

Machado's *The Alienist* : A Celebration of Hidden Irony

A short survey of the historical
context of Machado's *The Alienist* (1882)

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It is not altogether easy to understand the subtleties of Machado's ironic twists – more so for a reader unacquainted with the social particularities of Brazilian society in the 19th century and the social progress of the Second Empire under Dom Pedro II. The indeterminate setting of the story disorients even the experienced Brazilian reader: Simão Bacamarte is vaguely presented as a favorite of the King of Portugal, which points to the Colonial period in the 18th century, but there are other characteristics which make him a typical figure of the Second Empire (Dom Pedro II's reign, beginning in the second quarter of the 19th century). These confusing temporalities are probably deliberate and make the social criticism less evident.

A brief historical survey may help the understanding. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Portuguese colonizers were established in vast rural properties dominated by almost feudal sovereigns. The Portuguese Crown had great difficulty in controlling their autocratic rule and in collecting taxes. During that period, the Casa Grande, the fortress-manor was the center of economic, social and political decisions, providing at the once the school and the tribunal, the church and the hospital - and the asylum. The 'democratic' tendencies of these oligarchs and patriarchs concerned mainly their autocratic domination over those autarchies.

Occasional bouts of abusive taxation brought about occasional revolts, like the ones in Vila Rica (1722) or Tiradentes. Behind the seemingly popular upheavals one may discover the interests of the traditional aristocratic magnates, camouflaged behind the figure of a popular demagogue (Felipe dos Santos – finally betrayed when the conflict turned out to be more serious).

During the 18th century, plebeian merchants with entrepreneurial talent started competing with the old aristocracy and disputed the exclusive power of the privileged families over the City Assemblies and Senates. Despised by the old aristocracy, they mimicked their life style in the elaborate *sobrados* of the modern, urban society¹. The arrival of the Portuguese Court during the Napoleonic Wars, then the 1st and the 2nd

Empire (Dom Pedro I and II,) saw the first effort of centralization and organization of a nation-state. These reforms put an end to unrestricted patriarchal sovereignty. The discovery of great mineral resources dislocated economic wealth from agriculture (sugar, coffee) towards mining. A new and more violent system of tax collecting often crushed agricultural wealth. Eventually, patriarchal prestige faded under heavy mortgages and an ever more expensive (prohibited, yet tolerated) slave trade.

Machado's story *The Alienist* draws its ironic effects from these reforms situated between 1845 and the 1880s (the recognition of the Bill Aberdeen, the 1871 Law freeing newborn children of slaves (Lei do Ventre livre) and 1883 Confederação Abolicionista), during which the so-called Liberals (mainly the big landowners defending their 'democratic' privileges) were fighting Imperial efforts for abolition, economic and political reforms. Dom Pedro II, the emblematic educator of the unified Nation, attracted the sons, nephews and *agregados* (tenants) of the aristocratic patriarchs and created clear links between government service and the education of the '*bachareis*' (academics). Some of these become prominent figures and faithful allies of the Emperor's well-meaning efforts (Joaquim Nabuco is a good example; Machado modulates this perfect model in a satirical manner, twisting it into the quixotesque figure Simão Bacamarte). A large number of those *bachareis*, however, reproduced the traditional habits of favor while occupying the Chamber and the Senate, the National Guard and the rest of the administrative posts. As legislators and judges, they showed much reluctance against abolishing definitively their parents' and relatives' economic basis (production based on slave labor). The *chassée croisée* of conflicting and contradictory interests makes it easy to understand why a real public discussion about liberty and emancipation, equality and responsibility was postponed for almost 40 years (1883 Joaquim Nabuco's *O Abolicionismo*).

During the entire 19th century, popular revolts took on a different profile but continued to be the playground of demagogy. The most contingent circumstances sometimes stirred revolutionary upheavals under the guidance of short-lived demagogues: health innovations or the introduction of a new measuring system could lead to bloody riots. The names and presentation of the riots in Machado's *The Alienist* remind the Brazilian reader of the endless riots of this period (for example, the *Quebra-Quilo*)². The appendix at the end of this essay highlights the relevant historical events and some of the word-plays and puns, which are necessary for the understanding of *The Alienist*.

