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**Toward a Latin American Irony:  
English Intertextuality and the Transnational  
Reception of Machado de Assis and Borges**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes a comparative study of Brazilian writer Machado de Assis and Argentinean writer Borges in terms of the changing reception of their works vis-à-vis their intertextualities with English ironists. The focus is on Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies: their idiosyncratic adaptations of the narrative devices and strategies used by English ironists, such as Sterne, Dickens, Chesterton and Stevenson. International critics have compared Machado and Borges as precursors of the 1960s Latin American Boom—the belated international recognition of Latin American writers in English translation. However, this connection between these writers and Latin American narrative traditions was never explained in terms of the presence of English ironists within their narratives; further, it was not explained in terms of developments in the reception of their work by critics in transnational contexts. This comparative study is based on an examination of the writers' use of irony and intertextualities and the evolution of the critical reception of their works within different horizons of expectations: from their early local critics, in late nineteenth-century Brazil and twentieth-century Argentina; to their first critical discovery in the English-speaking world, from the 1960s; thence to their subsequent reception by later writers in Brazil and Argentina; and finally to the transnational reassessment of their work in the context of the Latin American Boom, in the late 1960s and 1970s. This thesis demonstrates that while Machado and Borges were writing within specific socio-cultural, historical and geographic discursive traditions, their innovative narratives prompt diverse interpretations across different cultures. As a result, their narratives have become models not only for transnational Latin American writers, but also for Euro-American readers, writers and critics across broader cultural horizons and networks of literary reception. This thesis critically analyses the reception of Machado's and Borges' works, to establish that, in fact, what situated them as concurrently national and universal writers, as well as precursors of the distinctive Latin American new narrative that was identified as the Boom, was their use of English irony.

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## Introduction: Toward a Latin American Irony

Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839-1908) and Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) are often considered the writers who best represented the cultures of their respective nations, Brazil and Argentina, while also being considered “universal writers” by late twentieth-century critics. Harold Bloom, for instance, stated not only that Borges, “of all Latin American authors [...] is the most universal” (*The Western Canon* 471), but also that Machado is “a kind of a miracle”, proof that literary genius is not related to its context (*Genius* 675). Indeed, Borges was acclaimed as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century: Bloom defined him as a universal author who, more importantly, had an “English and North American” sensibility (*The Western Canon* 464). In his 2002 book *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, Bloom also included Machado. However, Machado was highly appreciated by a smaller number of enthusiasts than Borges.

When Machado and Borges came to the attention of European and U.S. critics in the 1960s, their works were interpreted in a binary framework reinforced by the Cold War mentality: they were placed in the seemingly contradictory position of being constructed as national writers, while at the same time also being hailed as universal writers above their societies, because they were closely connected to Western traditions.

To bridge this national-universal binary, critics introduced a third concept, still associated with their importance as authors in transnational contexts: they associate both Machado and Borges with the Latin American Boom of the 1960s. I define this Boom as the international recognition of Latin American writers in English translation. Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal was the first to locate both Machado and Borges as precursors of the Boom (1972). For his part, Mexican critic and writer Carlos Fuentes was the first to place Borges as a precursor of this era (1972); subsequently, he included Machado in *Geografía de*

*la novela* (1998). The primary reasons for this estimation were, for Fuentes, their groundbreaking role as modern urban writers in Latin America, whereas for Rodríguez Monegal, it was their pioneering “interpretaciones sobre la relación entre el autor, la obra y el lector” [interpretations about the relation among the author, the work and the reader] (*El Boom de la novela latinoamericana* 54). In this thesis, I critically analyze the reception of Machado’s and Borges’ works, to establish that, in fact, what located them as *at the same time* national and universal writers, *as well as* precursors of the Boom, was their use of English irony.

In addition to their identity as national, universal and Latin American authors, Machado and Borges have in common distinctive cultural adaptations of English literary models, particularly those connected to ironic traditions. Through their adaptations of ironic models, both Machado and Borges achieved in their fictional work—each in his own way and in relation to his own times—the creation of a new narrative and a new reader, along with a new narrative theory. In his study of Machado and Borges, Earl E. Fitz locates in their fiction a new “modo de ler” [mode of reading], and a “nova conceituação da relação entre a linguagem e a realidade” [new concept of the relation between language and reality] (Fitz, “Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice” 131-3).<sup>1</sup> These new directions achieved by Machado and Borges challenged their respective local and contemporary readers; subsequently, they presented critics in various contexts with the issues of national versus international literary traditions, and local versus universal reception. These tensions between locality and universality within Machado’s and Borges’ narratives contributed to the definition of their national literatures. Yet a third geoliterary space has been introduced here whose historical specificity escapes the attention of many critics: beyond the binary of local versus universal, their role as “Latin American” writers conceptually distinguishes Machado and Borges as

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. It also should be mentioned that I will be using footnotes, instead of endnotes.



pioneers in a project that differs from either the local or universal, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Machado is one of the most important Brazilian writers of works in Portuguese, best known for his novels, particularly *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), *Quincas Borba* (1891), and *Dom Casmurro* (1899). He is considered the author who, in the late nineteenth-century, defined Brazilian literature. With Machado, the long process of defining a balance between European models and local cultural traditions culminated (Fischer 70-1). He had his first poems published at the age of 15 in the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Periódico dos Pobres* in 1854 (Piza 63). He continued publishing poems, novels, short stories, articles and criticism until 1908, the year of his death. Machado's literary production was both broad and large, not all of which has been collected in the four volumes of his *Obra completa*.

For his part, Borges is one of the most important Argentinean writers, best known for his short stories, particularly those collected in *Ficciones* (1944). In a sense, he is responsible for defining twentieth-century Argentinean literature by achieving a balance between Argentinean and European cultures. Further, he gained recognition and continues to be best known for being the "first Latin American writer to influence Western culture" (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 278), and for being central to developments in philosophical and literary traditions in France and in North-America. An example of this is the reception and adaptation of his work by philosophers and writers such as Michel Foucault and John Barth.<sup>2</sup> Borges' literary production is as extensive as that of Machado: he published his first translation at the age of nine, in the Buenos Aires newspaper *El País* (94), and contributed articles throughout his life to newspapers. In addition to the number of sole-authored books he published, he also wrote extensively in collaboration with friends such as Adolfo Bioy

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<sup>2</sup> French philosopher Foucault's *Les Mots et les Choses*, for instance, opens with quote from Borges' essay "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins": "Ce livre a son lieu de naissance dans un texte de Borges" [The birthplace of this book is a text of Borges] (Foucault 8). North American writer Barth establishes his idea of what he calls "the literature of exhaustion" using Borges as one of the topics (Alazraki 170-82).

Casares and Margarita Guerrero. He began this lifelong practice in his twenties and continued it to the end of his life in 1986. Furthermore, as in the case of Machado, Borges' copious literary production is not fully contained in the four volumes of his work published to date.

Over the years, the works of Machado and Borges were translated into diverse languages, the most important of which were French and English, as these were responsible for introducing their works into the canon of world literature. Borges enjoys a more prominent role as he is considered one of the most important twentieth-century short story writers in terms of publication runs, literature studied and taught in universities, and readership. By contrast, Machado's readership is usually limited to academics and scholars; however, he too is highly influential due to international scholarship about his work. In particular, critical work from France and North-America helped redefine his works within Brazil, and in transnational contexts, such as in the canon of world literature. Irrespective of differences, the critical assessment and reception of Machado's and Borges' works can be compared with respect to their expansive reach: according to Brazilian critic Luis Augusto Fischer, when comparing Machado's and Borges' critical fortune, "são dezenas de livros, centenas de estudos, milhares de artigos, milhões de referências, no país de origem e fora deles" [there are dozens of books, hundreds of studies, hundreds of articles, millions of references, in their original country and abroad] (12).

Machado and Borges lived, read and wrote in different societies, at different times and from contexts with distinctive relations to foreign cultures and literary traditions. However, an analysis of the similarities between Machado's late-nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro and Borges' early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires reveals a subtext of culture that influenced their respective literary endeavors. For example, both cities' ambition to become a sub-tropical Paris represents an aspiration that reflects the importance of French culture and literary tradition within both societies. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

both pursued urban redevelopment based on mid-nineteenth-century Paris (Moody xv), in search of a new, and more modern and cosmopolitan, national identity (vii). From my analysis, this aspiration reflects the neo-colonial cultural dependency on French traditions and models of the intellectual elite of both Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.<sup>3</sup> Such reliance on French culture shared by most of the intellectuals of the two capital cities only serves to strengthen the cultural-literary distinctiveness of Machado and Borges, given their particular affinity for English literature. Nevertheless, there are a number of differences between the two societies that also need to be considered, in order to understand the two writers' unique forms of irony and the outcomes of Machado's and Borges' relations with English ironists.

Certain basic differences between nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro and twentieth-century Buenos Aires societies, and also between Machado's and Borges' places within these societies are quickly demonstrable. First, with respect to readership, illiteracy was widespread in Brazilian society at the end of the nineteenth century: in 1872, a general census determined that 84% of the population (10 million) was illiterate (Piza 154). At the beginning of the twentieth-century, Argentinean society, by contrast, was much more cultured and better educated than Brazilian society: according to the national census of 1869 and 1914, the percentage of illiterate citizens older than fourteen decreased from 78 to 35 due to public policies regarding education (Acree 118).<sup>4</sup>

Machado's audience was thus a more limited number of readers who were concentrated in a more cultured and wealthier part of society. This Brazilian elite had

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<sup>3</sup> The colonial history of Brazil differs from that of Argentina in that it did not become a republic until 1889, but was an independent domain with a Portuguese head of state from 1822. In this context, neo-colonialism refers to what came just after the colonial period of Portuguese dominance: the period in which Machado is writing, that is, the nineteenth-century. When Brazil became independent from Portugal in 1822 it was only to open itself to new colonizers. During the nineteenth century, Brazil was still culturally indebted to France, in spite of being financially dependent on England.

<sup>4</sup> According to Acree, these national censuses "must be considered with caution": they were conducted by governmental agencies, and usually did not consider significant sectors of society (117-8). Another important point made by Acree, specifically in relation to literacy in Argentina, concerns the concentration of public primary schools in "Buenos Aires and the province of Buenos Aires", in contrast to Uruguay, which had similar public policies, but had most of its schools in the countryside (117).

continuously reinforced political relations with Portugal and was dominated by French culture. In neighboring Argentina, Borges' writing was specifically directed towards contemporary elite readers' expectations regarding authors, literary genres and their relation to reality. Buenos Aires at the time was defined as a highly dynamic social context of Spanish Creole (*criollo*) ancestry amidst new waves of Spanish and Italian working-class immigrants, within an elite culture dominated by French taste.

