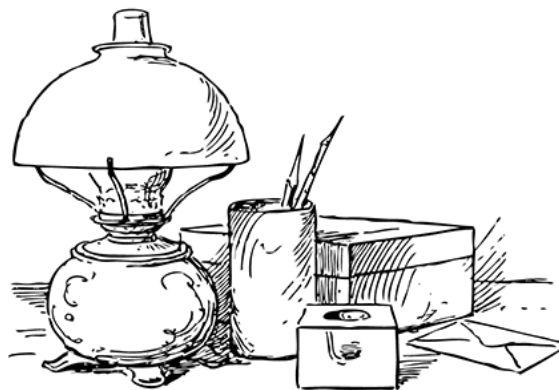


# Epistolary Memories

from Brazilian Writers :

*a glimpse of life and art.*



Organização e supervisão :  
CAROLINA ALVES MAGALDI  
e LUÍSA ARANTES BAHIA

# Sumário

## Sumário

How the project came to be .....	3
Historical Characters Index .....	5
REGARDING LOVE : .....	11
1.Machado de Assis .....	12
2.Machado de Assis .....	17
3.Gonçalves Dias .....	20
4. Rui Barbosa.....	24
REGARDING JOY AND SORROW : .....	27
1.Machado de Assis .....	28
<b>2. Monteiro Lobato.....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.Álvares de Azevedo.....	34
REGARDING ART AND LITERATURE .....	37
<b>1. Euclides da Cunha .....</b>	<b>38</b>
2. Graciliano Ramos.....	41
3.Mário de Andrade.....	44
4. Joaquim Nabuco.....	55
FICHA TÉCNICA.....	59

# Epistolary Memories



from Brazilian Writers :  
*a glimpse of life and art.*

## How the project came to be

*Carolina Alves Magaldi  
Luísa Arantes Bahia*

Developed at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, in Minas Gerais, Brazil, the book *Epistolary Memories from Brazilian Writers: a glimpse of life and art* was developed with students from the BA in Translation Studies, professor Carolina Alves Magaldi and doctoral student Luísa Arantes Bahia, who was an intern at the literary version class.

During said class, we decided to explore the possibility of translating letters written by Brazilian writers into English, given that it is a genre of great importance to the history of literature and would provide a glimpse into the thoughts, hopes, miseries and dreams of some of the most recognizable figures in Brazilian history.

The letters were chosen by the young translators themselves, then grouped together by recurring themes. Afterwards, a unified translation project was built and used by both the translators and the reviewers. In order to make the work more approachable to foreign audiences, the translators also constructed an index of historical figures, providing basic biographical information regarding the authors and addressees of the selected letters.

The recurring themes were Love, with letters by Machado de Assis to Carolina de Novais and to Joaquim Nabuco, Gonçalves Dias to Teófilo Leal, Rui Barbosa to Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira; Everyday life, loss and grief, with letters by Machado de Assis to Henrique Chaves, Monteiro Lobato to Godofredo Rangel, Álvares de Azevedo to Maria Luísa Mota Azevedo; Art and Literature, with letters by Euclides da Cunha to Francisco Escobar, Graciliano Ramos to Cândido Portinari, Mário de Andrade to Fernando Sabino, Joaquim Nabuco to Machado de Assis.

The following initiative will hopefully contribute to the visibility of Brazilian authors to a wider foreign audience, as well as catalyzing a discussion about the particulars, challenges and potential of translating into foreign languages.

# Historical Characters Index



- Álvares de Azevedo

Álvares de Azevedo (1831-1852) grew up in Rio de Janeiro, where he began his studies, but later moved to São Paulo in 1847 to study Law at the Faculty of Law of Largo de São Francisco. During his studies, he stood out for his ability to learn languages and for his early literary production. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete his course due to health problems, including pulmonary tuberculosis and a tumor in the iliac fossa, and passed away at the age of 20.

His work includes various poems, letters and essays. His main literary influences were Goethe, Chateaubriand, and Alfred de Musset and he is considered an important figure in Brazilian poetry. His work continued to be read and reissued until the early decades of the 20th century. Furthermore, he is the patron of chair 2 of the Brazilian Academy of Letters.



- Cândido Portinari
- 

Candido Portinari was a Brazilian painter born in 1903. Throughout his life he is calculated to have produced over five thousand pieces, amongst which there are sketches, regular sized paintings and gigantic murals. In 1956 he painted the panels *Guerra e Paz* (War and Peace), which were gifted to the United Nations. They remain at the UN headquarters in New York, having briefly been displayed at the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro in 2010. Perhaps his most widely recognized works are the ones portraying the poor rural workers of Brazil. He passed away due to lead poisoning from the paint he used in his work, but remained active in his profession even after he was aware of the devastating effects of said component to his general health. He remains one of the best-known painters in Brazilian history.



- Carolina de Novais

Carolina Augusta Xavier de Novais Machado de Assis, born in 1835 in Porto, Portugal, came to Brazil in 1866, after her mother's death, to live with her brother Faustino. Through her brother, Carolina met Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, with whom she got married in 1869. Little is known about Carolina, who lived such a secret life at Rio de Janeiro, but she is supposed to have a great influence over Machado's works as it is said by the biographer Lucia

Miguel Pereira: “Machado, like any self-taught individual, had huge gaps in his culture, many of which seem to have been filled thanks to Carolina's guidance (Pereira,1936, p.119)”<sup>1</sup>. In 2021, the book *O livro de Carolina – A improvável biografia de Carolina Machado de Assis* (Libretos, 2021, 232 p.) was published by Rosa Busnello, who wrote the novel based on hints found in historical documents.



- Euclides da Cunha

Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909) was a Brazilian writer, journalist and professor, author of the book *Os Sertões*, which narrates and analyzes the events of the Canudos War, where he was sent by the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* to cover the event. His work is considered a reference in the Brazilian literary canon and a landmark of Brazilian Pre-Modernism, a social literature focused on the concrete problems of the country. Euclides Rodrigues da Cunha was born in Cantagalo on January 20, 1866. Motherless at the age of three, he spent his childhood under the tutelage of two aunts in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, and a year in the care of his grandmother in Bahia. The author was elected, on September 21, 1903, to chair No. 7 of the Brazilian Academy of Letters.



- Fernando Sabino

Fernando Tavares Sabino (1923–2004) was a Brazilian writer; his most notorious work is *O Grande Mentecapto*, which earned him the Jabuti Award in 1980 (the most important literary award in Brazil). He spent 33 years writing said book. His book *O menino no espelho* (1982) should also be mentioned, being read in most Brazilian schools as part of the literary education of their students.



- Francisco Escobar

Francisco Escobar was born in Jaguari on December 8, 1865. He was a Brazilian politician and intellectual, recognized as one of the most erudite intellectuals of his time. His most memorable friendship was established with his closest friend, the writer Euclides da Cunha, having helped with the revision of *Os Sertões*. Self-taught, he did not attend school;

---

<sup>1</sup> Machado, que se formou sem mestre, teria lacunas de cultura, das quais algumas parecem haver sido preenchidas graças às indicações de Carolina. PEREIRA, Lucia Miguel. *Machado de Assis - estudo crítico e biográfico*. São Paulo: Cia Editora Nacional, 1936

With great ease of learning, at the age of 13 he mastered Latin and had a great interest in music. Francisco Escobar was also known for his legal knowledge, although he did not have a law degree. He died in Poços de Caldas on December 30, 1924, aged 59.



- Godofredo Rangel

José Godofredo de Moura Rangel was born on November 21, 1884, in Três Corações, Minas Gerais. He was a Brazilian writer and translator. At the age of 12, he was already writing, from small handwritten newspapers, with news reports, literary pages, to plays in which he also played female roles. He graduated in law school and became a teacher, later he was a public prosecutor and a judge. Rangel translated around 70 works, many of them published by Monteiro Lobato at *Companhia Editora Nacional*. Godofredo Rangel passed away in Belo Horizonte, aged 66.



- Gonçalves Dias

Antônio Gonçalves Dias was born on 10th August 1823 in Caxias, Maranhão. He was a prominent poet of the first generation of Romanticism in Brazil, known for its allusions to local colour and to its indigenous roots. In addition to his poetry, he was a journalist, lawyer, and ethnologist, having studied Brazilian folklore and indigenous languages extensively. His most celebrated works are the poem *I Juca Pirama*, in which he reconstructs the sound of drums during a indigenous warrior's death song and the poem *Canção do exílio*, written in 1843, which has been references and parodied ever since.



- Graciliano Ramos



Graciliano Ramos de Oliveira was born to a middle class family in 1892, He spent most of his formative years in his home region of the northeast of Brazil, which would be later portrayed in most of his literary works. As a young adult, he moved to Rio de Janeiro and worked extensively as a journalist, having returned to the northeast following a family tragedy in which he lost four of his siblings to the bubonic plague. After settling down in his home state of Alagoas, he took on political roles, becoming the mayor of the town of Palmeira dos índios. He was accused of supporting the communist movement, which led him to change direction in his writing, leading him to produce his greatest work, *Barren Lives*, first published in 1938. He is widely regarded as a remarkable novelist, essayist, journalist and translator, having contributed greatly to the regionalist movement of Brazilian modernism.



- Henrique Chaves

Henrique Chaves (1849-1910) was the owner of a well-known newspaper in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil at that time, *Gazeta de Notícias*, and a friend of Machado de Assis, who considered him to have journalism in his blood, as it was so natural for him to exert this function.



- Joaquim Nabuco

Joaquim Aurélio Barreto Nabuco de Araújo was born in Recife on August 19, 1849. Nabuco was a Brazilian politician, diplomat, historian, jurist, speaker and journalist who graduated from the Faculty of Law of Recife. He was one of the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters. National Historian Day is celebrated on the date of his birth. He was one of the greatest diplomats of the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889), as well as an orator, poet and memoirist. His book *Minha formação* appears as an important work of memoirs, where the paradox of someone who was educated by a slave-owning family, but chose to fight in favor of the slaves, is perceived. Nabuco died in Washington, on January 17, 1910, aged 60.



- Machado de Assis

Machado de Assis (1839-1908) is the most renowned author of Brazilian literature and one of the greatest authors of all time. He was among the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and its first president. Besides being a writer of prose, poetry, and drama, Machado was also an essayist, censor, translator, and literary critic. His works are generally divided between his first phase, more closely linked to Romanticism, from *Ressurreição* (1872) to *Iaiá Garcia* (1878) and his second phase, more closely connected to Realism and to English literary influences, from *Epitaph of a small winner* (1881) to *Memorial de Aires* (1908). Machado had a commitment to enriching Brazilian literature, translating from the French and becoming a patron of theatrical productions in Rio de Janeiro.



- Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira

Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira was born in the state of Bahia. Additional information about her is lacking, the majority of it is regarding her marriage with Ruy Barbosa, which happened on November 23th, 1876. She and Barbosa had five children: Maria Adélia, Alfredo Rui, Francisca, João Rui e Maria Luísa.





- Maria Luísa Motta Azevedo

Maria Luísa Silveira da Motta Azevedo married Inácio Manoel Álvares de Azevedo and had eight children. One of them is the famous Brazilian writer Álvares de Azevedo.



- Mário de Andrade

Mário Raul de Moraes Andrade (1893–1945) was a Brazilian poet, novelist, short story writer, museum curator, literary critic, art historian and photographer. His academic background was built as a musician, but it was as a writer that he became the central figure of the Brazilian vanguard in the early 20th century. He was responsible for works such as *Paulicéia Desvairada* (1922), *Amar, Verbo Intransitivo* (1927), and *Macunaíma* (1928), which is his most famous book and the main representative of the Modernist movement in Brazil. He founded the Department of Culture of São Paulo.



- Monteiro Lobato

José Bento Renato Monteiro Lobato was born in the city of Taubaté, São Paulo, in 1882. He was a short story writer, essayist and translator. Graduated in Law School and worked as a public prosecutor until he became a farmer, after receiving an inheritance left by his grandfather. Faced with a new lifestyle, Lobato began publishing his first short stories in newspapers and magazines, and later brought together a series of them in the book *Urupês*, his masterpiece as a writer. At a time when Brazilian books were published in Paris or Lisbon, Monteiro Lobato also became an editor, starting to edit books in Brazil as well. He is well known among children, as he dedicated himself to a writing style with simple language where reality and fantasy are side by side. His most famous collection of stories is *Sítio do Picapau Amarelo*. He died on July 4, 1948, in São Paulo, at the age of 66.



- Rui Barbosa

Ruy Barbosa (also spelled Rui Barbosa, after the orthographic change in 1943) was born in Salvador, Bahia, in 1849. He was a renowned politician, diplomat and writer. As a politician, he is known for allegedly instigating the *Revolta Armada*, a political movement against the centralizing government led by authoritarian marshal Floriano Peixoto.

As a diplomat, Barbosa had a vital contribution in the Second Hague Conference, in 1907, defending the legal equality of nations as a principle, whose consequences are seen as essential by some analysts and for that he is known in Brazil as *Águia de Haia*, Eagle of Hague.