I. Machado's multiple ironies

Machado is a universally appreciated author, because he offers his reader delightfully easy entertainment on the surface and thick layers of scholarship and sophistication underneath. His irony is explosive and contagious, but the journalist Machado is an expert in blurring the real goals of his sarcastic blows, mixing up his reader's attention and making it practically impossible to follow the thread of his critical intentions. In theory, the reader is not only free, but he is invited to pay attention;

but Machado's baroque and dispersive wit makes the task of serious-and-witty interpretation difficult. Machado is perfectly conscious of this and builds meta-ironic allusions (concerning the reader's superficiality and lack of education or perspicacity) into his stories.

The *Alienist*, one of the first of his 'mature' works, is a good example of cryptic social and political criticism which remains covered under an over-simple (if not simplistic) plot. Simon Bacamarte, the alienist, is an increasingly monomaniac psychiatrist who tries to establish a positivistic system and research unit in an imaginary town called Itaguaí. Proceeding systematically, he needs to segregate the mad population from the sane and normal one and proceed to scientifically adequate treatment. The ever increasing population locked up in his asylum, Casa Verde, makes him realize, however, that his theory contradicts statistical notions of normality. After a tentative adaptation (he inverts the first hypothesis) of his thesis, he liberates the inmates and locks himself up, dying shortly after.

The surface bait about false madness and normality has been the delight of Foucault's epigones, and Marxist critics have not lost sight of the quite obvious hints to the typical Brazilian power structures:

"[Bacamarte has the] status of a nobleman who enjoys royal favor, which transforms him into a dictator of poor Itaguaí. The town's population suffers the effects of his terrorism of prestige, of which the relations between the physician and the patient, the psychiatrist and the madman, are merely particular cases". The exercise of power becomes therefore, the axis of the story before the narrative turns to fanciful ideas of a steely-eyed scientist... [...]

There is then a preexisting state of authority that bends the tongue and the spine of those who surround Bacamarte. This authority is exercised in the name of an activity considered to be neutral, 'above common appetites': science and the love of truth that inspires the psychiatrist."³

Bosi's critique highlights a social and political problem of Brazilian sociability, very well known since Roberto Schwartz's analyses of Machado's work. In the case of the *Alienist*, however, this approach falls short of a decisive particularity of the emblematic features of the novel's main character: Simon Bacamarte is a fictional construction which over-determines the power-typology of the dictator. Bosi and his fellow Marxist interpreters) emphasize the oppressive control tendencies of the patriarchal characters and their pseudo-democratic offspring (the capitalist, liberal and bourgeois etc.), but they ignore the complex ambiguities of certain of these figures during the Second Empire. Between 1845 and 1883⁴ Dom Pedro II, the emblematic educator of the unified Nation, attracted the sons, nephews and *agregados* (tenants) of the aristocratic patriarchs, canalizing the education of the '*bachareis*' (academics) who occupied the Chamber and the Senate, the National Guard and the rest of the administrative posts. Among them, we find a fair number of sincerely committed and generous reformers, whose efforts and ideas (although sometimes misplaced and

sometimes almost ridiculous) deserve moral admiration. Bacamarte has similarities with these slightly quixotesque characters. Ironic overtones are reminiscent much more of Swift's keen-and-blind philosopher or of Flaubert's Bouvard et Pécuchet than of a power-thirsty tyrant.

Of course Simao Bacamarte is a scientist and apparently represents modern scientific health systems (the clinics of the famous psychiatrists – Pinel, Charcot – whose fame immortalized hospitals like the Salpêtrière in Paris). Of course he is an aristocrat and precisely the type of Dom Pedro's 'chosen' men⁵: a *Bacharel* (Bachelor of Arts) imbued with a grand task, sincere and committed, and yet... a bit obtuse, he takes good intentions to a poor end. There are no pejorative connotations of abusively favor: he rather resembles the grave and altruistic reformers the Emperor recruited among the sons of the old oligarchy: his integrity, patriotism and rigorous responsibility contrast with the emotional superficiality of ambitious demagogues who lead a disorientated and reluctant population into an unnecessary bloodbath⁶. The bloodbath brought about by Porfírio the barber is an unnecessary waste in several respects: 1) because Simao Bacamarte turns out not to have malignant intentions, 2) because the self-appointed 'liberator' does not liberate the interns of the asylum; 3) because revolution and bloodshed are negligently brought about and forgotten by Porfírio in order to... confirm the very same status quo: the only 'change' is a slight variation of the top of the pyramid: instead of the previous City Assembly, Porfírio proposes an 'alliance' of himself plus Simao Bacamarte, plus a selection of the previous City Assembly...

