cannot help but conclude that the man was not what he seemed – or wanted to be" (1988, p. 21).³⁷ Bearing these questions in mind, we understand that racial miscegenation, so present in Brazil in the 19th century – under the influence of European racial models adopted there – was decisive in the process of whitening Machado's image, as well as the labeling, by some writings, of his apparent lack of interest in racial issues.

Still in relation to social and anthropological research, Antonio Sérgio Guimarães also confirms that, until the 1920s, there was a predominant discursive representation of black people through white writings. Although in the political world, openly Afro-Brazilian figures such as José do Patrocínio and André Rebouças stood out in the abolitionist context, in the pantheon of the *belle lettres*, only occasionally would a talented black person be "integrated as Cruz e Souza (1861-1898) or a mestizo such as Machado of Assis" (Guimarães, 2021, p. 74).³⁸ Sérgio Guimarães also adds that despite the importance of recognizing black poets and mixed-raced writers, these authors will not be read as representatives of literature with an Afro-descendant bias. Scientific racism, permeated in the intellectual environment and in society as a whole began to label black authors as "minor," "subaltern" or were even silenced. So, against this annulment of Afro-descendant activism and black identity, according to Sérgio Guimarães, black modernity is founded. This black activism starts from the affirmation of the existence of more than one perception of black art as valid: that made by white people about black people, that of black people about themselves, etc. As we have shown, in the specific case of

clarear a pele nos estúdios fotográficos da época. Tais lugares-comuns, somados à ausência de um herói negro em seus romances, fundamentaram em grande medida a tese do propalado absenteísmo machadiano quanto à escravidão e às relações interétnicas existentes no Brasil do século XIX."

³⁷ In Portuguese: "como Machado escritor é uma realidade insofismável, uma personalidade forte e marcada, não podemos deixar de concluir que o homem não foi o que pareceu – ou quis ser."

³⁸ In Portuguese: "integrado um negro talentoso, como Cruz e Souza (1861-1898) ou um mestiço como Machado de Assis."

Machado's black ancestry, his Afro-descendant roots were barely recognized. One of the reasons why this can be explained by the fact that Machado would

have to fight against the inferiority of education, overcome the impulses of a neuropath, deny the proverbial edginess of the mestizo, impose himself to the whites, the well-born, Machado de Assis, in an instinctive movement of defense, tried to hide within another type, not quite his, but one that represented his ideal: that of the cold, indifferent, impassive man. He stepped into the shoes of this character, undoubtedly believing that he was rising, belittling himself, forgetting that his books betrayed him – or saved him (Pereira, 1988, p. 25).³⁹

According to Lilia Schwarcz (1992), Brazil, at the end of the 19th century, was seen as a unique and singular case of extreme racial miscegenation. Between the 1870s and 1930s, the predominant ideology was that miscegenation condemned the country to failure. In the words of polymath Silvio Romero (1949), we form a country of mestizos, if not present in everyone's blood, at least in their souls. In this "festival of colors" typical of a "society of mixed races," there emerged fresh Brazilian centers of scientific knowledge that solidified racism among us. During that period, according to Schwarcz, a racial model of analysis was established, supported by a fairly consensual perception among members of the elite and scientists of the time. This is the process of whitening the population through the mixing of races, an idea strongly linked to the consolidation and growth of the newly constituted republican nation. The image propagated regarding the mestizo – considered "impure" and "stray" (Lacerda, 1911) – explains, for example, the encouragement, on the part of the republican government, of immigration campaigns welcoming Germans, Italians, Portuguese and other European peasants to help in the process of whitening Brazil. In this regard, Schwarcz (1991, p. 18) highlights: "In fact, the hybridization of races meant in this context 'a riot', as concluded paper *A Província de São Paulo* [The Province of São Paulo], in 1887."⁴⁰ The scholar also cites an international event that took place at the beginning of the 20th century, in Paris, and which

³⁹ In Portuguese: "tendo que lutar contra a inferioridade da educação, de sopitar impulsos de neuropata, de desmentir o proverbial espevitamento do mestiço, querendo impor-se aos brancos, aos bem-nascidos, Machado de Assis, num movimento instintivo de defesa, tratou de se esconder dentro de um outro tipo, não era bem o seu, mas que lhe representava o ideal: o do homem frio, indiferente, impassível. Meteu-se na pele dessa personagem, crendo sem dúvida que se elevava, na realidade amesquinhando-se, esquecido de que seus livros o traíam – ou o salvavam."