Machado's best-known work, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, clearly parodies English ironic narratives; however, it is also arguably a parody of a slave owner's discourse, satirizing the nineteenth-century Brazilian elite (his potential readers included), and their relations with other social strata in the same context. By contrast, Borges in "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*," plays with the interaction between readers' expectations and literary genres: it makes fictional narrative use of the essay genre, and at the same time, replaces the real writer Cervantes with an imaginary French writer, Pierre Menard. I will analyze these narratives in considerable further detail. For the purposes of this brief introduction, one might say that in his novel, Machado plays with relations between literature and society; Borges, in his short story, plays with the relations between text and reality.

These two examples show how Machado's irony is generally considered more satirical, in the sense that it exposes faulty social and personal behaviors. On the other hand, Borges' irony is more metafictional, i.e., it usually provides a comment on its own fictionality, and sometimes it is even nihilistic in its apparent refusal to take a clear and unambiguous moral position. This is not to say that Machado's ironies cannot be interpreted as metafictional, or that Borges' ironies cannot be considered satirical, rather, their distinctive narratives corresponded to different societies, which required different cross-cultural adaptations: Machado's society demanded and permitted a more parodic and satirical approach; Borges' readers warranted a more metafictional and intertextual approach—as I

will demonstrate in this thesis. In fact, that is how Machado's and Borges' particular ironies are usually understood in critical terms: Machado as a satirist, who used irony to critique his society; and Borges as a metafictional ironist, sometimes even disconnected from reality (Balderston, *Out of Context*; Gledson, *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis*; Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography*). In spite of these differences, since both used English ironic models as references for their particular dialogues with the respective readers of their times, I will argue that Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies are substantively similar.

Another key difference concerns Machado's and Borges' places within their respective societies. Machado was born in 1839 into a poor family of African ancestry in a society still based on slave labor.<sup>5</sup> Bloom identifies Machado as a "black Brazilian novelist" (*Genius* 653), which corroborates many earlier North American views held about the author.<sup>6</sup> In that location, his narratives acquired new significance and relevance in the twenty-first century, as those of an African-descendant writer. The history of how he gained his education (including his fluency in French) is not clear; nevertheless, he became, against all odds, a man of letters. This is one of the most common narratives about his life: he was a self-made man who overcame social and personal adversity. Machado had to fight his way into this nineteenth-century Brazilian literary world, since he was in a precarious place within cultured spheres of nineteenth-century Brazilian society. As an African-descendant during the period

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<sup>5</sup> In Brazil, slavery was abolished in 1888. Machado's relation to slavery is ambiguous, and usually associated with views of Machado as a writer disconnected from reality, as one who chose literature, Europe and European models over his African heritage. Nevertheless, a case can be made with respect to the role of irony in his satire of Brazilian society of the nineteenth century, and also in his indirect comments on racial issues. This is not the focus of this thesis; however, I propose that it is the centrality of irony in Machado's literary project, and in the posthumous reception of his work, that allows for an analysis of his narratives with respect to issues of race and prejudice in Brazilian society (see Flynn, Calvo-González and de Souza).

<sup>6</sup> In 1938, U.S. critic Arthur B. Spirgan (13) stated that, at that time, there was no African-descendant novelist in North America better than Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. Nevertheless, Machado's narratives were not usually read through a racial lens, particularly in Brazil. Racial issues were usually drawn to reinforce Machado's connections to dominant Euro-Brazilian narratives of his time. Recently, more positive attention has been given to Machado's stances on racial struggles in nineteenth-century Brazil (Flynn, Calvo-González and de Souza), but that is still an area that requires more attention.

of slavery, he also had to overcome his poor origins to climb to a central position in the Brazilian cultured sphere. Typically, he was discreet, sometimes even secretive, about his past and previous social condition.<sup>7</sup> Despite his position within society and his critiques of nineteenth-century Brazilian social and racial relations ironically stated in his works from the perspective of a fictional member of the contemporary elite, Machado's narratives were considered by the majority of local critics, especially before the 1960s, as purely literary inventions, even evasive artifices, with no connection with his socio-historical surroundings; this was similar to a branch of critical approaches to Borges' work (Balderston, *Out of Context*).

By contrast, Borges was born into a middle-class, cultured and cosmopolitan family, within a wealthy early twentieth-century Argentinean society. Borges had the privilege of living and studying in Europe in his early years, first in French-speaking Geneva, in 1912, where he studied French and German. Later he returned to Europe to establish himself among Spanish-speaking writers in Spain, in 1923. In addition to his European education, Borges had the opportunity and the means to dedicate himself professionally to literature, an exceptional position for writers at the time. Further, his exposure to other languages and literatures very early in his life was rare. In fact, Borges grew up in a bilingual family environment, where English and Spanish languages and literatures were equally important parts of his upbringing. In stark contrast to Machado, Borges was educated and nurtured to become an intellectual and a writer of the cultured part of the Argentinean elite of his time.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Machado and Borges, each in his own way, had a privileged perspective regarding the societies within which they wrote: Machado, the consummate outsider, by coming from a socially and ethnically marginal background for an important writer of the

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<sup>7</sup> For more on Machado's biography, see Piza (*Machado de Assis: Um gênio brasileiro*) and Werneck (*O homem encadernado*).

<sup>8</sup> For more on Borges' biography, see Rodríguez Monegal (*A Literary Biography*), Vázquez (*Esplendor y Derrota*) and Vaccaro (*Georgie*).

time, and by fighting to make his way in that literary world; Borges, the gifted insider, by living abroad, and through his connections to other languages and cultures throughout his life, but marginalized by the dominant political power, Peronism from the 1930s. Especially important was his facility with the English language and his knowledge of its literatures, neither of which were as common as familiarity with French language and literature. In spite of the evident contrasts between their backgrounds, their place at the margins of their societies enabled both writers to distance themselves from their contemporaries and to critically examine their own social and cultural surroundings. Moreover, Machado and Borges were able to emerge from these problematic relations with their own societies to produce philosophical and critical commentary combined with their own perspectives on reality (Fischer 28), in ways that emphasize irony—from the choice of ironic models, to the dialogues between their narratives and their readers. In their fictions, Machado and Borges present the type of irony that results from the tensions between their own personal relations with their nations, and between their own literary relation with both hemispheric and European models.

Borges and Machado looked at their own and other literary traditions “sin supersticiones” [without superstition], to use Borges’ expression in his famous essay first published in 1955, “El escritor argentino y la tradición” (*Obras completas* 232). Alternatively, they had “certo sentimento íntimo” [certain inner feeling] that made them a Brazilian or an Argentinean writer, even when dealing with “assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço” [distant issues, in both time and space], to use Machado’s words in his famous essay first published 1873 “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade” (*Obras completas* 1205). Machado and Borges established critical relations with various European traditions, especially with English ironists, and with their own local as well as regional

traditions. Out of their distinctive backgrounds, different literary outcomes evolved, although, on many levels, with similar intertextual approaches.

## Review of Comparative Studies of Machado and Borges

Similarities between Machado's and Borges' narratives, such as their contribution to their national traditions, or their relation to English ironists, and even their use of irony, have been identified in multiple contexts by a number of critics. In the last three decades, the most common comparison relates these writers to their places within transnational literary traditions, most significantly as Latin American writers, and with respect to their roles as predecessors of the Boom of the 1960s. This latter identification helped consolidate the idea that Latin America existed as an entity differentiated from the discreet nations in the region. An understanding of these critical comparisons aids in the analysis of the different purposes they serve within diverse geographical contexts.

Brazilian critics tend to use this comparative strategy in order to assure recognition of the earlier Brazilian writer within the canon of world literature. Indeed, Borges is arguably more widely read than Machado both in the original and in translation, particularly into English. Argentinean critics tend to overlook this comparative strategy of linkage between Argentinean and Brazilian writers, perhaps for lack of knowledge of Brazilian literature in general, as well as of Machado in particular.<sup>9</sup> In general, Argentinean critics compare their leading literary figures exclusively to European or North American writers, considering comparison with other Latin American writers to be less prestigious.

However, in broader English-speaking cultural contexts, critics have compared Machado and Borges and accordingly revised the global literary canon to include both of

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<sup>9</sup> Other comparisons between Borges and other Brazilian writers have been attempted by Uruguayan critic Rodríguez Monegal in *Mário de Andrade/Borges*, and by Argentinean scholar Cariello in *Jorge Luis Borges y Osman Lins*, for example. Nevertheless, most of the comparisons between the Argentinean writer and Brazilian literature were undertaken by Brazilian critics, as I will demonstrate in the case of the comparisons between Machado and Borges.



these two geographically dislocated and atypical writers. By broadening the canon, critics tend to simultaneously strengthen the criteria around what constitutes great literature: approximation to their European and North American models. Some North American critics, and in particular Fitz in “Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice: A evolução da nova narrativa latino-americana” [Machado de Assis, Borges and Clarice: The Evolution of the New Latin American Narrative], argue for the inclusion of Machado’s and Borges’ names within the canon of world literature in general, and specifically within early developments of the Latin American Boom of the 1960s. In some cases, the privileged inclusion of Machado over Borges in these diverse Euro-American critical and literary traditions seems to be the main point of connection between the writers: these comparisons are undertaken in order to emphasize Machado’s relevance within and also precedence over certain European or Latin American narrative traditions, a position equal to that of the better known and more influential works of Borges. Latin American critics outside Brazil and Argentina, such as Emir Rodríguez Monegal in *El boom de la novela latinoamericana*, compare Machado to Borges with almost the same strategy used by critics in North American contexts: Machado deserves a place as a precursor of the Latin American Boom of the second half of the twentieth century equal to that of Borges, the more recognized precursor.