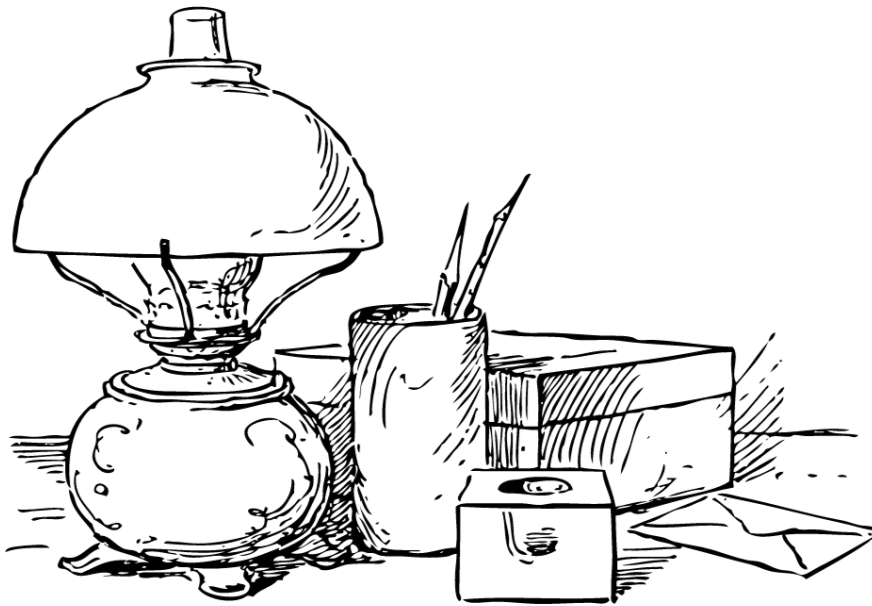
As a writer, Barbosa was granted a position at the 10<sup>th</sup> chair of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, whose patron is Evaristo da Veiga.



- Teófilo Leal

Teófilo Leal was born in Maranhão. He was the cousin and brother-in-law of Ana Amélia Ferreira Vale, who was Gonçalves Dias' great love. Leal was Dias' best friend.

# REGARDING LOVE



# Machado de Assis

Carolina de Novais

From: Machado de Assis  
To: Carolina de Novais

The following letter was written by Machado de Assis to his fiancé, at the time, Carolina de Novais. The content of the letter expresses Machado's love for Carolina and his anxiety to be reunited with his beloved again. It also reveals what he was planning for his future with Carolina and where they would live. The F. mentioned in the letter is Faustino Xavier de Novais, Carolina's brother and Machado's friend who lived in Brazil and was the one who introduced him to Carolina. While the M. was about Miguel Joaquim Xavier de Novais, her older brother, who was revealed as the family guardian, after their parents' death. The couple got married in the same year of the letter, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, three months after Faustino's death.

As for the translation, we have opted for a change in the order of some sentences for a more fluent reading. For the same reason, the translation of some words was determined by the meaning, rather than the form, as was the case of "calcula" which was translated as "wonder". The lexical choices gave priority to words with greater use in the time relative to that in which the letter was written.



Translation: Carolina Couto<sup>2</sup>

Reviewing: Carlos Colucci de Castro Azevedo

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1869.

My dear C.

---

<sup>2</sup> Carolina Couto is a literary translator currently studying Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) at Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF).

I received two letters of yours yesterday, after two days of waiting. Do you wonder the delight I had, how I read, reread, and kissed them! My sorrow had converted into sudden delight. I was so distressed to hear from you that I left the *Diário* one hour ago to go home, and indeed I found both of the letters, one of them should have come sooner, but was delayed, with no doubt, because of the post office. Yesterday you must have received, as well, two letters of mine; one of them, the one that was written on Saturday, I took it on Sunday at eight o'clock to the post office, without remembering (forgive-me!) that on Sunday the boat leaves at six o'clock in the morning. At four o'clock I took the other letter, and both must have headed towards you yesterday in the two-o'clock boat in the afternoon. Therefore, it wasn't just me who suffered from delayed letters. I wonder about your affliction based on my own, and I believe that will be the last one.

I had already heard from here that M. had rented the house of *Laranjeiras*, nevertheless what I did not know was that this journey to Juiz de Fora was being planned. I suppose, as you do, that the atmosphere does not do F. any good; but I can also see that it is not possible just to have it as motivation. However, you remember perfectly that the relocation to another house here in Rio would be excellent for all of us. F. brought up the subject, once, and it is everything I needed to have it done. The house will be found because my heart is committed to this. I suppose, however, that it is worth having a new conversation with F. on Saturday and being positively authorized by him. Even so, we have time to spare; 23 days; it is enough for love to work a miracle, especially since this is not a miracle at all.

You will naturally say that I always condescend to you. Why not? You have suffered so much that you even lost consciousness of your empire; you are always ready to obey; you marvel at being obeyed. Do not be marvelled; it is quite natural; you are as docile as I am; reason speaks in both of us. You requested so many fair things, that I would not have even the subterfuge to refuse if I wanted to refuse anything to you, and I do not.

Relocating here from Petrópolis is of the essence; the atmosphere does not do F. any good, and the house over there, it is a real danger for whoever lives there. If you were here, you would not be so scared of the thunder, you who are not so Brazilian yet, but will be if it is the will of God. You accuse me of having poor faith in you? You have and do not have reason; I do have faith; but if I have not told you anything, it is because it was not worth telling. My previous heart's story I must give it to you briefly in two chapters: one love, unrequited; the other, mutual. About the first one, I do have nothing to say; from the other I do not complain myself; I was the first to break it. Do not accuse me for it; there are situations that do not extend without suffering. A friend lady of mine compelled me, with her word of advice, to tear the pages of this sombre romance; I made it in pain, but remorseless. That is all.

Your natural question is this one: which chapter belonged to Corina? Inquisitive! It was the first one. What I have to say is that, from both, the second one was the most cherished. However, even the first, or the second one has nothing to do with the third and last chapter of my heart. Stäel says that the first loves are not the strongest, because they are born purely from the need of love. So, it is with me; but besides it, there is a capital reason, and that is that you do resemble nothing like the ribald women I have known. Heart and spirit as yours are rare treasures; so high and good soul, such capricious sensitivity, such a righteous reason are not goods that nature would spread it full hands to your sex. You belong to the small number of

women who still know how to love, feel, and think. How shall I not love you? Beside it you have an endowment that enhances everything: you have suffered. It is my ambition to say to your great soul in discouragement: “rise, believe and love; here it is a soul who also comprehends and loves you.”

The responsibility to make you happy is certainly capricious; although I accept it with joy, and I am certain that I will be able to fulfill this pleasant duty.

See, darling, I also have foresights about my happiness; but what is it if not the fair apprehension of someone who has not been completely happy yet?

I am so grateful for the flower you sent me; I kissed it twice as if it were on you, for although parched and unscented, it provided me with a bit of your soul.

Saturday is the day of my going; there are few days left and it is so distant! What to do? Resignation is necessary for those standing on heaven's door; we must not challenge the destiny that is so good to us.

I turn myself once again to the house matter; let me know if you approve what I have said above, that is, if you think that is better to talk once again to F. and receive his authorization, in order not to appear to M. that I am taking an incompetent intervention in his family's business. For now, we must take all these precautions. After... After, darling, we will conquer the world, because only is the true master of the world who is beyond your adorable glories and your sterile ambitions. We are both in this instance; we love each other; and I live and die for you.

Write to me and believe in the heart of yours

Machadinho.



2 de Março.

Minha querida C.

Recebi ontem duas cartas tuas, depois de dois dias de espera. Calcula o prazer que tive, como as li, reli e beijei! A minha tristeza converteu-se em súbita alegria. Eu estava tão aflito por ter notícias tuas que saí do Diário há uma hora para ir a casa, e com efeito encontrei as duas cartas, uma das quais devera ter vindo antes, mas que, sem dúvida, por causa do correio foi demorada. Também ontem deves ter recebido duas cartas minhas; uma delas, a que foi escrita no sábado, levei-a no domingo às oito horas ao correio, sem lembrar-me (perdoa-me!) que ao domingo a barca sai às seis horas da manhã. Às quatro horas levei a outra carta e ambas devem ter seguido ontem na barca das duas horas da tarde. Deste modo, não fui eu só quem sofreu com demora de cartas. Calculo a tua aflição pela minha, e estou que será a última.

Eu já tinha ouvido cá que o M. alugara a casa das Laranjeiras, mas o que não sabia era que se projetava essa viagem a Juiz de Fora. Creio, como tu, que os ares não fazem nada bem ao F.; mas compreendo também que não é possível dar simplesmente essa razão. No entanto, lembras perfeitamente que a mudança para outra casa cá no Rio seria excelente para todos nós.

O F. falou-me nisso uma vez e é quanto basta para que se trate disto. A casa há de encontrar-se, porque empenha-se nisto o meu coração. Creio, porém, que é melhor conversar outra vez com o F. no sábado e ser autorizado positivamente por ele. Ainda assim, temos tempo de sobra; 23 dias; é quanto basta para que o amor faça um milagre, quanto mais isto que não é milagre nenhum.

Vais dizer naturalmente que eu condescendo sempre contigo. Por que não? Sofreste tanto que até perdeste a consciência do teu império; estás pronta a obedecer; admiras-te de seres obedecida. Não te admires, é coisa muito natural; és tão dócil como eu; a razão fala em nós ambos. Pedes-me coisas tão justas, que eu nem teria pretexto de te recusar se quisesse recusarte alguma coisa, e não quero.

A mudança de Petrópolis para cá é uma necessidade; os ares não fazem bem ao F., e a casa aí é um verdadeiro perigo para quem lá mora. Se estivesses cá, não terias tanto medo dos trovões, tu que ainda não estás bem brasileira, mas que o há de ser espero em Deus. Acusas-me de pouco confiante em ti? Tens e não tens razão; confiante sou; mas se te não contei nada é porque não valia a pena contar. A minha história passada do coração resume-se em dois capítulos: um amor, não correspondido; outro, correspondido. Do primeiro nada tenho que dizer; do outro não me queixo; fui eu o primeiro a rompê-lo. Não me acuses por isso; há situações que se não prolongam sem sofrimento. Uma senhora de minha amizade obrigou-me, com os seus conselhos, a rasgar a página desse romance sombrio; fi-lo com dor, mas sem remorso. Eis tudo.

A tua pergunta natural é esta: qual destes dois capítulos era o da Corina? Curiosa! Era o primeiro. O que te afirmo é que dos dois o mais amado foi o segundo.

Mas nem o primeiro nem o segundo se parecem nada com o terceiro e último capítulo do meu coração. Diz Stäel que os primeiros amores não são os mais fortes porque nascem simplesmente da necessidade de amar. Assim é comigo; mas, além dessa, há uma razão capital, e é que tu não te pareces nada com as mulheres vulgares que tenho conhecido. Espírito e coração como os teus são prendas raras; alma tão boa e tão elevada, sensibilidade tão melindrosa, razão tão reta não são bens que a natureza espalhasse às mãos cheias pelo teu sexo. Tu pertences ao pequeno número de mulheres que ainda sabem amar, sentir e pensar. Como te não amaria eu? Além disso tens para mim um dote querealça-os mais: sofreste. É minha ambição dizer à tua grande alma desanimada: “levanta-te, crê e ama; aqui está uma alma que te compreende e te ama também”.

A responsabilidade de fazer-te feliz é decerto melindrosa; mas eu aceito-a com alegria, e estou certo de que saberei desempenhar este agradável encargo.

Olha, querida, também eu tenho pressentimentos acerca da minha felicidade; mas que é isto senão o justo receio de quem não foi ainda completamente feliz?

Obrigado pela flor que me mandaste; dei-lhe dois beijos como se fosse em ti mesma, pois que apesar de seca e sem perfume, trouxe-me ela um pouco de tua alma. Sábado é o dia de minha ida; faltam poucos dias e está tão longe! Mas que fazer? A resignação é necessária para quem está à porta do paraíso; não afrontemos o destino que é tão bom conosco.

Volto à questão da casa; manda-me dizer se aprovas o que te disse acima, isto é, se achas melhor conversar outra vez com o F. e ficar autorizado por ele, a fim de não parecer ao M. que eu tomo uma intervenção incompetente nos negócios de sua família. Por ora, precisamos de todas estas precauções. Depois... depois, querida, queimaremos o mundo, porque só é verdadeiramente senhor do mundo quem está acima das suas glórias fofas e das suas ambições estéreis. Estamos ambos neste caso; amamo-nos; e eu vivo e morro por ti. Escreve-me e crê no coração do teu

Machadinho.

ASSIS, M. de. Duas cartas de Machado de Assis a Carolina. In: Guardados da Memória. Disponível em: <https://www.academia.org.br/abl/media/RB%2056-GUARDADOS%20DA%20MEMORIA.pdf> Acesso em: 26 out. 2023



# Machado de Assis

J o a q u i m N a b u c o

From: Machado de Assis  
To: Joaquim Nabuco

A month after the passing of his wife, Carolina Xavier de Novaes, in 1904, Machado de Assis sent this letter to Joaquim Nabuco as a second reply to one received previously, since the only thing he could answer at that moment was “thank you”. It was first published in 1923 in *Machado de Assis e Joaquim Nabuco: comentários e notas à correspondência entre estes dois escritores*, a collection of 53 letters exchanged between the two writers from 1865 to 1908, organized and commented by Graça Aranha. In this translation, publication names have not been changed and the syntactic constructions were adapted to English but maintaining the author's writing style, as in the word "acabrunha", which is not commonly used in Portuguese, and has been translated into "dispirits", a word that has a similar frequency of use, as well as a corresponding meaning.



Translation by: Julia Baltar de Brito<sup>3</sup>  
Reviewer: Eduardo Lisovski Schmidt

Rio de Janeiro, November 20th, 1904

My dear Nabuco,

---

<sup>3</sup> Julia Baltar de Brito has a degree in Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), besides professional practice in literary proofreading and generalist translation. Throughout her academic career, she has acquired teaching experience working in education, as well as literary translation.

