

THE CRÔNICAS OF MACHADO DE ASSIS, 1871–1878

By

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To my family, who loves me; to Elizabeth Ginway, who invested in me and in this project; to Roberto Chauca Tapia, who inspires me to be a better scholar

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839–1908) is universally recognized as the leading nineteenth-century Brazilian author in prose fiction. The Brazilian Ministry of Culture officially declared 2008 as *Ano Nacional Machado de Assis*, honoring the centenary of his death. Over the years there has been extensive criticism written on his most renowned novels and short stories; however, critics have generally concentrated on his later works, written after 1880. At the same time, relatively little attention has been given to Machado's output in a genre he cultivated for decades: the *crônica*, a periodical composition or vignette akin to a column or topical story. The few scholarly works that have been done on Machado's *crônicas* center on either the 1860s or the 1880s and 1890s; surprisingly, the *crônicas* of the 1870s have been generally neglected.

Both during his lifetime and since his death, Machado's work has often been criticized for avoiding important current affairs, such as slavery, abolition, and political issues. However, he did in fact articulate such views in some of the most widely read Brazilian newspapers. The aim of my thesis is to contest the view of Machado as an apolitical figure, to recast him as a thoughtful, concerned man who publicly voiced his opinions. Moreover, the study will investigate Machado's journalistic contributions from an understudied period, namely the years 1871 to 1878. Also, we argue for a more unified view of his work, contesting the traditional

two-phased approach, before and after 1880. Finally, this thesis will show how valuable these *crônicas* are for understanding Machado's work in its entirety, advocating a vital and much needed change in the study of his oeuvre.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION – MACHADO DE ASSIS AS JOURNALIST: 1870S

Machado de Assis (1839–1908) has been the topic of countless studies of literary criticism, cultural and social history. Books on Machado seem to be everywhere, especially since 2008, the centenary of his death.¹ However, few studies focus on young Machado and the literary works he produced during that period. His earlier *crônicas* are often overlooked in favor of those published after 1881, the beginning of his so-called mature phase. This choice, in turn, makes it seem as if Machado's career started in 1880s. It is our contention that the great master was not born suddenly, but instead learned his craft over a long period of time, slowly developing his critical view of Brazilian society. In the analysis of the genre of the *crônica*, the mainstay of Machado's journalistic work, we will also show that he is not, as some have asserted, detached from the national reality, nor disinterested in the political upheavals of his time. This work then centers on 1870s so as to reconstruct the image of Machado as well as emphasize the importance of these *crônicas* in his opus.

There are many instances of his genius apparent in this early period, and this study challenges the traditional view of Machado de Assis as an apolitical figure by demonstrating how his early *crônicas* reflect his interest in politics on local, national, and even international levels. Furthermore, it will fortify the argument of how the master used the genre as training ground for his future widely acclaimed novels. Sonia Brayner, one of the first to conduct a critical study of *crônicas* as part of Machado's opus, asserts that the experience served as a fictional laboratory for Machado (162). A few studies have shown the importance of his writings as a *cronista*, but those tend to either focus on the 1860s, the beginning of his journalistic career, or the 1880s and

¹ *Machado de Assis* edited by Hélio de Seixas Guimarães and Vladimir Sacchetta, *A economia em Machado de Assis: o olhar oblíquo do acionista* by Gustavo H. B. Franco, and *Machado de Assis afro-descendente* by Eduardo de Assis Duarte are just a few examples of numerous studies published in celebration of what the Ministry of Culture officially declared: *Ano Nacional Machado de Assis*.

1890s, a period of great political change in Brazil.² Other studies, such as Ana Miranda's "Crônicas in Fifteen Themes," analyze many *crônicas* in few pages, and tend to generalize and overlook subtleties of the genre. Likewise, Mariana da Silva Lima in "O engajamento nas crônicas de Machado de Assis" also underscores the importance of his *crônicas*. Lima hopes to spark the interest for the genre, which is admirable, yet her ambitious goals of engaging with four decades worth of material cannot be accomplished in a short essay. The present study contrasts what previous critics have written, awarding Machado's early *crônicas* the sophistication and merit they deserve. It is a first step in focusing on the important events of the 1870s and how Machado chose to write about them.

Machado de Assis was born a poor mulatto, with very few opportunities to change his social status. Since he managed to achieve just that, it is easy for some scholars to be carried away by his success. Some portray him as the perfect author, whose qualities elevated him to the status of a literary genius in Brazil. Gondim da Fonseca, for instance, believes that "país algum do mundo possui homem de letras que se compare ao nosso Machado" (15). It is also often assumed that with success comes money; hence he must have earned a lot by producing all his great novels in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This assumption is unfounded, as we shall see. In light of what has been written on Machado's supposed lack of political interest and participation, we must take into account the factors that may have limited his freedom to write as he pleased. Thus, the present study will also address the possible obstacles Machado had to deal with and the limitations placed on him.

Talent was secondary to social class and capital in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. Jeffrey Needell describes Machado as a man from humble beginnings, stating, "he was no rich

² Jean-Michel Massa and Marco Cícero Cavallini write on the 1860s *crônicas machadianas*; whereas John Gledson and Gabriela Betella highlight the importance of the ones written in the 1880s and 1890s.

man's son of independent means or professional options. He was a bureaucrat who served Liberal and Conservative, *florianistas* and *paulistas*, indifferently, with a nicety and skill rewarded by near ministerial responsibilities" (*Tropical Belle Époque* 193). Although Machado's work as a *cronista* in the 1860s has been recognized as more political, as we shall see from Massa's and Cavallini's works in the next chapter, his later "objectivity" could have come from Machado not having the authority to publish polemical pieces.

Along the same lines, John Gledson answers the question raised by some about the motives behind Machado's return to newspaper chronicles after a three-year hiatus: "precisava do dinheiro" (*A Semana* 12). Although, as previously stated, he had been more polemical in the 1860s, as the political situation in Brazil became more unstable, censorship of the press could have increased. Patronage and hierarchical relationships were but two fundamental aspects of nineteenth-century Brazilian society, and it is quite plausible that Machado had to edit his comments and cater to a certain few. Literary critic Valentim Aparecido Facioli cites in a chapter on the intellectual biography of the author, during that time "o jornal era, pois, veículo de interesses de grupos ou frações de classe, a quem a ideologia liberal servia, como poderia servir a conservadora, se isso permitisse mais facilmente a chegada aos cargos de governo e aos favores" (23). Censorship could also have been partially self-imposed, since, as a rising journalist, Machado had to keep within accepted parameters to maintain his salary and status within the medium. He might not have been able to write another *crônica* if he did not comply with the unspoken yet clear rules.

In order to underline the importance of his 1870s *crônicas*, Chapter 1 is divided into two parts. First, it will address the problems with the previous scholarship analyzing Machado's work specifically in this genre. Second, it will shed light on the historical backdrop to these

crônicas. This, in turn, will show how the writings by Machado pertaining to this time period should be properly understood, and how the 70s decade was a time of social and political change in Brazil.

On the political front, Chapter 2 covers the historiography of the literature on the great Brazilian master. From the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, this chapter deals with the critical misrepresentation or unfounded claims regarding Machado's ignorance or disregard for politics. There is a great variation on his supposed political participation or lack thereof; but, for the most part, critics are harsh on the writer for maintaining a distance from political events.

Chapter 3 offers an analysis of his *crônicas* from 1871 to 1878. During this time period, Machado de Assis was known as "Dr. Semana" to his public at large. While trying to suggest remedies for fixing the country's ailing political process, which was suffering from a corruption virus, Machado was writing at a time when the monarchy was being challenged by two disgruntled political parties following the Paraguayan War (1865–70). Here, Machado uses his pen name to reflect the prejudices of his own readership. Dr. Semana is a persona crafted by the author in order to examine slavery, women's issues, and politics at different levels.

Chapter 4 covers Machado's last 1878 *crônicas* for the column "A semana" and his short period under "Notas semanaes". Lasting for less than a year, his contributions to *O Cruzeiro* came in a pivotal year for the author and for the country. 1878 marked the death of José de Alencar, one of Machado's great mentors and collaborators, the return of Liberals to power after a 10-year period, and Machado's last *crônicas* of that decade. Machado could have sensed the end of his career as a *cronista*, as seen in his most openly critical political pieces. These constitute his most polemical, and at times, most literary *crônicas*. At this point, the chapter addresses the powerlessness of Machado de Assis as a mulatto writer and the considerable

limitations imposed by the press in nineteenth-century Brazil. We will close by analyzing a pivotal *crônica* written in 1878. This piece commemorates the birth of the Republican Party and its inefficiency to work with the crown, hampering the country's growth. Therefore, it showcases Machado's interest for political affairs and the sophisticated sarcasm of his narrative.

Crônicas Machadianas: Previous Studies

Crônicas were not always taken seriously by literary critics. Seen commonly as the “parente pobre da família literária,” the genre was often overlooked or under analyzed (Preto-Rodas 218). As Gledson points out in the introduction of *Bons dias!: crônicas (1888–1889)*, there are over 600 *crônicas* written by Machado, and yet these *crônicas* “em comparação com o resto da sua obra, têm permanecido quase completamente ignoradas.” (*Bons Dias* 11) It is especially hard to understand the absence of any studies focusing on the 1870s *crônicas* if one considers the fact that out of W. M. Jackson's four volumes of Machado's work as a *cronista*, two of the volumes precisely address this time period.³ Machado's *crônicas* from the 1870s represent approximately 35% of his output, and yet it has been overlooked. Fortunately, recent scholarship has refuted the notion of this being a lesser genre and critics have underscored Machado's central influence in shaping the way *crônicas* are written. Eugênio Gomes, one of the first scholars to explore Machado's *crônicas* as a separate genre, describes it as “folhetim, destinado a comentar de maneira amena e graciosa certos fatos da semana ou do mês, tornando-os assimiláveis a todos os paladares;” and it was read mainly by “o mundo feminino, e, em consequência, criou um ambiente de civilidade na imprensa” (7). In his short book, Gomes only includes Machado's journalistic contributions from the 1890s, despite the title, which implies

³ There are over 630 pages of *crônicas* from the 1870s in the four volumes published by W. M. Jackson, which are the most cited by scholars of the genre. It is surprising that the decade has not been the focus of other studies of the genre up to this date. Machado de Assis, *Chronicas*, vol. 1-4 (Rio de Janeiro: W. M. Jackson, 1938).

more general overview.

Addressing the role of Machado de Assis in the appropriation of the genre, Afrânio Coutinho states "em crônica de 30 de outubro de 1859, Machado de Assis, definindo o 'folhetim' e o 'folhetinista', deu as características da crônica, tal como hoje é entendida"⁴ (*A literatura no Brasil* 109). It is then difficult to account for the limited amount of critical attention given to his *crônicas* compared to novels and short stories, since he was so crucial to the way the genre is viewed nowadays. Machado was a key figure on an influential genre. When describing the influence of this genre to national culture, Sússekind articulates *crônica* as "a journalistic form of some importance in Brazilian literature, typically less serious than the essay, focusing on contemporary life and sometimes bordering on light fiction" (111). In her eyes, *crônicas* allows this by nature, later leading Machado to portray daily life so well in his acclaimed novels.

Massaud Moisés situates the *crônica* in more artistic terms. In his view, "a crônica oscila entre a poesia e a reportagem" (111). Focusing on how Machado used this writing form, Moisés delves deeper into the specific way in which the writer presented his work as a *cronista*. At large, Moisés believes that "a estrutura das suas crônicas obedece, genericamente, ao mesmo padrão: ao começo, as notícias da semana que merecem relevo pelo impacto causado ou pelo tipo de leitor a que se destinavam; por fim, os comentários" (111). Such comments, political or polemical one way or another, became the trademark of Machado's *crônicas*.

Recently, John Gledson and Gabriela Betella both have done work highlighting the importance of Machado's newspaper columns. Yet by stressing on his work from the 1880s, they miss Machado's perspicacity in earlier journalistic pieces. Gledson, for example, mentions how the nineteenth-century author "tenta situar as crônicas no seu momento histórico," often

⁴ In this volume, Coutinho offers a thorough account of the genre, tracing its early "ancestrais ilustres, como Sócrates" (106) and describing its changes as it was incorporated into the Brazilian literature, 105-123.

defining the events and circumstances that shaped a certain decade (*A Semana* 12). Then, he offers a more political Machado by ascertaining: “se há uma história para contar que ligue as crônicas como um todo, ela baseia-se na reação de Machado à cena política e social que o cercava” (12). In spite of the fact that Gledson does not speculate about how Machado might have gained his critical view of the world surrounding him via the *crônica*, he generally portrays the author as a man in tune with the politics of his time.

Betella extends the argument of Gledson’s earlier work on Machado’s *crônica*. She repeatedly refers to Gledson’s work, and some of the historical background offered in her text is directly extracted from the same sources as Gledson. Overall, she does make her case for the importance of Machado’s *crônicas* toward the end of that century, but she does not consider the possibility that Machado had had years of training in his newspaper publications a decade before that might explain his deftness and wit.

Yet Betella’s work can be commended for tracing the origins of the genre and how it was transformed by Machado’s style and commentaries. She successfully underlines the difference in interpretation of the word *crônica* amongst European nations and how it came to be associated with journalism in Portugal and Brazil (37). Likewise, Betella points out how, especially after Machado, *crônicas* came to be “de um estilo despretensioso, todavia profundamente elaborado na narrativa, disfarçando até o caráter sério e crítico” (44). The issue here is that she implies Machado adopted an ironic style and a sudden interest in politics only in the 1880s. Betella’s work is valuable for heightening the importance of the genre in an overall study of Machado. However, it fails to offer the whole picture of his development as a writer, the limitations imposed on him by patronage, and his interest for politics and politicians from earlier days.

In general, the studies by Gledson and Betella tend to center on a later date, when pivotal

political events such as abolition and the overthrow of the monarchy were taking place in Brazil. Nonetheless, it was much earlier that Machado took an interest in politics. With corrupt elections, political divisions, and poorly administered governmental institutions, Machado could make 1873, or any year for that matter, seem as if it were a crucial time for Brazil and its citizens. This was part of the talent and appeal Machado de Assis possessed, and it is exactly what we aim to show in our analysis.