Antonio Candido is one of the first Brazilian critics to compare Machado to Borges within the context of Latin American literature. In his well-known 1973 article “Literatura e subdesenvolvimento” [Literature and Underdevelopment], Candido focuses on broader relations between Latin American literature and society in terms of economic and social development, and, in the process, briefly compares Machado to Borges. For Candido, Latin America as a region of 21 nation-states was in the process of acknowledging and understanding its peripheral position: he argues that Latin America was going through a “fase da consciência catastrófica de atraso” [phase of the catastrophic awareness of backwardness]

(141). According to the critic, “underdeveloped countries”, such as Brazil and its neighbors, were financially and culturally dependent on the “developed countries” of North America and Europe. In this context, he articulated his historically bounded understatement of the problem of what was commonly understood as “influence”: Latin American writers would usually be overshadowed by the central literary traditions of Euro-American writers. Machado and Borges, in contrast, represented for Candido examples of “originality” compared to otherwise overwhelming European models.<sup>10</sup>

In order to highlight Machado’s achievements, Candido proceeds to deprecate Borges’ worldwide recognition by suggesting that Machado possessed a wider “visão de homem” [human perspective] (152). Consequently, for Candido, Machado would have found more readers worldwide if he had written in a more accessible language than Portuguese. Candido considers that Machado’s work has been unfairly treated by critics and readers in broader cultural and literary contexts, in spite of the comparison of Machado’s originality with that of Borges in relation to his Euro-American literary models. At the time Candido was writing, the early 1970s, the sometimes overlooked importance of Machado’s work (and less often that of Borges’) within the emerging Latin American tradition and also within the canon of world literature seems to corroborate Candido’s view of the two writers. Candido’s article can be considered representative of general comparisons of Machado and Borges by Brazilian critics. His comparative strategy considered, on the one hand, the centrality of these writers within their national literatures, and, on the other hand, their place (or non-existence) within broader Euro-American spheres. Candido’s views can also be compared to critical assessments in broader global cultural contexts, particularly to those of North American

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<sup>10</sup> In Candido’s view, Borges “representa o primeiro caso de incontestável influência original, exercida de maneira ampla e reconhecida sobre os países-fontes” [represents the first unquestionable case of original influence, widely and visibly exercised over source countries]; and Machado, “poderia ter aberto rumos novos no fim do século XIX para os países-fontes” [could have opened new paths for source countries at the end of the nineteenth-century], but was overlooked because of his “unknown” language and country (“Literatura e subdesenvolvimento” 152).

critics: Candido points out the omission of Machado's work in world critical and literary discussions, and also the potential positive reception of these works by critics and readers in Europe and North America.

These same points would be made by North American critic Earl E. Fitz in 1998. When comparing Borges to Machado for a Brazilian audience, Fitz emphasizes not only Machado's potential role within the canon of world literature, but also his importance for Latin American narrative traditions of the twentieth century. In "Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice: A evolução da nova narrativa latino-americana", Fitz situates Machado as an early precursor of the new Latin American narratives. According to Fitz, the new narrative of the second half of twentieth century first appears with Machado's novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* in the late nineteenth century (130). Much like his peers, Rodríguez Monegal, Paul Dixon and Alfred MacAdam,<sup>11</sup> Fitz proposes an integrative framework for Latin American literature, emphasizing what he considers the neglected role of Brazilian literature within a larger continental historical construct. Machado thus plays a significant early role in the development of this integrative framework as a precursor of a later narrative tradition in a region—Latin America—that had not conceptually existed as a literary entity during his lifetime.

For Fitz, Machado as a writer foresaw and accomplished in the nineteenth century what Borges would only later accomplish in the beginning of the twentieth century. Fitz compares the narrative innovations introduced by Machado in his mature novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*—particularly the reading theories suggested by Machado's narrator in his interplays with readers—with Borges' reading theories expressed in his essays "La

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<sup>11</sup> Rodríguez Monegal, in *El boom la novela latinoamericana* writes the following: "Machado de Assis escapa de los límites de su tiempo y se convierte en el más deleitable precursor de la nueva novela" [Machado de Assis escapes from the limits imposed by his own time to become the most delightful new novel's precursor] (in Fitz, 130-131); Dixon, in "The Modernity of Machado de Assis": "Machado de Assis [...] 'is the writer most responsible for making Brazil's 'new narrative' older than that of its neighbors'"; MacAdam, in *Textual Confrontations*: "[...] Machado invents modern Latin American narrative" (quoted in Fitz, "Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice" 131).

postulación de la realidad” and “El arte narrativo y la magia” (134). In the first chapter of this thesis, I will comment more on these essays. For Fitz, the main point of this comparison lies in the fact that Machado freed himself of the “tirania da representação mimética (realismo) da realidade” [tyranny of the mimetic representation of reality (Realism)], as Borges would later do (134). Machado’s and Borges’ narrative projects were thus aimed at going beyond realism; concurrently, they drew attention to their fictional discourses as such (138).

In contrasting Machado’s and Borges’ narratives, Fitz points out that Machado proposed an interplay with readers with regard to ambiguities in terms of language: “Machado queria escrever uma nova narrativa cuja ambiguidade não repousa numa questão estrutural mas linguística, do processo fluido de significação” [Machado wanted to write a new narrative whose ambiguity relied not on a structural but a linguistic matter, related to the fluid process of signifying] (137). Borges, by contrast, created his peculiar fictional world as an artefact disconnected from reality. In summary, Machado’s “nova narrativa” was a matter of language, Borges’ “nueva narrativa”, one of structure (138). As a result, Fitz relates Machado’s narratives to poststructuralist theories and Borges’ to structuralist theories (136). In spite of the fact that this view also reflects the significance of Machado’s and Borges’ works within broader cultural contexts and with respect to later critical-theoretical appropriations of them, Fitz’s comparison between the authors and these later theories is related to one of the most recurrent ways of comparing Machado to Borges: both are considered culturally dislocated but also precocious modern writers.

In *El boom de la novela latinoamericana*, Uruguayan critic Rodríguez Monegal anticipated Fitz’s view of an inclusive Latin American narrative tradition that must incorporate Brazilian developments, specifically Machado’s work, in order to consider Latin America as a whole, rather than just Spanish America. These comparisons between Machado and Borges as precursors of Latin American traditions suggest the critical “search” for a

deeper root for the Latin American Boom of the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> Identifying Machado as the oldest precursor of the new twentieth-century narratives signaled advocacy for earlier Latin American narrative developments. In general, critics have tended to consider Machado their own “discovery” that should be highlighted in relation to the established and more recognized model, Borges. This point was also made by Brazilian critic Candido in “Literatura e subdesenvolvimento”. Moreover, Fitz, in his “Machado de Assis’ Reception and the Transformation of the Modern European Novel”, proposes a similar integrative and comparative strategy, this time related to the canon of world literature. In it, he relates Machado to European writers, such as Sterne, Dickens and Flaubert.

Most of the comparisons between Machado and Borges discussed thus far have not only been brief, but also have been related to broader issues of revising literary traditions and narrative developments, particularly with respect to the canon of world literature and to Latin American narrative traditions. Brazilian critic Luis Augusto Fischer, in two articles included in his book, *Machado e Borges*, proposes the most extensive and innovative of these comparative strategies thus far. Initially, Fischer establishes a series of biographical similarities between the two writers that can only to be summarized here, since they are not the focus of this thesis: Machado and Borges produced an extensive body of work that is not fully comprised in their so-called complete works; both contributed extensively to contemporary newspapers (10-1); both writers had no children—Fischer elaborates on the importance of this theme to Machado, in particular, but in general he draws attention to the “esterilidade física em relação com a abundância e a eficácia artística” [physical sterility in relation to the artistic abundance and effectiveness] of both authors (16); Machado and Borges eschew sensuality, which is significant for Fischer, in view of the usual stereotypical

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<sup>12</sup> Borges himself was not directly related to the Latin American Boom, in spite of the fact that he was still alive, writing and lecturing during the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate in more detail in Chapter 4, Borges was usually considered by critics and also by writers as the primary model for modern and transnational Latin American writers of the 1960s.

and often colonialist sensuality related to Latin American cultures (16); Machado and Borges had a classic temperament, in spite of the fact that both writers had been born in “culturas de feição romântica” [romantic-like cultures] (19); both writers reacted to Romanticism with a particular “consciência anti-efusiva, antiderramada e igualmente anti-nacionalista” [anti-effusive, anti-exaggerated and equally anti-nationalist consciousness] (19); Machado and Borges were young leftists turned into “velhos conservadores, quando não reacionários mesmo” [old conservatives, if not reactionaries] (21)—Machado toward the emerging Brazilian republic, and Borges toward Peronism; and finally, Machado and Borges produced their best and most recognized narratives after their 40s (24). These are all interesting facts that can, at least, help to connect Machado to Borges at different levels.

However, Fischer’s most notable contribution to a critical comparison between Machado and Borges is strongly related to Candido’s notion of “formative literature”, i.e., Machado and Borges are arguably the “ponto de chegada” [arrival point] of the development of their respective national literary traditions (Fischer 70-1). Machado’s and Borges’ mature fictions represent the pinnacle of the formation of their own national traditions, the point at which Brazilian and Argentinean narratives can be considered autonomous, although the authors themselves were both, as Fischer notes, anti-nationalist in their own times. According to Fischer, Machado’s and Borges’ mature works were capable of generating an internal process in which an autonomous and complete national cultural perspective could engage in dialogue with other Euro-American cultural traditions, such as Portuguese and Spanish literatures, but particularly with neo-colonial models (the most common being French) or even more unusually, yet also neo-colonial, cultural and literary models, mainly English. From that point forward, Brazilian and Argentinean literatures would no longer be seen as mere continuations or consequences of Portuguese and Spanish cultural traditions, of which Brazilian and Argentinean literatures were considered part, but now as sovereign literary

traditions in dialogue with various Euro-American cultural and literary models.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Fischer presents a brief Brazilian history of the critical comparisons between Machado and Borges, citing Brazilian critics Leyla Perrone-Moisés, Marcelo Coelho and David Arrigucci Jr (Fischer 44-7).<sup>14</sup> These earlier comparisons address conventional strategies with respect to the comparative study of Machado and Borges, i.e., all are roughly concerned with the place of Machado's and Borges' narratives within local, hemispheric and European traditions. In spite of a consistent and innovative conception of literary history adapted from Brazilian critic Candido, and a strong focus on Machado's and Borges' own narrative developments and socio-historical surroundings, Fischer reiterates the underlying polarities that permeate the critical comparisons between Machado and Borges: these writers' relations to nationalism and cosmopolitanism, localism and universalism.

In this thesis, Latin America, as a geoliterary space, will be understood as a deconstruction of those binaries, and not as a stable space. Machado and Borges, in defining their national literatures in relation to others, will be at the base of this construct. Nevertheless, as we will see throughout this thesis, Latin America as this developing geoliterary space will be viewed in different ways by different communities of readers, particularly after the 1960s.

In general, Brazilian, English-speaking and Latin American critics have used comparative approaches that point out the significant roles of Machado and Borges within the canon of world literature, and also in the development of Latin American narrative traditions. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the relations between these two writers and other Euro-

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<sup>13</sup> Fischer also presents some parallels between Machado's and Borges' narratives: he compares Borges' character Pierre Menard, of "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*" to Machado's character Rubião, of *Quincas Borba*; between Machado's short story "A chinela turca" and Borges' short story "El sur"; and, finally, between the delirium scene of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and Borges' "El aleph". These parallels were also attempted by other critics (such as MacAdam, "Immortality and Its Discontents"), with interesting results.