So far away, by other means, the news of my great misfortune has reached you, and you immediately expressed your sympathy by telegram. The only word with which I thanked you is the one I now send you, not knowing any other that can express all that I feel and that dispirits me. The best part of my life is gone, and here I am, alone in the world. Note that loneliness is not what burdens me, as a matter of fact, it is pleasant since it is a way of living with her, hearing her, watching the great care that this companion from 35 years of marriage had with me; but there is no imagination that does not wake us up, and vigil increases the longing for our loved one. We were both old, and I was counting on dying before her, which would be a great favor; firstly, because I would not find anyone who could better assist me in my death; secondly, because she leaves some relatives who would console her from missing me, and I have none. Mine are the friends, and they are truly the finest; but life scatters them, in space, in the concerns of the soul, and in their own individual careers. Here I stay, for now, in the same house, in the same bedroom, with the same ornaments of hers. Everything reminds me of my sweet Carolina. Since I am on the verge of eternal rest, I will not spend much time remembering her. I will meet her — she will wait for me.

I cannot, my dear friend, answer your letter of October 8th at this moment; I received it a few days after my wife's passing, and you understand that I can only speak of this deep stroke.

Until next time, soon; then, I will answer you what concerns the matter of that letter, which, for its affection and sincerity, has arrived at the time of the best medicine. Receive this hug from your sad old friend,

Machado de Assis



Rio de Janeiro, 20 de novembro de 1904

Meu caro Nabuco,

Tão longe, em outro meio, chegou-lhe a notícia da minha grande desgraça, e você expressou logo a sua simpatia por um telegrama. A única palavra com que lhe agradei é a mesma que ora lhe mando, não sabendo outra que possa dizer tudo o que sinto e me acabrunha.

Foi-se a melhor parte da minha vida, e aqui estou só no mundo. Note que a solidão não me é enfadonha, antes me é grata, porque é um modo de viver com ela, ouvi-la, assistir aos mil cuidados que essa companheira de 35 anos de casados tinha comigo; mas não há imaginação que não acorde, e a vigília aumenta a falta da pessoa amada. Éramos velhos, e eu contava morrer antes dela, o que seria um grande favor; primeiro porque não acharia a ninguém que melhor me ajudasse a morrer; segundo, porque ela deixa alguns parentes que a consolariam das saudades, e eu não tenho nenhum. Os meus são os amigos, e verdadeiramente são os melhores; mas a vida os dispersa, no espaço, nas preocupações do espírito e na própria carreira que a cada um cabe. Aqui me fico, por ora na mesma casa, no mesmo aposento, com os mesmos adornos seus. Tudo me lembra a minha meiga Carolina. Como estou à beira do eterno aposento, não gastarei muito tempo em recordá-la. Irei vê-la, ela me esperará.

Não posso, meu caro amigo, responder agora à sua carta de 8 de outubro; recebi-a dias depois do falecimento de minha mulher, e você compreende que apenas posso falar deste fundo golpe.

Até outra e breve; então lhe direi o que convém ao assunto daquela carta, que, pelo afeto e sinceridade, chegou à hora dos melhores remédios. Aceite este abraço do triste amigo velho

Machado de Assis

*Correspondência Machado de Assis & Joaquim Nabuco*. Organização de Graça Aranha. Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Letras/Topbooks, 2003, pp. 126-127.

# Gonçalves Dias

Teófilo Leal

From: Gonçalves Dias  
To: Teófilo Leal

The letter entitled *A dor que se comunica*, translated here as *The pain that communicates*, was written by Gonçalves Dias, one of the main poets of the first generation of Romanticism in Brazil. It is addressed to Teófilo Leal, brother-in-law and cousin of Ana Amélia Ferreira Vale, who was a great passion of the author. However, his beloved's family rejected him and he suffered until the end of his life from this love. In September, 1852, he married Olímpia Coriolano da Costa. In the letter, Gonçalves Dias expresses a feeling of sadness, loneliness, and unhappiness in his marriage to Olímpia. He says that he no longer cares about death and no longer takes pleasure in life. At the end of the letter he sends his regards to Inesota, Ricardinho and Mrs. Mariquinhas.

The main translation challenges are the inversions that are part of the author's writing style and are, therefore, present throughout the letter. Due to this aspect, they were kept when it was possible to construct them in English and were written differently when the inversion did not occur in English. Such as when translating “admiras-te?” into “are you surprised?” and “Viesse ela quando Deus” into “If it could come whenever God”.



Translation by: Luiza Maia Amaral<sup>4</sup>  
Reviewers: Julia Baltar de Brito e Charlie Milo Bergo

Rio [de Janeiro], July 10, 1853

---

<sup>4</sup> Luiza Maia Amaral is a general translator with an undergraduate degree in Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) at Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF).

Mate and friend of my heart,

It has been a long time since I have received any letters from you, I know what sorrows you have been through and I forgive you, however, the pain that communicates becomes less, and, at least on my behalf I tell you that in my hours of sadness and grief, which I have many, I am affected by not seeing you by my side: I let myself be overcome by discouragement, and in the age when on one's shoulders one carries the strength of life, death sometimes seems to me like a great, immense happiness.

Are you surprised? What am I going to do if this is the work of my imagination? With her it seems to me that even in heaven I would have reasons to consider myself unhappy.

I am tired, my friend: I believe that I decline very quickly. I have been doing nothing, except finish the Memoirs of the Institute, after I arrived in Rio, I have no taste for anything, not even for a trip to Europe, because I am afraid of leaving my wife in a strange land, far from her people. Day by day I feel weaker, more dejected, more incapable of serious studies, of hard work. It may be my imagination, I have had it more than once now; but this time I really think it is.

But if that happens, I will have made a terrible, very terrible mistake of getting married. I was not terrified, death was not impressive, on the contrary, there was in it, perhaps even now, something that attracts me. If it could come whenever God sent it, I would accept it gratefully, as I thank him for the life he has given me. I have found you, my friend, and your example convinces me that happiness does not lie in deserving it. What, then, could I complain about? Friend of yours (and Morais too), why should I separate from you now, when perhaps I shall never see you again? Friend of you and of his, I have experienced myself that there are pleasures in life that make it desirable.

What would I care, then, if I were to die? My relatives? What can I do for them, or what do they need of me? My friends? I have always been a burden to them. Without any care that could make the last moments bitter for me, apart from longing, I often fantasized about dying alone, but placidly and peacefully, without tears, without screams, without company as well. I would imagine myself in my study room, with my authors next to me, from where I could see the Sun setting, and the nature and the sky smiling at me for the last time, as the afternoon turns, and feeling the exhalation of the earth, the whisper of the sea and the perfume of the flowers. That I might be able to say goodbye to all this in the best of all my compositions, that would come to you dewy with tears of longing, and then, when the lyre would fall from my weak hands, continue still in a vague fantasy, hearing the faintest sounds, feeling the most

tenuous perfumes, like one who falls asleep to the sound of music that fades away, and in the midst of vaporous shadows, of radiant images, of a distant harmony, faint little by little, until in the last ray of sunlight my soul would flee to the feet of God, more full of errors than crimes, more full of tears than remorse.

Now you will no longer see that I die as one who is in a stupor in the middle of the street, they run, they scream, they cry, boys and children, all in a mess and confusion that, if the poor devil does not give his soul to it, it is because the mercy of God is infinite.

You will see that I die like this; taking broths by force, covered in sinapisms from head to toe, surrounded by a pharmacy on balance day, with crying faces, with tears of the kind and a yellow wax candle in hand! This is what is called a good death, deliver me, o Lord, from evil men.

Decidedly, rather than dying like this it is better to live for all eternity.

Goodbye, the image of death that awaits me makes me laugh against my will.

From your mate and friend

Gonçalves Dias

Best regards and kisses to Inesota and Ricardinho: the regards are given to Mrs. Mariquinhas.



Rio [de Janeiro], 10 de julho de 1853

Mano e amigo do coração,

Há muito tempo que não tenho recebido cartas tuas, sei por que desgostos tens passado e te desculpo, no entanto torna-se menor a dor que se comunica, e, ao menos de mim o digo que nas minhas horas de tristeza e de pesar, que as tenho e muitas, sinto de te não ver ao meu lado: deixo-me vencer do desânimo, e na idade que é para os ombros a força da vida, a morte se me antolha às vezes como uma grande, imensa felicidade.

Admiras-te? Que lhe hei de eu fazer se é culpa da minha imaginação? Com ela está-me parecendo que mesmo no céu teria motivos para me reputar infeliz.

Estou cansado, meu Teófilo: declino e creio que bem rapidamente. Nada tenho feito, a não ser a conclusão da Memória do Instituto, depois que cheguei ao Rio, para nada tenho gosto,

nem mesmo para fazer uma viagem à Europa, porque tenho medo de deixar minha mulher em terra estranha e longe dos seus. Sinto-me de dia em dia mais fraco, mais abatido, mais incapaz de estudos sérios, de trabalhos aturados. É possível que seja imaginação, já mais de uma vez a tenho tido antes de agora; mas desta vez creio que é deveras.

Mas se assim acontecer, terei feito mal e muito mal em me casar. Não me aterrava, não me impressionava a morte, pelo contrário, havia nela, há talvez ainda agora, alguma coisa que me atrai. Viesse ela quando Deus a mandasse que eu aceitaria agradecido, como lhe agradeço a vida que me deu. Encontrei-te, meu Teófilo, e o teu exemplo me convence de que a felicidade não está em merecê-la. De que, pois, me poderia eu queixar? Amigo teu (e do Morais também), por que vos separarei eu agora, quando talvez vos não torne a ver mais? Amigo teu e dele, experimentei em mim que há na vida prazeres que a tornam desejada.

Que me importava, pois, morrer? Meus parentes? que lhes posso eu fazer ou que precisam eles de mim? Meus amigos?! sempre lhes fui pesado. Sem cuidados que me amargurassem os últimos momentos, a não ser a saudade, fantasiava-me muitas vezes um morrer solitário, mas plácido e tranquilo, sem lágrimas, sem gritos, sem companhia também. Figurava-me no meu quarto de estudo, com os meus autores ao lado, donde pudesse ver o Sol no ocaso, e a natureza e o céu que me sorrissem pela última vez, ao correr da viração da tarde, e sentindo a exalação da terra, o sussurro do mar e o perfume das flores. Que me fosse dado dizer um adeus a tudo isto na melhor de todas as minhas composições, que vos chegassem orvalhadas com as lágrimas da saudade, e depois, quando das mãos frouxas me caísse a lira, continuar ainda num fantasiar vago, ouvindo os sons mais fracos, sentindo mais tênues os perfumes, como quem adormece ao som da música que se afasta, e no meio de sombras vaporosas, de imagens radiantes, de uma harmonia longínqua, desfalecer pouco a pouco, até que no último raio que desferisse o Sol fugisse minha alma para os pés de Deus, mais cheia de erros que de crimes, mais de lágrimas que remorsos.

Agora já não há de ver que morro como quem teve um ataque de estupor no meio da rua, correm, gritam, choram moleques e crianças, tudo numa balbúrdia e confusão que, se o pobre diabo não dá sua alma ao mesmo, é por ser infinita a misericórdia de Deus.

Hás de ver que morro assim; tomando caldos à força, coberto de sinapismos dos pés à cabeça, cercado de uma farmácia em dia de balanço, com caras de choro, com as lágrimas do estilo e uma vela de cera amarela na mão! Eis ao que se chama uma boa morte, de que Deus nos livre e guarde.

Decididamente, morrer assim mais vale viver por toda a eternidade.

Adeus, a imagem da morte que me espera faz-me rir bem contra a minha vontade.

Do teu mano e amigo

Gonçalves Dias

Lembranças e beijos à Inesota e ao Ricardinho: as lembranças dá-as a dona Mariquinhas. *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional: correspondência ativa de Gonçalves Dias*. Rio de Janeiro: Divisão de Publicações e Divulgação de Biblioteca Nacional, 1971, pp. 141-142.

# Rui Barbosa

Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira

From: Rui Barbosa  
To: Maria Augusta Viana Bandeira

The following letter was written by Rui Barbosa, born in Salvador, Bahia, on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1849. The recipient is his wife, Maria Augusta, and this letter was sent while Rui Barbosa was hiding during the uprising of *Revolta Armada* led by the Navy of Rio de Janeiro against the Heads of the Brazilian Republic, Marshall Deodoro da Fonseca and Marshall Floriano Peixoto. Being considered a very influential person against the Marshalls, Barbosa was forced to hide in order to survive.

In this letter, we chose to keep the author's writing style even when grammatically atypical, such as "to go to you to hug you and them". Also, there is a slight fluctuation of formality levels, using very formal language when describing his circumstances, and informal register when talking about his family, for example when he calls his wife by the nickname of Cota. The last point worth mentioning is that in some sentences the word order was changed, given that it would be unintelligible otherwise. In these cases, we chose to elucidate the meaning, such as in the very last sentence.



Translation by: Carlos Colucci de Castro Azevedo<sup>5</sup>  
Reviewers: Thiago Montes e Isabella S. Cordeiro

[Rio de Janeiro], September 7, [18]93

---

<sup>5</sup> Generalist translator with an undergraduate degree in Letras (English language teaching), and a current undergraduate in Letras (Portuguese/English Translation), both at Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF).



My dear Maria Augusta,

I am experiencing for the first time the “pleasures” of being constrained and constrained innocently. Notwithstanding the nobility with which I am treated, the good camaraderie we live with the house owner, a sort with distinctive and kindly qualities, my state of spirit, by the absence of yours and our little children, is infinitely painful, to such a point that sometimes the senseless desire of exposing myself to all dangers possesses me, to go to you to hug you and them.

Good thing you have such good friends around you, and find yourself sheltered in a safe and affectionate protection, as in the house where you are. Thank them all on my behalf for the service they provided me, comforting me with a feeling of relative calmness resulting from these facts.

Send me by courier, in a few lines, meticulous news about Joãozinho and our daughters. Was he fully recovered? What a day, what a party, the day we once again hug each other, my dear Cota!

I will attempt to write to you daily. The courier will tell you certain news, which I cannot write to you. Absolute secrecy about the place I am located!