⁴⁰ In Portuguese: "De fato, a hibridação das raças significava nesse contexto 'um tumulto', como concluía o jornal *A província de São Paulo* de 1887."

seen 112 years after, causes us immense indignation. It is about the *Premier Congrès Universel des Races* [1st International Race Congress], held between the 26th and 29th of July 1911, in which João Batista Lacerda, the then director of the *Museo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro* [National Museum of Rio de Janeiro], was invited to give a speech as a “typical representative of a mixed-raced country.”⁴¹ His thesis titled “*Sur les métis au Brésil*” [About the Mixed-Raced in Brazil] is direct and objective: “Today’s mestizo Brazil faces bleaching as perspective, way out and solution in a century” (Lacerda, 1911, our translation).⁴² By using the text of the lecture in French, we can abstract elements that supported the racism permeated in the scientific theories of the time. Here is an excerpt from that statement:

Accepting this criterion, which seems to me more physiological and natural than all the others, I find no difficulty in admitting that the white man and the black man form two races, and not two species, because no one ignores that the mixed race, resulting from the crossing of white with black are fertile for a long time in a succession of generations. If, however, white and black preserve separately for an indefinite period the characteristics specific to their race, - which constitutes their fixity, - there is no product of their crossing. Mutts [mestizos] do not form a true breed, following the lack of fixity of many physical characteristics that are subject to vary with each new crossing, sometimes leaning towards the white type, sometimes towards the black type. This innate tendency of the mongrel, depriving it of specific qualities of a fixedly constituted breed, has considerable value in the transformations that mixed populations undergo over time, where crossings do not obey precise social rules, where mixed-race people have total freedom to join the whites, providing products that are increasingly closer to white than to black. This is precisely the current condition of mixed populations in Brazil (Lacerda, 1911, pp. 7-8, our translation).⁴³

⁴¹ In Portuguese: “típico representante de um país mestiço.”

⁴² In Portuguese: “O Brasil mestiço de hoje tem no branqueamento em um século sua perspectiva, saída e solução.”

⁴³ In the original: “Acceptant ce critérium qui me paraît plus physiologique et naturel que tous les autres, je ne fais aucune difficulté d’admettre que l’homme blanc et le noir forment deux races, et non pas deux espèces, car personne n’ignore que les métis, issus du croisement du blanc avec le noir, sont féconds pendant une longue suite de générations. Si, cependant, le blanc et le noir isolément conservent pour un temps indéfini les caractères propres de leur race, — ce qui en constitue la fixité, — il n’en est pas de même des produits de leur croisement, des métis. Ceux-ci ne forment pas une race véritable, par suite du manque de fixité de beaucoup de caractères physiques qui sont sujets à varier avec chaque croisement nouveau, penchant tantôt vers le type blanc, tantôt vers le type noir. Cette tendance innée du métis, le privant des qualités propres d’une race fixement constituée, a une valeur considérable dans les transformations que subissent, pendant le cours des âges, les populations mélangées, où les croisements n’obéissent pas à des règles sociales précises, où les métis ont toute liberté de s’unir aux blancs, fournissant des produits qui se rapprochent chaque fois davantage du blanc que du noir. Et c’est là, précisément, la condition actuelle des populations mixtes du Brésil.”