Brazil in the 1870s

This study focuses on Brazil in the 1870s because it was a crucial time for politics, which were definitely of interest to Machado. His *crônicas* reveal new political tensions deriving from a growing distaste for monarchy, together with the incipient interest in positivism and republicanism. Historian Thomas Skidmore holds that “the elite generation reaching maturity around 1870, three generations removed from their forebears who broke with Portugal, were too young to identify automatically with their emperor or their empire” (65). The notion of empire and slavery being tied together in what he terms “slavocracy” brought discomfort to the younger members of the new elite. Times were changing for the emperor, and for Brazilian society as a whole. Machado registers and describes political disputes in a way that makes it hard to understand how his previous biographers did not take his *cronista* phase more seriously.

The 70s decade was turbulent, at best. In a period when Dom Pedro II was flirting with abolition, it is quite understandable that he would lose popularity among some members of the elite who saw change as a threat to their economic and social stability. European events and ideas often influenced the crown in Brazil. In 1870, for instance, Victor Hugo gathered a group of French intellectuals and together they wrote the emperor, Dom Pedro II, “urging him to abolish slavery immediately” (56). Consequently, in his speech from the throne a year later “the emperor acknowledged Hugo’s letter and promised to work toward abolition” (56). In such a

setting, Machado had more than enough political material to work with, and so he did in his own subtle way.

Since the official end of the African slave trade in 1850, Brazilian society had been tried to either maintain the current number of slaves or to find an alternative form of labor (Viotti da Costa 168). Discreetly pushing to modernize the nation, Dom Pedro II was very much aware of the backwardness associated with slavery. In *The Party of Order*, Jeffrey Needell dedicates an entire chapter to the significance of 1871 to Brazilian politics and society at large. Needell supports the idea that “the emperor wished to pass a particular abolitionist law which would signify Brazil’s participation in Civilization and Progress while posing the least threat to imperial society or the economy” (307). In order to achieve this goal without fomenting feelings of betrayal from pro-slavery politicians, the emperor needed to distance himself from the next step toward emancipation. Anxious and cautious, Dom Pedro II “wanted to be free of any evidence of responsibility for his intervention” (283). In a clever move, the monarch traveled to Europe.

The year of 1871 is then crucial to Brazilian society due to the passing of the Law of the Free Womb. With the monarch physically absent, “a Conservative Cabinet, headed by Rio Branco (1871–4), launched a series of reforms of which the most important was the emancipation of children born of slave mothers” (Viotti da Costa 189). As Barman points out, the passage of this law, “enacted during his [the monarch’s] stay in Europe, had further enhanced both his personal reputation and the international standing of the country he ruled” (240) It is precisely at this moment that Machado de Assis begins to find ways to comment on the political problems of his time. According to Needell, “the Brazil that emerged from the war with Paraguay (1865–1870) was already different;” the war had been longer than expected and shook the monarchy at its roots. Thus, the Paraguayan War caused great distress to the crown and

brought great distrust of the emperor's ability to deal with the changing times. Having "a decisive effect on political party alignments," the war would eventually lead to a new manifesto being issued by Liberals (Skidmore 64). This manifesto, in turn, would give way in 1870 to the foundation of the new Republican Party, which set out to put an end to Brazil as an Empire.

On the ideological front, the monarchy was being challenged by republicanism and abolitionism. Republicanism was not a new idea in Brazil, "it had flourished in the early 1830s but thereafter had become a matter of individual belief, one not systematically propagated or even publicly expressed" (Barman 241). As a new generation of political leaders and military personnel came to the forefront, republicanism was revived along with doubts of "whether monarchy, with its accompanying socioeconomic ethos, was the best system for their country" (Skidmore 66). On the one hand, Barman argues that "the emperor simply did not take the republican movement in Brazil seriously;" the monarch saw republicans as "children playing at being adults, a fantasy permitted and indulged but not to be confused with the realities of life" (243). On the other hand, Skidmore defends that republican ideas arose because "Dom Pedro II, once the unifying symbol of the Empire, was now physically and psychologically weaker" (66). Either way, we see the foreshadowing of the fall of the monarchy in Machado's 1870s *crônicas*. Along with his journalism, we seek to deepen the understanding of this decade since it served as a dress rehearsal to the political upheavals that would surface during the late 1880s, forever changing Brazil.

The last and perhaps most influential ideology to land in Brazilian soil during the mid-nineteenth century was positivism. As Skidmore states, the French philosopher, Auguste Comte "had developed a dogma that was particularly admired by the younger army officers of the Rio Military Academy" (66). Adopted by the Brazilian youth, especially in the ranks of liberal

professions and military officers, the doctrine would literally become the banner for the new Brazilian government, with its motto of Order and Progress. These would be men amongst the leaders of the newfound Republican front. In the last decades of imperial Brazil, political parties were constantly dealing with its changes in membership. Emília Viotti da Costa successfully summarizes the situation: “In the decade before 1870 staunch members of the Conservative party had broken away from their traditional loyalties and joined the Liberal party,” whereas “many devoted Liberals left their party to create the Republican party in 1870” (161). The eroding power of the crown supporters led to the victory of these positivist military men who would eventually overthrow the Brazilian monarchy in 1889.

It is already in the 1870s that we see the seeds of future events. The discontent with the emperor after the Paraguayan War, the crown’s increasing acceptance of abolition as a route to modernity, and the power of these new ideologies amongst the middle sectors of the young urban elite, all contributed to the end of imperial rule in Brazil. As we will show, the *crônicas* of 1870s reflect Machado as an active and engaged commentator; a man interested in the party politics, local elections, international issues, and events surrounding political process and the crumbling monarchy.

CHAPTER 2

MACHADO AND THE CRITICS: POLITICAL APATHY OR POLITICAL AFFINITY

Literary criticism, since the 1990s has focused on Machado de Assis' reception by critics and the general public during his lifetime when his literary genius was not unanimously recognized. The description of Machado's personality and an ever-changing interpretation of his work seem to follow certain patterns and waves. In the 1890s, Machado was portrayed as a rather timid, distant, apolitical figure. Yet, a century later, he is now seen as more social and politically interested than previously believed. It is fair to say that many critics have recognized Machado de Assis *politico* but with limitations that merit correction. By shedding light on his earlier *crônicas*, we will attempt to make these corrections, and consequently help recreate Machado's image as a politically interested and socially connected writer. In order to see how Machado's journalistic writings worked as a canvas for his criticism of Brazilian society and politics, the present chapter gives a summary of key critical works that address Machado's political views.

In 1897, the renowned literary critic, Silvio Romero, was the first to publish a harsh criticism of Machado de Assis. While defending the literary production of the Brazilian Northeast region, Romero chose to berate Machado, for he was the figure that most represented the South. He refutes all the praise and positive reviews written on Machado and instead he offers a fault-finding view of the writer and his work, criticizing his elitism and his lack of Brazilianness. Therefore Romero proudly goes against the grain. The *nordestino* critic advocates a better understanding of the "alienated" author, referring to Machado, to arrive at a better understanding of his works.

Romero completely disregards the decades the great author dedicated to newspaper *crônicas*. He describes Machado as "de uma natureza sem turbulências, sem audácia, sem

grandes lutas internas, sem preocupações sociais, inundada de uma incurável indiferença” (52). Despite his unfounded comments, the way in which Romero carefully refutes other critics’ comparisons of Machado to Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky, is daring and original. Consequently, he is successful at underlining the possibility of the critics holding Machado to an excessively high standard.

A more positive and appreciative review is published in 1934 by Alfredo Pujol. In *Machado de Assis*, Pujol formulates a more widely encompassing view of the master. His sources include Machado’s first sketches and compositions, his short stories, poems, novels, *crônicas*, and literary criticism. The critic states how “vivendo em meio a liberais... ele [Machado de Assis] não se deixou contaminar pela infecção da política” (20). In spite of including *crônicas machadianas* in his work, Pujol only sees these as one dimensional. He does not see beyond the apparently frivolous tone Machado carefully constructed to disguise his harsher critiques.

Celebrating the centenary of Machado’s birth in 1939, Lúcia Miguel Pereira’s book, *Machado de Assis: Estudo Crítico e Biográfico*, continues to be pivotal for Machadian scholars. The book was written to understand both Machado and his work while defending a more psychological approach to the great master. His *crônicas* are not neglected by the critic, who consults no fewer than thirty-seven newspapers and magazines, including *Gazeta de Notícias*, *A Marmota*, *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, and *O Cruzeiro*. Pereira may have been the first to demystify the apolitical portrait of Machado that had been previously drawn by others. She states that “ele sempre foi fiel aos princípios democráticos, mesmo depois de abandonar o jornalismo político” (77). After highlighting the importance the *Diário do Rio* had in his literary life by forcing a shy and introverted Machado to face the public at large, Pereira names him an

adversary of the aristocracy. For her, Machado was a man interested in politics yet less interested in making his political sympathies openly known.

Also in contrast to the harsh criticism of Romero, Brito Broca offers a much more amiable portrayal of the author in his 1957 work. In *Machado de Assis e a política*, Broca recognizes and defends Machado's involvement in politics, as well as his general concern for the well-being of the country. His sources include scattered *crônicas* taken from *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, "A Semana", and also *O Cruzeiro*. The masterpieces, *Dom Casmurro* (1899) and *Quincas Borba* (1891) are overused as sources. The emphasis on the novelist undercuts the significance of the other genres in establishing Machado's attitudes. In other words, critical articles and *crônicas* are placed aside and seen as of lesser value when trying to recreate Machado's persona. Brito Broca is successful at presenting situations in which the author expressed his political opinions or concerns. Whether on the topic of the Paraguayan War (69), ridiculing "os escravocratas" (65), or addressing the political dramas of that time (105), Machado always found a way of putting in his two cents; even if discreetly.

Likewise, Peregrino Júnior praises Machado in his 1958 article "Vida, ascensão e glória de Machado de Assis." The book commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Machado's death, and its four articles represent a shift in the scholarship on the great master. In his article, Peregrino Júnior describes the new qualities being assigned to Machado, allowing for a shift from an absent or serious Machado to a more light-hearted and socially engaged. Although the rags-to-riches theme is clearly stated in the essay's title, the article features an entire section dedicated to Machado's stance on Brazilian politics, economics, and society. By accentuating these interests, Peregrino Júnior contributes to a new, more socially active and charismatic image of the great master.

In this same celebratory volume, Cândido Mota Filho also makes his contribution to the literature on Machado. Entitled “Machado de Assis, escritor brasileiro” the article deals with the concept of nationalism in his works, and how the term was associated with the master as a person. Mota Filho shows Machado’s concern for Brazil and Brazilians. Perhaps due to his privileged upbringing and worldly experiences, Cândido Mota Filho feels compelled to compare Machado to great Western writers in order to praise his literature. The sense of nationalism and interest in politics is judged in comparison to European writers as opposed to Brazilian ones, as if the former were superior. The article, nonetheless, accounts for the subtle ways in which Machado showed signs of his political interest. The critic defends the idea that “os fatos históricos, como a abolição, quedas de ministérios, a Guerra do Paraguai ou a queda do Império estão refletidas em temas comuns, cotidianos” (53). Cândido Mota Filho understands Machado’s interest in politics to be based on how politics affected Brazilians, and not how Brazilians shaped politics.

Soon after, Raimundo Magalhães Júnior published *Machado de Assis: Funcionário Público* (1958). Following in the footsteps of Broca and Peregrino, he addressed Machado’s political involvement not only through his writings, but also in his role as a civil servant. His objective is to offer a different picture on Machado; not only as an exemplary writer, but also as an exemplary worker. Magalhães Júnior’s main contribution stems from drawing parallels between Machado’s political views in short stories and *crônicas*, to his actions as a civil servant. Furthermore, the critic divides Machado’s public career into two distinct phases: the monarchy and the republic. The first phase is where the master was the most productive, and also where Magalhães Júnior documents Machado’s mature research and developed writing abilities. This, in turn, aids the claim we are trying to make for the departure from the two-phase approach to his

literature; here it will be shown how his *crônicas* from 1870s already contained the sophisticated traces that would award him the title of great master later on.

Following Magalhães Júnior's lead and introducing Machado de Assis as a professional of many traits, Josué Montello studies Machado's presidency of the Academia Brasileira de Letras. His book *O Presidente Machado de Assis* (1961) examines papers and documents previously neglected. A twenty-page manuscript, a diary, and previously unseen correspondence, are all part of this new selection of material Montello had found. He closely analyzes Machado's multiple letters to recreate his personality and interests. This correspondence includes his exchanges with literay historian José Veríssimo, abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco, and writer Mário de Alencar.

In this process of recreating Machado de Assis' image, Montello neglects the writer's political concerns. It is rather difficult for us to imagine that none of the letters makes a single political remark; ironically Nabuco was a leader in the abolitionist movement and José Veríssimo was quite interested in literature and politics as well. Certainly, had Montello consulted Machado's *crônicas*, he would have had to change his point of view. Yet, it is important to note that Montello, as the president of the Academia Brasileira de Letras, was more focused on Machado as an institution, rather than Machado the historical person.

Also in 1961, Montello wrote and published another book on Machado de Assis, cleverly entitled *Memórias Póstumas de Machado de Assis*. His intent is basically the same, to create a fair image of Machado de Assis and to guarantee his position as the greatest Brazilian writer of all times. Yet, he makes distinctions in source selection this time, dividing primary sources into *crônicas*, short stories, novels, letters and theater. Montello mentions that Machado's published commentary on Canudos inspired Euclides da Cunha to produce his masterpiece, *Os Sertões*.

The critic can now see how Machado “fazia política sem ser político” (21). Here he begins to recognize the writer’s subtle style, although he does not take it much further in this study.

In 1968, Gondim da Fonseca published *Machado de Assis e o Hipopótamo* in order to show his discontent with Machado’s misrepresentation by other biographers. Fonseca’s methodology is based on Freudian psychoanalysis, and his aim is to get even closer to the true Machado de Assis. He planned on writing the ultimate biography as suggested by the book’s subtitle: *uma biografia honesta e definitiva, a última palavra sobre Machado de Assis*. Other than Machado’s published works, the critic investigates family data in various documents, including his birth certificate, marriage licenses, obituaries, correspondence, baptism records, etc. Books from the National Archive and a photo of his death mask add to this rich array of material. Yet, *crônicas* are nowhere to be seen. Following his portrayal of a weak, shy, and stuttering Machado de Assis, he offers unapologetic criticism of the author’s works from a Freudian point of view. However, insightful documents with regards to Machado’s family members are useful in reconstructing his youth and adulthood. Unfortunately, Fonseca stops there, and fails to appreciate the value of Machado’s *crônicas*, both for their disguised approach to politics and their sophisticated narrative style.

