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**ROMEO AND JULIET IN MACHADO DE ASSIS' LAST NOVEL:  
SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY AT THE END OF  
NINETEENTH CENTURY?**

**Adriana da Costa Teles\***

**RESUMO:** *Memorial de Aires*, último romance de Machado de Assis, traz uma intertextualidade explícita com uma das peças mais famosas de Shakespeare, *Romeo e Julieta*. O escritor brasileiro, no entanto, apresenta uma versão alternativa para a famosa história de amor. Em *Memorial de Aires*, Fidélia, diferente de Julieta, não comete suicídio após a morte de seu amado. Ela conhece outro homem e recomeça sua vida. Tal abordagem da peça sugere uma ironia que merece ser analisada. Nosso objetivo é discutir essa correlação intertextual, tentando verificar se Machado de Assis conserva a visão trágica de Shakespeare da realidade.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Machado de Assis, Shakespeare, *Memorial de Aires*, *Romeo e Julieta*, tragédia.

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**ABSTRACT:** *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, Machado de Assis' last novel, has an explicit intertextuality with one of the most famous Shakespearean plays, *Romeo and Juliet*. The Brazilian writer, though, gives an alternative version of the well-known love story. In *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, Fidelity, unlike Juliet, does not commit suicide after the death of her lover. She meets another man and restarts her life. This approach to the play suggests an irony which deserves to be analyzed. Our aim is to discuss this intertextual correlation, focusing on whether Machado de Assis conserves Shakespeare's tragic view of reality.

**KEYWORDS:** Machado de Assis, Shakespeare, *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, *Romeo and Juliet*, tragedy

Readers of Machado de Assis are familiar with his frequent references to canonical writers. Thackeray, Shelley, Sterne and Goethe are just some of the names that frequently appear in the Brazilian author's novels and short stories. Among Machado's common references we can find one of the most important writers of Western literature, William Shakespeare.

In *Counselor Ayres' Memorial* (1908), Machado de Assis' last novel, amongst many references to literary classics, of particular interest is his reference to one of the most famous Shakespearean plays, *Romeo and Juliet*.

At the very outset of the book, we are introduced to the story of Fidelity and Eduardo, a couple who fall in love and then discover that they are from rival enemy families. Although the ingredients of the Shakespearean play are so well known that an explicit reference is almost unnecessary, the intertextuality is made clear by Ayres, the narrator of this novel written in a diary format, who, in the first pages of the book, says:

Romeo and Juliet here in Rio, between agriculture and the law, - for our Romeo's father was a lawyer in the city of Parahyba - is one of those *rencontres* that one would have to know all about in order to explain (1972, p. 15).<sup>1</sup>

The couple's story, part of a major narrative that includes other parallel stories, diverges from the source, however, in decisive points. This is due to the fact that, although Machado retains main points of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, such as the rivalry and hate between the couple's families, he changes the story in decisive points and gives a different destiny to the novel's main character, Fidelia. Unlike Juliet, Machado's heroine does not commit suicide but meets another man and marries again.

Instigated by this ironic approach undertaken by the Brazilian writer we want to discuss how *Romeo and Juliet* is represented in *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*. Our aim is to investigate Machado's utilization of the tragic elements in the Shakespearean play.

### **1. Fidelia: Parayba's juliet**

In the opening pages of *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, the reader meets the novel's main character, Fidelia. Besides being young and beautiful, Fidelia has another trait that makes her very special in the narrator's eyes: she is a widow. The narrator, very curious about her, seeks more information about her and her widowhood. The information, given to him by his sister Rita, is set down in his diary, which means the book we are reading. In this way the reader can know Fidelia and Eduardo's story and why the female character is now alone and widow.

As in Shakespeare's play, Machado's couple also falls in love without knowing each other's identity. According to the

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<sup>1</sup> "Romeu e Julieta aqui no Rio, entre a lavoura e advocacia, - porque o pai do nosso Romeo era advogado na Paraíba - é um desses encontros que importaria conhecer para explicar" (1976, p. 17).

narrator, they meet for the first time at the theater and “when they learned who they were, the harm had already been done”<sup>2</sup> (1972, p. 33). But Santa-Pia, Fidelity’s father, discovers that his daughter is in love with his enemy’s son, and takes her to their farm, threatening her with severe words, telling her that he will expel her from his house if she insists on the relationship. Fidelity, however, insists on marrying Eduardo. As her father refuses his permission Fidelity becomes very sad, passing her days locked in her room, crying until she becomes sick.