In this transcribed excerpt, as well as throughout the lecture, we perceive the extreme racism present in the configuration of races that persists, in other ways, until today. It was believed that the black race would be inferior to the white race and that the future of Brazil, in the sense of the nation's progress, would lie in the whitening of its population. To substantiate this absurdity, Lacerda turns to the painting by M. Broccos, an artist from the *Escola de Belas Artes do Rio de Janeiro* [Rio de Janeiro School of Fine Arts], to exemplify this process to which black and mixed-raced people should be subjected. From the painting, Lacerda states: “*Le nègre passant au blanc, à la troisième génération, par l’effet du croisement des races*” [Black people become white, in the third generation, due to the effect of crossing races] (Lacerda, 1991, p. 3, our translation). In this regard, Schwarcz explains that the miscegenation that existed in Brazil was not only described, but also pejoratively qualified. With the enactment of the *Lei do Ventre Livre* in 1871, which began to dismantle slavery, the number of captives began to decrease. In this sense, as slavery was what sustained the Empire through a fully developed slave society, “modernizing” intellectuals began to stand out. Machado de Assis, in turn, remained skeptical regarding such great innovations in science. Joaquim Nabuco and André Rebouças, although monarchists, preached reforms without changing the country's political-institutional framework.

When focusing on this same scientific-racist context at the end of the 19th century, historian Ricardo Salles (2013, p. 25) recalls that Sílvio Romero and even Euclides da Cunha ended up surrendering to theories that prescribed the racial inferiority of the mulatto people and mixed race. Still according to Salles, Machado de Assis, once again, turns against this absurdity. Already disbelieving in the barbarities of the moment he was living in, Machado mocked the ideas of progress and faith in the republican future. The writer, then, preferred to stay away from these political clashes. However, in *Esau and Jacob* (1904), there is the presence of a “myopic” view regarding the ideological and moral ingredients of national political life, as well as the minimization of the emergence of a Republic established by a coup. This is how Machado acted and wrote, an Afro-descendant, a writer who was very attentive and aware of the problems of his time and his racial issues. He was so much in his society that he knew how to ascend

socially and also knew how to “camouflage” himself in the elite and in the literary environment as a way of resistance to the racist practices of his time.

REFERENCES

- ANDRADE, Mário de. Machado de Assis, 1939. In: GUIMARÃES, Hélio de Seixas; LEBENSZTAYN, Ieda. *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares – 1908-1939*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2019. pp. 291-312.
- ASSIS, Machado de. Mariana. In: *Contos: uma antologia*. Seleção, introdução e notas John Gledson. 1. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998. pp. 151-170.
- ASSIS, Machado de. *Máximas, pensamentos e ditos agudos*. Seleção e apresentação Hélio de Seixas Guimarães. 1. ed. São Paulo: Penguin Classics Companhia das Letras, 2017.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail. O autor e a personagem na atividade estética. In: BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Estética da criação verbal*. Tradução Paulo Bezerra. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010. pp. 3-192.
- BARRETO, Lima. Uma fatia acadêmica (1919). In: GUIMARÃES, Hélio de Seixas; LEBENSZTAYN, Ieda. *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares – 1908-1939*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2019, pp. 175-184.
- CAMPOS, Humberto de. O menino do morro. In: GUIMARÃES, Hélio de Seixas; LEBENSZTAYN, Ieda. *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares – 1908-1939*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2019. pp. 247-252.
- CHALHOUB, Sidney. *Machado de Assis: historiador*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003.
- DUARTE, Eduardo de Assis. *Machado de Assis afrodescendente: antologia e crítica*. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Malê, 2020.
- FARIA, Andréa. Lúcia Miguel Pereira e a renovação da escrita biográfica no Brasil. In: RANGEL, Marcelo; PEREIRA, Mateus; ARAUJO, Valdeni (Orgs.). *Caderno de resumos & anais do 6º Seminário Brasileiro de História da Historiografia – o giro-linguístico e a historiografia: balanço e perspectivas*. Ouro Preto: EdUFOP, 2012.
- FREIRE, Gilberto. Euclides da Cunha. In: FREIRE, Gilberto. *Perfil de Euclides da Cunha e outros perfis*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1949.
- GATO, Matheus; RIOS, Flavia. Introdução. In: GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio. *Modernidades negras: a formação racial brasileira (1930-1970)*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2021. pp. 7-14.
- GLEDSON, John. *Machado de Assis: ficção e história*. Tradução Sônia Coutinho. 2. ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2003.
- GLEDSON, John. Os contos de Machado de Assis: o manchete e o violoncelo. In: ASSIS, Machado de. *Contos: uma antologia*. Vol. 1. Seleção, introdução e notas John Gledson. 1. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998. pp. 15-55.

- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. A liberdade é negra; a igualdade, branca e a fraternidade, mestiça. In: GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. *Modernidades negras: a formação racial brasileira (1930-1970)*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2021. pp. 45-66.
- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. A modernidade negra. In: GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. *Modernidades negras: a formação racial brasileira (1930-1970)*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2021. pp. 67-89.
- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio. Democracia racial: o ideal, o pacto e o mito. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, v. XX, n. 61, pp. 147-162, 2001.
- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. O estudo das raças e sua formação histórica. In: GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. *Modernidades negras: a formação racial brasileira (1930-1970)*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2021 pp. 21-44.
- GUIMARÃES, Hélio de Seixas. Uma longa vida póstuma. In: GUIMARÃES, Hélio de Seixas; LEBENSZTAYN, Ieda. *Escritor por escritor: Machado de Assis segundo seus pares – 1908-1939*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2019. pp. 9-23.
- LACERDA, João Batista. *Sur les metis au Brésil*. Paris: Imprimerie Devougue, 1911.
- PEREIRA, Lúcia Miguel. *Machado de Assis: estudo crítico e biográfico*. 6. ed. Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia; São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1988.
- PIZA, Daniel. *Machado de Assis: um gênio brasileiro*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2008.
- ROMERO, Silvio. *História da literatura brasileira*. 4. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1949.
- SALLES, Ricardo. *Nostalgia imperial: escravidão e formação da identidade nacional no Brasil do Segundo Reinado*. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Ponteio, 2013.
- SCHWARCZ, Lilia Moritz. *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e a questão racial no Brasil – 1870-1930*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993.

Translated by Marina Cardozo Mesquita – marina.mesquita@ifgoiano.edu.br

Received April 11, 2024

Accepted July 01, 2025

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66233e, July/Sept. 2025

All content of *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type CC-BY 4.0

Review I

The article “The racial dilemma in biographical writings about Machado de Assis” deals with a topic in vogue, through which the aim is to draw a new profile of Machado de Assis and, thus, rectifying the so-called “white readings” about the writer. Although this theme is important for building a less partial image of the author of Brás Cubas, the columnist is not effective in his purpose, basing his point of view on biographers and scholars in the face of whom he does not assume the necessary critical distance. Furthermore, the article is not organic in its conception, presenting flaws in terms of sequentiality; the linguistic correction also leaves something to be desired, according to the comments, added to the text, prove. It is recommended that the article be accepted for publication, as long as corrections are made. MANDATORY CORRECTIONS [Revised]

Juracy Ignez Assmann Saraiva – Centro Universitário Feevale, Campus II, Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1783-2850>; juracy@feevale.br

Reviewed on June 14, 2024.

Review III

The study presents a very good overview of the racial issue in the main biographies dedicated to Machado de Assis, also revealing excellent knowledge of the literary work of the writer. The title is appropriate, as is the development of the proposed objectives. Essential recent studies are resumed and considered in the discussion, which is presented in language suitable for scientific communication.

-- About Bakhtin’s first quote in the subtitle “The illustrious Afro-descendant.” [In the form as it stands, suggests that Bakhtin is referring specifically to the case of Machado de Assis. I suggest a small rewrite or small addition (something like “using the Bakhtin terms”) to avoid this confusion.] -- After the translated quote from Lacerda’s text, there is the following call: LACERDA, 1991. I think there is a mistake in the year, right? To check. APPROVED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

Alex Sander Luiz Campos – Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica de Minas Gerais – Cefet-MG, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5897-7418>; alex.campos@ifnmg.edu.br

Reviewed on July 22, 2024.

Review IV

In view of the corrections made to the original version of the article, I recommend its publication. APPROVED

Juracy Ignez Assmann Saraiva – Centro Universitário Feevale, Campus II, Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1783-2850>; juracy@feevale.br

Reviewed on September 01, 2024.

Editors in Charge

Beth Brait

Elizabeth Cardoso

Maria Helena Cruz Pistori

Paulo Rogério Stella

Regina Godinho de Alcântara