In his second attempt at unveiling Machado de Assis to the public, Magalhães Júnior published *Machado de Assis desconhecido* in 1971. Here, Magalhães Júnior plans to reveal further the aspects in Machado’s life and work that remained in obscurity despite an increase in scholarship on the great master. Setting himself apart, the critic reconstructs a politically involved Machado de Assis. Despite using the same sources he used on his first book, Magalhães Júnior looks at the material with a different agenda in mind. The critic sets out to do what he failed to do on the first attempt: uncover the “jornalista político” within Machado (71).

He even goes as far as to say that “política é, no fim das contas, uma das obsesões literárias de Machado” (82). Furthermore, the critic defends the ideas that just because Machado de Assis left his liberal journalistic past behind, it does not mean he lost his interest in politics. In fact, Magalhães Júnior argues that Machado’s criticism of Brazilian customs and institutions has political meaning and direct relevance to the political world.

In the same year, Jean Michel Massa’s biography entitled *A Juventude de Machado de Assis* describes Machado’s route to maturity. Dealing with the period from 1839 to 1870, Massa strives to be the first to do an “intellectual biography” of the master. His research started as a literary study, but it later grew to encompass a more historic approach to literature.

Amalgamating a biography and critique of Machadian literature, Massa gives an account of the author’s youth, focusing on the master’s life experiences and on the work that resulted.

Most of Massa’s critical material was extracted from *Catálogo de Jornais e Revistas do Rio de Janeiro*, ranging from 1808 to 1889. Additional sources include *Catálogo de Plantas e Mapas da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro* to trace Machado’s whereabouts and give a better picture of what his life must have been like. His birth certificate, family wedding licenses, personal correspondence, and both Machado’s published and unpublished writings are consulted as well. To his credit, Massa uses travel accounts, international correspondence and newspaper to recount how the world viewed Machado then. Massa first portrays a youthful, vigorous, and politically interested Machado de Assis, who is eager to make his mark. Yet, at the end of the book, all this enthusiasm gets hampered by a profound disillusionment with Brazilian society and politicians. Unfortunately, Massa simply does not have a clear foundation to his argument that “por volta de 1870, Machado de Assis, num momento particular de sua existência, atravessou uma crise de moralismo” (616). The critic views *crônicas* as a less significant genre and Machado’s political

involvement as ephemeral; it had come and it had gone. Yet, we will show how this political interest did not die in the 1860s. Where Massa leaves off – the 1870s – is precisely where we pick up our own thread of Machado’s journalistic writings.

Along the lines of Massa, but mostly covering a mature Machado de Assis, Raymundo Faoro writes what has become a standard text on the author in 1974. Depicting Machado as very politically interested and even involved, Faoro studies his novels, short-stories, and *crônicas*, and concludes: “forte é a presença em sua obra dos partidos políticos – as marcas polêmicas se fazem sensíveis pela ironia ou pela mofa encoberta. Com ar de zombaria diz as coisas sérias, sem a cor viva ou vermelha das reivindicações” (67). The distinction to be made between Faoro’s *Machado de Assis: a pirâmide e o trapézio* and other works on the topic is the vast background information on the political situation in Brazil at the time Machado was writing. It thus offers a completely new perspective to the master, showing the complexity of his narrative and exposing all its layers. Faoro often refers to Machado as *o cronista* as opposed to labeling him novelist or great master. As he points out, “o jornalismo político tem um grande papel na ficção de Machado de Assis” (72). Machado wrote for newspapers for most of his adult life, and Faoro may be the first to highlight the fact adequately. Another outstanding contribution from Faoro’s work was underlining Machado’s ability to write about people from all social classes. The master could realistically and hence successfully narrate the life of a baroness as well as the ambitions of a *mineiro* from humble beginnings.¹

Three years after Faoro’s insightful publication, Roberto Schwarz helped spark the new trend in Machadian scholarship. The latter writes on the clash of European liberal ideology and institutional conservatism in Brazil, and its influence on Machado as a writer and as a person.

¹ The baroness portrayal was based on the actual baronesa dos Santos; Rubião is the main fictional character in his 1891 masterpiece, *Quincas Borba*.

Therefore, Schwarz goes a step further and actually analyzes the political tensions present in Machado's work. In his 1977 book, *Ao vencedor as batatas*, the critic dedicates a chapter to the importance of paternalism in Brazil and its presence in the Machado's early novels. Schwarz tends to follow the traditional division of Machado's criticism into two phases: the young and political Machadinho, followed by the mature and wise Machado de Assis. The young Machado "havia adotado idéias liberais e assimilara a retórica do progresso e da igualdade" (63). Whereas the mature Machado, after being deeply disillusioned with *realismo*, "já agora só faltava a desilusão da desilusão: desiludir-se também do conservantismo paternalista" (65). In general, Schwarz had mostly positive contributions in reshaping the image of Machado and his work. Looking at his political statements in early novels, the critic shows a *carioca* writer concerned with social mobility and equality.

Another recognized work on the great master is *Machado de Assis: O enigma do olhar* by Alfredo Bosi. Written in 1999, the book is born out of Bosi's "insatisfação cognitiva e desconforto moral" with critical studies up to that point (10). It centers on Machado's novels and short-stories, and aims at understanding the Machadian perspective through the eyes of the narrator. Bosi expresses great interest in the way Machado addressed social classes in his writings. In Machado's works "a situação matriz é sempre o desequilíbrio social, o desnível de classe ou de estrato, que só o patrimônio ou o matrimônio poderá compensar" (76). Bosi offers a thorough study of the multilayered and complex Brazilian society painted in Machado's narratives, where the moral and social status of the individual always mattered. However, the *crônicas* are not represented. Had Bosi made use of Machado's journalistic contributions, his conclusions could have led to unifying his work into a single *oeuvre*, and it could also have

reflected more of the writer's political concerns. The book, however, complements both Faoro and Schwarz for having examined the great master's interest in social classes and politics.

Richard Graham's 1999 *Machado de Assis: Reflections on a Brazilian Master Writer* includes a relevant article on *crônicas* by Sidney Chalhoub. The essay points toward Machado's intentions in writing and his paternalistic view of society. Primary sources include Machado's masterpieces and other articles by the famous author. Chalhoub studies primary sources by Machado and other secondary sources with a specific goal in mind: to prove how Machado de Assis believed that "whenever they act as agents of their own history, subordinates are said to cheat their masters" (83). The essay shows Machado's view of the possibility of using the rules against the rulers, and offers a more socially conscious picture of the master by defending the need for a more political reading of his masterpieces.

In a 2005 study on the genre of political *crônica*, Sidney Chalhoub's article "A arte de alinhar histórias" addresses precisely what Bosi omitted: Machado's newspaper publications. The *crônicas machadianas* tackled by Chalhoub are, for the most part, the hardest to interpret and understand. He finds ways of getting closer to the meaning behind these journalistic publications, mainly through the analysis of pseudonyms and the writing traits of each. His sources include John Gledson's work on Machado, as well as that of Roberto Schwarz and Raimundo Magalhães Júnior. While the critic overlooks lighter themes present in *crônicas*, Chalhoub makes the point that Machado deals with "temas da corrupção e das tensões entre governo central e provincial" (79). Yet, solely by presenting such political *crônicas*, the author possibly misleads readers into believing that Machado wrote only in a critical fashion. In fact, many of his *crônicas* were light-hearted and frivolous, often proud and complimentary to the Rio de Janeiro he knew. In other words, Chalhoub's selection exaggerates Machado's political

involvement and also presents a less *carioca* Machado. This notwithstanding, the critic verbs the pseudonyms used by the author, and the characteristics associated with them, thus offering a great contribution to the study of Machado as a *cronista*.

In the second part of *Histórias em cousas miúdas* there is another study of Machado's *crônicas* by Marco Cícero Cavallini, entitled "Monumento e Política: Os 'Comentário da Semana' de Machado de Assis". As Cavallini states, his goal is to describe "a experiência de Machado de Assis na imprensa política através das crônicas," focusing on the 1860s (300). The article contests the view of young Machado as politically disinterested, as previously posed by Jean-Michel Massa. His analysis is based on earlier secondary publications, including the works of Gledson, Massa, Nabuco, and Magalhães Júnior. Primary sources other than Machado's early *crônicas* include pamphlets and some correspondence. Most quotes stem from *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, *Jornal do Comércio*, and *Actualidade*. Despite Cavallini's exclusive focus on Machado's political writings and *crônicas*, the article offers a different side of Machado's youth, giving a more political tone to his early works. The critic shows that besides being interested in politics, Machado was also interested in the way politics would be viewed in the future by historians and critics. In this thesis we tackle the same subject, *crônicas* and politics, yet we plan to continue his study into the following decade, the 1870s.

Most recently, an enlightening article by Dain Borges focuses on Machado's political concerns. "The Relevance of Machado de Assis" aims at showcasing the rebirth of Machado in the Brazilian intellectual arena as well as the new wave of recognition for the great master's work. On Machado and politics, Borges quotes thoughts extracted from the biographical works of Faoro, Chalhoub, Schwarz, Gledson, and Caldwell. Borges assigns a more active stance to the author with regards to political matters. Even when he seemed disinterested, the author was

actually purposefully acting that way. As stated in the article: “Machado deliberately hid most of his political opinion,” knowing how dangerous it could be to his career (236). Reflecting Schwarz’s view, Borges believes Machado was aware of the hierarchical construction of nineteenth-century Brazilian society and the central role patronage played in this setting. Furthermore, Borges traces the changes in Machado’s imagery as a public figure, from timid and sickly man to the great master of Brazilian literature. In 1890s, as Romero suggested, Machado was criticized for not defending abolitionism and being too distant from the political and social realities of Brazil. Nowadays, according to Borges, Machado is celebrated as a clever and thoughtful critic of slavery, who used his sarcasm to express his thoughts to those that could follow him there. Even though Borges is successful in explaining the newfound relevance of Machado, more focus on his newspaper contributions would have better supported his view of a more politically inclined and concerned Machado de Assis.

Although it is difficult to generalize, Romero focuses more on literary aspects, Lúcia Miguel Pereira on psychology, and Broca attempts at balancing both. Later studies by Bosi, Faoro, Schwarz among others are more theoretical, illustrating new trends of literary criticism. What emerges from this picture is the general lack of in depth study of *crônicas*. On the one hand, literary critics such as Pujol attempted to analyze the genre, but they did so only in a superficial manner. On the other hand, historians have placed a greater focus on *crônicas políticas*, yet they omit Machado’s ‘literary’ facet and the connection between them.

As stated in the introduction, Massa and Cavallini focus on *crônicas machadianas* from the 1860s while Gledson and Betella study those from the 1880s and 1890s. Yet here we have researched a period generally overlooked by previous scholars, even by those working on his

youth.² In the chapters to come, we will explore his 1870s newspaper chronicles, measuring Machado de Assis' view of political events, while appreciating the sophistication and political acumen that often lie below the surface of his seemingly ephemeral observations of daily life.

² In *Por um novo Machado de Assis* (2006), Gledson mentions having worked on the *crônicas* published in 1877 and 1878 with Brazilian scholar Lúcia Granja. However, the study was never published due to differing interpretations; Gledson confesses that “a idéia de editá-las todas em poucos anos, em equipe, infelizmente não deu certo devido a divergências” (20).

CHAPTER 3
CRÔNICAS 1871–1878: MACHADO’S TRAINING GROUND FOR IRONY

In this chapter we will examine Machado de Assis’ *crônicas* published beginning in 1871, the year of the passing of the Law of the Free Womb– and ending in 1878. Here we explore Machado’s development of a political voice and interests in the issues of slavery and justice. Although written under a pseudonym, his newspaper columns generally refute the image of an apolitical and apathetic Machado put forth by his harsher literary critics throughout the years, as we have shown on the previous chapter.

Machado’s superb writing talent did not flourish overnight. As Cristiane Costa has said it best in her article on young Machado, the apprentice of journalism, he could ascend socially and culturally “only by entering the great halls of literature through the service entrance of journalism” (296). In other words, Machado has become one, if not the most respected novelist in Brazil; yet it must not be forgotten that it all started in the periodicals, and his commentary on the daily lives of *cariocas*. This same analysis would one day aid him in constructing the famous and infamous characters of his later masterpieces.¹

Politics were without a doubt the most frequent topic Machado de Assis discussed in his weekly, biweekly, and monthly columns of *crônicas*. Whether addressing local, national or international affairs – the first being the most common – Machado always felt the need to write about politics. Despite the use of the sarcastic comments and an ironic undertone that would later become his trademark, Machado de Assis always makes his way to the topic of politics present in almost every *crônica* he wrote during this period. My goal is to give a context to these events and show how Machado develops his critiques.

¹ Machado’s acclaimed novels, which some scholars use in diving his work into two phases as we will see later, include: *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), *Quincas Borba* (1891), *Dom Casmurro* (1899), and, in the year of his death, *Memorial de Aires* (1908).

Under the *crônicas* in *Badaladas*, and using the pseudonym Dr. Semana, the *cronista* explores politics, slavery, gender inequality, and nationalism, among other politically-charged themes. Under this pseudonym, Machado frequently analyzes Brazil's political scene, either pointing his finger at specific politicians and mocking political rhetoric, or criticizing the electoral process and political debates.

It should be noted that Machado writes not under any pseudonym but specifically, Dr. Semana, a well-to-do man who is relatively unaware of his own contradictions and prejudices, much like his readers. It is important not to confuse Dr. Semana with Machado de Assis, who, although a supporter of the monarchy, still tirelessly pointed out the contradictions of his own society.² Although Gledson asserts that Machado “pertencia a uma tradição liberal monárquica” (*A Semana* 16), the writer's political inclinations did not stop him from criticizing all politicians, liberal and republican alike. His *crônicas* were often based on mocking politicians; it was what Machado did best and seem to enjoy doing most.

Dr. Semana is a persona or mask through whom Machado makes his point. By giving Semana the title of “doctor” he succeeds in conveying the idea through his persona, that Machado is there to “cure” or at least to diagnose society's ills. The choice of name may also symbolize the idea of nobility and education in Brazil, where in order to obtain respect a man would need to have some form of higher education attesting to his status and wisdom.