Faced with this extreme situation, Santa-Pia retracts and allows his daughter to marry Eduardo Noronha, but on the condition that he never receives her or talks to her again; he will not even go to their wedding. After recovering, Fidelity goes to Rio de Janeiro where she stays at her uncle Campos’ house and marries Eduardo the following year.

Soon after the marriage, the couple decides to go to Europe, where Eduardo dies in Lisbon. Fidelity decides to take the husband’s body back to Rio de Janeiro, where she starts to live. Around two years later Ayres starts his diary and meets the widow, which is the starting point for this very interesting narrative.

The reader can follow Fidelity’s subsequent steps through Ayres’ comments in his diary. Always ready to watch and analyze the widow’s behavior, the narrator registers the arrival of a man named Tristão, Aguires’ godson, who comes to Rio from Lisbon. Around ten months after his arrival, Fidelity and Tristão get married and go to the Portuguese capital, where they decide to live.

The comparison between Romeo and Juliet’s tragic love story and that of Eduardo and Fidelity is made naturally. What is interesting to notice, though, is not the obvious intertextuality, but Machado’s ironic approach to the Shakespearean play. When the narrator draws our attention to the similarity between the stories he provokes the reader to focus on the new version. In this way, the reader sees that what is really interesting is not the similarities but the differences between the two stories.

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<sup>2</sup> “quando souberam quem eram, já o mal estava feito” (1976, p. 17).

Machado focuses on the rivalry between the families which represents an obstacle to the couple's love. But the conflict is handled differently by Machado. In his novel the families become aware of the love affair at the outset, which propitiates a long sequence of quarrels and negotiations before the marriage, unlike what happens in *Romeo and Juliet*. In the play, the arrangements for the wedding are made secretly and when the truth comes to light the couple are already dead.

Another interesting aspect is Fidelity's behavior after the unexpected ending of her romance with Eduardo. In the Shakespearean play, when each young lover thinks their counterpart is dead they decide to commit suicide. They seem to believe that life without the other makes no sense at all. The world that surrounds them seems too hostile. In the novel, though, when Eduardo dies in Lisbon, leaving Fidelity a widow and alone, her attitude is not so radical as that of the Shakespearean heroine. Unlike Juliet, who could not live without her Romeo, Fidelity returns to Brazil and she is soon ready to restart her life with a new love. The end of the relationship between Romeo and Juliet, represented by the tragic death of both lovers, gains an alternative that is very far from tragic in Machado's text. As we can see, Fidelity chooses the opposite path to that of the Shakespearean heroine.

Machado's version of this well-known story raises some interesting questions. First of all, is it reasonable of the reader to expect from Fidelity, a nineteenth-century character<sup>3</sup>, an attitude resembling that of the sixteenth-century one? Would an attitude like Juliet's be plausible in a nineteenth-century context? And, finally, if we consider a less tragic hypothesis, should we expect Fidelity to renounce her own life and retire in sorrow, being so young?

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<sup>3</sup> *Counselor Ayres' Memorial* was published in 1908, but the plot is set twenty years before, in 1888-1889.

## 2. Tragedy and modernity

Analyzing Fidelity and Eduardo's story, we could say that irony is a basic element of Machado's version of the love story. This irony, however, appears to be in the way the Brazilian writer handles the tragic. So, to understand this ironic reconstruction of *Romeo and Juliet* we must first understand the characteristic aspects of the genre. It is important to know what makes a story tragic and how these elements are handled by Machado in his text.

As with so many other literary terms, such as romanticism or realism, for example, the term tragedy is usually used without strict definition. So, everything that is in some way sad or involves death is commonly referred to as tragic. This confusion about the term is the result of the difficulty in defining it.