I need clothes and other objects. But you must not request they take them from home; for I know that opposite of our house there is a watchman. Carlito, with Amaral, who volunteered to buy them, and put them in a small travel bag, that they will buy as well, but not in my name. Later, the courier will be in charge of making it arrive here.

Goodbye, my beloved Cota. I cannot describe the longing from your

Rui



[Rio de Janeiro], 7 de setembro [de 18]93

Minha Maria Augusta,

Estou experimentando pela primeira vez as “delícias” de ser preso, e preso inocente. Não obstante a fidalguia com que sou tratado, a boa camaradagem em que vivemos com o dono da casa, tipo de qualidades simpáticas e distintas, minha situação de espírito, pela ausência tua

e de nossos filhinhos, é infinitamente dolorosa, a tal ponto que às vezes se apodera de mim a vontade insensata de expor-me a todos os perigos, para te ir abraçar a ti e a eles.

Ainda bem que tens em roda de ti tão bons amigos, e que te achas abrigada numa proteção afetuosa e segura, como a da casa em que estás. A todos eles agradece por mim o serviço que me prestam, confortando-me com o sentimento da tranquilidade relativa que desse fato me resulta.

Dá-me pelo portador, em algumas linhas, notícia minuciosa do Joãozinho e de nossas filhas. Teria ele ficado inteiramente bom? Que dia, que festa a daquele em que nos tornarmos a abraçar, minha Cota!

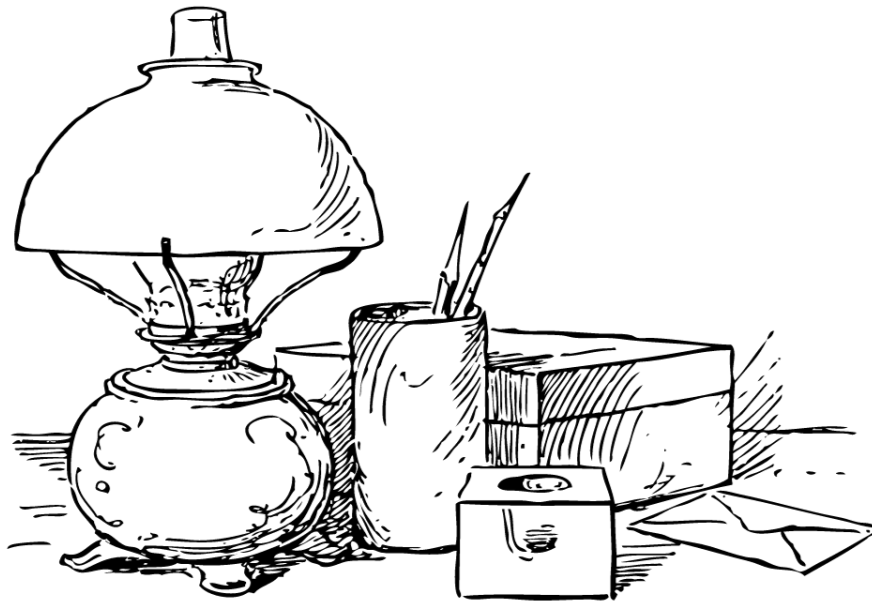
Procurarei escrever-te diariamente. O portador dar-te-á certas notícias, que não posso escrever-te. Sigilo absoluto sobre o lugar onde me acho!

Preciso de roupas e outros objetos. Mas não debes mandar buscá-la em casa; porque sei que em frente à nossa porta há guarda. Carlito, com o Amaral, que se incumbam de comprá-la, e metê-la numa malinha de viagem, que comprarão também, mas não em meu nome. Depois o portador encarregar-se-á de fazê-la chegar até aqui.

Adeus, minha adorada Cota. Não te sei dizer as saudades do teu  
Rui

Rui Barbosa. Cartas à noiva. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1982, pp. 226-227.

# REGARDING JOY AND SORROW



# Machado de Assis

Henrique Chaves



From: Machado de Assis  
To: Henrique Chaves

This letter was written by Machado de Assis, and addressed to Henrique Chaves. In this correspondence, Machado de Assis mourns the passing of Eça de Queiroz, an important Brazilian novelist, and praises this eminent writer for his life and talent. Although Machado had criticized Queiroz's masterpiece *O Primo Basílio* by the time it was published, he grew admiration for the Portuguese writer for his wits and style that, even if different from his own, were held in great respect.



Translation by: Larissa Silva Leitão Daroda<sup>6</sup>  
Reviewer: Carolina Alves Magaldi

August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1900.

My dear Henrique Chaves,

What shall I say to make this calamity worthwhile? For novelists, it is as if we lost the best of the family, the slenderest and most valid. And such a family is not only composed of those who entered the life of the spirit with him, but also of the relics of the other generation

---

<sup>6</sup> Larissa Leitão Daroda is a Bachelor in Translation English-Portuguese from the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, and a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the same institution, where she researches the stylistics of translator writers. She is a literary and technical translator, especially in the medical field, since Medicine is her other degree, having already published several works in the area.

and, finally, the blossom of the new one. That which started with strangeness ended with admiration. The same ones he hurt when he exercised direct and daily criticism, forgave him the evil of pain for the honey of the tongue, for the new graces he gave them, for the old traditions he preserved, and plus the strength that united them one another, as only great art unites them. Art existed, the language existed, not even could the two peoples, without them, preserve the heritage of Vieira and Camões; but each step of the century renews the previous one and each generation has its prophets.

Antiquity consoled itself from those who died young, considering it was the fate of them whom the gods loved. When death meets a Goethe or a Voltaire, it seems that these great men, in the extreme age they have reached, need to enter eternity and infinity, owing nothing to the land that heard and admired them. Where it is without compensation is at the point in life when the ingenuity was raised to the highest degree, like that Eça de Queiroz – and like our dear Ferreira de Araújo, whom we took to the cemetery yesterday –, still has a lot to give and complete. In the full force of age, evil seizes them and takes from their hands the pen that works and evokes, paints, sings, performs all the crafts of spiritual creation.

As expected as this death was, it felt sudden. Domício da Gama, when he sent me his regards a few months ago, already trowed he agonized. I do not know if he arrived in time to offer him mine. Neither he nor Eduardo Prado, his friends, will have seen all that tough and refined spirit fade away, but one and the other must tell it to those from this side who speak the same language, admire the same books, and esteemed the same man.



Rio de Janeiro, 23 de agosto de 1900

Meu caro Henrique Chaves,

Que hei de eu dizer que valha esta ca-lamidade? Para os romancistas é como se perdêssemos o melhor da família, o mais esbelto e o mais válido. E tal família não se compõe só dos que entraram com ele na vida do espírito, mas também das relíquias da outra geração e, finalmente, da flor da nova. Tal que começou pela estranheza acabou pela admiração. Os mesmos que ele haverá ferido, quando exercia a crítica direta e cotidiana, perdoaram-lhe o mal

da dor pelo mel da língua, pelas novas graças que lhe deu, pelas tradições velhas que con-servou, e mais a força que as uniu umas e outras, como só as une a grande arte. A arte existia, a língua existia, nem podíamos os dois povos, sem elas, guardar o patrimônio de Vieira e de Ca-mões; mas cada passo do século renova o anterior e a cada gera-ção cabem os seus profetas.

A antiguidade consolava-se dos que morriam cedo considerando que era a sorte daqueles a quem os deuses amavam. Quando a morte encontra um Goethe ou um Voltaire, parece que esses grandes homens, na idade extrema a que chegaram, precisam de entrar na eternidade e no infinito, sem nada mais dever à terra que os ouviu e admirou. Onde ela é sem compensação é no ponto da vida em que o engenho subido ao grau sumo, como aquele Eça de Queiroz – e como o nosso querido Ferreira de Araújo, que ontem fomos levar ao cemitério –, tem ainda muito que dar e perfazer. Em plena força da idade, o mal os toma e lhes tira da mão a pena que trabalha e evoca, pinta, canta, faz todos os ofícios da criação espiritual.

Por mais esperado que fosse este óbito, veio como repentino. Domício da Gama, ao transmitir-me há poucos meses um abraço de Eça, já o cria agoni-zante. Não sei se chegou a tempo de lhe dar o meu. Nem ele, nem Eduardo Prado, seus amigos, terão visto apagar-se de todo aquele rijo e fino espírito, mas um e outro devem contá-lo aos que deste lado falam a mesma língua, ad-miram os mesmos livros e estimavam o mesmo homem.

*Revista Brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Letras, 2004, pp. 307-308.

# Monteiro Lobato

Godofredo Rangel



From: Monteiro Lobato  
To: Godofredo Rangel

This letter is a correspondence between the Brazilian writers Monteiro Lobato and Godofredo Rangel. On February 20, 1943, Lobato sent it to report the death of his son, Edgard. The letter has a poetic, philosophical tone of reflection on life and death. Lobato is sad, but proud of his children's trajectory, both of whom died in their youth.

Regarding translation, no major problems were found. We chose to maintain the elaborate inversions and constructions of the original. The proper names were kept as in the original, highlighting here the nickname used by the author to refer to his wife, Maria Pureza da Natividade, called by him "Purezinha".



Translation by: Luísa Arantes Bahia<sup>7</sup>  
Reviewer: Larissa Silva Leitão Daroda

São Paulo, February 20, 1943

Rangel,

So it is. I lost my second son, Edgard, a golden boy, just like Guilherme. It is impossible to have better children than mine, and maybe that's why they were called so early. Guilherme passed at 24, and now Edgard at 31. He never forgot the first letter he received in the mail, one from you.

---

<sup>7</sup> Luísa Arantes Bahia has a degree in Letras (English language teaching) and also Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora. She has a master's degree and is currently a phd student in the postgraduate program - Literary Studies at the same institution where she researches a famous brazilian writer, Carolina Maria de Jesus, translated to English. Currently she is also attending the Spanish translation undergraduation course. She is a literary and technical translator having already published several works in the area.

I do not feel despair about deaths because I have death as a release permit. Release us from this stupid solid state into a gaseous one — it gives us invisibility and expansion, exactly what happens to an ice block that turns into steam. However Purezinha does not comply. Greater despair is impossible. And from a human point of view, she is right. They were two perfect sons. Believe me, Rangel, that I don't remember anything bad, or slightly bad, that they did in life. How many parents can say that?

Guilherme was very quiet, introspective, like those who live in an eternal interior monologue — and he died the most beautiful of deaths. He passed away in his sleep. He slept and no longer woke up to this world. On the other hand, poor Edgard suffered a lot — and with a great stoicism, Rangel! With the philosophy of a great philosopher!

And so we too die. Dying in our children, pieces of ourselves that lead ahead. Dying in the tremendous disillusionment in our dreams' outcome. And dying physiologically in the torpor of the glands, in the decay of the sight, in the increasing disinterest in things that in youth were of tremendous importance for us.

If we are here as in an improvement school, my children finished the course faster than I did — proof that they were better students than I was. And I had to witness the death of them both and be in the greatest disappointment — “remaining”...

Lobato



São Paulo, 20 de fevereiro de 1943

Rangel,

Pois é. Perdi o meu segundo filho, o Edgard, um menino de ouro, tal qual o Guilherme. Impossível filhos melhores que os meus, e talvez por isso foram chamados tão cedo. O Guilherme se foi aos 24 anos e agora o Edgard com 31. Ele nunca se esqueceu da primeira carta rece-bida pelo correio, uma tua.

Eu não me desespero com mortes porque tenho a morte como um alvará de soltura. Solta-nos deste estúpido estado sólido para o gasoso — dá-nos invisibilidade e expansão, exatamente o que acontece ao bloco de gelo que se passa a vapor. Mas Purezinha não se conforma. Impossível maior desespero. E do ponto de vista humano, tem razão. Foram dois filhos perfeitos. Creia, Rangel, que não me lembro de nenhuma coisa má, ou levemente má, que eles hajam feito em vida. Quantos pais podem dizer isto?



O Guilherme era caladão, metido consigo, como esses que vivem em eterno monólogo interior — e morreu a mais linda das mortes. Passou em pleno sono. Dormiu e não mais acordou para este mundo. Já o pobrezinho do Edgard sofreu muito — e com que estoicismo, Rangel! Com que filosofia de grande filósofo!

E assim vamos também nós morrendo. Morrendo nos filhos, pe-dãos de nós mesmos que seguem na frente. Morrendo nas tremen-das desilusões em que desfecham nossos sonhos. E morrendo fisiologi-camente no torpor das glândulas, no decair da vista, no desinteresse cada vez maior por coisas que na mocidade nos eram de tremenda im-portância.

Se estamos aqui como numa escola de aperfeiçoamento, meus filhos acabaram o curso mais depressa do que eu — prova de que eram melhores alunos do que eu. E tive de assistir à morte dos dois e ficar no maior desapontamento — “sobrando”...

Lobato

Monteiro Lobato. *A barca de Gleyre*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1972, pp. 359-360.

# Álvares de Azevedo

Maria Luísa Motta Azevedo



From: Álvares de Azevedo  
To: Maria Luísa Motta Azevedo

The letter translated here brings a contrast between the two largest cities in Brazil. Álvares de Azevedo (1831-1852) was in São Paulo when he wrote this letter to his mother, who was in Rio de Janeiro. He ironically complains about the dullness of São Paulo compared to Rio de Janeiro, mainly contrasting balls and the streets.

We have maintained the words that were in italic on the original in the translation. Also, we have found different sources of this letter and some had more abbreviated words than others, not all of them with similar uses in English. Therefore, we have decided to standardize by not utilizing abbreviations.