<sup>14</sup> I also include in this tradition Zilberman in "O leitor, de Machado de Assis a Jorge Luis Borges", Namorato in *The Missed Encounter: Cannibalism and Authorship in the Works of Antonio Fernando Borges, Jorge Luis Borges and Machado de Assis*, and Antelo in "Machado and Modernism".

American cultural and literary models and traditions are central to the majority of the usual comparative strategies, critics tend to overlook the common constant that Machado and Borges share, i.e., a peculiar critical and ironic relation to specific English ironic literary traditions. Some critics, such as Fischer, briefly mention this similarity between Machado and Borges;<sup>15</sup> however, the important studies that extensively establish and discuss the presence of narrative strategies and literary devices from English ironists within their works treat the two writers separately, i.e., they are not comparative studies. This particular relationship between Machado and Borges—both writers had an attraction for certain themes and strategies related to English ironic writers—is, nonetheless, never carried further in critical terms.

In this thesis, I will consider these relations with English ironic models in more analytical terms: their intertextuality and reception history. The fundamental critical question that emerges is: how have Machado's and Borges' critical and creative readings of English ironic writers affected the reception of their work among different communities of readers?

Intertextuality with specific English ironists tends to be discussed when these writers are considered separately: with Sterne, Dickens and Thackeray in the case of Machado; and with De Quincey, Sterne and Stevenson in the case of Borges.<sup>16</sup> Machado and Borges maintained different relations with different literary models; the outcomes of these relations are dissimilar. Machado was interested in “strong” English authors: very influential writers with strong personal styles (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* 31-2). Borges was interested in

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<sup>15</sup> Fischer, when comparing Machado's and Borges' critical relations to their own societies, especially considering the “philosophical” and “cultured” outcome of their fictional productions, poses the rhetorical question: ‘Terá isso algo com a afinidade de ambos com a literatura inglesa?’ [Would this be related to their affinity with English literature?] (28). Clearly, his answer is yes—especially if one delimits ‘English literature’ to its ironic traditions.

<sup>16</sup> Gomes (13): “[...] o sarcasm de Swift pôde temperar-se, nêle [Machado], de outros influxos menos corrosivos, como Sterne, e, até benéficos, como Thackeray e Dickens” [(...) Swift's sarcasm could be attenuated in him (Machado) by less corrosive influences, such as Sterne, and also by good influences, such as Thackeray and Dickens]. Anderson Imbert: “Muchas cosas Borges confiesa deberle a Thomas De Quincey” [Borges confesses that a lot of his work is indebted to Thomas De Quincey] (598); Balderston: “[...] un nombre reaparece insistentemente como el de *su* [Borges] maestro: Robert Louis Stevenson” [a name constantly reappears as the name of *his* [Borges'] master: Robert Louis Stevenson] (*El precursor velado* 1).



noncanonical and some “minor” English authors. As both sustained continuous relationships with English ironists, it is to be expected that some models might coincide. Specifically, Machado and Borges are both considered to be Sterne’s successors in the sense that both authors can be connected to Sterne’s “formal self-consciousness” (Bell 110); this is the assessment of critics such as Bloom (*Genius*), Rodríguez Monegal (*A Literary Biography*), De Nagel and Gomes.<sup>17</sup>

Relevant scholarship with respect to irony has focused on post-structuralist forms of ambiguity, rather than irony, to define and compare Machado’s and Borges’ narratives (Fitz, “Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice” 137). Much like irony, ambiguity that was identified in the context of post-structuralism refers to the philosophical critique of the tenuous relationship between sign and signifier that creates an openness in a given text, a way of rendering language that permits multiple interpretations; however at the same time, it has a neutral connotation, closely related to rhetoric, which irony has lost during its history as a concept. Irony has come to be understood as a device that has acquired multiple meanings, with the loss of the original in its general relation to all literature. Booth, for instance, argues that “[o]nce the term has been used to cover just about everything there is, it perhaps ought simply to be retired” (ix). Critics, particularly during the 60s, preferred post-structuralist ambiguity over irony, perhaps because of problems in defining the term, but also because of the association with elitism that irony still carried. I will return to the concept of irony, for I believe that irony can be precisely conceptualized so as to explain more productively what was previously perceived by critics as Machado’s and Borges’ “ambiguity”.

Alternatively, critics analyze Machado’s and Borges’ relevance in terms of a genealogy of writers of great value, i.e., critics compare them hierarchically, in relation to

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<sup>17</sup> Critics have related Machado and Borges separately to Shakespeare. See Vasconcelos in “Hamlet the Brazilian Way”, Tiffany in “Borges and Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Borges”, Novillo-Corvalan in “Joyce’s and Borges’s Afterlives of Shakespeare”, and Mualem in “El proteo literario: La imagen de Shakespeare en la obra de Jorge Luis Borges.”

major and recognized authors of the canon of world literature. For example, Bloom compares Machado to Dickens, and declares the Brazilian writer the best successor to Sterne (*Genius* 675). Bloom situates Borges in an arbitrary “five-in-one” composite: “Blind Oedipus, Homer, Joyce, Milton, Borges” (684). This thesis will demonstrate how Machado’s and Borges’ relationships with English ironists historically aided in defining their role as precursors of the Boom; however, it will do so beyond issues of global literary value or philosophical ambiguity. The aim is to create an innovative model for the study of irony directly derived from Machado’s and Borges’ literary projects, narratives and posthumous reception. This model will renew the significance of the work of these authors, by more specifically identifying their relationships with readers from multiple literary traditions over time.

### **Methodology: Irony, Intertextuality, Reception and Parody**

The evolving adaptations that the two authors made from English ironists serve as the departure point for this thesis. In particular, the focus is on Machado’s and Borges’ critical and fictional works, with particular attention to their short stories. Subsequently, I will analyze the contemporary and the later critical reception of Machado and Borges, by both local and English-speaking critics. I will demonstrate the originality of their narratives with respect to their innovative appropriations of ironic English writers. This claim will be verified by contemporary Brazilian and Argentinean critics, and later English-speaking critics in their general reception of those narratives, with special attention given to the relevance of the English intertextualities within their narratives. Finally, I will examine this reception network, to determine how it affected the reputations and re-appropriations of the two writers’ fictional works by critics associated with the Latin American Boom.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Critics and writers related to the Latin American Boom usually were appropriated and massively consumed in Anglo-American cultural contexts. Fuentes is a good example of a critic and writer who also wrote specifically for a North-American audience. García Márquez, by contrast, was a writer engaged with a Latin American

In spite of its complexity as a concept that has been used and misused almost to exhaustion, irony does have a recurrent and basic definition: “saying what is contrary to what is meant” (Colebrook 1). In her manual on irony, Claire Colebrook attributes this definition to Quintilian, and adds that irony “by the very simplicity of its definition becomes curiously indefinable” (1). Nevertheless, at least two primary definitions of irony are distinguishable. The older classical definition, from before the eighteenth century, defines irony as a rhetorical device, i.e., saying one thing while meaning the opposite of it in the pursuit of some sort of advantage. An example is in the mode of the classical comic character *ieron*.

The later post-Romantic definition, from the late nineteenth-century onwards, attributes irony to the writer, and, by doing so, relates it to a literary value (Booth ix). Thus, according to Ernst Behler (vii), the very notion of irony in literature has been generalized as a “[...] broad mode of saying it otherwise, of circumlocution, configuration, and indirect communication characteristic of today’s humanistic and scientific discourses”. Behler emphasizes the readers’ position in decoding irony, that is, he focuses on interpretation rather than on the intention of the writer. Irony, whether Romantic or Postmodern, “has this distancing function” (Colebrook 2): in reading ironies we “rely on distinguishing between those statements and actions that we genuinely intend and those that repeat or mime only to expose their emptiness” (3). Readers have to be able to keep a distance from what is being said or written; however, they cannot rely on the ironic intent, as what is beneath the literal meaning will depend on how one understands the context in which irony is produced.

To put it simply: irony “works against common sense” (Colebrook 19). Machado and Borges are engaged in this concept of working against “common sense” on multiple levels. By choosing ironic models, these two authors signal their intentions to confront the common sense of the time, and they play with the expectations of contemporary readers with respect to

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project from within the region, but who also was accepted and appropriated by transnational readers and critics, especially in English translation.

literary models. Machado's and Borges' resulting narratives are also ironic in the sense that they leave it to the reader to make sense of the disjunction between what is written and what is meant. For my purposes in this thesis, the relation between their narratives and society is the main point. By selecting unusual models, adapting them to their societies and playing with the expectations of their contemporaries, Machado and Borges are making subtle, indirect comments on their contexts: "[t]he ironist did not simply say something about his subject, he said something about himself and the world" (Booth 139).

Moreover, on a sociological level, one might locate irony by focusing on the multiple analyses of Machado's and Borges' narratives by critics. At this metacritical level, we can identify the importance of interpreting ironic intentions. First, according to Booth "[e]very reader will have great difficulty detecting irony that mocks his own beliefs or characteristics" (Booth 81). Indeed, contemporary critics did not realize that they were among those being satirized by Machado's and Borges' narratives, or they rejected that representation; the result was negative reception. Secondly, "to read the irony you do not just have to know the context; you also have to be committed to specific beliefs and positions *within* that context" (Colebrook 12); therefore, depending on the belief of readers displaced in time and space and the knowledge of the original context in which the irony was produced, readings will differ.

Therefore, I will analyze ironic relations at two primary levels. First, I will consider the level of Machado's and Borges' text, intertextuality and adaptation of models in their writing. Then, I will analyze ironic relations at the societal level in which those texts were read, with a focus on issues of critical reception and expectations, both socio-historical and cultural. Therefore, I will use a two-tiered critical model related to irony. On the one hand, I will use concepts of intertextuality, i.e., a textual production of meaning in which a text is a result of other previous texts. In addition, I will consider other social and historical forces at play in the decoding of the meaning of those texts in different socio-historical and geographic

contexts. In this study, I will look at the textual level of those relations between the two authors and their respective models, as well as the development of Machado's and Borges' intertextualities throughout the history of their reception.

The relations between the Brazilian and Argentinean authors and English ironists will be analyzed in terms of intertextuality. Julia Kristeva first used this neologism: in her conceptualization of intertextuality, any given text is understood as a permutation of other texts (36). In replacing intersubjectivity and the agency of a given author regarding his precursors, intertextuality emphasizes the text itself with its structural levels. The French critic Roland Barthes—who expanded on Kristeva's ideas—conceives of it as the production of structuration (20). The writer, thus, becomes a reader not in the sense prescribed by North-American critic Harold Bloom, who in *The Anxiety of Influence* defined the writer as a special, gifted reader, but in the sense of a copyist: writing becomes a series of variations and deviations from other texts and books (borrowings, plagiarism, etc.), a constant citation not necessarily highlighted by the use of quotation marks (Kristeva 52).