Slavery

Based on the 1870s *crônicas*, it becomes clear that Machado takes a highly critical stance on slavery, condemning it at every turn, defending the position of the subaltern slave every

² Although a strong liberal in his early days as a *cronista*, Machado slowly shifted toward a more neutral political stance. By doing so, he would not suffer political pressures to write a certain way and also be free to criticize whomever he pleased. As Jeffrey Needell states in *A Tropical 'Belle Époque'*, he became a “liberal monarchist” who “expressed opinions with an increased reserve” (193).

chance he gets. A careful reading of each *crônica* reveals how he moves from portrayals of individual domestic slaves, inheritance rights to legislation such as the Law of the Free Womb and the Lei dos Sexagenários, covering both individual cases to those involving political legislation. While Gabriela Betella claims in her study that Machado is critical only in his later phase, his voice is very sharp from the beginning regarding the treatment and social position of slaves although perhaps not as subtle as some of his later *crônicas*. As we shall see, his clever depiction of a master freeing an elderly slave is comparable to his famous May 19th 1888 *crônica* about another slave owner who prides himself on freeing a slave published in 1876, before the official declaration of Abolition.

In a *crônica* dated October 22, 1871, via the persona of Dr. Semana, Machado begins by focusing on politics in France,³ yet seems to be cautioning the reader not to involve oneself mindlessly in the affairs of that country.⁴ He quickly turns events to the story of a hapless monkey in Rio de Janeiro. Clearly, Machado thought that readers, while “aping” everything French, should not ignore important issues at home.

As Dr. Semana tells an anecdote involving an immoral lawyer who has his good friend the priest over as a guest in his house, one quickly perceives parallels with slavery. The lawyer brags to his friend about his talented “female monkey” who serves him: “Eu tenho uma macaca admirável a qual me serve como um criado, lava os copos, põe a mesa, abre-me a porta” (14).

The lawyer, as a member of the urban upper-middle class would clearly have domestic slaves

³ After the fall of Napoleon III in 1870, France was in a period of distress and chaos. In his praised book *Quincas Borba*, Machado de Assis draws on the French mishap when creating Rubião, the protagonist. As Haberly states in the introduction of the version translated by Gregory Rabassa, “Machado carefully sets up a series of interlocking emblems of imperial pretension. The mad Rubião believes he is Napoleon III”, who was “surely a second-rate imitation of his glorious uncle, a real Emperor.” (xvii) Rubião is a displaced character not made to withstand the pressure of conforming and transforming into a member of the elite. He is then a reflection of Brazil, who is not ready to, nor ever will be, to transform into a European nation. In *Quincas Borba* by Machado de Assis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴ All the *crônicas* by Machado de Assis cited in this chapter were extracted from *Chronicas*, vol. 3.

working inside his house. Here Machado criticizes the elite for being slave owners, and then by adding the priest, he indicates the Church's support of the institution. He sardonically says "Trapaceia como puderes, dá a tua facadazinha, e fica certo de que escaparás da morte eterna mediante uma oração á Virgem – é a receita mais barata que se conhece..." (14). Any sin committed by the slave owner may be automatically forgiven. Machado clearly did not approve of the practices held by the urban elite at the time.

In a final irony, Machado de Assis makes his point by having the lawyer get upset with the monkey because she will not obey. After the "monkey" hides and refuses to come out of a vase, the priest gets furious and shouts: "Besta infernal, sai para fora, e dá parte de Deus, te mando, que declares quem és – Respondeu a macaca que era o demônio" (15). Finally the monkey confesses that it has been waiting for the priest to stop praying in order to fulfill its divine mission, namely, to take the priest to hell. This relatively early *crônica* reflects Machado's views on a controversial subject by telling a fantastic tale of a talking monkey, who, as it turns out, is God's own messenger sent to censure the injustice of slavery and those who condone it.

In a *crônica* dating October 20, 1872, Machado uses the voice of Dr. Semana to demonstrate how he supposedly educates his *moleque*, or young male slave, an "interessante companheiro de doze anos" (33). Curious about elections and politicians, the *moleque* states that "ser deputado é então uma coisa muito superfina" (33). The narrator goes on to agree, adding that elections are like magic, "avultam em ambas as visualidades e tramoias" (34). Therefore, the master's explanation to his "charge" is based less on ideology and more on the "magic tricks" created by those in power. Especially through the use of the last adjective, *tramoias*, the author paints politicians as devious and selfish members of society. This is only an introduction to Machado's distaste for the electoral process. Through the years, as we shall see, he continues to

poke fun at and highlight the failings of the corrupt electoral process, in which slaves and women have no voice.

As Machado's confidence grows as a *cronista*, he tackles issues of slavery and political topics in his *crônicas*. Some of his most clear and outspoken comments come from his December 29, 1872 column in which Dr. Semana refers to a slave, Celestina, his cook, who happens to know more about politics and science than her own master. He comments, "A minha cozinheira Celestina... atreveu-se há dias a explicar a trovoada ao meu moleque" (47), as if such knowledge were beyond her reach. In other words, because she can explain thunder, the master believes she may also be able to explain another difficult phenomenon: politics. Dr. Semana concludes: "Ora, se a cozinheira Celestina podia assim explicar a trovoada e comentar a natureza, entendi que alguma coisa podia ella dizer igualmente de política" (47). This is an odd scenario for the time, with one slave teaching another about science and politics, which, Dr. Semana believed, warranted a natural reaction of surprise or disbelief, so he asks readers not to "torcer o nariz" and then explains: "porque da cozinha pode nascer uma boa idéia" (48), referring to the possibility of slaves having more knowledge than their owner, since those at the lower ranks of society have to be attuned to society's workings and contradictions than those of higher rank.

In this light, the cook, immediately points out the pretenses of her master to which those involved with the process are blind. In referring to her master's voting habits she states: "que faz meu amo na eleição? Vota num homem porque tem o nome comprido, e esse vota n'outro porque tem o pescoço curto. Ora, meu amo, que tem as costas largas, fica como se não tivesse voto..." (49). Here the slave woman recognizes the automatic advantage of those politicians with long names and elite lineage and that her master, like many, votes for the wrong reasons.

Furthermore, by referring to the slave owner as having “costas largas” implies that he, like most voters, is unable to see corruption and unfairness caused by voting such candidates into office in the first place.⁵

Slaves and Inheritance

Machado de Assis tackles the issue of inheritances left to women and slaves in wills. On November 15, 1876, he describes how a white middle-class citizen, Santos Almeida left a controversial will with \$300 mil-réis⁶ each for “quatro mulheres brancas das mais mundanas” (143–144), or prostitutes, which sparked quite a bit of interest. However, his will draws even more attention by leaving a sum of \$500 mil-réis to his slave, José da Silveira. Also known as “Geitoso,” the master states in the will that his slave was the one who deserved the largest single sum. Machado comments on the fact that the general public seems to disapprove of the gift to his slave while accepting the much more bizarre inheritance left to prostitutes.

Along similar lines, on August 1, 1876, Machado’s *crônica* praises an Italian immigrant who died, leaving large sums of money for his slaves. Luiz Sacchi had a very “creative” burial, according to Machado, wanting others to celebrate his death and not to mourn for him. Instead of wasting money on an expensive casket and tomb, Sacchi was deemed to be quite original: “dividiu a fortuna entre os escravos, deixou o resto dos parentes, embrulhou-se na rede e foi dormir no cemitério” (96). The shocking part of this funeral, it is later stated, is not being buried in a net, but the large sum of money left for the slaves. Yet, looking at the content of this *crônica* more critically, it becomes clear Machado is also portraying a slaveowner who

⁵ The term “costas largas” can also refer to a strong slave, or even be representative of a slave who has been whipped too many times yet refuses to bow down.

⁶ Delso Renault in *O dia a dia no Rio de Janeiro segundo os jornais* (Brasília: Civilização Brasileira, 1982) states that an old slave was bought for \$200, as well as that to rent a slave one would pay from \$5 to \$6 per month. It was then quite a large sum to be given to any person, especially a poor black man.

sympathized with his slaves to the point of wanting to be buried as one. On funeral rites in nineteenth-century Brazil, João José Reis points out that “few could afford to be buried in coffins, which were generally used merely to transport bodies” (133). Reis further investigates funeral ceremonies, studying the case of a black woman from Mozambique and the supposed son of an African king. When describing the first circumstance, the historian describes how “the funeral was attended exclusively by women, with the exception of two men who carried the body in a hammock” (145). On the burial of the African prince, Reis states how the corpse “was carried in a hammock covered with a funeral cloth” (146). Therefore, it is safe to assume that most of the individuals buried in a hammock were either poor whites, not the case of Sacchi, or former slaves who held a certain status. Machado may just be trying to illustrate the universality of death, and how passing judgment on a person sympathetic to slaves no longer matters to the deceased.

Legislative Policies regarding Slavery

One of the most outspoken and politically charged *crônicas* by Machado is dated September 15, 1876, when he uses his own voice boldly and unapologetically to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Law of the Free Womb: “de interesse geral é o fundo da emancipação pelo qual se acham libertos em alguns municípios 230 escravos” (129). But his commemoration is short lived in that he soon notes that it is in “só em alguns municípios!” (129). Yet the author already foresees abolition and voices his hopes, declaring “esperemos que o número será grande quando a libertação estiver feita em todo o Império” (129). This *crônica* clearly demarcates a new and more direct phase master who adds:

A lei de 18 de setembro fez agora cinco anos. Deus lhe dê vida e saúde! Esta lei foi um grande passo na nossa vida. Se tivesse vindo uns trinta anos antes, estávamos em outras condições. Mas a 30 anos, não veio a lei, mas vinham escravos, por contrabando, e vendiam-se às escancaras no Valongo. Além da venda, havia o calabouço. (129)

Despite his hopes for the future, Machado felt the need to be wary. He often hoped for the better, but as he points out, the country did not follow the liberal track. As Betella notes, as did Roberto Schwarz before her, Machado's 1878 novel *Iaiá Garcia* does not end with the triumph of the lower-class but deserving female character: "Machado não escreveu este livro e o país não foi nessa direção. Daí a insistência de representar o fracasso—ou o "sucesso"—do projeto social brasileiro" (129). He knows that one must expect the worst and fight long and hard to change long held traditions and institutions.

The author remains skeptical finding a certain man among his acquaintances resists change. The upset man confesses:

Hoje os escravos estão altanados, costuma ele dizer. Se a gente dá uma sova num, há logo quem intervenha e até chame a polícia. Bons tempos os que lá vão! Eu ainda me lembro quando a gente via passar um preto escorrendo em sangue e dizia: 'Anda, diabo, não estás assim pelo que eu fiz!' Hoje... (129)

Machado mocks the man's longing for the good old days when he mistreated slaves and kept his own slaves in line. Referring to him as a "poor man" (129), Machado pities the slave owner's ignorance and resistance to change. From this point forward, more courageous than before, Machado's comments and newspaper publications tend to be more openly polemical, less subtle, since he no longer bothers to cover up his stance on slavery.

In his June 15, 1877 *crônica*, Machado continues to exercise his criticism of society in a *crônica* purportedly celebrating a slave owner who freed his elderly slave, without receiving any compensation. Here Machado foresees the Saraiva-Cotegipe Law, or the "Lei dos Sexagenários," which would take effect in 1885, giving freedom to slaves over 60 years old. Describing the situation, Machado states that the man had "uma escrava de 65 anos, que já lhe havia dado a ganhar sete ou oito vezes o custo. Fez anos e lembrou-se de libertar a escrava... de graça. De graça!" (230). The absurd notion that this was seen a good deed, after the slave had

given him a lifetime of servitude, obviously bothers the author. Yet, he seems wary that some of his readers would agree with him instead of noticing the sarcasm in his comments. Writing in an intriguingly ambiguous way, Machado portrays himself as the no-nonsense kind of slave owner still quite common at the time. This is exactly the point of view of a later *crônica* the famous May 19, 1888, in which Machado portrays another do-gooder, a man who “frees” his slave before the official declaration of slavery, offering him a pittance for his services, while punishing him more than before as he is now a “paid” worker.⁷

In the same *crônica*, Machado pushes the irony still farther by using biblical verses as if to “justify” the good deed. He then describes the master’s true agenda to portray himself as a true gentleman, an enlightened modern soul, a civilized human being. By using the Christian idea that in acts of charity the right hand should not know what the left hand is doing, Machado describes how the man’s left hand “travou da pena, molhou-se no tinteiro e escreveu uma notícia singela para os jornais, indicando o fato, o nome da preta, o seu nome, o motivo do benefício”(230). It is clear that the slave is too old to work, but the master gets credit for her freedom, and it is not a real sacrifice on the master’s part.⁸ To the master’s dismay, this is exactly what the newspaper editors thought about the story, and in the end, he laments it was not published. It could also be Machado’s stab at editorial censorship and control of the press, which we will address on Chapter 4.

The following two sections center on local, national and international political affairs.

Roberto Schwarz dedicates an entire chapter to Machado’s subtle parody of “misplaced ideas”

⁷ Although Betella claims that this type of irony is present only in Machado’s later *crônicas* (101-114), here we see a much earlier example, in the same tone.

⁸ If a slave was too old or sick to work, it would be to the owners benefit to free the slave so as not to have to feed him/her any longer. Slaves tended to multiple chores, but if the cost of feeding a slave exceeded the benefits, the slave owner would rid himself of the slave.

by which Brazil thought of itself as a liberal democracy, and its elites justified their policies as if it were not a peripheral country whose economy was dependent and slave-based (*Misplaced Ideas* 19). Thus Machado comes back to the issue of Brazilians losing sight of local happenings and accounts for the wider themes hindering nation building. Topics in his *crônicas* then range from illiteracy and political corruption, while suggesting the need for electoral reform and a broader vision of the nation. Beginning with international affairs, we will then discuss Machado's views of national issues, corruption, and his own increasing disillusionment as a newspaper columnist.

International Issues

Machado devotes considerable space in his column to international affairs, mostly to comment on their relevance or lack thereof to Brazilian reality. The latter is reflected in the tone of his October 27, 1872 *crônica*, in which Machado criticizes the exhaustive coverage given to Rome by the rival paper *O Jornal do Comércio*. At the time, Italy was going through what Susan Ashley called "Disappointed Hopes" (200). The historian believes the instability of both main political parties, *Destra* and *Sinistra*, took over center stage and the masses were forgotten. Ashley mentions how, "in 1870 half the citizens in provincial capitals, and close to three-quarters in all other communes, were illiterate" (22). Yet the new Italy was about to be united, and despite the chaos, Rome and its other urban centers were making a move toward unifying its parts and, most importantly, searching for a national identity.