But there are still other ironic allusions in the condensed fictional construction of Machado's main character: Simao Bacamarte is also the laic and anti-clerical scientist, who flares Padre Lopes' Jesuitical intrigues and prefers cold science to cordial Catholicism. And, last but not least, he is weird and alien, because (coming back from Europe) he tries to be a man with public interests as opposed to the normal Brazilians – like his wife Dona Evarista or his agregado, Crispim Soares, whose horizons are limited to domestic, private, family-welfare.

As announced by the emblematic name (old gun), Bacamarte is not far from the Swiftian 'bookish' philosopher – a quixotesque caricature of the modern scientist, who cannot adapt his knowledge to the particular situation he finds in Brazil. Muricy's reading pinpoints this element when developing her idea about the well-known flaws of 'imported ideas' and their fallacious use in an inadequate context. Muricy thinks that Bacamarte is an allegory of 19th century Brazilian culture which indulged in an abusive importation and pernicious exploration of European models: she suspects Bacamarte of a power-plot, aiming at an alliance between science and power⁷. It might be more important, however, to note that Simao Bacamarte resembles common caricatures of Dom Pedro, who was caricaturized as a bookish Don Quixote of Education and Science. The mainly inglorious battle against ignorance waged by Dom Pedro II, who recruited (the elected 1.000 – according to O. Vianna) among the sons

of the oligarchy, appears in a passage from G. Freyre's essay "Brazil..." (less idealizing than O. Vianna):

But while there were graduates of European universities who reconciled their knowledge of European theories with political or social realism, others exaggerated pure theory or doctrine. They were simply theoretical or merely bookish. (Brazil, p.5)

Against the generalizing critique of power-abuse which focuses the 'bourgeois' or the aristocratic villain, let us see Bacamarte through the lens of Dom Pedro's reform policies: Machado does not represent Bacamarte receiving favors, but putting his personal wealth to collective and scientific use. He spends his own money to build Casa Verde – another reminder of the Imperial effort to introduce reforms in the health and sanitary system which would bring belated Itaguaí-Brazil closer to Western Civilization. This is clearly an allusion to the generous patriotic commitment which Machado may have admired⁸ in figures like the physicians Barão Torres Homem or Correia de Azevedo, Saldanha Marinho and Oswaldo Cruz, Joaquim Nabuco, Barão do Rio Branco...⁹.

All this (quixotesque) commitment, of course, does not make him a good scientist. Although trained in the European schools of positivism and admired by the King of Portugal, he proudly withdraws into the 'splendid isolation' of the provincial realm of Itaguaí. The remote tropical setting transforms him into the Brazilian version of a Shandyan hobby-horse scientist (together with overtones of Swift's philosopher and Flaubert's Bouvard et Pécuchet). But he serves his country with great integrity... like Dom Pedro II!

The (more benevolent) focus of irony concerns Simao Bacamarte's resemblance to the dignified, enlightened and committed individuals of the Imperial aristocracy – men who, like Nabuco and Rio Branco made every effort to bring about changes in the backward semi-feudal régime of the Second Empire. Under Dom Pedro's influence, they tried to reform the country morally and economically¹⁰, to found new institutions and to unify and centralize the fragmented and highly individualistic 'democratic' realm. Ironically, though, their reforms were equally individualistic and sometimes dictatorial enterprises, facing the general difficulty of the slave system: conceiving innovations but avoiding the hard work of implementing them. Even if their horizons were broader than those of their peers, they were prone to leisure and bureaucratic *sine curas*, and a certain preference for honorific and contemplative activities flawed their enterprises.

II. Machado's focus of social critique

Bacamarte's logic of hospitalization (and his vision of responsible judgment)

Instead of exaggerating the focus of power abuse, we might see the finer irony of Machado's psychiatrist, who may be obtuse, but nevertheless identifies certain socially determined follies: cordiality, for example, a hyperbolic and characteristically Brazilian rhetoric which covers up a deplorable lack of sincerity and outspokenness. Bacamarte

also exposes a good list of failings in his neighbors: almost instinctive plotting and intrigue (Pe. Lopes); nouveau-riche dishonesty, greed and ostentation (the saddle-maker); decadent aristocratic money-wasting (Costa); flattery and opportunism (Crispim Soares); administrative incompetence, ignorance and void oratory (the City Assembly); and, most of all, revolutionary demagoguery and its *pendant*: the passive lack of civic responsibility of the emotionally manipulated crowd (Porfírio, Pina and the three-hundred).