These definitions of intertextual relations were reassessed and categorized by Gérard Genette in more detailed terms that will be particularly useful in interpreting the nuances of the critical analyses of Machado's and Borges' intertextual relations with English ironists and the resulting irony of their polyphonic narratives. Genette defines transtextuality as “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (1). Further, he divides these relations into five types: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality. For him, intertextuality is “the actual presence of one text within another” (1-2): this includes, but is not limited to, allusions citations, and plagiarism. He proceeds to define the five as follows: paratextuality refers to elements outside the main body of the text, such as titles, subtitles, forewords, notes, etc. which establish a more “distant relationship” (3) that “provide[s] the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a

commentary” that affects the work as whole. Metatextuality “is the relationship most often labelled ‘commentary’” (4): a critical discourse about one text within another. Architextuality represents a relationship between a text and a genre: “the entire set of general or transcendent categories [...] from which emerges each singular text” (1). Finally, hypertextuality is a more intricate relation between texts: “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*)” (5); these relations between texts, in terms of superimposition, are connected to transformation, rather than to mere commentary or imitation.

On the level of hypertextuality, that is, of any relation between texts, Florence Mercier-Leca locates, in her study on irony, a “dimension polyphonique” [polyphonic dimension] inclined towards irony (99). From her view of genres such as parody and pastiche, she identifies hypertextual relations as a site for irony and its playful forms of intertextuality (99) that highlight the “ludico-critique” [ludic-critical] tendency of such works (100). This intersection between intertextuality and irony is particularly interesting when analyzing Machado’s and Borges’ works, as I will point out when presenting the idea of parody as a form of cross-cultural adaptation.

I will be using Genette’s concepts primarily to describe the relations between the texts of Machado and Borges and their English models. I will use the term intertextuality when I point to the general presence of one text (or set of texts) within another; this follows Kristeva’s and Bakhtin’s original definition. (This term, intertextuality, is what Genette terms transtextuality.) I will refer to other forms of intertextuality in Genette’s terms—paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality—in order to describe specific levels of those relations. I will use the term hypotext when referring to Machado’s and Borges’ literary models; for the resulting narratives written by Machado and Borges, I will use the term hypertext.

In the ironic adaptations that Machado and Borges make of other authors' texts, parody occupies a special place. While critics in different contexts have studied parody in the works of these two writers, those have been separate, not comparative studies. In this thesis, I seek to make the irony/parody relationship more explicit through an examination of Machado's and Borges' texts that are related to the narratives and devices of their English models. The Brazilian and Argentine writers tailored their narratives to their contemporary audience with specific cross-cultural adaptations. Separate studies of parody in Machado were written by Douglass, Weschenfelder, and S.D.T. Bastos. The studies of Borges in this regard were by Madrid, Girardot and Domínguez, who conducted a study of the collaborative works of Borges and Bioy Casares. The results were usually limited to discovery and elucidation of parodied texts, in an erudite search for obscure sources and textual relations. Instead, I will be guided by Linda Hutcheon's approach as articulated in *A Theory of Parody*. Hutcheon reinforces the use of irony within parody to convey the idea of literary continuity and transformation. For Hutcheon, irony can be conceived of as playing the role of intention and recognition between writer and reader, a mediating process that occurs between the intention of the writer and the perception of the reader. In addition, she views it as an invitation to "the decoder to interpret and evaluate" (31). In Hutcheon's view, "parody functions intertextually as irony does intratextually: both echo in order to mark difference rather than similarity" (64). Hutcheon defines parody as "ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion, [...] repetition with difference" (32). Machado's and Borges' works should not be considered parodic in a narrow or traditional sense, but in this broader particular sense of parody as interplay between writers, traditions and texts, i.e., as a form of intertextuality. In this broader sense, the cross between creativity and playfulness is evident in the critical and ironic relations between various points of view and different cultural and literary traditions skillfully interwoven into Machado's and Borges' hypertext. Parody, thus, is far more than a

mere imitation. In her study of parody, Margaret Rose stresses also that it is a playful and meta-fictional device (1). Nevertheless, it is not only playful and creative, as perhaps suggested by Rose's perspective, but also amusing. Humor, in a more general sense, plays an important part in parody. More importantly for my purposes, parody functions as an imitation with an ironic inversion, that is, a reproduction with the addition of other layers of meaning and textual intentions, that permit contradictory interpretations of given narratives (Hutcheon 32). Along with irony, parody can thus be considered a form of literary continuity and transformation: they are both ways of deliberately adapting a given tradition.

Informed by the textual and literary perspectives of Kristeva, Genette, and Hutcheon vis-à-vis the literary phenomenon, this thesis will also consider Machado's and Borges' narratives within the context of their tense relations within their own socio-historic environments. Within the framework of their own socio-historical contexts, I will consider Machado's and Borges' intertextualities, particularly those that reference English ironists. Further, I will examine the developments of their reception in multiple cultural contexts, locally and globally, in their original languages and in translation, with particular attention to English translation. I am not suggesting here a biographical study or comparison between related facts in the lives of Machado and Borges, nor do I refer to any struggle between them as individual authors, as suggested by Bloom in his discussion of influence (*The Anxiety of Influence* 31-2). Rather, following the model developed by Claudio Guillén, I will examine the textual relations between these two writers and their literary models, as well as the multiple roles of "literary life and its function in society" (44). In Guillén's words, "the diffusion of literature demands translation or the knowledge of foreign languages, that is to say, either the most hazardous of creative efforts or a condition notoriously dependent on political or economic power" (47). In summary, I will examine Machado's and Borges' literary works in relation to: 1) their intertextual developments; and 2) their circulation and



roles in different cultural and literary contexts.

After examining the evolving intertextualities within Machado's and Borges' works with English ironists, the focus will shift to the reception of those works by local and international, contemporary and later critics. I will be looking at reader-response processes through the lens of the phenomenology of reception, as articulated by Wolfgang Iser. This critic considers "the individual reading act as a concretization or realization of the text as literary work" (Schellenberg 172). In *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Iser presents the concept of "patterns of communication," which he describes as the particular traits of the novel, but also of all literature, that invite the reader "to take an active part in the composition of the novel's meaning" (ix). The divergences between the reader's world and that of a literary text—especially in the novel genre—are an important stimulus to the participation of the reader in the production of meaning that the novel usually evokes. The reader is involved in "the world of the novel" and so s/he can "understand it – and ultimately her/his own world – more clearly" (xi). In order to develop this "theory of literary effects and responses based on the novel" (xi), Iser uses the idea of an 'implied reader': "This term incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process—which will vary historically from one age to another—and not to a typology of possible readers" (xii). The concept of the implied reader will be important in this thesis particularly when examining how Machado and Borges establish through their use of irony a new mode of reading. In this sense, I will demonstrate how the implied reader in their narratives contrasts with their actual readers, a display of the ironic disconnection between what is written and its interpretation. In the process, I will explicate how the reading process changes throughout history, as well as throughout space, depending on the beliefs and knowledge about the

original context, as well as the interpretation of the ironic intent.

Another useful concept that more explicitly identifies relations of reception is that of the “horizon of expectations” (Jauss 22). Hans Robert Jauss, in his concept of the aesthetic of reception, aims at a more precise methodology for the study of literary history and historicity. It provides a practical framework to deal with the concept of influence, since it aspires to evaluate the presence of a dialogical relation between past and present within the artwork itself, or the effects of a literary event. For Jauss, the history of literature is not the continuity between works and writers, but the “dialogue between work and audience that forms a continuity” (19). Jauss proposes to evaluate the presence of the relation between past and present by examining the existence of a literary event within the framework of a “horizon of expectations.” In his view, a literary event is autonomous, i.e., not continuous, in the traditional sense. Further, he maintains that it only exists if readers respond to it. Finally, he circumscribes the literary event as mediated by the horizon of expectations which expansively defined is the “literary experience of contemporary and later readers, critics, and authors” (22). Using this framework, it is possible to demonstrate this horizon of expectations to evaluate the presence of a literary event and its effects. The concept of literary event will be particularly relevant when I focus on the reception of Machado’s and Borges’ works when translated for the English-speaking world and the impact of their narratives as literary events within this displaced horizon of expectations. Clearly, different horizons of expectations will evoke different beliefs and, therefore, varying interpretations of Machado’s and Borges’ ironic narratives.

I will be using the term reception throughout this thesis when describing the response to Machado’s and Borges’ narratives, particularly by critics. I will utilize the concept of the implied reader in the analysis of the patterns of communication created by Machado’s and Borges’ innovative narratives and the disconnection between those innovative patterns and

the patterns of their actual readers. The concept of horizon of expectations will focus discussion vis-à-vis the expectations and beliefs of critics in different socio-historical contexts.

I have developed a theoretical model based on modern notions of irony and reception. Before presenting it, I want to suggest other relevant subjects for the methodology of this thesis, concepts that will be particularly relevant when addressing Latin America as a geoliterary space. First, I will be using two terms to define relations among writers, readers and distinct societies: cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. By cosmopolitanism, I mean the traditional way of understanding it, as initially defined by Robert Spencer: “a sensibility to the world beyond one’s immediate milieu”, and an “[...] enlarged sense of moral and political responsibility to individuals and groups outside one’s local or national community” (Spencer 4). Spencer later re-defined the term to convey a new form of criticism. Cosmopolitanism will thus be understood as a disposition to think, live and read beyond national borders. It is an attitude exemplified by the awareness of the world beyond their immediate surroundings of Borges in particular, but also of Machado, and by that of their readers, locally and internationally. It is demonstrable in Machado’s and Borges’ choices of models, as well as in the consumption of their works in translation by readers in multiple contexts.

In this thesis, transnationalism will be defined as “a movement toward the crossing and breaking open of national boundaries; while also it can be thought of as a way of naming the tensions between formations such as globalization and the nation-states” (Frassinelli, Frenkel, and Watson 1). Pier Paolo Frassinelli defined transnationalism as a movement beyond national boundaries while pointing out “the continued significance of the national” (5). A perfect example of transnationalism, for my purpose, is the formation of Latin America as a space of literary production: it emphasizes multiple attachments to more than a nation or

community, while at the same time sustaining the singularity of each country related to it. Another excellent example relates to the Latin American Boom of the 1960s, which has been defined as the “fenómeno publicitario, de raíz industrial” [a marketing phenomenon, in essence a business], as well as the “fenómeno literario que precede y acompaña al anterior” [a literary phenomenon that precedes and goes together with the latter] (Rodríguez Monegal, *El boom de la novela latinoamericana* 11). The Boom writers are perceived contemporaneously as nationals (Colombian, Mexican, and Argentinean) and as Latin Americans. The Latin American Boom will be analyzed as a transnational movement, and the authors related to it, as transnational writers, in view of the locus of the literary enterprise, i.e., most of the authors were based in Europe or North America, and in the view of the fact that their productions were being massively publicized as works by Latin American writers. They were read in transnational contexts, often in translation, as the works of “Latin American writers”.