About this difficulty Bornheim points out that the tragic phenomenon is a very complex thing that has challenged critics. According to him the difficulty in the definition is due to the fact that the tragic is something rebellious and does not submit itself completely to theories:

[...] the main difficulty that the comprehension of the tragedy offers does not reside so much in this process of dissolution, not even in the divergence that exists between the different theories that attempt to interpret it. The main difficulty comes from the resistance involved in the tragic phenomenon itself. It really concerns something that is rebellious to any kind of definition, which does not submit itself completely to theories. [...] The interpretations remain beyond the tragic, and struggle with a reality that cannot be reduced to concepts (our own translation).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [...] a principal dificuldade que oferece a compreensão da tragédia não reside tanto neste processo de dissolução, nem mesmo na divergência existente entre as diversas teorias que pretendam interpreta-la. A principal dificuldade advém da resistência que envolve o próprio fenômeno trágico. Trata-se, em verdade, de algo que é rebelde a qualquer tipo de definição, que não se submete inteiramente a

Aware of the difficulty of trying to delimit such a complex phenomenon we are going simply to focus on some basic aspects of tragedy and the tragic, in an attempt to establish some guidelines for our discussion on the intertextuality created by Machado. We should also point out that we are not concerned with the structural aspects of the genre, as exposed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, but rather the characterization of the tragic view of life, which is fundamental to tragedy.

Aristotle did not define the genre but basically talked about its structure. So, for a definition of tragedy we have to look to modern theories and interpretations of it. We propose to seek theoretical support in the writing of four authors: Gerd Bornhein, Albin Lesky, Lígia Militz da Costa and Maria Luísa Ritzel Remédios.

Bornhein, dealing with the characterization of the genre, says that the main requirement for a tragedy to be defined as such is the existence of a tragic hero (1975, p. 73). But the author also stresses the importance of the world in which this hero is inserted. According to him, this world has its own order (1975, p. 73). To Bornhein the tragic conflict is possible due to an imbalance between two poles, man and the moral and social atmosphere in which he is inserted.

Albin Lesky has a similar way of thinking about tragedy. Talking about the subject independent of time he considers that:

The tragic contradiction can be situated in the world of the Gods, and their opposed poles can be called God and man, or it can be of adversaries that raise against one other from man's own breast (our own translation).<sup>5</sup>

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teorias. [...]. As interpretações permanecem aquém do trágico, e lutam com uma realidade que não pode ser reduzida a conceitos (1975, p. 71).

<sup>5</sup> A contradição trágica pode situar-se no mundo dos deuses, e seus pólos opostos podem chamar-se Deus e homem, ou pode tratar-se de adversários que se levantem um contra o outro no próprio peito do homem (1976, p. 25).

Considering the basic aspects of tragedy in general – and not only modern tragedy – he agrees with Bornheim that the conflict between man and order in his world represents the essence of the tragic. The tragic contradiction, the name he gives to this imbalance between hero and reality, is, according to him, situated in the world of the gods, in the case of ancient Greek tragedy, or internalized – man’s own breast – in the case of Renaissance tragedy. Both writers agree that the conflict – or tragic contradiction, as Lesky describes it – is irreconcilable.

For Bornheim, hero and the meaning of order are resolved in terms of conflict and reconciliation. In so far as one of these elements loses meaning or strength the tragic aspect of the action weakens (p.75). As a consequence the tragic action loses its *raison d’être*. This point of view reinforces the idea of conflict as a basic principle of tragedy. If the conflict is conciliated the situation is attenuated and the tragic aspect of the drama is not fully characterized.

Although conflict is a basic element of tragedy – whether classical or modern – we must consider the specific characteristics of the modern tragic hero, which arise from a very specific cultural moment.

The genre has appeared in Western culture at very specific moments, particularly at turbulent periods in man’s history, in which established ideas were being shaken by new developments.

Tragedy arose in ancient Greece, around 500 B.C.. During this period of Greek civilization man was passing from a mythical way of thinking to a rational one. Mythology, long cultivated as an explanation for reality was unable to cope with new developments in philosophy and mathematics.