When it comes to semantics, to keep the meaning of “moléstia” and the author’s truncate style, we have opted for the construction “some would think it were ill of me”. In addition, the word “spleen” is in English in the original and it was used as a byword for melancholy. In French, “splénétique” refers to a state of pensive sadness or melancholy. This usage was popularized by the poems of Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and his collection *Le Spleen de Paris*, but it was also present in earlier 19th-century Romantic literature. Furthermore, “Maneco” is the author’s nickname used by his friends and family and “Nhanhã” is the author’s sister.



Translation by: Thales Buzan<sup>8</sup>  
Reviewer: Naara Bitencourt

S. Paulo, 12th June 1849

---

<sup>8</sup> Thales Buzan is a general translator and a PhD candidate at Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), working towards his third undergraduate degree in English and Portuguese focusing on teacher training and translation at the same institution. He is a researcher in linguistics, at doctoral level, in L2 acquisition. He published, as a translator, the article *Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy in Sports Practice: A Literature Review*, by Thieme, in the Brazilian Archives of Neurosurgery.

My dear mother,

I have got before my eyes your letter from 3<sup>rd</sup> of the current month, which I am very pleased to have received.

I hope everyone is well back home.

While in Rio these one-thousand-and-one-nights balls glitter, with all its glow and light magic, the narcotic and only ball of *Concórdia Paulistana* drags itself over here.

I have never seen such an insipid place as S. Paulo is today. I have never seen such a thing more tedious and *spleen*-inspiring. If I were the only one who shared the thought, some would think it were ill of me – but everyone thinks as such. – Life here is an endless yawn.

There are no entertaining walks, nor balls, nor societies, this looks like a city of the dead – not even a single pretty face on the windows – just wrinkled toothless faces – and the silence in the streets is only broken by the noise of the beasts tap-dancing on the street *tiles*.

This silence invites me to sleep rather than study, it languishes, and benumbs the imagination and one may say that life here is a perpetual slumber.

Days and days pass without me leaving the house – but what shall I do? The pavements do not consent that a garnished pair of feet with a callus pair – like mine – can roam around the streets. I stay at home, however for that I don't study any more than when, last year, I went every night to chat at some acquaintance's, or at a ball.

I always study, however – but it is like a hammer, it is only by force of will.

Tell Nhandã that classes are going fine, and that they have promised me the gap and gown by any day now.

Enough for today, send my regards to all – to the very excellent Mrs. Nhandã, to Marianinha, Quinquim etc. etc. – and cast your blessing upon your dear son.

*Maneco*

Around here there is no news that would interest you, besides the birth of Bela's daughter.

On Thursday there was a play.

I have never seen such an awful thing.



S. Paulo, 12 de junho de 1849

Minha cara Mãe.

Tenho à vista a sua de 3 do corrente, que com muito prazer recebi.

Estimo que todos passem bem lá por casa.

Enquanto no Rio reluzem esses bailes à *mil e uma noites*, com toda a sua magia de fulgências e luzes, para aqui arrasta-se o narcótico e único baile da *Concórdia Paulistana*.

Nunca vi lugar tão insípido, como hoje está S. Paulo. Nunca vi coisa mais tediosa e mais inspiradora de spleen. Se fosse eu só que o pensasse dir-se-ia que seria moléstia — mas todos pensam assim. — A vida aqui é um bocejar infindo.

Não há passeios que entrettenham, nem bailes, nem sociedades, parece isto uma cidade de mortos — não há nem uma cara bonita em janela — só rugosas caretas desdentadas — e o silêncio das ruas só é quebrado pelo ruído das bestas sapateando no *ladrilho* das ruas.

Esse silêncio convida mais ao sono que ao estudo, enlanguesce, e entorpece a imaginação e pode-se dizer que a vida aqui é um sono perpétuo.

Passam-se dias e dias sem que eu saia de casa — mas que hei de eu fazer? as calçadas não consentem que um par de pés guarnecidos de um par de calos — como os meus — possam andar vagando pelas ruas. Fico em casa, contudo por isso não estudo mais do que quando no ano passado eu ia todas as noites conversar em alguma casa de família, ou num baile.

Estudo sempre, contudo — porém é como a martelo, é unicamente à força de vontade.

Diga a Nanhã que as aulas vão andando, e que prometeram-me por qualquer destes dias a toalha.

Basta por hoje, muitas lembranças a todos — A Ex.<sup>ma</sup> Sra. Nanhã, à Marianinha, Quinquim, etc., etc. — e lance sua benção sobre seu filho do c.

Maneco

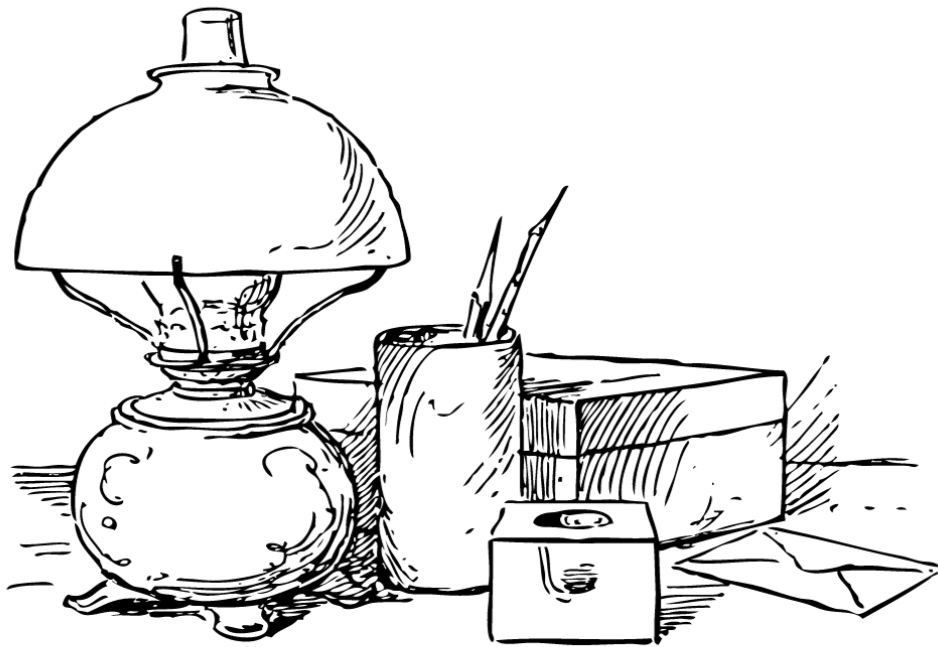
Por aqui não há novidades que lhe interessem, além do nascimento de uma filha da Bela.

Quinta-feira aqui houve teatro.

Nunca vi coisa tão ruim.

AZEVEDO, Álvares de; BUENO, Alexei (org.). *Obra Completa*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar S.A., 2009.

# REGARDING ART AND LITERATURE



# Euclides da Cunha

Francisco Escobar



From: Euclides da Cunha  
To: Francisco Escobar

This letter is one among several correspondences exchanged between Euclides da Cunha and his long-time friend Francisco de Escobar. The document approaches both friendship and literature, Euclides writes to his friend in order to share the grammatical atrocities he found in his draft of *Os sertões* (1902) months before its publication. In a comic tone, we have access to the author's reflection about his own writing and grammatical errors soon after Escobar draws his attention.

For this version, some lexical challenges were found, such as the terms "pilhérico", "remascar", "gramatiqueiros" and "meninote", the last three being neologisms. In addition, at one point in the letter, Euclides highlights some grammatical errors found in his copy, errors that can be identified in the context of the Portuguese language and that are challenging to translate into English. In this case, it was decided to keep the expressions in their literal sense, not adapting the errors in Portuguese to the target language.



Translation by: Naara Bitencourt<sup>9</sup>  
Reviewer: Luiza Maia Amaral

Lorena, October 19th, 1902

---

<sup>9</sup> In 2020, Naara Bitencourt enrolled at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) and, based on her contact with the theory of Translation Studies and with her translation practice throughout the course, she is considered a generalist translator - having experience in translating academic, medical, legal, commercial, journalistic texts, and subtitling and dubbing - with professional aspiration for the translation of literary texts. Formally, this letter is the first translation she has done for publication purposes.

Escobar,

I answer your letter, just received. Jestin'g dream, your... Minister! Minister of Transportation, this poor friend of yours! Only in dreams, indeed...

But do you want to know something? I would rather be really a Minister in the brief minutes of a dream, filling up a friend's imagination, than to be one, in reality, in this land where there are no more high and low positions... All undermined.

I have been miserable. You drew my attention to several carelessnesses of my *Sertões*; I read it more carefully - and I was terrified! I no longer have the courage to open it. On every page, my gaze catches a mistake, an unwelcome accent, a vagrant comma, an impertinent (;)... Such a dreadful thing! I wonder if this will not destroy all the value of that poor, shuddering book. Send me something about this subject from your point of view. Can you imagine that I found there *by the hawk, by the blade, arm in arm, from time to time*, etc. etc.?

I cannot tell you how I felt. Finally - opening a page at random after dinner - I found this: "*It did not delude the story...*".

I cannot describe it to you! This indicates that I am at the mercy of each erudite young boy who burnishes the street corners; and susceptible to the brutal ferule of the terrible grammarians who spend their days ruminating prepositions and disciplining pronouns!

Fortunately, they also said that Victor Hugo did not know French.

I will write to Laemmert to reduce the first edition as much as possible if there is time.

After all, I selfishly spoke to you solely about myself. Forgive me; and write to me soon. I wish to have a word from there, from far away, coming from that good old fellow soul, to cheer me up a little.

Farewell. Send my regards to yours - the old friend

Euclides

P.S.: Napoleon by Rosebery... Extraordinary.



Lorena, 19 de outubro de 1902

Escobar,

Respondo a tua carta, agora recebida. Pilhérico sonho, o teu... ministro! Ministro da Viação este teu pobre amigo! Só mesmo em sonhos...

Mas queres saber de uma coisa? Prefiro ser realmente ministro nos breves minutos de um sonho, ocupando a imaginação de um amigo, do que o ser, de fato, nesta terra onde não há mais altas e baixas posições... Minado tudo.

Tenho passado mal. Chamaste-me a atenção para vários descuidos dos meus *Sertões*; fui lê-lo com mais cuidado — e fiquei apavorado! Já não tenho coragem de o abrir mais. Em cada página o meu olhar fisga um erro, um acento importuno, uma vírgula vagabunda, um (;)

impertinente... Um horror! Quem sabe se isto não irá destruir todo o valor daquele pobre e estremeado livro? Manda-me dizer daí algo a respeito. Imagina que lá encontrei *à falcão, à pranchada, braço à braço, tempos à tempos* etc. etc.

Não te posso dizer como fiquei. Por fim — abrindo, ao acaso, depois do jantar, uma página —, encontrei isto: “*Não iludiu à história...*”.

Não te descrevo o que houve! Quer isto dizer que estou à mercê de quanto meninote erudito brune as esquinas; e passível da férula brutal dos terríveis gramatiqueros que passam por aí os dias a remascar preposições e a disciplinar pronomes!

Felizmente disseram também que o Victor Hugo não sabia francês.

Vou escrever ao Laemmert para reduzir, quanto possível, a primeira edição, se houver tempo.

Afinal, egoisticamente, falei-te só no que me dizia respeito. Desculpa-me; e escreva-me logo. Quero que venha daí, de longe, partindo dessa boa alma de velho companheiro, uma palavra que me anime um pouco.

Adeus. Recomenda aos teus — o velho amigo.

Euclides

P.S.: O Napoleão de Rosebery... Extraordinário.

Walnice Nogueira Galvão e Oswaldo Galotti. *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1997, p. 141.



# Graciliano Ramos

Cândido Portinari



From: Graciliano Ramos  
To: Cândido Portinari

The letter in question is an exchange between Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), and Cândido Portinari (1905-1962), best acknowledged for his work portraying the poor and the outcast in his paintings. It is precisely about poverty and existential misery that Graciliano Ramos will discuss in his letter.

Over the course of the translation, the main goal was to preserve Graciliano's style of inverted sentences and his use of adjectives and nouns that convey emotions, as they discuss the nature and necessity of misery to an artist.



Translation by: Carolina Alves Magaldi<sup>10</sup>  
Reviewer: Luísa Arantes Bahia

Rio, February 18th, 1946

Dearest Portinari:

Your letter arrived very late, and I am afraid the answer will not find you applying upon the canvas our poor country folk any longer. There is no work more dignified, I believe. They say we are pessimists and showcase deformities; however, the deformities and the misery exist outside of art and are cultivated by the ones who censor us.

What I sometimes ask myself, with anguish, Portinari, goes as such: if They disappeared, could we continue with our work? Do we really wish them to disappear or are we also exploiters like the others, when we expose disgraces? From the paintings you showed

---

<sup>10</sup> Carolina Alves Magaldi is a translator, writer and professor of literary translation and literary studies at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF) on undergraduate levels as well as master's and doctor's degrees. She has organized the books *Alter Worlds* – a journey to the heart of the uncanny (Paratexto, 2021), containing foreign gothic short stories translated into Portuguese and Brazilian short stories translated into English and *Traitors' club* – small encyclopedia of the translation universe (UFJF Publishing House, 2021).

me when I had lunch at Cosme Velho for the last time, the one that moved me the most was the one of the mother with the dead child. I left your house with a horrible thought: in a society with no social classes and no misery would it be possible to create something like that? In a tranquil and happy life, what kind of art would arise? I come to think we would create printed pictures, pink angels, and that horrifies me.

Thankfully pain will always exist, our old friend, and nothing will suppress it. And we would be ungrateful if we wished it to be suppressed, don't you think? See how the mighty rich are generally stupid.

I believe naturally it would be good to hang them, but if that brought us tranquility and happiness, I would be most dissatisfied, for we were not born to such sensation. My wish is that, once the rich are eliminated along with the suffering that they caused, there may come new suffering, because without it we have no art.