The theoretical model of irony I propose in this thesis is related, on the one hand, to intertextuality and, on the other, to sociological reception. I propose to analyze at least six levels of irony and ironic relations related to Machado’s and Borges’ works. In this analysis, I postulate that irony is not only the rhetorical trope of saying the opposite of what is meant, but is to be found between the text and the reader, between text and society. It can be identified in a specific text and also in the sociological readings of this given text. First, I will briefly allude to the nature of the hypotext chosen for adaptation, i.e., the ironic attitudes of Machado’s and Borges’ models towards their own society, particularly when it is relevant to the analysis of these two writers’ narratives. Second, I will discuss Machado’s and Borges’ choice of these specific hypotexts as a challenge to the horizon of expectations of their readers (I will outline the dominant literary trends of the time and the challenges they represent). Third, the thesis will demonstrate that the forms in which Machado and Borges appropriate the hypotext into the hypertext are also ironic. By this I mean that, as readers,

they decoded the original intention of their English models, and as writers, proposed a trans-contextualization of those intentions in order to make their narratives resonate within their own societies. Fourth, I will identify the ways in which the mode of the hypertext itself is ironic; thus, I will highlight the stable ironies within Machado's and Borges' texts that are not context dependent. Fifth, in their relation to their original societies (Brazil and Argentina), I will discuss the way in which the appropriation of ironic models can be recognized by readers as related to Machado's and Borges' own contemporary societies. In other words, the hypertext can be read as a dialogue with the society in which it was created, depending on the knowledge of the reader. Sixth, I will demonstrate the mediation of irony in the multiple and often contradictory sociological receptions of Machado's and Borges' narratives in various times and places.<sup>19</sup>

Using this theoretical model of intertextuality and reception related to irony, I intend to demonstrate the ways in which English ironists are central to both Machado's and Borges's narratives. The ironic adaptations of Machado and Borges were unambiguously related to their own cultural contexts; yet they consequently led to multiple possible interpretations by critics in widely varying contexts. My aim is to make manifest how Machado's and Borges' particular adaptations were determinative in the production of their parallel roles as national and universal, and most importantly as Latin American writers.

In this thesis, I will argue that their ways of using irony is the common link between Machado and Borges, rather than specific literary models, or even the overall outcome of these continuous critical and creative relations with them. My claim is that these two writers presented, in different times and with different results, similar ways of continuing and modifying literary traditions that not only reproduced the techniques and devices of English

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<sup>19</sup> Ideally this model will be applicable for other writers, to whom (English) ironists were a model, and who wrote from eccentric cultural contexts, particularly contexts in which national identity, as well as relations with European culture and literature are problematic issues. For example: Alexander Pushkin in Russia, Natsume Sōseki in Japan, and Salman Rushdie in India, among others.

ironic models, but adapted those devices to their own Brazilian and Argentinian contexts. Thus they simultaneously modified their personal and national narratives, and also the way in which central writers and literatures were perceived outside of their original contexts. Rather than uncritically looking at English models, merely copying their styles, Machado and Borges created forms of national narratives based on these models, but which were not subservient to them, as had been the norm for earlier writers both in Brazil and Argentina. Machado and Borges found in irony and in the adaptation of ironic models a way out of the otherwise overwhelming presence of European traditions in their local cultures and societies. In this sense, I argue that they were both decolonizing their literary history and their readership. Most critics would not use this term to describe this effect; in fact many would argue the opposite. Both writers had a distinctive attraction to English authors who employed themes and styles associated with certain types of irony, usually metafictional and even subversive types of irony (both in social and aesthetic terms); both proposed in their works innovative cross-cultural adaptations of the narratives and devices used by their literary models.

A further aim of this thesis is to argue for critical-discursive links between Machado and Borges based on parallel Latin American appropriations of English ironic models, and on their use of irony as a critical-literary device. Their literary production led to parallel networks of reception as signposts for a new Latin American narrative tradition in the twentieth century.

Machado and Borges chose to critically and creatively dialogue with English traditions which were unfamiliar to Brazil and Argentina, both former colonies but not of the British Empire. As with most Latin American and Iberian countries at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Brazil and Argentina were in the thrall of French literature and culture. Thus these two writers were iconoclasts who resisted cultural norms. This thesis will provide evidence for these claims: by analyzing Machado's and Borges'

particular adaptations of English ironic models in Chapter 1; by following the consequent reception of these intertextualities in their works, first, by early local critics, in Chapter 2; and, second, by later English-speaking critics, in Chapter 3. Finally, in Chapter 4, Machado's and Borges' works in the English-speaking world will be assessed and compared to their later twentieth-century reception and re-appropriations by Latin American critics and writers. This assessment and comparison will establish the significance of Machado's and Borges' particular forms of irony as links between these writers as precursors of the Latin American new narratives of the late twentieth century.

In conclusion, I aim to demonstrate how Borges and Machado significantly renovated their national literary traditions through these complex dialogues with multiple traditions that were based on unusual ways of dealing with tension: initially, tensions between national identities and transnational literatures (in Spain and Portugal); then tensions between localism and universalism, Latin America and Europe.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Unlike other post-colonial nations such as the United States, in both Brazil and Argentina, writers and critics struggled to define a national identity in literature throughout the twentieth century. This was a major topic of concern for many writers, because if there were no "national" literature, there was no national identity. Few doubted the existence of a national identity in the United States in the twentieth century. People indeed doubted (and still do) the existence of a unique identity in Latin American national contexts as created by literature. Therefore the desire to territorialize both authors emerges as a deep need to have them located in that context while at the same time enjoying international success.

## 1. Cross-Cultural Irony: Appropriations of English Ironists in Brazil and Argentina

Late nineteenth-century Brazilian and early twentieth-century Argentinean writers were utterly enthralled by French models. In the case of the Brazilian Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, those writers were mainly from romantic and realist literary traditions. In neighboring Argentina, writers around Jorge Luis Borges were attracted to models of social realism and other European avant-gardes. In Brazil, the major example of this French immersion is the first initiative to produce a national literature, which was signed by writers Ferdinand Denis (actually a French writer who specialized in Brazilian history), Gonçalves de Magalhães and Araújo Porto Alegre (both recognized Brazilian romantic writers of the first half of the nineteenth century). These writers formed a group to collaborate on the magazine *Niterói*. The project had been formulated in France, in 1836, and was dedicated to focusing on “as peculiaridades que possibilitariam a existência de uma literatura brasileira” [the peculiarities that make possible the existence of a Brazilian literature] (Guimarães 96).

In Argentina, a good example of the prevalence of French models is the quest of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, author of *Facundo* (1845), a classic within Argentinean culture. Upon his arrival in Paris in the 1840s, Sarmiento commented: “la fama adquiere un eco universal” [fame acquires a universal resonance] (Sarlo, *Escritos sobre literatura argentina* 21). Sarmiento’s aspiration was to have his book translated into French, and reviewed in *Revue des Deux Mondes* (21), one of the major French magazines, which dealt with cultural and international affairs between France and the United States. In addition, the numerous avant-gardes who entered Buenos Aires at the turn of the century were heavily influenced by French Symbolists, Parnassians, and the later Impressionists and Surrealists. Subsequently, this Spanish-American movement became known as *modernismo*, an example of which is the poetry of Rubén Darío.



In these French-influenced cultural contexts, Machado and Borges chose less expected literary models: English ironists, such as Sterne and Dickens, in the case of Machado, and Stevenson and Chesterton, in the case of Borges.<sup>21</sup> I argue that Machado and Borges did not simply copy these models, but culturally and critically adapted them in relation to their own societies; both writers created forms of irony that can be related to those of their literary models in intertextual and cultural terms, but that were also strongly related to their own contexts and actual readers. The transition to a more mature and ironic mode for Machado's and Borges' fictional works will be analyzed in this chapter. In addition, the shift from poetry and essay to short narrative forms, particularly in the case of Borges, will be discussed. In the analysis of Machado, the primary focus is on his collection of short stories *Papéis avulsos* (1882).<sup>22</sup> Secondary attention is given to his early articles, particularly "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade" (1873), but also to his mature fiction, represented by his novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881). As for Borges, his on-going essays about literature, particularly "El escritor argentino y la tradición" (1955), and also his first collection of short fictions, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941) will be discussed.

Machado and Borges launched their unconventional literary projects through critical articles and essays first published in newspapers and journals. Their highly personal critiques and commentaries on their own national literatures and writers, and also on literary trends and devices in their original contexts, appear in these articles and essays and presage their

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<sup>21</sup> A number of critics include Machado and Borges in ironic traditions, mainly in association with recognizable writers such as Sterne, Dickens and Chesterton: for instance, Rouanet in "A forma Shandiana: Laurence Sterne e Machado de Assis", Nogueira in *Laurence Sterne e Machado de Assis: A tradição e a sátira menipéia*, Bastos in "Estratégias composicionais de um autor brasileiro: Um estudo sobre a ironia, a paródia e a sátira em contos de Machado de Assis", and Zimbraoin "Homo Ludens and Esau e Jaco, Homo Economicus and Hard Times"; and Venegas in "Eliot, Borges, Tradition and Irony", De Naguel in "El concepto de la verdad en Laurence Sterne y en Jorge Luis Borges: Sus deudas a Cervantes", Anderson Imbert in "Chesterton en Borges", Strait in "Chesterton, Borges, and Allegory", and Van Loan Aguilar in "Borges and Chesterton: Theologians of the Detective Story".

<sup>22</sup> There is no published English translation of *Papéis avulsos* in its entirety, in spite of the fact that some of Machado's most recognizable, translated and highly-praised narratives are included in it, including "O alienista" and "O espelho", among others.

own mature narratives. In them, Machado and Borges also establish some patterns for their implied reader: a reader able to transcend the contemporary normative expectations vis-à-vis a proper Brazilian or Argentinean narrative. Machado's "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade" and Borges' "El escritor argentino y la tradición" share similar functions in their literary development: in both essays, one can see the maturity of their reflection about what it meant to write fiction in Brazil and in Argentina. Moreover, a strong case for the intentionality of Machado's and Borges' narrative devices can be made by examining their critical and essayistic works. In their essayistic projects, these writers perfected their distinctive styles, establishing their "very complex textual intentionality" that is related to their critical and ironic readings of English ironists, and also to their narrative developments (Hutcheon 1985: 15). A closer look at Machado's articles about literature, as well as Borges' essays, will provide a good background for the analyses of their fictional works.