Tragedy reappeared in Western culture in the sixteenth century when man was once again facing changes that would shake his way of seeing reality. The period, generally referred to as the Renaissance, was marked by changes in many areas of science and culture, such as the Reformation, the beginning of Capitalism, Copernicus’s discoveries and so on. In this way, man was once again seeing that his established ideas were not sufficient to explain reality. According to Baumgarten, it was in



the “[...]context marked by crisis, transformation and the replacement of values, that tragedy reappeared in modern times, becoming once again the expression of a transitional period of human history” (our own translation).<sup>6</sup>

Man in the Renaissance was passing through a turbulent transitional period. The feeling of been isolated from the other gave rise to a very specific kind of tragedy. According to Baumgarten, “modern tragedy, [...], has its conflict centered on the individual: it is man who struggles with himself, determining an interiorization of the conflict, that is a result of the character of the hero” (our own translation).<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Greek tragedy, which focused on the conflict between God and man, in the Renaissance model we have an interior conflict. About this Remédios and Costa say:

The modern tragedy of character distinguishes itself in general from the old tragedy of destiny; destiny in modern drama is no longer transcendent and dependent on the Gods or the powers above the Gods anymore; but it is implicit in the hero's character. [...] The tragic conflict centers on the individual [...]. The hero is now alone (our own translation).<sup>8</sup>

In Renaissance tragedy man is part of an individualistic society and his acts occur as a response to this reality. So the conflict the hero experiments in modern tragedy is personal, it is lived by an individual, who must resolve the imbalance between himself and the world in which he lives.

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<sup>6</sup> “contexto marcado pela crise, pela transformação e pela substituição de valores, ressurgiu a tragédia nos tempos modernos, sendo ela novamente a expressão de um período de transição da história humana” (1985, p. 46)

<sup>7</sup> “A tragédia moderna, [...], tem seu conflito centrado no indivíduo: é o homem em luta consigo mesmo, determinando uma interiorização do conflito, que é uma decorrência do caráter do herói” (1985, p. 47).

<sup>8</sup> “A tragédia moderna do caráter distingue-se em geral da tragédia antiga do destino; o destino no drama moderno não é mais transcendente e dependente dos deuses ou dos poderes acima dos deuses; mas está implícito no caráter do herói. [...] O conflito trágico centra-se no indivíduo [...]. O herói agora está só” (1988, p. 38).

### 3. *Counselor Ayres's memorial: the attenuation of conflict*

The stories of Romeo and Juliet and Fidelia and Eduardo have something in common, a conflict, which is the basic aspect of tragedy, according to Bornheim and Lesky. This conflict is basically the same in both cases: two people love each other and cannot stay together because of the rivalry and hate between their families. But although this basic point is recuperated, the main elements of the tragic appear to be subverted in *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*.

The lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* are involved in the conflict and suffer its consequences deeply from the beginning of the play, trying all the time to escape from the limits imposed by the world in which they are immersed. In the second act of the play, for example, Juliet ponders why she is in love with a man who is the son of her family's enemy:

JULIET: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.  
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.  
(II.ii.35-38)

Romeo does not behave differently; he seems to suffer in the same way as Juliet:

JULIET: What man art thou, that thus bescreen'd in night  
So stumblest on my counsel?  
ROMEO: By a name,  
I know not how to tell thee who I am:  
My name dear saint, is hateful to myself,  
Because it is an enemy to thee;  
Had I it written, I would tear the word.  
(II.ii.55-61)

But the conflict in which the characters are involved is irreconcilable. It is rooted in the action from the first scene until the end of the play. A good example of this can be found in the scene in which Tybalt provokes Romeo to a fight in a public square. Romeo tries to ignore the provocation showing that he is prepared to leave the place. But Tybalt insists on the provocation, which consists not only of challenging him to fight but also of referring to him as a “boy”, which was considered an insult:

TYBALT: Romeo, The love I bear thee, can afford  
No better term than this thou art a villain.  
ROMEO: Tybalt, The reason I have to love thee,  
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage  
To such a greeting: villain am I none.  
Therefore farewell, I see thou know'st me not.  
TYBALT: Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries  
That thou hast done me, therefore turn and draw.  
ROMEO: I do protest I never injur'd thee,  
But love thee better then thou canst devise:  
Till thou shalt know the reason for my love,  
And so good Capulet, which name I tender  
As dearly as mine own, be satisfied.