And farewell, my great Portinari. Many hugs to you and to Maria.

Graciliano



Rio, 18 de Fevereiro de 1946

Caríssimo Portinari:

A sua carta chegou muito atrasada, e receio que esta resposta já não o ache fixando na tela a nossa pobre gente da roça. Não há trabalho mais digno, penso eu. Dizem que somos pessimistas e exibimos deformações; contudo as deformações e miséria existem fora da arte e são cultivadas pelos que nos censuram.

O que às vezes pergunto a mim mesmo, com angústia, Portinari, é isto: se elas desaparecessem, poderíamos continuar a trabalhar? Desejamos realmente que elas desapareçam ou seremos também uns exploradores, tão perversos como os outros, quando expomos desgraças? Dos quadros que você mostrou quando almocei no Cosme Velho pela última vez, o que mais me comoveu foi aquela mãe com a criança morta. Saí de sua casa com um pensamento horrível: numa sociedade sem classes e sem miséria seria possível fazer-se aquilo? Numa vida tranquila e feliz que espécie de arte surgiria? Chego a pensar que faríamos cromos, anjinhos cor de rosa, e isto me horroriza.

Felizmente a dor existirá sempre, a nossa velha amiga, nada a suprimirá. E seríamos ingratos se desejássemos a supressão dela, não lhe parece? Veja como os nossos ricos em geral são burros.

Julgo naturalmente que seria bom enforcá-los, mas se isto nos trouxesse tranquilidade e felicidade, eu ficaria bem desgostoso, porque não nascemos para tal sensaboria. O meu desejo é que, eliminados os ricos de qualquer modo e os sofrimentos causados por eles, venham novos sofrimentos, pois sem isto não temos arte.

E adeus, meu grande Portinari. Muitos abraços para você e para Maria.

Graciliano

RAMOS, Graciliano. *A dor existirá sempre*. Destinatário: Candido Portinari. Rio de Janeiro, 18 fev. 1946. carta. Disponível em: <<https://correio.ims.com.br/carta/a-dor-existira-sempre/>>  
Acesso em 03 nov. 2023

# Mário de Andrade

Fernando Sabino



From: Mário de Andrade  
To: Fernando Sabino

The current letter, sent by Fernando Sabino to Mário de Andrade after publishing his first book, *Os Grilos Não Cantam Mais* (1941), is representative of the connection between the two writers. This particular letter presents digressions about life, art, artists, and the creative process. It can be read in Portuguese and it is featured in the book *Cartas a um jovem escritor e suas respostas* (2003), a compilation of letters between Sabino and Mário de Andrade.

The biggest challenge of the translation of this letter were the syntactic inversions, as well as the long periods full of interruptions made by digressions, and repetitions of terms. All of this was maintained to the limits of the English language in order to preserve the author's writing style, including sentences that are quite hermetic to the reader. Lastly, in order to cause the same ambiguity and reinforce the similarity of concepts between “ease” and “happiness”, the synonyms “facility” and “felicity” were used (in Portuguese, “facilidade” e “felicidade”).



Translation by: Eduardo Lisovski Schmidt<sup>11</sup>  
Reviewers: Daniele Reis Salles e Davi Marcenes Cunha

São Paulo, February 16th, 1942

Fernando Sabino,

I will borrow this carnival Monday so I can answer you more thoroughly. You should have already received a postcard from me regarding the subject that you suggested. It is that your letter was exhaling a certain desire to know sooner what I was imagining about the question that touched immediately the practice of your life, that I did not want to let you wait

---

<sup>11</sup> Eduardo Lisovski Schmidt is a Brazilian undergraduate student of Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) by the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF). The main languages of both study and work include Brazilian Portuguese and English, and the general interests as a professional are mainly literary translation.

any longer. The subject, by the way, retains an enormous complexity. Briefly, what you asked me is the following: being art a direct product of human *dissatisfaction*, does the artist, in order to preserve one's *integrity*, has to recant every single piece of *facility* that may show up in practical life? Is it not what you want to know? What I imagine is: you have decided with great moral honor to become an artist, but it happens that, at 18 years of age, life grasped you at the corner and offered you a great vital gift, that you assume to be your *felicity*. Naturally, you are afraid to accept it, fearing that it might come to hinder your artistic fate. There is only one possible immediate answer: accept what life offers you and experiment with it. You, at your first-glance discretion, did not want to say frankly what was the type of *facility* (notice that I dwell on *facility*, avoiding the word *felicity*), Whether it was for love, or wealth, because it must be one of the two. It may also be both altogether: very sincere love that happens to be wealth, engagement, legal marriage, and arranged life, without any more financial distress. Even if it is like that, I don't hesitate for a second upon telling you to accept it.

There is no doubt that art has, among the elements that constitute itself, dissatisfaction. Art is the daughter of pain, some say, and you reinforce it in your letter. I would rather say dissatisfaction, which is more dynamic; and art is not only the daughter of dissatisfaction but also the spouse, the day-to-day companion, and the mother. A true artist will never be satisfied with themselves or with their work. There are momentary satisfactions, this is clear. And there is, dear God! the ones who are satisfied... But you may observe that throughout your whole life that the ones who are "satisfied" with their mission and with the works they accomplish will never be "true" artists: they are mediocre, they are just bad. Regarding the momentary satisfactions, although almost never they become complete, nothing but psychologically logical. You, as an artist, fulfilled, enthusiastically, without fatigue, your duty, that is to say, you gave all you got. The work of art has been completed with every single piece of strength of any species that you have. It is natural that you *do not* see it. The work of art is you as a whole, and all your critical possibilities consider it excellent. Do not use, then, false modesty: say faithfully to yourself that you consider your work excellent. It is, as long as it is referring to yourself. And you feel, then, some type of natural satisfaction. As an artist, you were moral, giving everything you had. Your work identifies itself with you because it is everything that you are. You must have a clear conscience, and after that, some kind of satisfaction will arise from this relational equilibrium between you and your work. But from the moment that you bring your work to the public and it starts to live independently from you, the dissatisfactions will come, and the distastes. Incomprehension will prove fatal. The deviations will be even more fatal, and this distastes the artist prodigiously. One can no longer be in charge of one's work; it has reached adulthood, and starts it by doing amazing mischiefs. What I have been suffering, with *Macunaíma*, mainly with it, you cannot even imagine... And, however, if it was written in a full state of possession (the first piece of writing was fully completed in six days), on which I had not undergone any suffering upon the sublime rush of creation, but I also could not put consciousness on the sublimity in which I was by the extension of this sublimity that obscured myself from any state of analytic consciousness, what I can swear to you is that *Macunaíma* was abhorrently painful to me. In the most anecdotal moments, the funniest moments of the plot, I could not help but suffer for my hero, suffer from his lack of moral organization (of the Brazilian, whom he satirizes), disapprove of what he was doing against my

will. And when, in the end, Macunaíma, on the verge of regenerating himself, falters once again and chooses to live in the "useless" bright of the stars, my eyes filled with tears. They filled and will always fill. But that is nothing compared to what came later when *Macunaíma* was published and had nothing to do with me. I have heard the highest praises for my book — and that is always pleasant for the true artist because there is no true artist who does not create to be loved. But the very few who reflected upon the book: either they were the ones-who-were-proud-of-their-country that refused the satire and remained very satisfied with life, or they were the ones who only took from the book a reinforcement, conscious with their amorality... with the nation. But now, you see: do not think I will play dumb and uphold the critical value of my book! I have enough mental health to recognize that life is a struggle, and in this game of *Macunaíma*, I lost: I made a mistake. *Macunaíma* is a "masterpiece" that failed. Move on!

You have mistaken, as everyone does, felicity with facility. I suspect, I still do not know, from your writings, that you are Catholic, or at least, certainly of Catholic upbringing. That is alright, it does not cast for me the slightest shadow on our personal relationship, whatever may be your beliefs. I, too, am of Catholic upbringing, I fervently believe in God, and no matter how big my missteps are, I know that I will die (if I die consciously), as a Catholic. But it is strange how I have no *religion* at all, in the sense that religion is a reconnection, a collectivized organization of our relationships and duties towards God. Respect is not really respect, I *believe* too much in the consciousness of others to try to demolish the conviction of others. But what I wanted to say is that, precisely because you are catholicized, you could not have used the word felicity in order to summarize your current situation. It will be anything you want, a wonderment, a sublime delusion that you are about to conquer if you have not conquered it already. But it is not felicity, no. If you happen to grasp a truly philosophical conception of what felicity is, you will realize that the popular sense in which you used the word is defective and even immoral. It is immoral because it diverts one from their integrity, from their collective, and even from their individual destiny. It is something much higher than a momentary or even permanent facility.

And here is the crux of the matter: the difficult, the most difficult, the tremendously difficult is for you, in the midst of your facility (especially if it is wealth), to preserve the moral integrity of your artistic fate. It is difficult, but it is not impossible. There is one thing I am sure of; no matter how much facility (felicity) you achieve, whether you are an artist, Hitler, Stalin, an inventor, Getúlio, or a thief, you will never be satisfied: you will want more. There is no wrong in that; it is man's divine mark. The harm is that, although you are constantly seeking dissatisfiedly to increase the achieved *felicity* (that is to say: a Ford will never stop to intend to increase its wealth, sometimes even "diverting" the aspiration towards politics, love, alms, "altruism," etc.), the harm is that even though you intend to increase yourself, you begin to act on the sly as if you *were satisfied*: it is conformism. This is the trap that the man encounters daily on his path: conformism. It begins by being physiological: it is the principle of stabilization, the principle that I call "laziness," we live dying. When the true moral principle is quite the opposite: we must always live by being born, everything should always be a subject of personal improvement and the pursuit of perfection. I do not hesitate to affirm: every facility, every felicity is demoralizing. But afterwards, how do I reconcile my command for you to accept the felicity that life is offering you and this conviction that felicity is demoralizing?

It is quite simple, my little brother, although it is difficult. You should never lose sight that your *experience* of felicity should also be a subject of personal improvement. Felicity, pleasure, facility is also a test we go through. In this matter, the symbolism of creation is admirable. God did not subject Adam to seven tests of *misfortune*, killing dragons, or swimming across the sea: he only subjected him to one test of *felicity*, the garden of delights. But Adam, dissatisfied, became Rockefeller-like, he also wanted the apple... And he played himself. In your particular case as an artist: does not the worker, every time he starts working, checks his tools twice? Does he not sharpen the scythe, oil the machine? You also need to be constantly alert, so that your work is legitimate. You need to constantly recheck your work tools. It is difficult, facility tends to forget this, to kidnap the idea of self-reflection and reevaluation in our work. But there is a very human way to fix this sneaky tendency: the establishment of a commemorative date... for your greatness as a man and an artist. Set an annual date for your spiritual retreat and do it at the end of the year, as it is easier and unforgettable. What have I done this past year? How does it contribute to or harm my work? What do I need to do next year? What should I do to fulfill myself? After all, I'm telling you banal things that, to the banal, may seem like a confessional. It won't be so banal as it looks after all... life has to be about more than just living, a continuous self-rethought. And that's all I ask of you, almost... paternally, my God! Our ages are so far apart from each other! Do not let yourself fall into the lazy life of so many other Brazilian artists. How poor they are in humanity!... Sometimes they are rich in activity and vital variety: everything has happened to them, the most diverse women, all the poverty, all the riches, a hundred difficult diseases, a hundred healths, a hundred powers. However, none of this served them to become a being, an entire being, complete in themselves and insoluble. They are *macunaimáticos*, they dissolve themselves in their *actions*, without accomplishing an *action*, which is continuity. They are not men, they are water. But we are ashamed of rethinking ourselves. Making an exam of consciousness, that's a "deviation" (oh, psychoanalysis!...) suitable for boys and fragile women. "I am of a strong spirit!", they say, and then come up to be the ones who lack the most spirit...

It is not fair we refuse a facility that life offers to us, *as long as this facility is fair*. Felicity in love is not only fair; it is somewhat a form of duty. Not even wealth stops being fair. The difficult part is for you to subsequently fulfill the human duties imposed by this facility. But if you are well defined, well known, and well conscious of your duties with yourself and with men, you will only take from your facilities more strength to improve. After all, Goethe did not lose himself. And Victor Hugo, in the days of his greatest love realizations, wrote "Tristesse d'Olympio"... And still exists this mystery of "misfortune chases me" as the *samba* says<sup>12</sup>. The most insoluble of the truths is this one... Have you ever noticed at the end of a party that you took part with your body and soul passionately? The party came to an end, and you fell an inconsistent emptiness that is not strong enough to be painful, does not become a delusion, does not become anything clearly qualified: you only reach a vague notion of stinginess. Everything that happened was good, how could it not have been enough! Do not

---

<sup>12</sup> "Misfortune chases me" (in Portuguese, "A Infelicidade me Persegue") is a *samba* (Brazilian musical genre) composed by Assis Valente in 1936.

refuse felicity. The moment will come in which you will realize a bit frightened that it was immense and it was still not enough.