In response, Machado de Assis calls for the discussion of national issues, declaring: "tanto me romanizaram que eu penso em vestir a toga quando evergo a casaca!"(41). Because of changes taking place in Italy, Machado confesses his own head is spinning, nevermind his readers: "Não me admirará, pois, se o leitor também andar atarantado com estas transformações. A culpa não é minha nem dele, é da política" (41). Furthermore, Machado insists that "há de

haver diferença entre eles e nós” (42), indicating Machado’s increased frustration with the constant comparisons made between Brazil and other nations. On the one hand, it reveals that Machado was aware that Brazil was at the periphery of world affairs, and also shows he believes in a “we”, i.e., Brazil as a nation. It is precisely in this decade that Machado publishes his article “Instinto de nacionalidade,” in which he tackles the beginnings of a national literature. Written in March 4th, 1873, Machado states: “quem examina a atual literatura brasileira reconhece-lhe logo, como primeiro traço, certo instinto de nacionalidade.” (*Obra Completa* vol. 3, 801). Consequently, he believed that Brazilian literature would flourish, and defended the idea of it having a “certíssimo futuro” (809). Brazil was, for Machado, in the process of defining its own national culture.

This international focus recurs later in August of 1876, when Machado appears to criticize the new constitution in Turkey. Through the voice of Dr. Semana, he criticizes the new religious tolerance for Christians living in that country, stating: “alegre-se quem quiser; eu fico triste.” Machado is mocking political hardliners, via Dr. Semana who adamantly insists that a country should stick with one point-of-view, standing by it come what may. To offer greater detail on the historical background of Turkey in 1876, we shall quickly visit the events that made it prominent enough to be mentioned by Machado.

After France had been defeated by the Prussian Empire in the war of 1870–1871 and the balance of power in Europe had been altered, famine and floods gave way to disastrous famine over parts of Turkey. Thus, “the crisis that developed in the 1870s was economic as much as it was (or became) political” (Zurcher, 71–72), and the Ottoman Empire was in great danger of crumbling to pieces. However, these events would only add to the chaos Turkey was about to endure.

In 1876, the year Machado wrote his *crônica* on the topic, all the misfortunes that nation suffered would culminate in political chaos. First, there was a coup d'état, deposing Sultan Abdulaziz in May. The succeeding ruler, Murat, was also deposed in September of that same year due to alcoholism and numerous nervous breakdowns. Finally, after Hamit, also known as Abdulhamit II came to power, a new constitution was promulgated. This is precisely what Machado exposes in his column. In this new constitution, "all subjects were now granted constitutional rights" (74), and as a consequence of the unstable and weakening leadership, Russia saw an opportunity to strike and declared war on the weakened Ottoman Empire.

With Turkey becoming more lenient with Christianity, Dr. Semana states, "se isto não é o fim do mundo, é o penúltimo capítulo" (95). Here Machado can be understood to mock the rhetoric of those conservatives who, in Brazil, act as if political reforms or the end of slavery are equivalent to end of the world; perhaps the end of their world. Thus, while ostensibly commenting on international politics, Machado brings the issues closer to home, again beginning to wield that double-edged sword that is normally associated with his so called *segunda fase*.

This comparative point of view holds true when Machado reflects on the political process in other nations. In his *crônica* dated April 15, 1877, Machado advocates publishing political debates immediately so that the general public can follow the arguments. He defends the intelligence of the average Brazilian, stating that every citizen has the right to know about policy issues:

Tratando-se agora da publicação dos debates, lembrarei ao parlamento que o uso, não só na Inglaterra ou França, mas em todos os países parlamentares, é que se publiquem os discursos todos no dia seguinte. Com isso ganha o público, que acompanha de perto os debates, e os próprios oradores, que têm mais certeza de serem lidos. (209)

In Brazil, the political system was extremely dependent on the emperor as well as on the political party that controlled the cabinet, thus allowing for a rather closed political system.⁹ While comparing the Brazilian parliament to those of European nations, Machado may have wanted to highlight the unfairness and abuses of having a closed political system in Brazil. The writer seems to be concerned about the Brazilian public at large and their ignorance toward what political debates are taking place in the Brazilian Congress.

National Politics and Policies

Naturally, an open political system, such as the one mentioned above, depends on a literate electorate. On August 15th, 1876, Machado brings up the controversial and much avoided topic of widespread illiteracy. According to the Imperial census of that year, 70% of Brazilian men voted, and, as Machado points out this is the same percentage represents the number of illiterates in Brazil, 70%. Since only a small percentage of the country was eligible to vote, this number is most likely not impressive.¹⁰ Machado remarks how “as instituições existem, mas por e para 30% dos cidadãos” (103). 70% of the 30% of the people who are literate and eligible to vote, do not represent such a high number after all. The author, then, uses the example of illiteracy to criticize society as a whole. Education is an institution for the privileged, as are most others, while the poor and those in bondage are left behind. In this example, we see that Machado never ceased to remark on the minimal attention given to the lower classes and the lack of criticism regarding the corruption of those on top.

⁹ Richard Graham, “1859-1870” in Bethell’s *Brazil: Empire and Republic 1822-1930*, describes the system as having a “façade of liberal measures protecting the rights of political opponents, maintaining the freedom of the press and attempting to ensure the honest counting of the votes” (139).

¹⁰ Nancy Stepan points out that even 25 years after Machado wrote this *crônica*, “Brazil entered the twentieth century formally a liberal republic, was governed informally by a small largely white elite and in which less than 2% of the population voted in national elections; a society in which the majority of people were black or mulatto and could not read or write; in which, though there was a technical separation of church and state, Catholicism had considerable cultural influence; and in which democratic liberalism was seen by many intellectuals as irrelevant or harmful to Brazil’s future.” *The Hour of Eugenics: Gender, Race and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 37.

In conjunction with the government's assertion of the high percentage of participation in elections, Machado proposes another radical idea: the enfranchisement of women. Machado de Assis opens up the year of 1877, arguing for women's right to vote in Brazil, suggesting that voting laws be changed: "venha, venha o voto feminino" (200). This is indeed quite a thought, since women did not gain the right to vote in Brazil until 1928,¹¹ yet Machado is fond of pointing out society's contradictions—exaltation of women's high moral character coupled with their lack of power to determine elections.

In an earlier *crônica* dating October 20, 1872, Machado addresses a nearly invisible double standard, i.e., the distinct treatment men and women receive at their funerals, marked by different numbers of rings by the church bell. "Um defunto é um defunto" (36), the author muses, suggesting there should be no distinction between them since we are all one and the same, especially after death. As Machado states: "Não há necessidade, penso eu, de indicar aos fregueses da paróquia o sexo do cristão que cessou de viver" (36). Here he is commenting on the differences in treatment afforded men and women, pointing out society's hidden contradictions and social distinctions that are too often taken for granted.¹²

On the national scene, Machado's sharp eye focuses on other societal contradictions, the differences between North and South, and the symbolic importance of celebrating national independence. In 1876, Machado notes how a respected historian decided to challenge the authenticity of "o grito do Ipiranga," advocating a rather banal and more realistic scenario for

¹¹ For further information of the topic, consult June Hahner's article "Feminism, Women's Rights, and the Suffrage Movement in Brazil, 1850-1932," *LARR* 15, no. 1 (1980): 65- 111. Here, Hahner address the historical development of women's rights activities in Brazil from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1930s and the achievement of women's suffrage.

¹² Machado writes a story in 1884, "As Academias de Sião", in which he has the male protagonist trade bodies with a female concubine for six months. Thus, gender issues are also of interest to Machado. Bosi goes so far as to surmise that Machado, like his early female protagonists of his first phase, is finding the key into the white, male-dominated world. See Alfredo Bosi, "A mascara e a fenda" in *Machado de Assis: enigma do olhar*.

Brazilian independence. The author confesses: “Minha opinião é que a lenda é melhor do que a história autêntica. A lenda resumia todo o fator da independência nacional, ao passo que a versão exata o reduz a uma cousa vaga e anônima” (116–117). Advocating the myth, Machado de Assis criticizes the historian who claims “o grito” to be false. Here, the author shows the importance of myths and legends to the formation of a sense of nationhood.

During the same year, 1876, he turns to the problems of elections and governance of such a large country. He announces: “agora, o que é ainda mais grave que tudo é a eleição, que a esta hora se começa a manipular em todo este vasto Império” (127). Since elections were synonymous with manipulation and dishonesty, Machado lamented the electoral process. Being such a vast country, Brazil always pose difficulties to being ruled by a central government, to having the law enforced and the people heard. The outcome is the election of local *coronéis* through violence and corruption.

To understand better the local political situation in distinct regions of the country, we shall refer to Nunes Leal’s *Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto*. Therein, Leal combines the three aspects here involved, the landowner, the worker, and the vote. Leal describes the power struggles of the countryside: “o *coronelismo* é sobretudo um compromisso, uma troca de proveitos entre o poder público, progressivamente fortalecido, e a decadente influência social dos chefes locais, notadamente, dos senhores de terra” (270). After thoroughly defining the term, the author, trained as a lawyer, proceeds to focus on the colonial period, where “a representação era limitada ao governo do município, e na estrutura social, muito simples, da época dominava incontestavelmente a nobreza rural sobre a massa informe dos escravos e agregados.” Furthermore, Leal continues to describe *coronelismo* all the way to the voting urns, the place where “desavenças dos potentados chegaram a derramar sangue nos embates eleitorais” (240).

Therefore, Machado was not exaggerating when he describes the electoral process as a corrupt and often violent event.

In another 1876 *crônica* Machado returns to a growing problem within the electoral process: the manipulation of the voting urns: “O que é verdade é que em vários pontos... a urna foi despejada no rio” (134), portraying it initially as if it were a tragedy. Then, he states ironically: “e bom será que só vão aos rios as urnas com cédulas,” since that way the urns with the votes would then be lost. Machado arrives at a final conclusion that “o pior é se chegamos à perfeição de mandar com as cédulas os mesários” (135), since that way, the election monitors would also be lost down river. Machado shows the whole process of voting to be corrupt, since the *mesários* are most likely in cahoots with the *coronéis*. Thus, the ideal ending, according to the author, would be to discard the corrupt *mesários* along with the votes, thereby putting an end to corruption.

At the end of 1876, Machado focuses on an absurd attempt to hold an election held in the city of Corumbá, Mato Grosso, in Brazil’s central region, where there is only one eligible voter. So, Machado starts to describe that crucial day in this person’s life. His fictitious but realistic account is filled with ironies, and offers a sharp criticism of the whole electoral process. The absurd situation of the man in question is that he is both the election monitor or *mesário* and lone voter.

By 1878, Machado puzzles over national policy, wondering if the cabinet will be dissolved, since he sees grave consequences for the drought-stricken Northeast. Aware of this problem, he comments with some relief that “foi agradável saber que as chuvas já caem no interior do Ceará” (303). Machado sees a clear distinction between that region and the one he resides in the Southeast. He poses the question, “nós temos o recurso de não morrer de fome;

mas eles?” (303). Here, despite his usual jovial tone, Machado inserts a serious note about national and regional differences, about the political maneuverings in Rio and the catastrophes taking place in Ceará.

In an earlier *crônica* Machado also refers to historic events in other states. His October 15, 1876 *crônica* follows the trend by having as its main theme fortieth anniversary of the Guerra Farrroupilha in the southern region of the country.¹³ The fact that the state of Rio Grande do Sul declared itself an independent state in 1836 initiating a long and costly civil war appears to be a theme to ponder, yet Machado cuts himself short, stating, “a revolução rio-grandense foi o facto culminante da quinzena” (130). Although he may imply that it is to be thought about, he never loses perspective by glorifying the past, comparing the revolution to “outros bicos d’obra, incidentes dignos de contemplação” (130), namely current events affecting the everyday life of *cariocas*. Here, while addressing Rio Grande do Sul, Machado could be hinting at the region’s revolutionary tradition and the diminishing importance assigned to its insurrections in the capital, Rio de Janeiro.

Local Politics

Local events affecting the daily lives of *cariocas* are of constant concern to Machado, especially medical issues and epidemics, such as yellow fever. It is not so much because of the developments in medicine and science, but more based on the way the government and other institutions dealt with such problems and crisis. For instance, on the 2nd of March 1873, he exposes the hypocrisy of Franciscans, monks who are supposed to help the sick in their hour of need (67). According to Machado, they are the first ones to call for help, but do not help the

¹³ As described by Bethell, “in September 1836 the *farroupilhas* proclaimed the independence of the province under a republican government” (71). The revolt Machado refers to in his 1876 *crônica*, then, stems from this culture of separation that had taken place in the beginning of the century.

people themselves out of fear of being infected. Franciscans had denied the sick a place to stay in order to save something as sublime as God himself: their own skin. Mocking the cowardice of the monks, Machado's Dr. Semana requests the counsel of his cook, the wise Celestina, and, with the younger boy at her side, she shows no fear of the disease and recommends drinking lemonade to stave off the illness.

Machado's September 15, 1876 *crônica* also addresses a protest about lack of street pavement held by residents of the Laranjeiras neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. Commenting on the nature of the event, he states, "não se pode ter tudo – nome bonito e calçamento; dois proveitos não cabem num saco. Contentem-se os moradores com o que têm, e não peçam mais, que é ambição" (121). Clearly Machado mocks the fact that despite the neighborhood's pretty name, it will not get the sidewalks it deserves. In his study of Rio's neighborhoods, David Cardeman states that "em 1868, a região foi ligada ao Centro pelo serviço de bondes puxados por burros deslizando sobre trilhos, cujos passageiros eram sacrificados até então com o péssimo calçamento das ruas" (144). The historian also describes the flocking of middle-class citizens to the region so as to be closer to the train tracks.

It is worthwhile to note that Machado actually lived in this neighborhood at the time he wrote this *crônica*. As reported in the municipal magazine *Rio Estudos*, "em 7 de dezembro de 1875, Machado é promovido a chefe de secção da Secretaria de Agricultura e se muda para a Rua das Laranjeiras nº. 4, em Laranjeiras" (7). He is then advocating a right he has as a resident of Laranjeiras and as a citizen of Brazil; the right to live in a place with proper infrastructure. Machado's cynical tone stems from the futility he sees in complaining about municipal issues that in all likelihood will not be addressed or changed. Laranjeiras was a better neighborhood to live in than the northern regions of the city, without a doubt.