In other words, Simao Bacamarte is not just the figure of villainous power abuse. Like Don Quixote's idealistic heroism in a trivial world, Bacamarte is an old and useless gun in the swamp of Itaguaí. He is the center and the top (privileged observer) of a social structure. This hierarchic and patriarchal pyramid has made domination smooth and automatic – it does not need violent repression any more, but is already psychologically internalized and functions – so to speak – down-side-up! Machado satirizes the Brazilian version of the *servitude semi-volontaire* (La Boétie) highlighting several times the almost chivalric gestures of Simao Bacamarte, who offers his arm while gently and courteously guiding his fools into Casa Verde! Towards him converge the submissive gestures of the *agregados*, the intrigues of the ecclesiastic (who fears any kind of economic or scientific innovation), the ignorant disorientation of the city institutions and the emotional waves and upheavals of family members. All the minor figures of the story – Crispim Soares, Dona Evarista, Padre Lopez, etc. – are engaged in weaving around Simao Bacamarte gestures of insincerity, words of flattery, tactics of intrigue. Machado is the first to pinpoint the whole range of apparently docile dissimulation called "cordiality"¹¹ – the characteristically unstable warmth-and-violence bred by the system of patriarchal favor. Silence, flattery and elaborate void rhetoric suck up any possibility of expressing sincere feelings and frankly outspoken thoughts. This kind of duplicity, which we know of course in other cultural contexts – think of Henry James' Mme. Merle -, is not limited to a distinct social layer (the Court, for example). What appears in other novels as the partial perversion of moral behavior (high society intrigue), crosses in Machado's universe all strata of society, from top to bottom: in other words, perversion is normal! It 'comes naturally' in a society overshadowed by the "loyalty complex" towards the *Senhor da terra* and the "respect-complex" towards the *Senhor do engenho*¹². This instinctive respect and automatic loyalty (which produces blind, instinctive obedience in the citizens' relationship towards the various representatives of power: tenants and capangas, administrators and *agregados*) flaws the entire basis of civic responsibility and freedom.

This is what Simao Bacamarte obtusely perceives when he returns to his own country at the beginning of the story. Coming from Europe (Padova and Coimbra), he notices despite all his shortcomings the socially induced flaws and follies which block progress in Itaguaí: ecclesiastical intrigue, manipulation and menace (reference to the recent shocks between the Bishop of Olinda and the Imperial State – cf. the major events at the end of this article); the notorious mismanagement of the City Assembly (abusive tax system leaving no margin whatsoever for new investments); the

incompetence of the accountant in calculating the future revenues of a new tax created in order to sustain the asylum voted under the irresistible influence of Simao Bacamarte, he finances the vast and well equipped Casa Verde from his own pocket. (“Simão Bacamarte arranja tudo”, chap. 1). But then of course, having convinced a totally incompetent and ignorant Assembly to vote the new institution, he reigns over Casa Verde and the City of Itaguaí like an autocratic sovereign...

The joke is not that he mistakes normal people for madmen, but that his positivistic convictions and hypotheses lead him to identify as “madness” what must have appeared to Machado as the **real Brazilian madness and waste**: the irrational vices produced by the swamp of insincere social relationships: flattery, grandiloquence, irresponsible aristocratic generosity (Costa’s irresponsibility in chapter V appears to be a consequence of guilt feelings for the violence involved in slave-owning and the wrath of his ancestor, tio Salomão¹³ against a beggar), deceit and corruption (wordplay “alabardeiro” means saddle maker and cheater), etc.. Here again, the condensation of the wordplay allows for another over-determination: it is quite inexplicable how a poor saddle-maker can become so rich that he can build a palace furnished with precious pieces from Hungary and Holland. Getting rich with such a poor and old-fashioned activity in a time when Mauá meant to construct a transcontinental railway, can only mean that cheating in the traditional (exploitational) fashion is more lucrative than responsible economic and social innovation!