In your letter, it seemed to me that you are somewhat mystical regarding the necessity of personal suffering for artistic achievement. At least you assert peremptorily: "and this achievement is unequivocal that only suffering is capable of providing." But I'm alarmed to find myself on the path to another five pages of typing! And I'm also afraid that my letters may become pretentious as if I had the audacity to solve all human problems. I do not. I'm simply giving you, as I mentioned in the first letter, I believe, the assistance that can arise from my experience and my more mature thinking. No: art is not exactly suffering, nor can it solely arise from suffering. The moment of creation is a sublime pleasure, and I completely disagree with those who consider it a labor. I cannot even comprehend this assimilation of artistic creation with childbirth. It certainly stems from the objective similarity between the child and the work of art. The moment of creation is incredibly enjoyable, truly that sublimity of integration and generosity of being, in which one finds oneself in a sexual ejaculation. It is so sublime indeed, the integration is so immense that one cannot isolate oneself in a state of critical consciousness and analyze oneself. The most fragile being in the world, the most enslaved, the most defenseless, is a man at the moment of ejaculation: he becomes completely helpless. That is the moment of artistic creation. What happens is that this moment is extremely rapid (like ejaculation), it lasts a few seconds. And then one begins the arduous and, above all, restless work of art-making, correcting, criticizing, judging, planning, directing the work of art, polishing, and so on, sacrificing things one loves for the sake of a functional significance of the work of art; which is more important than oneself, the devil. This is when much suffering, fatigue, and indecision come in. But it is strange how in this long process, you constantly find yourself thrown back into the pleasure of creation, it is incredible how you "invent." It is as if you are cold, coldly directing the work of improvement, and yet even voluntarily giving up something you like for the sake of a higher purpose, even if it is just the formal balance of the artwork, even in this sacrifice, you return to an active state of poetry, you practice an ejaculation, you are in the throes of the creative pleasure. One must be humbler, yet here, more like a laborer, and do not overly mystify this idea that art is born out of pain. It is painful, it is burdensome, it is exhausting, and above all, it is restless; unsettling, and unsatisfactory. But it is also enjoyable, it is manly, and, above all, it carries great dignity. Isn't art a "torture", as you say? I will just ask you one thing: do you know any human profession that, carried out with dignity, is not also a form of torture? The vanity of the individualistic artist leads them to *attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*.<sup>13</sup> That is pretentious individualism. Torture is from us all and it confuses itself with what it truly means to *live as a human being*. The problem is that most beings (including artists) vegetate instead of living as humans. And are we not by chance insulting the vegetables?

Are those digressions, written at the idleness of thought and without orderliness, enough for you, perchance? If they are not, keep discussing until you concentrate on a state of consciousness that is sufficient to organize within yourself a coordinator attitude towards your future work. There were more points I wished to reflect upon in your letter, but I am tired. I

---

<sup>13</sup> "suffer and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow".



would advise, right away, that you should not tie yourself to such clear and simple equations. After all, you, precisely being an intellectual, cannot feed yourself on proverbs; do not forget that proverbs are also a derivation of the principle of laziness, a dying living. For example: almost at the end of your letter, you ask me if art “hovers above and independently, dominating life and not being dominated by it”. This is a proverb, and it is overly simplistic. That art, under a certain view, hovers above life, it is still acceptable, because upon relying on aesthetic elements (beauty, transposing instrument, criticism of life etc.) it is never the same life, and offers us a new synthesis of this said life. There is no doubt that art is somewhat a lie, but in the sense that you tell an ill man that he has gotten better, or to a child that if one plays with fire, one will piss the bed<sup>14</sup>. You do not lie with the sole intent to deceive, but with the intention to reach a greater benefit. But for all of that, art is never independent from life: there is an insoluble and unappealable interdependence that causes life to not dominate art and vice-versa. Do not disconnect proverbially both things that are the same. Even as aspirations they are the same: for does not everything aspire to a better life?...

With a big hug from

Mário de Andrade



São Paulo, 16 de fevereiro de 1942

Fernando Sabino,

Vou pegar esta segunda-feira de carnaval pra lhe responder mais longamente. Você já deve ter recebido um cartão meu a respeito do assunto que você me propôs. É que a sua carta respirava um tal desejo de saber logo o que eu imaginava sobre o problema que tocava imediatamente a prática de sua vida, que eu não quis deixar você numa espera mais longa. O assunto, aliás, é de uma complexidade enorme. Em resumo o que você me pergunta é o seguinte: sendo a arte um produto direto da *insatisfação* humana, o artista, para se preservar em sua *integridade*, tem que renegar toda e qualquer *facilidade* que lhe aparecer na vida prática? Não é isso mesmo que você quer saber? O que imagino é isto: você está decidido com gran-de honradez moral a ser artista, mas eis que, nos seus 18 anos, a vida agarrou você na esquina e lhe ofereceu um ótimo presente vital, que você julga ser a sua felicidade. E você está receoso de aceitar, temendo que isso venha a prejudicar o seu destino de artista. Só há uma resposta possível imediata: aceite o que a vida lhe oferece e experi-mente. Você, na sua discricção de primeira hora, não quis dizer logo com franqueza qual era o gêne-ro de facilidade (repare que insisto em *facilidade*, evitando a palavra *felicidade*), se amor, se riqueza, deve ser

---

<sup>14</sup> Popular saying in Brazil.

uma destas duas. Podem ser também as duas juntas: amor sinceríssimo que acontece ser rico, noivado, casamento legal e vida arranjada, sem mais inquietações financeiras. Mes-mo que seja assim, não hesito um segundo em responder que aceite.

Não há dúvida nenhuma que a arte tem entre os elementos que a constituem a insatisfação. A arte é filha da dor, dizem, e você repete na sua carta. Prefiro dizer insatisfação, que é mais dinâ-mico; e da insatisfação, a arte não é só filha, mas esposa, companheira cotidiana e mãe. O artista verdadeiro jamais estará satisfeito consigo mesmo nem com a obra de arte que produziu. Há satisfa-ções momentâneas, está claro. E há, meu Deus! os satisfeitos... Mas você há de observar em toda a sua vida que os “satisfeitos” com sua missão e com as obras que realizam, nunca serão artistas “verdadeiros”: são medíocres, são francamente ruins. Quanto às satisfações momentâneas, embora quase nunca elas sejam completas, nada de mais psicologicamente lógico. Você, como artista, cumpriu entusiasticamente, sem fadiga, o seu dever, isto é, deu tudo o que tinha. A obra de arte está realizada com todas as forças de qualquer espécie que você tem. É natural que você *não veja*. A obra de arte é você inteirinho, e todas as suas possibilidades críticas a consideram excelente. Não use então modéstia falsa: se diga com lealdade que você con-sidera a sua obra excelente. Ela o é, enquanto a você. E você sente então uma espécie natural de satisfação. Como artista você foi moral dando tudo o que tinha. A sua obra se identifica com você, pois que ela é tudo o que você é. Você há de neces-sariamente sentir a consciência tranquila e com isso uma espécie de satisfação, derivada desse equi-líbrio relacional entre você e a sua obra. Mas desde o momento em que você tornar pública a sua obra e ela for viver independente de você, as insatisfa-ções virão, e os desgostos. As incompreensões serão fatais. Os desvios ainda mais fatais, e isso desgosta prodigiosamente o artista. Ele não pode mais man-dar na sua obra, ela adquiriu sua maioridade e principia fazendo estrepolias incríveis. O que eu tenho sofrido, com o *Macunaíma*, principalmente com ele, você nem pode imaginar... E, no entanto, se escrito em pleno estado de possessão (a primei-ra redação foi feita inteirinha em seis dias), em que eu não sofria nada no ímpeto sublime da cria-ção, mas também nem podia pôr consciência na sublimidade em que estava pela extensão mesma desta sublimidade que me obnubilava qualquer estado de consciência analítica, o que posso lhe jurar é que *Macunaíma* foi detestavelmente doloroso pra mim. Nos momentos mais anedóticos, mais engraçados do trecho, eu não deixava de sofrer pelo meu herói, sofrer a falta de organização moral dele (do brasileiro, que ele satiriza), de re-provar o que ele estava fazendo contra a minha vontade. E quando, no fim, *Macunaíma*, no ponto de se regenerar, fraqueja mais uma vez e prefere ir viver o brilho “inútil” das estrelas, meus olhos se encheram de lágrimas. Se encheram e se encherão sempre. Mas isso ainda não é nada, com o que foi depois, quando *Macunaíma* estava publicado e não tinha mais nada comigo. Tenho ouvido os maiores elogios ao meu livro — e isso é sempre agradável ao artista verdadeiro, porque não existe um só artista verdadeiro que não artefaça com a intenção de ser amado. Mas os pouquíssimos que refletiram sobre o livro: ou foram uns porque-me-ufano-do-meu-país que recusaram a sátira e continuaram muito satisfeitos da vida, ou foram os que só reti-raram do livro um reforço, consciente de seu amoralismo... nacional. Mas agora veja bem: não ima-gine não que eu vou bancar o incompreendido e sustentar o valor crítico do meu livro! Eu tenho bastante saúde mental pra reconhecer que a vida é uma luta, e que nesse jogo do *Macunaíma* eu perdi de um a zero: eu errei. *Macunaíma* é uma “obra-prima” que falhou. Toca pra frente!

Você confundiu, como fazem todos, felicidade com facilidade. Eu desconfio, ainda não sei, pelos seus escritos, que você é católico, ou pelo menos, certamente de formação católica. Está bem, isso não trará a menor sombra, enquanto a mim, em nossas relações pessoais, seja você o que for. Eu também sou de formação católica, acredito vorazmente em Deus, e por maiores que sejam os meus descaminhos, sei que morrerei (se morte consciente) em estado católico. Mas é estranho como não tenho a menor *religião*, nisso em que a religião é uma religião, uma organização coletivizada das nossas relações e deveres pra com Deus. Respeito, não é bem respeito, *acredito* por demais na consciência alheia, pra tentar desmanchar a convicção alheia. Mas o que eu queria dizer é que, por isso mesmo de você estar catolicizado, você não podia ter empregado a palavra felicidade pro seu caso atual. Será tudo o que você quiser, um deslumbramento, um delírio sublime que você está prestes a conquistar, se não já conquistou. Mas felicidade não é não. Se você chegar a uma conceituação verdadeiramente filosófica do que seja felicidade, você perceberá que o sentido popular em que você empregou a palavra é defeituoso e até imoral. Imoral porque desvia o indivíduo da sua integridade, da sua destinação coletiva e mesmo individual. Coisa muito mais alta que uma facilidade momentânea ou mesmo permanente.

E aqui é que está o busfalis: o difícil, o difícil-limo, o tremendamente difícil é você, no convívio de sua facilidade (principalmente se for a riqueza), conservar a integridade moral do seu destino de artista. É difícil, porém não é impossível. De uma coisa eu tenho certeza: por mais que seja a facilidade (felicidade) que você conquistar, seja você artista, Hitler, Stalin, inventor, Getúlio ou ladrão, você jamais ficará satisfeito: há de querer mais. Nisto não há mal: é a marca divina do homem. O mal é que, embora buscando sempre aumentar insatisfatoriamente a *felicidade* conquistada (isto é: um Ford nunca deixará de pretender o aumento de sua riqueza, às vezes até “desviando” a pretensão para a política, o amor, a esmola, o “altruísmo” etc.), o mal é que você, embora pretenda se aumentar, você principia agindo sorratamente como se *estivesse satisfeito*: é o conformismo. Esta é a cilada que o homem encontra cotidianamente em seu caminho, o conformismo. Ela principia já por ser fisiológica: é a lei da estabilização, a lei que eu chamo da “preguiça”, nós vivemos morrendo. Quando o princípio moral verdadeiro é justo o contrário: nós devemos viver sempre nascendo: tudo deve ser sempre objeto de aprimoramento pessoal e a busca da perfeição. Não hesito em afirmar: toda facilidade, toda felicidade é desmoralizante. Mas então como conciliar a minha até intimação de você aceitar a felicidade que a vida está lhe oferecendo e esta convicção de que a felicidade é desmoralizadora?

É simples, meu irmãozinho, embora seja difícil. É você não perder jamais de consciência que a sua *experiência* de felicidade deve ser também um objeto de aprimoramento pessoal. A felicidade, o prazer, a facilidade também é uma prova por que a gente passa. Nisso a simbólica da criação é admirável. Deus não sujeitou Adão a sete provas de *infelicidade*, matar dragões nem atravessar o mar a nado: sujeitou-o apenas a uma prova de *felicidade*, o jardim das delícias. Mas Adão, insatisfeito, rockefellerizou-se, quis também a maçã... E se “brincou”. No seu caso particular de artista: o operário, cada vez que principia trabalhando, não reverifica os seus instrumentos de trabalho? Não afia a foice, não azeita a máquina? Você também precisa estar sempre alerta, pra que seu trabalho seja legítimo. Você precisa reverificar constantemente os seus instrumentos de trabalho. É difícil, a facilidade tende a esquecer isso, a sequestrar a ideia da gente se repensar e se reverificar em seus trabalhos. Mas há um jeito

muito humano da gente consertar essa tendência sorradeira: a fixação de uma data... comemorativa da sua grandeza de homem e de artista. Fixe uma data anual para o seu retiro espiritual e faça isso no fim do ano, que é mais fácil e inesquecível. O que fiz este ano que passou? No que isso me acrescenta em minha obra ou a prejudica? O que preciso fazer este ano próximo? No que deva me completar? Afinal das contas estou lhe dizendo coisas banais, que, aos ba-nais, parece estar cheirando a confessionário. Não será tão banal assim... a vida tem de ser, muito mais que um viver-se, um continuado repensar-se. E só isso lhe peço quase... paternalmente, meu Deus! Nossas idades são tão afastadas uma da ou-tra! Não se deixe desleixadamente viver como a maioria infinita dos nossos artistas brasileiros. Como eles são pobres de humanidade!... Às vezes são riquíssimos de atividade e variedade vital: tudo lhes aconteceu, as mais diversas mulheres, todas as pobreza, todas as riquezas, cem doenças difí-ceis, cem saúdes, cem poderes. No entanto nada disso lhes serviu para se tornarem um ser, um ser íntegro, completado em si mesmo e insolúvel. São macunaimáticos, se dissolvem nos seus atos, sem realizarem uma ação, que é continuidade. Não são homens, são água. Mas a gente tem vergonha de se repensar. Fazer exame de consciência, isso é “desvio” (ah, a psicanálise!...) próprio de meni-notes e das frágeis mulheres. “Eu sou um espírito forte!”, e são os mais inexistentes dos espíritos...