### 1.1 Machado: The Writer as a "Man of his Time and Nation"

From the beginning of his writing career in the 1850s, Machado demonstrated a unique voice within Brazilian cultural contexts of the time, a moment when Brazil as a nation was still in its formative stages. Although less definitive in his early fictional works,<sup>23</sup> Machado had a distinctive voice as a critic in his early articles. In his initial critical works, Machado challenged various contemporary literary conventions; he questioned early developments in Brazilian narratives (namely romantic and Indianist literatures); and he pointed out the overwhelming presence of French authors among the young nation's writers.

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<sup>23</sup> Machado started publishing his poems in Rio de Janeiro newspapers of the mid-1850s. His first published poem was "Soneto", in October 1854 in a small newspaper named *Periódico dos Pobres*, signed J.M.M. Assis (Piza 63): "Vós sois de vossa mãe a cara filha/Do esposo feliz, a grata esposa/Todos os dotes teus oh – Petronilha" [You're the dear daughter of your mother/ Of your happy husband, the grateful spouse/All these gifts are yours, O – Petronilha]. According to Piza (65) "O poema é mediocre, com a retórica romântica da época [...] O mesmo se pode dizer de seus poemas seguintes, publicados ao longo de 1855" [The poem is mediocre, with the romantic rhetoric of the time [...] The same can be said about his following poems, published during 1855].

In addition, Machado pointed to indirect methods of connecting literature and politics, illustrating these ways through the use of irony. Through his early writing, he sought a literary counterweight to the political discussions on contemporary Brazil. Boldly, he suggested that the Brazilian narrative could be as distinctive, as independent as the nation theoretically was after its 1822 break from Portugal. In one of his most acclaimed critical articles of this early period, “O passado, o presente e o futuro da literatura” (1858), Machado briefly reassessed emerging Brazilian literatures, and suggested paths for the development of these and other national literatures. In this early period, Machado denounced the constraints placed by Portuguese literature on the development of nascent distinctive Brazilian narratives, as well as the excessive presence of European cultural and literary themes within Brazilian writers’ works.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1858 article, Machado foretold some of his own future literary developments. In it, Machado disparaged pretensions of novelistic and dramatic traditions in mid-nineteenth-century Brazil, proclaiming them non-existent. Moreover, in his view, French literature had “pernicious” effects on young writers and even on contemporary readers (Assis, *Obra completa* 1005).<sup>25</sup> According to Machado, readers were accustomed to weak translations of French novels and plays, and uncritical and direct uses of French literary and dramatic models and devices. Brazilian readers and writers of the time were, for Machado, “indifferent” and “apathetic” (1005), with no aspiration to renew, or more precisely (in Machado’s terms) to create an authentic Brazilian literature. Machado also denounced the sometimes close and often contradictory relations between literature and politics in early nineteenth-century Brazil, a position that can also be understood as criticism of Realism and

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<sup>24</sup> There were few noticeable exceptions: for instance, the (for Machado) autonomous and evidently Brazilian poem by Basílio da Gama, *Uruguai* (Assis, *Obra completa* 1003).

<sup>25</sup> Machado de Assis is commonly referred to as Machado—and that is the name I have been using in this thesis to refer to the author. Nevertheless, in keeping with Brazilian convention, throughout the thesis I will be using the name Assis when referring to his bibliography (see Select Bibliography: Primary Sources at the end of this thesis).

Naturalism. Machado suggested, for instance, that José Bonifácio, an engaged Brazilian writer of the turn of the eighteenth-to the nineteenth century, would have been more effective if “menos político” [less political] (1003). Finally, Machado proposed a pact between writers and their societies: he suggested that although this critical relation and response to a writer’s time and place is important, it should be implicit, understated, and not as direct as that of Bonifácio. While Machado did not fully develop his suggestions with respect to the future of Brazilian literature, nonetheless he claimed the necessity of a literary “revolution” (1004) that would follow the political one, and he anticipated a “futuro grandioso” [great future] (1006) for this potential national literature.

Machado’s article “O passado, o presente e o futuro da literature” can thus be considered a tentative template for his literary and narrative project. Following his initial critiques of Brazilian literature as summarized in this article, Machado wrote plays and novels that, if initially not as innovative or as removed from the French style as he might have preferred, filled the void—in a sense—that was created by the lack of fictional production in these genres. More significantly, this early prose production anticipated his personal narrative “revolution”. Eventually, the intertextualities within his narratives would point to less familiar European writers, particularly to English ironists. These culturally unexpected intertextualities would also eventually intersect with his earlier 1858 critique of the direct relations between literature and politics in Brazilian culture and society.

In his mature narratives, Machado, using irony, proposed more complex and oblique relations between literature and politics. The connections between his literary and cultural adaptations of the devices of English ironists to his society had a polyphonic dimension: Machado’s complex relations with Euro-American writers and his own political stances were ironically communicated to his implied readers through his mature narratives. Through his reassessment of the work of prestigious writers of his day, with special attention to

Portuguese and French writers, and his analysis of the relations between literature and society, Machado initiated construction of the path toward his own literary developments. It was in stark contrast to the direct approach of his predecessor Bonifácio with respect to Brazilian independence and to that of the slavery abolitionists of the early nineteenth century: Machado proposed indirect ways to address and criticize his society.

Also in his early criticism of Brazilian drama, Machado emphasized the contradiction inherent in the uncritical use of European dramatic devices and trends, which created a distance between Brazilian plays and their audience. In “Idéias sobre teatro” (1859), for instance, Machado argued that in Brazilian culture “a arte divorciou-se do público” [art divorced itself from the public] (Assis, *Obra completa* 1027). According to Machado, dramatists of the time used themes, language and devices that did not relate in any sense to nineteenth-century Brazilian society. In addition, Machado pointed out that neither writers nor the audience noticed this lack of connection between art and the public, or understood the issue in critical terms. Machado was trying to convey critical and effective ways to connect literature and society in contemporary dramatic production that would: 1) not repeat the direct, engaged political stances of earlier writers that alienated contemporary readers, and 2) not be as alien to the local audience because it was not as saturated in European modes and mannerisms. In “Idéias sobre teatro” Machado directly denounced the uncritical relations that writers of the time sustained with European narratives: “imitamos as frivolidades estrangeiras” [we (Brazilian writers of the time) imitated foreign frivolities] (1031).

Nevertheless, when he was writing these articles in the 1850s, Machado was still some years away from his transition to the more mature and ironic fictional production that would begin with the 1880s publication of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Machado’s literary project evolved over more than thirty years; however, these early articles are good examples of his literary project and would later serve as a defense against the negative

reception of his mature works, as we shall see in the next chapter. In these early articles, Machado was clearly engaged in a personal struggle against mainstream European conventions and local socio-cultural prejudices and expectations. The positions outlined in these early critical articles would be further developed and deepened over time, firstly in his critical studies, and finally in fiction. With the passage of time, such critical statements would become less straightforward, and increasingly more subtle, more nuanced and even ironic, going from direct and objective arguments of his early articles to more oblique and complex forms of expression in Machado's mature types of irony.

First in his critical works and his evaluations of Brazilian writers, particularly during the 1860s,<sup>26</sup> Machado expanded his initial thoughts on the role of major European literatures within Brazilian culture, on contemporary European literary trends and an appropriate relation to them, and on the development of Brazilian narratives. Machado also commented on the fundamental role of critics in relation to the development of Brazilian literature. For him, a revision of the emerging criticism in Brazil would also benefit the development of other national literatures. In "O ideal do crítico" (1865), for instance, Machado recommended that critics be tolerant even with respect to "diferenças de escola" [divergences in terms of literary schools]; and he suggested an individually-focused literary criticism that did not compare authors to contemporary literary trends and writers (Assis, *Obra completa* 1103). In relation to major European literatures of the time, Machado, in "Revista dramática" (1860), made a significant statement, vis-à-vis critically relating to current narratives and literary devices. Commenting on Alencar's play *Mãe*, Machado declared: "Não subscrevo, em sua totalidade, as máximas da escola realista, nem aceito em toda sua plenitude, a escola das abstrações românticas" [I do not accept, in its entirety, the rules of Realism, or accept, in all its fullness, the school of romantic abstractions] (1037). Ambiguously, at least by

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, in his critical articles about theatre, more specifically in his 1866 to 1867 critical articles in "Semana literária" (Assis, *Obra completa* 1105-61).

contemporary standards, Machado concluded that a writer can use—and critically relate to—relevant parts and devices of all literary traditions and trends, thereby creating his personal literary and narrative parameters, while participating, at the same time, in a national project: “Tiro de cada coisa uma parte, e faço meu ideal de arte, que abraço e defendo” [I take a part of each item, and make with it my ideal of art, that I embrace and champion] (1037). Finally, when assessing important writers of the time, particularly Brazilian, Machado rejected the previously accepted directions for the development of Brazilian literatures. In his critique of José de Alencar’s *Iracema*, although praising the writers’ imaginative narratives, Machado condemned what he named “poesia americana”. For Machado, Brazilian romantic Indianist literatures of the time (and other hemispheric literatures that connected nationality to the use of indigenous local color) could not be seen as the sole possible path for the development of Brazilian national narratives. In Brazilian cultural history, Indianist works represented a search by largely urban European-trained artists and writers who were influenced by European Romanticism to capture the unique local culture through the use of folkloric images and narratives that idealized local rural cultures. Such inclined artists and writers discovered themes in indigenous peoples that would give readers an impression of a Brazilian cultural history. For Machado, Indianist themes, languages and traditions limited the possibilities of Brazilian literary developments, particularly of modern and urban themes and literatures, which were more relevant to nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro than those associated with indigenous peoples, languages, settings and stories. Particularly during the 1860s, Machado focused his criticism on national and European writers and literatures, devoting the best part of his fictional efforts to his early and immature poetic and dramatic productions.

In the 1870s, Machado initiated the early phase of his long-narrative production period with his first novel *Ressureição* [*Ressurrection*], which was published in 1872. At the same time, he summarized and rearranged his life-long fictional project in critical terms, with

the publication of his famous article “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade” [News about Current Brazilian Literature: National Instinct] (1873).<sup>27</sup> In it, Machado revised and extended the scope of his personal literary project in anticipation of his mature narratives of the 1880s. In the article, he informed an international readership of the current state of Brazilian literatures from his perspective. In his introduction, Machado re-evaluated contemporary narratives, paying due respect to early nineteenth-century Brazilian romantic writers including Gonçalves Dias, Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre and Gonçalves de Magalhães. For Machado, what was called Brazilian literature remained in an incipient, gestational phase: authentic and independent national narratives did not yet exist in mid-nineteenth-century Brazil. Once again, Machado asserted the importance of creating an independent literature to mirror the 1822 political independence of Brazil. As before, he rejected Indianism and the use of local color as means to achieve this literary independence.