Being clever and talented, Machado managed to constantly state his more polemical and political opinions in ways that would not affect his journalistic career. Yet, perhaps out of his growing comfort and confidence as a *cronista*, came his more bold and outspoken *crônicas* of 1878. As we will see in the next chapter, the year was marked by crucial political and social changes in Brazil, and Machado's newspaper contributions reflect this fact.

CHAPTER 4
1878: A FAREWELL TO “DR. SEMANA” AND “ELEAZAR”

In the middle of 1878, Machado de Assis offered his last contributions as Dr. Semana, for “Semana Illustrada”, and started publishing his *crônicas* in *O Cruzeiro*’s “Notas Semanaes”. The latter only lasted from June to September of that year. Machado wrote under the pseudonym of “Eleazar”, and presented a more refined and fluid style. The name Eleazar¹ could be said to have derived from the word “azar”, which in Portuguese means “bad luck.” Continuing with his pessimistic view and ironic approach to news and events, Machado de Assis becomes even more involved with the political world around him during this period. As Eleazar, the great master still poked fun at the chaotic electoral system, criticized the government, and commented on the deplorable situation of the Northeast region. Writing for different newspapers under separate editors with distinct restrictions was a peculiar and new experience for Machado as a journalist. It is important to try to understand the particularities of each stint at different periodicals.

The year is also important because it marks the end of an era for Machado. Not as yet unanimously recognized as a celebrated writer – this would only happen after *Memórias Póstumas* (1881) – he may have still be dependent on patrons. With the death of José de Alencar, came his last *crônica* of the 1870s. For the author, “leaving the daily press was akin to placing a bet” (Costa, 568). Although Machado worked as a *funcionário público*, and his income did not solely come from newspapers, he probably would have to live in a financially restricted manner if he abandoned the press, but this could be his way out of the possible limits imposed on his writing by editors. After years and years of censorship and patronage-based publishing, he would be free to speak his mind, at last.

¹ The name Eleazar comes from the Hebrew for he “whom God helps” and refers to the son of Aaron. As quoted on the Bible: “And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood” (Number 18: 1). Therefore, Eleazar was to be the keeper of the faith as his father had been.

Therefore, 1878 was a remarkable year for Machado de Assis and his career. The crucial difference between this new phase and his earlier newspaper contributions would be bolder criticism, coupled with a better sense of his surroundings and responsibility. In truth, Machado is no longer afraid of being more confrontational. While writing more polemical comments, he may have learned about what can and cannot be touched on by a journalist during that time. Most importantly, there is a noticeable change in the light overtone many of his previous *crônicas* had carried along the years. The mature Machado de Assis begins to tempt further censorship by shining light upon certain social and political issues being faced by the nation in the second half of the nineteenth century.

As Dr. Semana became Eleazar, the sometimes trivial comments were replaced by political comments stemming from a need to inform the general public, to inspire them to be familiar with and get involved in the political life of Brazil as well as the lives of Brazilian politicians. His “love affair” with the latter is present in this 1873 commentary on the life of a senator and also exemplifies what was labeled by his critics as “Histórias de políticos.” Bosi said it best: “havia em Machado de Assis um gosto acentuado de contar histórias de políticos. Não são poucas as crônicas em que falou de parlamentares do passado ou seus contemporâneos” (*Brás Cubas em três versões* 53). Machado gracefully managed to comment, mockingly, on politicians, the policies being advocated by them, and the political system in Brazil. Therefore, the first item under discussion will be an older *crônica*, but very much symbolic of his transition to becoming a more openly critical *cronista*; this is just a sample written five years earlier that would become more commonplace as Machado felt more at home in making his criticism toward Brazilian politics and politicians.

Politics, Rhetoric, and Metafiction in the *Crônica*

Machado makes use of his considerable rhetorical skill to parry with political blowhards and the corruption of politicians. We begin to see Machado move from word play to more brutal metaphors of swordplay and violence as he comments on political struggles, suggesting a growing disillusionment with the political scene. He also begins to question his own role as a *cronista* or commentator on political events in the late 1870s, as the newspaper relegates him to commenting on events less frequently in shorter columns.

On March 2, 1873, Machado openly attacks Senator Jobim. Assuming the role of Montesquieu, he writes from beyond the grave, as he would one day do in *Memórias Póstuma de Brás Cubas* (1881), in order to criticize a speech the politician had given shortly before. Ironically, we have found that the French philosopher was also fond of anonymity as critic D'Ambert states in a preface to the complete works of the French thinker: "Notwithstanding the success of this work, M. de Montesquieu did not openly declare himself the author of it" (vi–vii). Machado de Assis could have sympathized with the man because, he too, "perhaps thought that by this means he would more easily escape the literary satire, which spares anonymous writings the more willingly, because it is always the person, and not the work, which is the aim of its darts" (vi–vii). Emphasizing the common ground with his French counterpart, Machado also pretends to be Montesquieu for the Frenchman became known for bringing justice to the forefront of political system by his famous articulation of the theory of separation of powers.

Assuming the voice of Montesquieu, Machado first criticizes the senator's not quoting him properly, then thanks him for broadcasting his beliefs, but finally censures him for not attributing those words to the philosopher: "S. Excia. honra-me muito fazendo suas as minhas palavras, mas era justo citar o meu nome, e bem assim transcrever-me fielmente" (*Chronicas* 3:54). Machado, through his impersonation of Montesquieu, continues to mock the senator

saying “seja como for, não se pode negar o mérito do discurso” (55). Here Machado criticizes the senator because although convincing, he uses the age-old speech poorly. In the end, politicians can say what they please to gain votes or win an argument.

On the topic of corruption and politics, Machado continues to provoke those in power in the same *crônica*. In a more subtle tone, while writing about clothes and fashion, the author takes another shot at politicians. He highlights their fickleness in party affiliation and their general unreliability. He opens with remarks about the popularity of wearing hats. He mysteriously confesses never having seen a single crime involving hats: “não constava na política um só crime do chapéu” (64), and later it becomes clear that “chapéu” and “casaca” are sartorial codewords to talk about the political process.

In Brazilian Portuguese, especially when referring to politicians, *vira a casaca*, means switching sides, changing political stance just like to a turncoat in English. Machado discloses his perception of government by taking advantage of this popular expression to criticize political opportunism. Then he enigmatically remarks that “neutralidade na política era tal que os homens viravam a casaca, mas não consta nunca que mudassem o chapéu” (65). Thus, Machado’s parting shot is that the hat, or ideas, always remains in the same place in contrast to the ever-changing coat, or political affiliation.

In contrast with this light and amusing wordplay, Machado’s rhetoric becomes exceedingly darker on one occasion. On December 1, 1877, Machado closes the year underlying the disorder to which national politics were no stranger, but this time using metaphors involving blood-letting struggle or “sangria,” which they then rush to clean up: “Daí um ou outro arrufo, que dá em resultado uma ou outra sangria; imediatamente caem em si e reconciliam-se. Não tenho outro modo de explicar eleições renhidas entre partidos reconciliados. Estripam-se por

higiene” (289). So, the only meaning Machado can gather from the fighting and reconciling amongst different parties is the taste for excitement. Finally, he pokes fun at the idea of trying to cleanse the political arena, since politicians can hardly be concerned with hygiene since they are morally unclean, i.e, corrupt.

Later that year, Machado refers to an actual election that resulted in bloodshed: “a eleição na Glória, onde foi um pouco vermelha. Correu sangue!”² He goes on to remark that “uma eleição sem umas gotinhas do líquido vermelho equivale a um jantar sem as gotinhas de outro líquido vermelho. Não presta; é palido; é *terne*; é sem sabor.” Here he mocks political process whereby bloodshed is as natural with politics as wine is to dinner. On top of that, the author sarcastically remarks how violence is well-received and even craved, and how it makes for good entertainment: “quando chega a morrer alguém, minha opinião é que a eleição fica sendo perfeita” (309). Here Machado is mocking the system as much as criticizing the normality of such a violent, bloody, and arbitrary event.

Finally, Machado de Assis turns to metafiction in writing his *crônicas*, i.e., writing about the act of writing. He recognizes that through the literary genre of the *crônica* he can veil his controversial opinions. In November 1877, he confesses that “não posso dizer positivamente em que ano nasceu a *crônica*; mas há toda a probabilidade de crer que foi coetanea das primeiras duas vizinhas” (273). Machado presents the genre as rather superficial and apolitical, more akin to gossip than reporting. This is precisely what he wants some to believe, since for a *mulatto* author to speak so critically of the government, policies, politicians, and slavery, he needed to make sure the powerful individuals who dominate society are soothed by the idea of his

² Violence was common at the ballot-box as Bethell confirms by stating that “during the empire, voting in elections was open (and oral). Fraud, intimidation, violence, and the exercise of patronage by local landowners and agents of the Crown were widespread.” Leslie Bethell, “Politics in Brazil: From Elections without Democracy to Democracy without Citizenship”, *Daedalus*, v. 129, n. 2 (Spring, 2000): 1-27, 4.

comments being nothing but gossip. His talent was based on the ability of constructing statements that could be taken both ways. Again, we see Machado sharpening the skills he would use so successfully in later *crônicas* and in novels like *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*.³

Even in 1878, Machado continues to publish his *crônicas* under a pseudonym. After announcing a “crise ministerial”, the author uses the nonchalant air associated with the genre, stating that “nossos leitores sabem que esta folha é estranha à política; e portanto, não esperam de mim nenhuma indicação ou apreciação no que respeita a substância dos fatos” (*Chronicas* 4:297). By denying that he will touch on any controversial topics, Machado is paradoxically ensuring that he will continue along the same lines, reassuring his public that he has not changed.

In February 1878, Machado protests the fact that he would not be able to publish his ideas as frequently. Newspaper editors had decided to change his column from biweekly to monthly. So, the author complains about the possible “staleness” of his news, since he may have to comment on something that may seem out of date, or even been covered too much. He boldly advocates that “um fato de trinta dias pertence á história, não á *crônica*,” proclaiming that he will be writing about history instead of current events. The fact, once again, serves to demonstrate the limits imposed on Machado by those in power. Given the choice, he would much rather write weekly columns, yet he was not the one pulling the strings.

By taking a close look at the topic of the last *crônica* in the previous year and the first contribution for the year of 1878, we can at least allow for the possibility of a growing problem surfacing between Machado and his publishers. First, the author tries to make his contributions look frivolous, but suddenly, he is allotted only half of the space he once had to write his

³ Betella claims that: “Machado já escrevia *crônicas*, dominando o procedimento narrativo frívolo, irônico, por vezes cínico. A grande virada à época da produção das *Memórias Póstumas* foi de ordem ideológico” (63), yet years before a similar ideology is already seen.

column. Machado de Assis may have foreseen this change and the previous *crônica* was an attempt to salvage his post in the newspaper world.

Despite these ill tides of change, Machado continued to publish, as we will see in the following section. Yet, he would be forced to take a three-year hiatus from being a *cronista*, starting in 1878. By first switching to write for *O Cruzeiro*, then vanishing for a while, Machado has left many questions unanswered; assumptions can be drawn on these events connecting them to a perhaps greater editorial censorship. Nevertheless, during his final year, he still continues to speak boldly about politics in neighboring Argentina, the drought-stricken Northeast, elections in Rio, and national politics. In addition, he also reflects on the role of the crown, the imperial goals and the emperor's frustration, in a more philosophical way. These reflections give us a fuller picture of early Machado as a writer.

International Politics

On August 18th of 1878, while Machado opens his *crônica* with the faulty and corrupt process of choosing a candidate in Brazil, he decides to address politics in Argentina. By doing so, the author is attesting to his political interests not only within the country but also abroad, in a neighboring new country. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that Machado was a lot more interested in areas outside of Brazil, early on in his life, than has been previously noted.

In this piece, the author narrates the political drama taking place in the neighboring country of Argentina. There is a revolution in Corrientes after both Brazil and Argentina have disputed ownership over the land during the War of the Triple Alliance.⁴ The public reacts fiercely to this event, which leads Machado to a final and surprising conclusion: “o que excita o

⁴ As James Scobie states in *Secondary Cities of Argentina*, the combat between Argentina and Brazil brought war and disgrace over this city and became “a major conflict that held Corrientes in its vortex for several years” (63) after Paraguay pressed Argentina to place troops around that area.

contribuinte é o simples facto do transtorno politico” (141). Yet, it should be noted that Machado draws a comparison between Brazil and Argentina at a time when doing so would have been very controversial. The War of the Triple Alliance ended only eight years earlier and its effects were still being felt amongst Brazilians. The pangs of a difficult victory over Paraguay caused great wounds to national pride; these wounds would eventually aid the eroding confidence in an imperial Brazil.

Politics

On the 13th of June, 1878, Machado de Assis publishes a revealing stance on politics (4:38).⁵ Here, he openly disapproves of the apolitical attitude of politicians unaffiliated with a party when referring to the “neutros da política, que não são peixe nem carne” (39). This politician could be said to be “galinha”, which means chicken; and in nineteenth-century Portuguese it could carry the meaning of a sickly, pale individual. If he accuses them of not really having much character or livelihood, it suggests that he felt it was important to choose a side in a political argument, even if you were to change your mind later. It is important to have a say, and Machado made sure his readers knew where he stood in the issue of indecisiveness. Although many biographies have painted Machado as a disinterested, politically-distant figure, clearly he not only had a political point of view, but also thought it was important to take a stance on an issue.

His next *crônica* continues to follow on the track of national politics, but now the conversation with the reader centers on the Parliament and its role in life. According to the master, its main function is to “abrir-nos os olhos.” Yet Machado knows how the public continues to be blind. For him, the parliamentary tribune is nothing but “uma simples poltrona

⁵ From this point forward, all *crônicas* quoted come from the fourth volume of *Chronicas*.

de magno” (57), implying that politicians sit around feeling grand while they should be focused on actively improving the country.

Northeast

While maturing as a professional writer and journalist, Machado de Assis saw his role in society change. At first, he aimed at entertaining and occasionally openly criticizing those involved in the political milieu. By mid-1878 all of that has changed. Machado, a Liberal reformist who believes real change can be achieved, now understands that he can use the *crônicas* as a channel to communicate the main issues he has with the government and politicians, as well as ideas in general. He does not sit back or bother to cover his comments with a more trivial topic. Machado de Assis is willing to put his newspaper career on the line.