(III. i. 61-71)

As we can see, Romeo refuses to fight and is ready to pardon any swearing from Tybalt. But he has no means of stopping the conflict between the families, even he himself refuses to fight the enemy. That is why Mercutio, seeing that Romeo is not going to accept the challenge, goes to fight Tybalt himself. So all Romeo's efforts to avoid violence and put an end to the dispute do nothing to ease the situation. The dispute is far beyond an easy resolution and the fight ends with his friend's death:

MERCUTIO: O calm, dishonourable, vile submission:  
Alla stocatta carries it away.  
Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?  
TYBALT: What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO: Good king of cats, nothing but one of your  
Nine lives, that I mean to make bold withal, and as you  
Shall use me hereafter dry-beat the rest of the eight. Will  
You pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears?  
Make haste, let mine be about your ears ere it be out.

TYBALT: I am for you.

ROMEO: Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

MERCUTIO: Come sir, your passado.

ROMEO: Draw Benvolio, beat down their weapons:

Gentlemen, for shame forbear this outrage,

Tybalt, Mercutio, the Prince expressly hath

Forbid this bandying in Verona streets,

Hold Tybalt, good Mercutio.

*<Tybalt under Romeo's arm thrusts Mercutio in; and flies.>*

(III. i. 72-88)

Romeo is obliged to fight in order to revenge Mercutio's death. The result of this new confrontation is another death involving the families and an even tenser situation:

ROMEO: He gone in triumph, and Mercutio slain?

Away to heaven, respective lenity,

And fire and fury, be my conduct now.

Now Tybalt take the villain back again,

That hate thou gav'st me, for Mercutio's soul

Is but a little way above our heads,

Staying for thine to keep him company:

Either thou or I, or both, must go with him.

TYBALT: Thou wretched boy that didst consort him here,

Shalt with him hence.

ROMEO: This shall determine that.

*They fight. Tybalt falls.*

(III. i. 122-132)

Although Romeo is disposed to behave differently the local situation is too strong for him. So Romeo and Juliet's wishes are insufficient to change the dominant practices. They try to

break free from the limits of the world in which they live, but the local order overwhelms any simple individual attempt.

The final attempt to overcome the conflict is by means of Friar Laurence and the poison plan. But it also goes wrong. When Romeo sees Juliet sleeping and concludes she is dead, he faces a desperate situation. The same happens to Juliet. The death of Romeo appears to confirm that there is no solution. The external order cannot be challenged in the context of the play, as Friar Laurence confirms when Juliet and he see that Romeo is dead:

I hear some noise Lady, come from that nest.  
Of death, contagion and unnatural sleep:  
*A greater power than we can contradict*  
*Hath thwarted our intents, come, come away,*  
Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead:  
And Paris too: come, I'll dispose of thee,  
Among a Sisterhood of Holy Nuns:  
Stay not to question, for the watch is coming,  
Come go good Juliet, I dare no long stay.  
[my italics] (V. iii. 160-169)

Although Friar Laurence tries to convince Juliet, she refuses to leave the place and, in so doing, accepts the external order. So death, which was Romeo's choice when he believed Juliet to be dead, is the only solution for the heroine.

In the case of *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, things work very differently. Although the conflict exists and, at first, seems likely to make the fulfillment of their love impossible, this is not what happens. When Fidelity and Eduardo's families discover the relationship and prohibit it, this gives rise to a long process of negotiation. The conflict between the families does not end but the couple can do what they want. After Fidelity's uncle interferes on their behalf her mother talks to Santa-Pia and he finally agrees to the marriage, although he establishes some conditions:

(...) her mother resolved to beg her husband to give in and at last he did, but only on condition that he would never again receive his daughter in his house or speak to her; he would not attend the wedding, nor did he want to know anything about her (1972, p. 35).<sup>9</sup>

As we can see, although the conflict exists, it is not as irreconcilable as in *Romeo and Juliet*. Unlike Romeo and Juliet, who try to break through the restraints of the situation and cannot, Eduardo and Fidelity are successful in their attempt. Attenuating the conflict Machado breaks with a fundamental component of tragedy.

