

abolition to protect small landowners. Marson concludes that Milet's arguments were influential and representative of a sizeable sector of the Pernambucan population, which caused Nabuco to take a more moderate approach in his arguments.

Based on these chapters, Marson argues that Armitage's, Ottoni's and Timandro's images of revolution have sunken into obscurity, as have Milet's arguments in defense of the "middle class" and the small producer. Nabuco's interpretations have survived to inform our understanding of history, due to his fame as an abolitionist, holder of political office, journalist and historian, as well as owing to his conciliatory demeanor after the declaration of the republic, when rather than focus on petty politics he opted for "*pátria*, nation and humanity" (283, quoted from *Minha Formação*). Through Marson's careful analysis, the reader gains new perspective on the political nature of Nabuco's writing and his trajectory from involvement in politics as "knight-errantry" to politics with a capital P, which focused on the greater human drama. *Política, história e método* is a valuable contribution to the study of Joaquim Nabuco's career and historical writing, as well as to the study of the intellectual history of slavery and liberal revolt in Brazil.

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Almino, João. *O diabrete angélico e o pavão: enredo e amor possíveis em Brás Cubas*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2009.

João Almino's recently published book *O diabrete angélico e o pavão: enredo e amor possíveis em Brás Cubas* brings fresh air to the appreciation of Machado de Assis's most studied, analysed, and scrutinised novel, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Almino's starting assertion is Virgília's central role in the novel, a centrality seldom (or indeed never) acknowledged by critics, both in Brazil and abroad. According to the essayist, the reader would benefit from

focusing his or her attention not only on the main female character but also on the novel's plot, a narrative feature consistently overlooked by critics as different from each other as Roberto Schwarz (*Machado de Assis – um mestre na periferia do capitalismo*, 1990) and Alfredo Bosi (*Brás Cubas em três versões*, 2006).

Claiming to start from those aspects to which the narrator devotes more attention, João Almino calls his own method “a exposição do óbvio, se o óbvio fosse facilmente percebido como tal” (8). He seems to be aware, as Machadian close readers know only too well (Helder Macedo and Pedro Meira Monteiro are two excellent examples), that nothing in Machado de Assis's novels is obvious, that everything which *is* can also, and at the same time, *not be*. To that extent, Almino's discussion of *Brás Cubas* ends up being much more interesting than what is proposed at its outset. What I mean by this is that there are issues discussed in the book which seem to be there regardless of the method of “exposição do óbvio.” One of these issues is the discussion of references, first to Dante, explicit in the novel, then to Flaubert, absent in *Memórias póstumas*, but to whose Emma Bovary Almino compares Machado's Virgília.

The essayist's comments about the presence of Dante's *Commedia* in *Brás Cubas* stress the *double* (perhaps triple, quadruple, infinite...) *entendre* of a brilliant narrator, who tells the story of an almost entirely amoral couple, hardly ever haunted by remorse, which, as opposed to Paolo and Francesca, will never suffer any sort of punishment. As Almino observes, the author nods towards the “romantic” and the “tragic”—“Há piscadelas de olho para o romântico e o trágico” (36)—but never engages either in tragedy or in romanticism. Likewise, what the critic says about a verse of Dante's *Purgatory*, which Machado applies to the Virgília-Brás couple (when, in fact, in the Italian masterpiece it refers not to a couple of lovers, but to the narrator himself and Oderisi, the vain, if gifted, artist who walks with the narrator from canto XI to the beginning of canto XII), indicates again Machado's cunning use of reference: different layers of intertextual meaning, the less obvious here pointing not to

the Brás-Virgília relationship but to Brás's own vanity and love of glory. This less obvious meaning demands a hardworking, learned reader toward whom, again, Machado seems to nod and wink.

Another fruitful connection is the one between *Memórias póstumas* and *Madame Bovary*. If both plots deal with adultery, the Brazilian critic claims – with good reason – that Machado de Assis's Virgília is much more modern than Flaubert's Emma, inasmuch as she is totally free from guilt, the tragic undertones of the French novel being replaced here by the banality involving the whole affair, which ends not with a bang, and not even with a whimper, but simply with the cessation of love between the lovers. In Almino's words, the latter “deixam de se amar, sobretudo porque deixam de se amar” (37).

To remain in the territory of intertextual references, the way Almino connects *Brás Cubas* with the “typology of love” proposed by Stendhal in *De l'amour* is again very interesting. What the French author calls “vanity-love” dominates the relationship between Brás and Virgília. In the beginning, when they are both young and unmarried, rather than taking the obscure Brás for a husband, Virgília does not hesitate to marry Lobo Neves, who has a promising political future and assures his bride he will make her a marchioness. Later, when they meet again and start having their adulterous affair, that which in an ordinary romantic or even realist novel could turn out to be Stendhal's “passionate love” is marked by a strong possessiveness: Brás will exhibit Virgília as he would a decoration on the lapel of his well-cut tails. As Almino points out, we are still in the domain of “vanity-love.” The essayist had cleverly announced in his title that he would deal with the plot and “possible love” in *Brás Cubas*. After all, as the novel's first-person narrator states in a rather oblique way, “Não há amor possível sem a oportunidade dos sujeitos” (chapter 56). And what the “opportunity of the individuals” entails is far from romanticism or true passion. Here, the only possible love is “vanity-love.”

Almino bases some of his analysis on statistical data. Virgília is central to the novel because her name is present in

the narrative 198 times, as opposed, say, to Eugênia's, which is only mentioned 14 times. Whilst not entirely convinced by this approach, I must concede that Almino's emphasis on the love affair between Brás—"o pavão"—and Virgília—"o diabrete angélico"—and on the alleged consistency of the plot, rather than on the more obvious fragmentation of the narrative structure (a topic stressed by both sociological and philosophical interpretations, both in psychological analyses and in those focused on the so-called Shandean form), is refreshing to our understanding of a much-revisited novel.

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Perrone, Charles A. *Brazil, Lyric, and the Americas*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010.

The appearance of Charles Perrone's new book on lyric poetry in the Americas is cause for celebration. As the field of inter-American literature grows, and as the crucial role of Brazilian literature in it becomes more and more apparent, the importance of discerning and comparative book-length studies like *Brazil, Lyric, and the Americas* cannot be overestimated. A renowned scholar of Brazilian literature and culture, and a leading inter-Americanist, Perrone has here done both these disciplines a great service.

Perrone's study achieves three very important, and interrelated, goals: it centers on poetry, a genre that, although brilliantly cultivated throughout the Americas, has not so far received the critical attention it merits; it emphasizes the three New World cultures (the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil) that have been generating the most inter-American scholarship in recent years; and it elucidates the all-important differences that distinguish these cultures and thus avoids the trap of homogenization that all too often afflicts comparative studies: the tendency to make literary texts that are really quite different seem, under the analytical lense, much more alike than they really are. That Perrone avoids this methodological pitfall is important,