In the past, as we saw on Chapter 3, the master does refer to the Northeast in order to shed light on the issues of droughts and hunger. This often neglected and forsaken region is at the center of his argument once again. However, this time he presents the theme in a more direct way. In 1878, opening his July 7th *crônica* with the topic at hand, he does not apologize or redirect the reader to a lighter topic. He wants people not only to understand, but also to get involved in finding a solution to the plight of Brazil’s most troubled regions noting how politics often leads to violence and lawlessness. While addressing the state of Ceará, in the Northeast area, he exclaims: “Pobre Ceará! Além de secca, os ladrões de estrada” (70). Here, he comments on a new threat to the population: the starving highway robber.

In fact, these lawless men were also victims of poverty, illiteracy, and neglect. Perhaps even more ironic is the fact that the victims of these lawless men also become the victims of violent acts by the government. Machado starts by saying to readers “hão de ter lido que esses malfeitores entrincheiram-se em uma villa cearense;” but the worse was still to come. The *crônica* states: “o governo foi obrigado a mandar uma força de 240 praças de linha.” The reader,

by now, should be able to pick out the tone of sarcasm from this statement, as if the state was literally forced to send such a high number of soldiers. As it would be expected from Machado, he closes his argument by questioning how helpful this initiative from the government really was; at the end, there were “muito fogo, mortos, feridos” (69). The *cronista* defends that the *nordestinos* suffered more than they would have had the government not intervened at all. Clearly present in his 1878 *crônicas*, Machado seems to be pondering on just how much more can the *nordestinos* tolerate.

The Northeast was a region forgotten by the government for the most part. In addition, whenever the government awakens to its existence, troops are sent creating even more chaos and suffering. He is then basically pushed to the edge as his *crônica* of July 4th shows. Machado de Assis, who often covers the cultural life of the city, and defends its importance, does not agree that the same be done with regards to the poverty-stricken state of Ceará. After a local newspaper, *O Retirante*, has stated what the victims of drought need the most is bread and water, the *carioca* is happy to see that finally the real issues about the area being covered. His happiness, however, is short-lived. On page four of that same paper, as Machado cleverly notes, there is an advertisement for “dois delirantes bailes”, which are being offered solely to “distrair da secca” (85–86). So, while poor people are dying of thirst and hunger, the elite wants to distract itself from the misery and have a ball. This is too absurd even for Machado, and so he ridicules Ceará’s upper-class and its lack of charity toward its suffering *conterrâneos*.

Elections

Elections are one of Machado’s favorite topics. As shown in the previous chapter, he was in constant shock of politicians’ deeds, and especially what these men were allowed to get away with in order to win an election. First, let us focus on the year: 1878. The date does not stand out as a milestone in the history of Brazil for most. However, Judy Bieber associates the

date with electoral violence at the ballot-box in *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence* (253). The historian states that “in the 1860s, ideological differences began to resurface, and subsequent national political turnovers, especially those in 1868 and 1878, produced even more electoral violence at the local level” (100). The voting booths, by that point in time, were badly supervised, unruly, and thus far from being peaceful.

Departing from this notion, Machado de Assis, cynically states he is surprised to see a voting area that has not been wrecked by havoc: Paquetá. This little island in the bay of Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, held elections in August. By the 11th of that month, the *cronista* was complimenting the city for acting in accordance with the law. A police force was sent to the voting booths as was necessary in almost all other voting locations. Yet, “Paquetá declarou dispensar a força que lhe mandaram, certa de fazer uma eleição pacífica” (123). The *crônica* then commends both the people for being honest and the police for leaving, thus allowing the electoral process to continue undisturbed. The latter aspect implies that the police are the ones causing disorder. Machado ends this journalistic piece by describing the city of Paquetá as “o primeiro centro de uma forte educação política” (123). The concern here is not for that election alone, but Machado is actually thinking about the forming of a corrupt voting system that could be imbedded in the culture and transformed into the norm. He predicted that “dirty” elections could become status quo; and surely they did.

Again on the issue of elections, his August 18th *crônica* undercuts the little faith he had built up in Paquetá’s exemplary situation. Irony takes over the narrative, and Machado declares that just about anyone, with enough capital and contacts, can run for elections. A candidate does not need to be fit or to qualify for a position. When it comes to Brazilian politics, he compares elections to gambling. Ballots are “bilhetes brancos da loteria; com a diferença que antes de

correr a roda, todos os bilhetes são susceptíveis de premio, ao passo que, antes de correr a uma prévia, ha já candidaturas duvidosas, enfermas” (136). These sickly candidacies contribute to the ill state of the country; a metaphor for the ailing body politic.

National Politics

While this section shares commonalities with the last two, it shows Machado’s greater focus on the morally bankrupt political system in Brazil; corruption was everywhere, and he took notice. Since Machado believed the government budget to be rather limited, he could not fathom how “a camara resolveu autorisar o tesoureiro a comprar uma arca forte para recolher nella as suas rendas.” Here, Machado resorts to sarcasm so as to protest against local politicians miraculously having money to spare for a safe while the state is claiming to be bankrupt. Since the state could not invest in the city infrastructure, as we saw earlier with the neighborhood of Laranjeiras, it is hard for the author not to assume the worse about politicians. He states: “imaginei sempre que todas as rendas da camara podiam caber na minha carteira,” and proceeds to point out that it is “uma carteirinha de moça” (91). So, Machado is trying to say the government only spends as if it had very little, but then the treasurer goes and requests a safe for keeping all the state’s money. The situation is controversial at best, and Machado makes sure to point it out and let his readers know.

A little over a month later there would be another *crônica* addressing national politics. On the 25th of August, 1878, Machado exposes a candidate for the General Assembly who wants to gain voters in an original way. The politician wants to win people over by promising not to take a cent from them. Furthermore, the candidate refuses to accept his salary. The objection Machado has with this is based on the fact that the man has not made any plans for bettering the economy and is already stating what he will not need, which Machado considered to be irresponsible of him. As he puts it, the man declared “não ter ainda fixado o seu programma de

ideias, mas pode afiançar desde já que dispensa o subsidio.” The author believes “um deputado pode ser excelente, sem ser gratuito;” and as a matter of fact, he sarcastically concludes: “creio até que as leis saiam mais perfeitas quando o legislador não tenha que pensar no jantar do dia seguinte” (150). The supposed nobility of the politician is quickly unmasked by Machado de Assis, and the government will get what it “pays” for – another useless politician.

Crônicas as a Genre

Analyzing his profession, Machado de Assis on several occasions defines the responsibilities that befall a *cronista*. For the most part, he writes as if trying to avoid being seen as a pompous journalist, which would suggest the triviality of his occupation. Yet, on August 25th, it is safe to say that he might have felt threatened, or at least realized where his polemic and political commentary had taken him: to become a liability for *O Cruzeiro*.

This was his penultimate *crônica* for that newspaper, and Machado may have been pondering the profession. According to him, the professional cannot help but “fumar quietamente o cachimbo do seu fatalismo” (146). He tries to portray the *cronista* as a banal profession, and states that “o chronista não tem cargo d’almas, não evangelisa, não adverte, não endireita os tortos do mundo; é um mero espectador” (146). If he is convincing enough, he shall prove that his sarcastic political remarks should not be taken into account.

In the same *crônica*, Machado attempts once more to attenuate the polemical tone to his *crônicas*, while trying to move away from the political troubled water in which Brazil was drowning. Machado says that “o chronista não pleitou candidatura” (146), unlike politicians. He reinforces the ideas of the chronicler as a mere narrator who “fica alheio a todas as luctas, ou sejam de força, ou de destreza, ou de ambas as coisas juntas” (146). Machado is trying to distance the *cronista* from the politician. He was rather unsuccessful, since his *crônicas* often

meddled with politics. Machado would have only one more day in the life of *O Cruzeiro*, possibly because of his inability to disguise his opinions on politicians and politics alike.

Patronage and Publishing: Limits and Barriers

As the title for this section suggests, there were numerous limits and barriers Machado de Assis had to contend with in order to do his work and make a living. When Viotti da Costa describes the 1870s, she states: “in spite of the proliferation of cultural institutions, newspapers, and journals and the constant increase in the number able to read, the conditions for the independent production of ideas were still far from ideal” (185). Similarly, Dilson Cruz Júnior refers to John Gledson’s implications of how Machado’s ambiguity in *crônicas* could be “uma estratégia de Machado para fugir à rigorosa censura política da época” (26). Therefore, here we see more scholars who have at least raised the question of Machado’s freedom to publish his ideas. Although some describe the late nineteenth-century press in Brazil based on its “clima de largueza, de liberdade, de quase licenciosidade, em que viveu o jornalismo do Segundo Reinado” (Costella 68), others seem to emphasize that “os homens de letras... encontravam liberdade relativa para as suas criações literárias, não para os impulsos políticos” (Sodré 221). The issue of censorship of the press during the late nineteenth-century Brazil is still much debated. Yet, since most scholars neglect to take the possibility of there being limits into account, we shall do that here so as to shine light upon an alternative interpretation of the *crônicas machadianas*.

Machado was of humble origins; despite his job as a bureaucrat, he had to depend on the money and faith of others to get his voice heard by the public at large. As Jeffrey Needell describes it, Machado’s “image as a man cool to political (or any) passion, particularly Abolition, has been ably disputed. The *cronista* first attracted Liberal patronage by his political journalism, after all;” referring here to his more radical 1860s *crônicas* (*Tropical Belle Époque*, 193). He was not wealthy, he was not white, he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth;

Machado's work very much depended on the approval of his superiors, who controlled what could and could not be printed.

A great account of the trials and tribulations Machado had to endure in order to get his material printed for public access was written by Marisa Lajolo and Regina Zilberman. Their article "Machado and the Cost of Reading" offers an insightful perspective on writings of the great master. They defend the idea that it was not so much what Machado chose to publish or touch basis with, but more what he was allowed to do under the jurisdiction of repressive bosses. As they point out, "relations are not always easy between writers – purveyors of the raw material of literature – and the professionals responsible for the transformation of this raw material into a product" (250). As previously cited by Needell, Machado was not wealthy and he had to please those who could actually finance and publish his writings. All in all, "Publishers, booksellers, printing shops, newspapers, critics, and the literary institutions were, at different stages, the concerns of a prolific writer" (251). By the 1870s, Machado was becoming a more productive writer and therefore had to concern himself with different publishing issues.

Viotti da Costa paints a patronage-driven Brazil when writing about the 1870s. She describes how "bureaucrats, journalists, writers, artists, entrepreneurs, and merchants: everyone had to follow the rules of patronage;" and quoting José de Alencar, she concludes that "everything depends on patronage, even the press, which needs state subsidies to survive" (180). We can then assume that, for the most part, the author had to bend his will to what his superiors thought acceptable and hence publishable. In addition, the 1870s proved to be a challenging period for the crown and political parties alike. Lajolo and Zilberman point to the author's success at handling editors, describing how "in the 1870s, Machado, an ascendant author in the market and in the so-called Republic of Letters, has the means to show significant experiences as

a writer who negotiates with publishers different clauses to publish his work” (254). His cleverness and brilliant use of irony made for a more sophisticated criticism of politics, politicians, and Brazil at large. It is safe to say that his talent might have aided him in covering his harshest comment with a veil of triviality.

The article “Machado and the Cost of Reading” closes by asserting that “Machado is much more attentive (and submissive) to the misty, complex, and asymmetric world in which, in the nineteenth-century Brazil, not only narrators and male and female readers but also writers and editors exchanged flips and bows” (261). The question, then, is how much leeway was given and how his ability to publish was limited by editors. According to Anne-Marie Smith “from the Empire to the time of the independent Republic, from the earliest *pasquims* to the establishment of an industrial press, there was no period when the state was not attempting to monitor and shape the press to some degree;” so we should at least consider the possibility of there being barriers for some of his more polemical ideas (16). The more pivotal aspects of the possible presence and authority of his superiors are to be kept in mind when judging his published works: they had to be first approved by others. This disguising of his voice is perhaps a key exercise in developing the ironic writing style so present in his latter novels. As we will conclude, we see how Machado begins to use more literary allegory and other literary techniques in his *crônicas*, pushing the limits between journalism and literary prose.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Machado de Assis' journalistic contributions were just as memorable and fundamental to the later development of his skills as a short story writer, poet, dramatist, and finally novelist, amongst other more commonly cited genres he penned. The *crônicas* honored his observational and narrative skills, where Machado tested his portrayals of the day-to-day lives of his subjects in a way that makes his account seem realistic. His ability to write about the trivial and mundane so well comes from years of practice writing newspaper bits on politicians and their lives, instances of corruption and the country's troubles, as well as local events and the people involved. Perhaps most importantly, he wrote about the common man and woman, and how they were affected by the social and political changes taking place in Brazil.

In *Machado de Assis: a pirâmide e o trapézio*, Faoro grasps the subtleties of Machado's novels and short stories. He succinctly defines the Machadian narrative style, stating: "num dia de novembro não ruiu o Império nem nasceu uma República. A tabuleta da confeitaria do Custódio é que mudou de nome: a confeitaria do Império passaria a ser a confeitaria da República, se a transformação estivesse consolidada" (177). This sentence is descriptive of the great master's style, showing how he gracefully walked the tightrope of change. Here, in this thesis, we strive to do the same for his *crônicas* of the 1870s, which were cleverly constructed and deserve critical attention. The present conclusion will then be divided into two parts: first, we will look at a *crônica* that is symbolic of Machado's political interest and understanding;¹ second, we argue for a reevaluation of Machado's work by refuting the notion that his writings

¹ Parts of this *crônica* have been previously published in the studies of Faoro and Montello. Yet, in order to appreciate the full genius of this work, here we attempt a complete analysis, for the first time.

should be split in two phases, arguing for a more unified and gradual approach to his development as a writer.

The 1870s and Machado as a Political/Polemical *Cronista*

Resuming our investigation of the year 1878, it is important to point out how this year marked the political return of Liberals to power. Moreover, it was marked by the dissatisfaction of political parties with the monarch, Pedro II, trying to please all sides after a tough and ever-resounding war.² Leslie Bethell attests to this post-war setting, saying that “as a result of political instability the emperor was often asked to intervene in the political arena”(198). Bethell proceeds to ascertain that the meddling of the monarch into political affairs brought about resentment on the part of politicians. Consequently, as the historian notes, “monarchical parties did not spare criticism of the monarchical regime they were supposed to defend. The Moderating Power was the main target of their criticism” (198). Emperor Pedro II was in an untenable position, and Machado, in spite of his humble origins, had always sympathized with the monarch, seeing the world from his perspective.