In *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, the interference and companionship of other people both before and after the wedding diminishes the solitude of the hero. As we have seen, after Eduardo's death Fidelity returns to Rio. Her mother is then dead and her father does not wish to see her any more, but she continues with her life. She makes new friends and gets closer to her uncle, who tries to reconcile father and daughter, in which effort he is successful just before Santa-Pia's death. So, we can see that in the novel Fidelity not only obtains her father's permission to marry but also his pardon. After Santa Pia's death Fidelity even thinks about reconciling father and husband posthumously:

Fidelity had her father's photograph and her husband's placed in one frame and hung in the living room. She never did it during the baron's life out of respect to his feelings; now that death had reconciled them she wants to reconcile them in effigy (1972, p. 86).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "(...) a mãe resolveu pedir ao marido que cedesse, o marido concedeu finalmente, impondo a condição de nunca mais receber a filha nem lhe falar; não assistiria ao casamento, não queria saber dela" (1976, p. 30)

The novel's narrator, Ayres, seems to be a spokesman from a new era, a time when man is no longer so isolated in his conflicts and whose choices are no longer so proscribed:

If I should see her (Fidelia) in the same place, in the same posture, I still would not doubt her love of Tristão. It all could exist in the same person without either hypocrisy on the widow's part or infidelity on the part of the bride to be. It would be the accord or the clash between the individual and the species. The remembrance of her dead husband lives in her, notwithstanding her present suitor's influence; it is there in all its old sweetness and melancholy and in the secret beginnings of a heart that learned it's A B C's from one who is dead. But the genius of the species has brought the dead man in a new form, and in this form gives him to her, restores him to her, and recommends him" (1972, p. 154).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, we can say that there is a kind of dissolution of the tragic in *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*. Machado's ironic approach to *Romeo and Juliet* works in such a way as to subvert the genre. As we have shown, the Brazilian writer changes the plot in the points which would characterize the story as tragic and in so doing deconstructs its original meaning.

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<sup>10</sup> "Fidélia mandou encaixilhar junto as fotografias do pai e do marido, e pô-las na sala. Não o fez nunca em vida do barão para respeitar os sentimentos deste; agora que a morte os reconciliou, quer reconcilia-los em efígie" (1976, p. 62)

<sup>11</sup> "Se eu a visse no mesmo lugar e postura, não duvidaria ainda assim do amor que Tristão lhe inspira. Tudo poderia existir na mesma pessoa, sem hipocrisia da viúva, nem infidelidade da próxima esposa. Era o acordo ou o contraste do indivíduo e da espécie. A recordação do finado vive nela, sem embargo da ação do pretendente; vive com todas as doçuras e melancolias antigas, com o segredo das estréias de um coração que aprendeu na escola do morto. Mas o gênio da espécie faz reviver o extinto em outra forma, e aqui lho dá, aqui lho entrega e recomenda" (1976, p. 104).

#### 4. Final words

Machado and Shakespeare have something in common: they both had a brilliant perception of their time and knew how to express it. Shakespeare captured the spirit of his era. With his conception of drama with what we now understand to be plays with a psychological content he reproduced in his plots the anguish of Renaissance man and his tense relationship with the world and its conflicts. Machado de Assis, on the other hand, knew how to portray man's behavior in society in his own epoch. Using elaborate language and always breaking with the aesthetic limits of the novel, building dialogs between his texts and other genres; he left us texts that still instigate discussion of man's behavior.

As we have seen, in *Counselor Ayres' Memorial*, the dialog between Machado's text and *Romeo and Juliet* is not merely a thematic recuperation of the conflict or dramatic source, but establishes an interesting relationship with Shakespeare's play. In Machado's last novel, the intertextuality built with *Romeo and Juliet* works in such a way as to indicate changes in man's posture towards conflict almost three hundred years after the original plot was written.

In his adaptation of this Renaissance story to a nineteenth-century Brazilian context, Machado transposes the traditional love conflict to a different society and a very different period. Fidelity and Eduardo are the products of another cultural and social context and propitiate a new outcome to the old and well-known story.

Subverting the main aspects of the genre, Machado depicts a time when it had become easier to resolve man's conflicts. This trait appears to show that, at the end of nineteenth century, both surviving rules and social behavior are mediated by attitudes that are, above all, convenient.



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