The psychiatrist’s “two most beautiful cases” of madness, however, appear in chapter IX. Porfírio having overthrown the City Dragons and taken the Assembly, declares that – far from realizing the promised task (destroy the Casa Verde) – he now is all too proud carrying “the responsibility of government inherited from the City Assembly”. With inflated solemnity, he declares his vocation to “protect the public institutions” and invites Simao Bacamarte to “unite, and the crowd will know how to obey”. Bacamarte – far from dreaming with power, pursues his scientific hobby-horse, keenly observing the demagogue’s folly and asking (negligently, the way one would interrogate a real lunatic) how many dead and injured his rebellion had produced – 11 dead and 25 injured is the answer, without any concern for this somber responsibility! Nor does the cheering crowd seem to care much about the bloody outcome – which is the hidden meaning of Bacamarte’s musing and Machado’s sarcastic subtitle “Two lovely cases”! For the normally distracted reader, it is not quite obvious what Machado means with the title “Two lovely cases”. Only a critical second reading brings out the meaning pointing to the totally irresponsible joint madness of the demagogue and the crowd. Machado certainly has in mind the pseudo-popular movements triggered by petty ambitions fostered within the authoritarian clans. Porfírio is the typical example of the (probably mestizo) *agregado*, whose plebeian strife to equal his former master brings out his talent of the demagogue and the self-appointed liberator!¹⁴ His feelings for the community he is leading, however, show a somehow reactive and twisted solidarity¹⁵ and makes the community an instrument of his ambitions. Porfírio emblematically repeats the private appropriation of the city government and alliance-

policies of the traditional families after working his fellow-citizens into inconsistent revolutionary outbreaks.

The name of Porfírio’s revolution – Canjica – reminds the many revolts Dom Pedro II had to face throughout his reign (Balaiada, O Quebra-Quilo, etc.). The two beautiful cases which Simao Bacamarte watches from his veranda mean, of course the joint follies of inconsistent populist leaders and the obedient-and-hysterical reactions of the manipulated masses towards their ephemeral and inconsistent “leaders”. Speedily, as in historical *caudilho*-stories, Porfírio will fall under the next coup of another barber – Pina. Over-satisfied with his alliance with Simao Bacamarte, he neglects to react against the seizure of 50 of his followers who are duly shut up in Casa Verde; and he will follow them there, in the company of many others, including a deputy and the president of the Assembly- all of them dutifully turned over by the obedient new governor.

Machado criticizes the terrible inconsistency of political responsibility in a system without any real liberty of decision-making concerning social and economical, ethical and political matters. There is no critique of science as such (whichever model Simao Bacamarte may have adopted) but about short-sighted, individualistic abuses of science, knowledge and leadership.

III. The triple reversal and the absurdity of Brazilian political representation

This brings us back to Simao Bacamarte and the triple reversal of his ‘scientific’ enterprise.

1. Based on a supposedly scientific hypothesis, he identifies and segregates the ‘mad’ people from the normal (madness = social vices)
2. Casa Verde being overcrowded and the city almost empty, statistics show that the claim of ‘normality’ has falsified the hypothesis: if vice = normal, the perfect and virtuous must be the madmen: they are now identified and hospitalized: ironically, their number is only 18! And they are dutifully cured by inoculation of vicious and corrupt behavior
3. Then Simao Bacamarte suspects that he himself must be “mad”, consults the Assembly and, when they confirm his goodness and perfection, he locks himself up and dies in the Casa Verde.

Simao Bacamarte’s honest, sincere and well-meaning madness highlights the typical and structural flaws of the Second Empire: the lack of civic judgment, the absence of common sense and moral determination. Contrary to what previous critics say about him, Simao Bacamarte should not be suspected of planning “the reciprocal alliance between the emerging discipline and the political power.”¹⁶ Machado points out several times that the asylum Casa Verde was financed by Bacamarte’s own money, and that the alienist turns down the allocations guaranteed by the City Assembly when he finds out that his theory of madness has been falsified by the statistics. His honesty is confirmed by another gesture: he spontaneously reimburses the payments made to

the families for the now-released patients¹⁷. So there is no control-mania *à la* Foucault working in Machado's ironic mind.

It is more likely that Machado ironically pinpoints scientific amateurism and individualistic idiosyncrasies. Consider how Simao Bacamarte treats madness, not as a deviant island, but as a continent as if the world were a **nau dos loucos**: Socrates, Pascal and Mahomet figure in the same list of madmen as Caracala, Caligula and Domitian! Trained by positivists and modern, enlightened minds like Renan, Bacamarte drives subtle enlightenment too far and gets lost in monkish generalizations. Like Bouvard and Pécuchet, he is only partly aware of the world and guides his observations too much from bookish knowledge (another typical error of Brazilian scientific and literary culture in the 19th century). Seemingly unaware of the general flaw of his country, he crowds Casa Verde with inmates and empties the City.