Raymundo Faoro had thoroughly analyzed the role of the emperor in Machado’s works in *Machado de Assis: a pirâmide e o trapézio*, which dedicates quite a few pages to the study of this relationship. Faoro describes how “o D. Pedro de Machado de Assis está coroado com o mito, que o eleva, nas ruas, no coche, no jogo político. Ele ergue os humildes e abate os soberbos, quase um semideus” (57). Machado depicts the emperor with the same respect and affection as the image resting in the minds of the masses. Even in his more critical and caricatured work on Dom Pedro II, Machado never meant to taint permanently the image of

² The Paraguayan war (1865-1870) exposed a weak Brazilian military and a divided political community.

Brazil's ruler; instead these were comments that led the reader to defend and hold the emperor in ever higher regard.

On August of this same year, while referring to another “throne” of sorts and the need for power, Machado de Assis writes about the Republican Party in Brazil. He analyses the nature and birth of this institution. Always under his critical and cynical lenses, he addresses the quest for personal power. In his own words, “o partido republicano... nasceu principalmente de um equivoco e de uma metafora: a metafora do poder pessoal” (*Chronicas* 4:127–128). Machado attempts to convey the idea that if an individual has too much power, he or she may eventually get blinded by it, which perhaps reflects the situation of Brazil's own emperor.

In the *crônica* of August 11th, 1878, Machado tells of a disoriented young man of the elite in Persia searches to make his life more meaningful while struggling to promote new ideas in an unwelcomed land, a stagnate soil. The young man is used to mask Machado's commentary through a political allegory; the writer is actually addressing Dom Pedro II. The soil, in turn, represents the traditional republicans who refuse to work with the monarch and implement changes to the Brazilian society. A closer analysis of this *crônica* leads to the conclusion that Machado saw Dom Pedro II as a good man, trying to be of value to this world while perhaps also craving his father's approval.

Machado makes it clear that he is referring to national politics, but refers to the need for a “Persian” apology, disguising his topic. Addressing Republicans and their obsession with power, Machado notes that “o partido republicano, não obstante as convicções dos seus correligionarios nasceu principalmente de um equivoco e de uma metaphora, a metaphora do poder pessoal; e a este respeito contarei um apologo... persa.” As the *crônica* goes on, the author details the struggles of a man wanting to please his father by growing limes. It sounds like a

fable, but the introduction and the conclusion indicate it is an allegory for politics. The young man represents the eager-to-please monarch, the father is Dom Pedro I, who renounced the throne and returned to Portugal when his son Pedro was an infant. He left behind the seeds of lime that are to become seeds of liberty and justice.³ In addition, the barren soil represents the traditional politicians who will not allow anything new to flower, and finally the unforgiving sun is probably comes from the stigma of Brazil as a tropical and neo-colonial country.

Here, Machado de Assis shows his work at its best. His politics disguised, as most of his political comments had to be, Machado's sarcastic yet compassionate tone reflects the greatest literary mind in nineteenth-century Brazil. In order to do justice to this piece we will cite it at length:

Havia em Teheran um rapaz, grande gamenho e maior vadio, a quem o pae disse uma noite que era preciso escolher um officio qualquer, uma industria, alguma cousa em que applicasse as forças que despendia, arruando e matando inutilmente as horas. O moço achou que o pae fallava com acerto, cogitou parte da noite, e dormiu. De manhã foi ter com o pae e pediu-lhe licença para correr toda a Persia, afim de ver as differentes profissões, compara-las a escolher a que lhe parecesse mais propria e lucrativa. O pae abençoou-o; o rapaz foi correr terra. (125)

The father is as much of a central figure in the son's life and career choice, and Emperor Pedro I had been on the life of his son, Dom Pedro II. Another aspect in common between the protagonist of the *crônica* and Pedro II, is that both were well-traveled men striving to employ newfound knowledge and find meaning in their lives.

Ao cabo de um anno, regressou á casa do pae. Tinha admirado varias industrias e profissões; entre outras vira fazer chitas, as famosas chitas da Persia – e plantar limas, as não menos famosas limas da Persia; e destas duas occupações, achou melhor a segunda.

³ In *Party of Order*, for instance, Needell recounts the admiration Dom Pedro II felt for his self-constructed father figure. Pedro II was raised in a very strict environment, where he was prevented from communicating with the former king. This only furthered his idolization of Pedro I. As Needell notes, "he [Pedro II] never was allowed to read his father's letters, and his own, first marked by tears, only faintly convey the pain of this complete orphanhood" (32).

- Lavrar a terra, disse elle, é a profissão mais nobre e mais livre; é a que melhor põe as forças do homem parallelas ás da natureza. (126)

In this case, to till the land, could also mean to better it, make it more productive. Pedro II, considered a thoughtful and enlightened ruler by most, wanted to plant the seed of European ideas and cultivate them in Brazilian soil. According to the Persian lad and the Brazilian ruler, this is the most noble of professions.

Dito isto, comprou umas geiras de terra, comprou umas sementes de limas e semeou-as, depois de invocar o auxilio do sol e da chuva e de todas as forças naturaes. Antes de muitos dias, começaram a grelar as sementes; os grelos fizeram-se arbustos. O jovem lavrador ia todas as manhãs contemplar a sua obra; mandava regar as plantas; sonhava com ellas; vivia dellas e para ellas. – Quando as limeiras derem flôr, dizia ele consigo, convidarei todos os parentes a um banquete; e a primeira lima que amadurecer será mandada de presente ao Schan. (127)

While attempting to fulfill his role as a planter, to impress his father, and to make his family proud, the protagonist traces out his future. The emperor, in much the same way, had a plan: to modernize Brazil and to have liberal European ideas flourish on Brazilian soil. Under the influence of new theories, the crown had already calculated its possible gains and knew what measures to imply in order to achieve the “modernity” that was so sought after.

Infelizmente os arbustos não se desenvolviam com a presteza costumada; alguns seccaram; outros não seccaram mas tambem não cresceram. Estupefacção do joven lavrador, que não podia comprehender a causa do phenomeno. Ordenou que lhe puzessem dobrada porção d’agua, e vendo que a agua simples não produzia effeito, mandou enfeitica-la por um mago, com as mais obscuras palavras dos livros santos.

Nada lhe valeu; as plantas não passara do que eram; não vinha a flôr, nuncia do fruto. O joven lavrador mortificava-se; gastava as noites e os dias a ver um meio de robustecer as limeiras – esforço sincero, mas inutil. Entretanto, elle se lembrava de ter visto boas limeiras em outras provincias; e muitas vezes comprava excelente limas no mercado de Teheran. Por que razão não alcançaria elle, e com presteza, a mesma cousa? (128)

The failure to cultivate the soil and to see the fruits of his labor frustrated the Persian youth.

Likewise, the multiple attempts at emulating Europe and at moving away from the backwardness associated with the nation ended in failure for Dom Pedro II. Machado felt that

the Republican Party, which came to the forefront after the weakening of the Conservative Party, failed to be receptive and refused to allow these notions to bear fruit. Emancipation, for instance, was out of the question since wealthy planters depended so much on slave labor to continue to export coffee at the same rate. An idealist, Dom Pedro II fought his sense of rising discouragement, analyzing the barriers which halted the success of his objective. Yet, he would eventually cave in as did the young Persian gentleman.

Um dia, não se pode ter o joven lavrador; quiz, enfim, conhecer a causa do mal. Ora, a causa podia ser que fosse a falta de alguns saes no adubo, ares pouco lavados, certa disposição do terreno, pouca pratica de plantador. O moço, porém, não cogitou em nenhuma dessas causas immediatas; attribuiu o acanhamento das plantas... ao sol; porque o sol, dizia elle, era ardente e requeimava as plantas. A elle, pois, cabia a culpa original; era elle o culpado visivel, o sol. (128)

In the *crônica*, for the Persian planter, the sun is to blame and not the plants. A combination of various political issues could have resulted in the failure of “Europeanizing” Brasil, yet the emperor did not take that into account. Therefore, we can attribute the guilt to the sun to represent neo-colonial backwardness, the harsh nature of the tropics and its extreme environment, or a scapegoat for the emperor’s disappointment. However, the sun can also be seen as the obsession with personal power, which blinds political leaders from seeing and doing what is needed. The drive for personal power on the part of politicians may have been what caused the Republican Party to be indifferent to the imperial suggestions and uncompromising in dealing with other political parties.

Entrando-lhe esta convicção no animo, não se deteve o rapaz; arrancou todas as plantas e vendeu a terra, metheu o dinheiro no bolso, e voltou a passear as ruas de

Teheran, ficou sem officio.

Conclusão: se soubessemos um pouco mais de chimica social... (128)

Social chemistry is what was needed for Brazil to leave its colonial past behind to become a truly sovereign nation. Republicans then needed to learn how the country works and understand all

components of society. In Machado's view, the Republican Party was perhaps not willing to consider the emperor's suggestions or negotiate with the Liberal Party.

This conclusion reflects Machado's ideas and his concern with Brazil's backward status. He offers advice for the cure – that Brazilians must learn and understand one another, and all politicians should work together and aid the emperor in bettering Brazil as a whole. In Machado's view, if there were a mutual understanding and a shared goal without the harsh blindly quest for power, Brazil would finally be able to progress. Political and polemical, Machado's newspaper chronicles represent another contributing facet to his masterpieces. In 1870s, the great Machado of the later decades was taking his first steps toward immortality; these *crônicas* are among his first stepping stones.

Machado's Work as a Continuum: *Crônicas* as Training Ground

We have set out to shed light on Machado as a *cronista* between the year of the Law of the Free Womb, 1871, and the year in which political changes and imperial challenging made their marks, 1878. The main goal of this study is to give new relevance to Machado de Assis' political interest, and consider the fact that many of the great literary critics have overlooked the importance of his earlier *crônicas*. Hopefully, we have achieved such a goal. Yet, there are other aspects to the way Machadian work is viewed that are directly connected to the relative negligence of his newspaper publications. For instance, those critics who defend a division of his work in two phases have not carefully or seriously considered his writings as a *cronista*. Gomes was one of the first to plead for recognition to be awarded to the genre, as he states “vê-se que no processo machadiano estabeleceu-se uma confusão intencional; a fantasia, a crônica e o conto já não mantinham fronteiras entre si” (10). It is then obvious that in his *crônicas*, Machado de Assis was not only interested in politics, as some critics failed to note, but also

interested in the lives of Brazilians, be they politicians or not. His contributions in this genre functioned as a training ground for his captivating narrative style in years to come.⁴

Some scholars have been able to see a bridge between these “two phases”, and analyze traces of his genius in earlier work. Sonia Brayner underscores the genre, describing how “na obra machadiana a crônica não é um texto-ponte para os outros, os ‘maiores’;” she believes Machado’s *crônicas* are “a solda capaz de unir um produção literária de mais de quarenta anos” (416). Likewise, Betella states “bem antes de escrever os romances tidos como superiores na composição, Machado já escrevia crônicas, dominando o procedimento narrativo frívolo, irônico, por vezes cínico” (63). Taking Machado’s early novels into account, Elizabeth Ginway addresses the issue of this traditional two-part interpretation of his work. Ginway states that “considera-se a primeira fase de Machado como tradicional e a segunda, radical;” yet this notion is problematic because it does not “toma em conta o fato de que o pensamento machadiano seguiu a mesma linha ao longo da sua carreira, só que desenvolveu e amadureceu nas últimas obras” (33). Fortunately, a general shift is being made in the literature of Machadian analysis toward a more continuous and progressive growth of Machado as a writer.

Afrânio Coutinho was among the first critics to be wary of this approach, warning those who defend the two-phased interpretation. In 1966, Coutinho recommends that the critic “todavia, deve-se afastar, no exame do problema, a idéia de mutação repentina. Não há ruptura brusca entre as duas fases. É mais justo afirmar que uma pressupõe a outra, e por ela foi preparada” (*Machado de Assis* 15). The idea of *crônicas* and his first novels as a dress-rehearsal

⁴ For further information on the esthetics and linguistic aspects of *crônicas machadianas* refer to *Machado de Assis: o romance com pessoas* by José Luiz Passos (São Paulo: Nankin Editorial, 2007), and *Estratégias e máscaras de um fingidor: a crônica de Machado de Assis* by Dilson F. Cruz Júnior (São Paulo: Nankin Editorial, 2002).

to his critically acclaimed masterpieces have been appropriately gaining ground.⁵ Therefore, this thesis also focuses on these gains and the belief that Machado learned from past experiences and continued to grow as a writer.

The cleverness of his later *romances* burst out of his *crônicas*, which, to borrow from Brayner, served as a fictional laboratory, where Machado could test his ideas and see how they played out with the public at large. In Afrânio Coutinho's words: "Sua obra folhetinesca reflete discretamente as variações por que o genero veio passando, desde o romantismo até o realismo, com bifurcações pelo parnasianismo e simbolismo. Há um pouco de tudo isso em suas crônicas" (*A literatura no Brasil* 114). We must not forget to account for the possibility of editorial censorship. Nonetheless, Machado de Assis managed to showcase his ideas, however subtle, demonstrate his talent as a writer. Machado has thus proved his brilliance in the way he maneuvered the press, addressed political and polemical topics in *crônicas*, and continued to write. His 1870s *crônicas* are of significant value, and hopefully this study will motivate others to examine these journalistic contributions, which reflect a crucial point in Machado's opus. Furthermore, the thesis will also guide others to respect his earlier work, and finally bridge the gap between the traditional "two phases".

⁵ This can be seen in the works of Coutinho, Gledson, Chalhoub and Betella, here mentioned.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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In 2007, with the encouragement of her family, Andréa decided to return to Florida to pursue her master's degree. Under the guidance of Elizabeth Ginway and Richmond Brown, she enrolled in the MALAS Program with a concentration in Brazilian Studies. In the meantime, Andréa taught classes in Brazilian Portuguese at the University of Florida. She received the top teaching award for Graduate Teaching Assistants, the Calvin A. VanderWerf Award, for the academic year 2008–2009.

After she received her M.A. from the University of Florida in the fall of 2009, Andréa decided to apply for the doctoral program in the History Department under the guidance of Jeffrey Needell. Her doctoral research will continue to focus on literature, as she plans to study nineteenth-century Brazilian intellectual life.