Não é justo a gente se recusar uma facilidade que a vida nos ofereça, *desde que essa facilidade seja justa*. A felicidade no amor nem é apenas justa, é uma espécie de dever. Nem mesmo a riqueza deixa de ser justa. O difícil é você, em seguida, cumprir com os deveres humanos que essa facilidade lhe impõe. Mas se você estiver bem definido, bem conceituado e bem consciente dos seus deveres pra con-sigo e pra com os homens, você apenas tirará de suas facilidades mais uma força de aperfeiçoamen-to. Afinal das contas, Goethe não se perdeu. E Victor Hugo, nos dias de maior realização amorosa escre-veu a “Tristesse d’Olympio”... E ainda existe esse mistério de “infelicidade me persegue” como dizia o samba. A verdade mais insolúvel é essa... Você já reparou num fim de festa de que você participou de corpo, e alma, apaixonadamente. Festa acabou e você sente um vazio inconsistente que não chega a doer, não chega a ser desilusão, não chega a ser nada de nitidamente qualificável: você apenas atinge uma noção vaga de mesquinhez. Tudo o que houve que foi bom, como que não foi bastan-te! Não recuse a felicidade. O momento há de vir em que você perceberá meio assustado que ela foi imensa e que não foi bastante.

Você na sua carta me pareceu que está um pouco místico a respeito da necessidade do sofrimento pessoal para a realização artística. Pelo me-nos você afirma peremptoriamente: “e essa reali-zação, é inequívoco, que só o sofrimento é capaz de proporcionar”. Mas vejo assustado que estou no caminho de mais cinco páginas de datilografia! E também fico um bocado com medo das minhas cartas se tornarem pretensiosas, como se eu tivesse a veleidade de decidir de todos os problemas hu-manos. Não tenho. Estou apenas lhe dando, como falei desde a primeira carta, creio, o auxílio que pode derivar da minha experiência e do meu pensa-mento mais amadurecido. Não: a arte não é um sofrimento exatamente nem é só o sofrimento que a pode legitimamente proporcionar. O momento da criação é um prazer sublime, e estou completa-mente em desacordo com os que o consideram um parto. Nem posso compreender mesmo, essa assimi-lação da criação artística com o parto. Deriva cer-tamente da semelhança objetiva, entre o filho e a obra de arte. O momento de criação é gostosíssimo, verdadeiramente aquela sublimidade de integração e de dadivosidade do ser, em que a gente

fica na ejaculação sexual. É tão sublime mesmo, é tamanha a integração, que a gente não se pode ilhar num estado de consciência crítica e se analisar. O ser mais frágil do mundo, mais escravo, mais indefeso é o homem no momento da ejaculação: ele fica por completo inerte. Esse o momento da criação artística. O que sucede é que esse momento é rapidíssimo (como a ejaculação), dura alguns segundos. E logo a gente principia o trabalho mais penoso e principalmente muito mais inquieto de artefazer, corrigir, criticar, julgar, intencionalizar, dirigir a obra de arte, polir etc. etc., sacrificar coisas que gosta em proveito de uma significação funcional da obra de arte; que é mais importante que a gente, o diabo. Nisso é que vem muito sofrimento, muita fadiga, muita indecisão. Mas é estranho como neste trabalho longo, você constantemente se vê atirado de novo à volúpia da criação, é incrível como você “inventa”. Parece que você está gélido, dirigindo friamente o trabalho de aperfeiçoamento e, no entanto, até no desistir voluntariamente de uma coisa que você gosta, em proveito de uma finalidade maior, que seja mesmo apenas o equilíbrio formal da obra de arte, mesmo nesse sacrifício, você retorna a um estado ativo de poesia, você pratica uma ejaculação, você está em plena volúpia criadora. É preciso ser mais humilde, ainda aqui, mais operário; e não mistificar por demais essa história da arte ser filha da dor. É dolorido, é penoso, é fatigante, é sobretudo inquieto; inquietante e insatisfatório. Mas é gostoso também, é másculo, é, sobretudo, de uma grande dignidade. A arte é “uma tortura”, como você diz? Apenas eu lhe pergunto uma coisa: você conhece qualquer profissionalidade humana que, realizada com dignidade, não seja uma tortura também? É a vaidade do artista individualizado que o leva ao seu *attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*.<sup>[1]</sup> Isso é individualismo pretensioso. A tortura é de todos e se confunde com o que de fato seja *viver humanamente*. O que sucede é que a maioria dos seres (e também dos artistas) vegeta em vez de humanamente viver. E não estaremos por acaso insultando os vegetais?...

Será que estas digressões, escritas ao léu do pensamento e sem ordenação, lhe bastam? Se não bastarem continue discutindo, até você se fixar num estado de consciência suficiente pra organizar em você uma atitude coordenadora do seu trabalho futuro. Ainda havia o que comentar na sua carta, mas estou cansado. Eu aconselharia desde logo a você não se prender a equações muito nítidas e simplórias. Afinal das contas você, justamente por ser um intelectual, não pode se alimentar de provérbios; não se esqueça que os provérbios também são uma derivação da lei da preguiça, um viver morrendo. Por exemplo: no fim quase da sua carta, você me pergunta se a arte “paira acima e independente, dominando a vida e não sendo dominada por ela”. Isso é provérbio, é simplório por demais. Que a arte, sob certo ponto, paira acima da vida, ainda é possível aceitar, porque se servindo de elementos estéticos (a beleza, o material transpositor, a crítica da vida etc.) ela nunca é a vida mesma, e nos oferece uma síntese nova dessa mesma vida. A arte não há dúvida nenhuma que é uma espécie de mentira, mas no sentido em que você diz ao enfermo que ele está melhor ou à criança que, se ela brincar com fogo, mijar na cama. Você não mente com a intenção de enganar, mas justo na intenção de atingir um beneficiamento maior. Mas por tudo isto mesmo, a arte jamais é independente da vida: há interdependência insolúvel e irrecorrível, que faz com que nem a vida domine a arte nem esta àquela. Não desligue assim proverbialmente duas coisas que são a mesma coisa. Até como aspiração elas são a mesma coisa: pois tudo não aspira a uma vida melhor?...

Com um abraço do

Mário de Andrade

Mário de Andrade. *Cartas a um jovem escritor*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1981, pp. 27-37.

# Joaquim Nabuco

Machado de Assis



From: Joaquim Nabuco  
To: Machado de Assis

Joaquim Nabuco, in his letter to Machado de Assis, showed a great feeling of humbleness regarding his own literary work, which was praised by Machado. Nabuco was only fifteen when he wrote this letter – at this point he thought he was allowed to dream and to fantasize about his life and feelings. He believed that, at a certain age, he would no longer be able to dedicate himself to the good values of life, arts and dreams, becoming just one more man who thinks about work. Joaquim Nabuco grew to be a great diplomat – a very important one to the Brazilian abolitionist movement. His essay *O Abolicionismo*, from 1883, is a very famous text defending the abolishing of slavery in Brazil by using economic, political and, most importantly, moral arguments on why slavery should be banned.

In the translation of this letter, I tried to maintain the poetic prose writing the young Nabuco had. His lines were almost verses, using a lot of metaphors and comparisons to justify why he did not deserve the title of poet that he was, indeed, worthy to have. His humbleness was the true antithesis of his golden dreams.



Translation by: Thiago Montes<sup>15</sup>  
Reviewers: Thales Buzan e Juliana Bellini Meireles

Rio de Janeiro, February 1st, 1865

My dear Sir,

---

<sup>15</sup> Generalist Translator with a degree in Letras (Portuguese/English Translation) at the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF). Additionally, he has extensive experience in commercial translation. He translated the short story *The Witches* by Fagundes Varela, which is part of the *Alter Mundos* volume, published by the Paratexto publishing company. He also curated the second volume of the series, *Alter Feminae*, and worked as a transcriber for several stories included in this volume.

I have yesterday's *Diário* in mind, in the “Ao acaso” chronicle I have come across some lines about me, laid down from your quill; I have read and then reread what you wrote about me and after some meditation on those lines, I have decided to expound the two considerations that follows:

I am not a poet; my lame compositions, written on my spare time, yet they do not intend much; the pompous title of poet, which by extreme kindness and pleasantry you deigned yourself on applying to me, it could, crushing my null worth, fill me with a baseless pride, which would elevate me higher than what I really am, and if by chance I had not the indestructible conviction that it truly does not belong to me, and that it was applied to me by a poet that, perhaps by sympathy or by any other reason, desiring to extend to me his supportive and cheerful hand, gave me superior titles rather than the qualities I truly possess.

I write verses, it is true; however these verses, with no cadence nor harmony, cannot raise the author to the rank of poet, if much from lower he floats; I thank you, therefore, for the title, which does not belong to me; accepting it, or silently letting it slide, would be intending what I could never aspire; it would be to inflate me with a false pride, considering my merit a title I could have only because of benevolence and pleasantry.

That is the first consideration the reading of your lines suggested upon my mind; furthermore, I ought to tell you: from a certain age on I do not intend to apply myself in poetry no more; at this age, that my mind cannot discuss about the positive and the exact, I glide the quill upon the paper, and that my bashful imagination expands itself in those lines that it composes; but, when my wit, concentrated by study and meditation, can focus on the positive and the exact, I will no more burn the herbs to the muses of the Parnassus, so I can enroll myself on the rows of the most mediocre apostles of the positivism, and the exact sciences; this is a protest for the fulfillment of which I beg the Lord willpower and firmness of resolution. I understand, my dear poet, that in a certain age our imagination loses its vigor; the utopias and the fantasy, which feed the imagination of the poets, cease from the moment he enters in a life whose vicissitudes demonstrate him the absurd of their calculations; and whose whims and adversities are the perfect antithesis of the golden dreams of his fantasies and pleasures, and of the happy vigils, that his calculations of an utopist and of a poet, he one day have conceived.

And that is why, for now, I set free my imagination; but a day will come, and maybe this day is close, in which I completely quit this world of the dreamers, to make myself part of those who, more intimate with the realities of life, consider the world as it really is. Those are the two considerations that, for now, I thought to be pertinent on the lines about me.

Avail yourself of the little service from that obliging servant of yours

Joaquim Nabuco



Rio de Janeiro, 1º de fevereiro de 1865

Meu caro senhor,



Tenho em vista o *Diário* de ontem, na crônica “Ao acaso” deparo com algumas linhas ao meu respeito, caídas de sua pena; li e reli o que sobre mim escreveu, e depois de meditar sobre estas linhas decidi-me a aventar sobre elas as duas considerações que se seguem:

Não sou poeta; as minhas toscas composições, escritas nas minhas horas vagas, ainda não pretendem a tanto; o título pom-posito de poeta que, por extrema bondade, e complacência, dignou-se-me aplicar, poderia, esmagando a minha nula valia, encher-me de um orgulho sem fundamento, que me elevasse acima do que eu realmente sou, se porventura não tivesse a indestrutível convicção de que ele verdadeiramente me não pertence, e de que me foi aplicado por um poeta, que, talvez por simpatia ou por outro qualquer motivo, desejando estender-me a sua mão de apoio e de animação, me deu títulos superiores às qualidades que realmente eu possuo.

Escrevo versos, é certo; porém estes versos, sem cadência e sem harmonia, não podem elevar o seu autor à altura de poeta, se bem de inferior plaina; agradeço portanto o título, que me não pertence; aceitá-lo, ou tacitamente deixá-lo passar, seria pretender aquilo a que jamais poderei aspirar; seria encher-me de um falso orgulho, julgando meritório um título que só a benevolência e a complacência me poderiam conferir.

Esta é a primeira consideração que a leitura de suas linhas sugeriu em minha mente; de mais, cabe-me dizer-lho: de uma certa idade em diante pretendo me não mais aplicar à poesia; nesta idade em que minha inteligência ainda não pode discutir sobre o positivo e o exato, deixo que a pena corra sobre o papel, e que minha acanhada imaginação se expanda nas linhas, que ela compõe; mas, quando as minhas faculdades concentradas pelo estudo e pela meditação se puderem aplicar ao positivo, e ao exato, deixarei de queimar incenso às musas do Parnaso, para me ir alistar na fileira dos mais medíocres apóstolos do positivismo, e das ciências exatas; é um protesto para cujo cumprimento peço a Deus força de vontade e firmeza de resolução. Entendo, meu caro poeta, que desde uma certa idade a nossa imaginação perde o seu vigor; as utopias e as fantasias, que alimentam a imaginação dos poetas, cessam desde que ele penetra numa vida cujas vicissitudes lhe demonstram o absurdo dos seus cálculos; e cujos caprichos e contrariedades são a perfeita antítese dos sonhos dourados de sua fantasia e dos prazeres, e das vigílias felizes, que em seus cálculos de utopista e de poeta ele um dia concebeu.

É por isso que por ora dou asas à minha imaginação; mas um dia virá, e este dia talvez esteja perto, no qual me desligue completamente desse mundo de visionários, para ir tomar parte no grêmio daqueles que, mais chegados às realidades da vida, consideram este mundo como ele realmente é. São estas as duas considerações, que por ora julguei dever fazer às linhas a meu respeito.

Disponha do pouco préstimo daquele seu criado obrigado

Joaquim Nabuco

*Correspondência Machado de Assis & Joaquim Nabuco*. Organização de Graça Aranha. Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Letras/Topbooks, 2003, pp. 89-90.

# Epistolary Memories

from Brazilian Writers :  
*a glimpse of life and art.*

**Organização e Supervisão:**  
Carolina Alves Magaldi e Luisa Arantes Bahia

**Capa e diagramação:**  
Jady Forte D.signer

**ISBN:**  
978-65-00-86710-7

**Juiz de Fora, 2023**