Let us end with a final remark about satirical treatment of political representation in Chapter VI, which narrates the popular upheaval against Simao Bacamarte's supposed tyranny. Significantly, nobody in the crowd is able to distinguish what the psychiatrist really has in mind. The total unawareness of the (modern) procedures of empirical science maintains the people of Itaguaí within the bonds of domestic fantasies: they suspect motives like vengeance, jealousy or greed. Some believe that the psychiatrist is himself mad. Unable to judge and too passive to decide and act, they slide into the typical Brazilian habit of hiding their opinions, waiting for a charismatic figure to set their resentments and irrational passions in motion. Of course this man of action comes from within the intimate circle of the oligarchic administration. Simao Bacamarte's second hand, Porfirio the barber, incites the rage of a handful of citizens and whips up the Assembly to dispossess Simao Bacamarte and destroy Casa Verde. There is a satirical touch in the President's protest, when he claims that "Casa Verde is a public institution" and more so, a public institution that cannot be affected by administrative decisions or (even less so) by popular movements¹⁸. The President is right. Just like the Assembly he presides over, Casa Verde is a public institution, but both seem to owe their existence and activity (like most of the "public" institutions of that period) to the personal interest and private money of oligarchs like Bacamarte. The confused and paradoxical relations of the private and the public sphere mirror Brazilian reality of the 19th century. The reader can guess Machado's hidden nostalgia for men like Bacamarte, whose integrity contrasts with Porfirio's authoritarian and intuitive manipulation of the crowd¹⁹.

Notes and References

¹ Cf. G. Freyre, *Sobrados e Mucambos*, Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1961, vol. I, chap. I; O. Vianna, *Instituições políticas brasileiras*, Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1955, analyzes the fatal, clanic tradition of flawed political representation due to the private appropriation of public power: city assemblies founded by the land-owners who have their tenants and relatives elected under the pressure of jagunços and capangas.

Competing plebeians continue the same power-struggle acting as self-appointed popular leaders. Bacamarte and Porfirio in Machado's story can be seen as figures of the respective social classes.

- 2 Revolta Cabanagem
 - Pará; 1837 Sabinada
 - Bahia; 1842 Revolução dos liberais
 - SP e em Minas; ; 1848 Revolução Praieira
 - Pernambuco; Revolução Farroupilha
 - RS; 1874 O Quebra Quilos
 - movimento sedicioso Pernambuco; Prisão e condenação dos bispos de Olinda e Pará;
- 3 Cf. Alfredo Bosi, "A máscara e a fenda", *Machado de Assis. O Enigma do Olhar*. São Paulo, Atica, 1999, p. 88.
- 4 1845 is the date of the Recognition of the Bill Aberdeen, in 1871, the Law freeing newborn children of slaves (Lei do Ventre livre) is issued and in 1883 takes place the Confederação Abolicionista: the so-called Liberals (mainly the big landowners defending their 'democratic' privileges) are fighting the Imperial efforts of abolition, economic and political reforms.
- 5 Cf. Oliveira Vianna's chapter on "O carisma imperial e a seleção dos 'homens de mil'", *Instituições Políticas Brasileiras, vol. I*, José Olympio, 1955, cap. XIV, 379 ss..
- 6 This 'remanejamento' is of course a cruel allusion to the falsely 'liberal' and caricatural 'democratic' intrigues of against Dom Pedro's efforts of centralization; To understand Machado's irony, it is better to refrain from Marxist and Foucauldian projections and to read Oliveira Vianna's (idealizing) account of Brazilian Political Institutions.... – which Machado would have adhered to!
- 7 Katia Muricy, *A Razão Cética*, Companhia das Letras 1988, p. 36
- 8 Recently, John Gledson's analyses have drawn attention to this more subtle ironies revealing Machado's patriotism
- 9 Gilberto Freyre, *Sobrados e Mucambos*, pp. 117 et seq.; in one of his essays written in English ("Brazil...") Freyre remarks: "The lawyers, university graduates, and doctors of medicine who returned from Coimbra, Paris, England, Germany and, later, those who were educated in Brazil - Olinda, São Paulo, Bahia, where the Brazilian Government established schools of law and medicine - brought to public life, with the relish of their youth, the latest English ideas and the latest French fashions. They undermined the prestige of their fathers and grandfathers and established, by contrast, their superiority over the old country gentlemen. This was done by the white as well as by the quasi-white and colored new men: cap-and-gown aristocrats. **The Emperor Dom Pedro II, a pedantic boy** at the time, **attracted** the sympathy and support of young **men returned from abroad with a European education**, or educated in those **new schools in Brazil**. **Dom Pedro II delighted in presiding, with an air of European superiority**, over cabinets of elderly country gentlemen, who knew only the Latin and Portuguese Classics taught them by priests. Some of these were men of profound good sense, but without any European experience. And it was principally the new French and English culture or learning that gave one prestige."

- ¹⁰ Gilberto Freyre, “Brazil”, subtitle: **Youth and Social and Political Reform:** Notwithstanding the fact that they were young and prone to **sensualism** of the body as well as to **excesses of the mind, bachelors of arts and lawyers, educated in Europe or according to the new theories and methods, became the censors** of their elders’ sexual excesses, which in Brazil were a substitute, especially in the plantations, for more refined tastes or interests of an intellectual nature. When these young men [like Simão Bacamarte] turned **patriots they became ardent nationalists;** and some even laid down their lives in **political martyrdom**, [see Bacamarte’s heroic gesture facing bravely the rebellious crowd] like the students of a Russian novel. Some were reabsorbed again by the native environment; but the majority, once the feeling of **disgust with colonial habits** had become spent or attenuated, became a **creative element of differentiation and of social and political reform.**
- ¹¹ The ambiguity and instability of emotions (oscillating between friendliness and violence) in the Cordiality-complex will be the center of sociological and anthropological investigation in the 1930ies (G. Freyre, S.B. de Holanda)
- ¹² O. Vianna, I, XII, VII, 326 for the complex of loyalty and respect. Vianna describes the different forms of symbolic and economic submission brought about by the autarchy of the latifundio, where a patriarchal clan-leader and landowner appropriates public power and administrative functions. The influence and power over those basically private institutions reaching from the City Assembly (Camara) to charitable or scientific institutions (like Simão Bacamarte’s Casa Verde, the asylum for the madmen) are sustained by a dependant mass of *agregados*, (*capangas*, *cerca-igrejas*, *caceteiros*, *capoeiras* who take care of the defensive functions, manipulating elections or blackmailing voters); cf. 323-333.
- ¹³ There is a wordplay involved in the story of Costa, the nephew of tio Salomão: Salomon, in Ernest Renan’s laic reading of the Cantic of Canticles, is not the venerable figure of divine Grace, but the despotic oriental patriarch, polygamous and anti-ethical... In this view, when Costa’s cousin tries to explain the apparently superstitious idea that Costa has to carry the fate of tio Salomon’s curse, Machado hints at the terrible heritage of slavery, which disabled the descendants of the big landowners.
- ¹⁴ Irony concerning what Freyre calls the mimetic tendencies: cf. Brazil: And though the qualities of the Brazilian statesmen during the Empire period was imitative rather than creative, some of them were remarkable for their political talent as well as for their tact and ability as diplomats.
- ¹⁵ Freyre, Brazil, about the waves of insurrection involving the mestizo administrators: The “Minas Insurrection” was a revolution of university men and liberal Catholic priests. So also were the two revolutions in Pernambuco in 1817 and 1824, and the so-called Tailors’ Revolution, in Bahia. In most of those liberal movements the leaders were Brazilian who had been educated under the influence of French or English ideas, and some of the most prominent leaders were mestizos.
- ¹⁶ Katia Muricy, *A Razão Cética*, Companhia das Letras 1988, p. 36
- ¹⁷ This may be another hint to Dom Pedro II’s notorious modesty and scrupulous care about public finances....
- ¹⁸ Cf. chapter VI, first paragraph. The indignation about this refusal transforms Porfirio:

he now feels the ambition of government and his rhetoric enthusiasm lifts up the minds of the pusillanimous citizens, gathering 300 - although the majority, “because of anxiety or habits of education, would not descend into the streets...”

- ¹⁹ According do O. Vianna, this sort of charismatic leader (who generally lacks instruction and has to deal with a total lack of institutions preparing and orienting public decisions) has to be a *Teireisias*, guided by intuitions or superstitions. Cf. Vianna I, 393²⁰ José Murilo de Carvalho, *D. Pedro II*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2007; cf. pp.133 e 136.