Again, Machado emphasized the role of critics in this process of creating independent Brazilian literature. In his view, critics had an important didactic role in educating readers’ and writers’ tastes in order to foster a cultured distinctly Brazilian readership. In this article, Machado also reinforced his previous evaluation of the uncritical relations between French literature and Brazilian writers, particularly young ones; he singled out French romantic authors that for him “seduzem nossa mocidade” [seduce our youth]: Hugo, Gautier, Musset, Gozlan and Nerval. He also pointed out the (in his own words) “excessive” influence of the French language on local writers and lamented the fact that contemporary Brazilian writers typically used French language as a model for their own literary expression in Portuguese. Finally, reinforcing his earlier view that at the time there were no proper Brazilian narratives, Machado highlighted the lack of short stories or short-story writers in his cultural milieu. For Machado—in order to create and develop independent and critical Brazilian national

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<sup>27</sup> Just after the publication of his first and immature novel *Ressureição*, Machado published this article in *O Novo Mundo* (a literary journal published in New York, n.30, 1873).



narratives—Brazilian writers and critics had to transcend contemporary national literary prejudices and expectations (especially in relation to local color or indigenous themes, settings and languages), along with their conventional and uncritical preference for European narratives and devices (particularly in relation to French literatures and contemporary literary trends).

In this sense, Machado created a new kind of implied reader for his later mature narratives: instead of external signs of nationality (such as excessively exotic settings, languages or the use of indigenous characters or settings), Machado advocated a “[c]erto sentimento íntimo” [certain intimate feeling] that makes a given writer a “homem do seu tempo e do seu país ainda quando trate de assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço” [man of his time and country, even when dealing with remote issues in time and space] (1205).

Thus, Machado’s article “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira” established a definitive template for his later narrative achievements, particularly those that followed *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and *Papéis avulsos*. In this article, Machado outlined ways of relating to Brazilian writers and earlier literatures, and to Brazilian social and cultural expectations and prejudices by suggesting a two-track transition: first, a shift from external signs to an “intimate feeling” of nationality; and second, from uncritical relations with French to more complex cultural and intertextual relations with other European literatures and languages. In this way, Machado was suggesting the development of his own narratives as a model for a Brazilian national literature. In “Instinto de nacionalidade”, Machado introduced his critical approach to European literatures and writers, and at the same time pointed to some of his unconventional European models. As an example, Machado proposed Charles Dickens as a literary model for the short story genre, along with familiar and accessible English writers in nineteenth-century Brazil, such as Shakespeare and Longfellow. He preferred these

English-language writers to the less important romantic and realist French and Portuguese writers.

Seven decades later, Borges would accomplish in Argentina a similar literary project with his own critical essays. For example, Borges also assessed and wrote about national and European literatures, and suggested methods for assessing other writers and adapting other literatures. The earlier language of Machado resonates in Borges words in the next century. As discussed above, Machado proposed innovative relations to local literary traditions and to European narratives with powerful arguments against the overwhelming influence of French romantic and realist literatures in Brazil. Moreover, he addressed the sense of being a Brazilian writer (in his own words, a “man of his time and country”), without any visible basis for the claim. This can be compared to Borges’ later assertions in “El escritor argentino y la tradición.” In this essay, Borges points out the fate of being an Argentinean writer and thus of belonging to wider cultural traditions, with free and uncompromised access to “el universo” [the universe] as a literary heritage (Borges, *Obras completas* 324).

An assessment of the construction of Borges’ narrative project through his critical essays will advance understanding of his particular cultural and intertextual relations with Argentinean society and his own implied readers.

## **1.2 Borges: The Writer as a “Creator of his Precursors”**

Whether because of his highly personal views on narratives and literary devices and writers, or his arbitrary selection of writers and works to be critically studied, Borges presented a distinctive voice within the Argentinean cultural context of the first decades of the twentieth century. Through his initial critical work, Borges developed what I consider as a defense against the negative reception of his mature short narratives. In addition, with these critical essays, Borges constructed his own literary project, opening new possibilities for his later narratives, but also for later Argentinean literary and critical traditions.

In the 1920s, Borges first published a collection of poems on his return to Argentina from Europe. In his initial critical works (particularly in the essays collected in *Inquisiciones* and *Discusión*), Borges challenged various contemporary literary conventions by reassessing early developments in Argentinean narratives.

In his first published collection of essays, *Inquisiciones* (1925), Borges highlighted lesser known English writers and philosophers, ranging from Thomas Browning to George Berkeley, and he included ironists such as Jonathan Swift and Thomas De Quincey. In these initial critical essays, he anticipates an aspect of his later literary developments, with attention to intertextual relations with European writers. In seemingly contradictory views, Borges positively assessed the development of certain pervasive Argentinean literary devices of the time, i.e., the use of local characters, languages and settings, or local color. In “La traducción de un incidente” [The translation of an incident], one of the essays collected in *Inquisiciones*, Borges had earlier suggested that European literary classics “son de nosotros” [belong to us (Argentinean writers)] (20): European literary and cultural traditions would be part of any given Argentinean culture or literature. Nevertheless, in the same paragraph, Borges strongly emphasized his initial suggestion—implemented by the writer himself in his early poems—for an authentic national literature that required a certain “sabor de patria” [nation flavor] (21). Thus, Borges’ initial critical works, in spite of his unconventional models and views on European narratives and literary devices, did not fully or clearly present readers and critics with an illustration of what became his innovative narrative form.

By contrast, the essays collected in *Discusión* are generally considered as Borges’ first step towards his later mature narratives.<sup>28</sup> In “La poesía gauchesca”, for example, Borges clearly reassessed and distanced himself from various Argentinean narrative traditions that were consolidating around that time. In essays such as “La superticiosa ética del lector”, “La

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<sup>28</sup> *Discusión* was first published in 1932, with a revised version in 1957.

postulación de la realidad”, “El arte narrativo y la magia” and “Paul Groussac”, Borges effectively challenged both Argentinean readers and critics vis-à-vis literary expectations and prejudices, conventional so-called national literary styles and devices, traditional forms of narratives and standard literary models. Through the essays collected in this book, Borges first launched his own mature literary project, with particular attention to the complex relations between literature and reality that he envisaged for his later narratives. In addition, he addressed his own personal relations with European, hemispheric and Argentinean writers and literatures.

In “La superticiosa ética del lector”, Borges argued that “la condición indigente de nuestras letras, su incapacidad de atraer, han producido una superstición del estilo, una distraída lectura de atenciones parciales” [the indigent condition of our [Argentinean] letters, their inability to be attractive, have produced a superstition for style, a distracted reading that is only somewhat attentive] (Borges, *Obras completas* 236). Borges was thus suggesting, much like Machado in nineteenth-century Brazil, that there was a lack of connection in early twentieth-century Argentina between readers’ expectations with respect to literary devices and expression, and writers’ devices and narratives. In “La poesía gauchesca”, Borges questioned the development and reception of Gauchesque literature in Argentina; he affirmed its origins in urban and educated Buenos Aires, while at the same time helping readers to see it as a genre. For him, Gauchesque literature was as connected to nineteenth and twentieth-century urban writers of Buenos Aires as it was disconnected to the subject of these narratives, the gaucho himself, and his setting, the Argentinean pampa. Borges used Shakespeare and his characters to illustrate and to clearly convey his view on the subject: if there are no clear connections between writers and their characters, then there is no authenticity with respect to socio-historical reality or subjects (208). Thus, Borges distanced himself from the concept of an authentic Argentinean literature prescribed by his

contemporaries and some predecessors. Ironically, he initiated his assessment of Argentinean narrative by analyzing the works of Uruguayan writer Bartolomé Hidalgo; however, he concluded it with Argentinean writers: Hilario Ascasubi's and José Hernández's initial Gauchesque poems.

For Borges, his Argentinean readers—early twentieth-century Buenos Aires elites—were much more interested in avant-garde experiments with language and style, rather than in what he valued, i.e., the substance to include the theme, the content itself, the story. In this essay, Borges suggested ideas that he would develop in his later mature narratives; by valuing theme over language, content over form, he was distancing himself from the European and local avant-garde.<sup>29</sup> Therefore in his 1932 *Discusión*, Borges, the critic, began signaling new directions (particularly literary expression and devices) that would distance him from his early fictional production and literary models and would also be echoed in his later mature narratives. Most significantly in *Discusión*, Borges outlined new potential models for the development of Argentinean literature, with a specific focus on narrative forms that critically related to nineteenth-century English writers, such as Chesterton and Stevenson.<sup>30</sup> However, only in “La postulación de la realidad” and “El arte narrativo y la magia” did Borges express different ways to critically convey language and literary expression and, most importantly, to establish intertextualities that would have as hypotext literatures and societies that would be outside the conventional literary expectations of contemporary Argentinean readers and critics.

In “La postulación de la realidad” (1931), Borges discoursed on differentiated views of romantic and classical forms of literary expression and ways of conceiving narratives.

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<sup>29</sup> Borges was previously connected to Argentinean literary avant-gardes by critics and readers, particularly because of his experience and personal relations with European writers of early twentieth-century Spain (especially the *ultraístas*). He was also related to literary avant-gardes because of his early poetry, as well as because of his first activities as an intellectual and a writer in returning to Buenos Aires from Europe in the 1920s.

<sup>30</sup> Specifically in “La supersticiosa ética del lector”, Borges nevertheless did not mention these English writers as examples, but instead recalled the Spanish writer Cervantes.

With the deepening of his views on the importance of themes over language, Borges chose the classical way of producing narratives as the best one for the development of his own later mature narratives and, consequently, for Argentinean literature. By classical narratives, Borges seemingly refers to a canon of world literature, apparently one of his own design. Rather than providing a critical view on the subject of classical literature, Borges was trying to disconnect contemporary and avant-garde narrative and poetic trends from what he considered better forms of literary expression, forms that for him were being overlooked by local contemporary writers and critics. In this essay, Borges provided guidelines for producing a literary classic: he was writing for a cosmopolitan reader, and trying to convey forms of narrative that would be included among the classics of the canon of world literature. Perhaps, he was prescribing a place for his own later mature narratives. For Borges, the ideal classical writer, represented in this essay by Voltaire, Swift and Cervantes, thus “no desconfía del lenguaje” [does not mistrust language] (253).

In the essay, these classical writers (and also the ideal writer of his own later mature narratives) would consider language merely a way of registering reality, not a means in itself.<sup>31</sup> For Borges, the postulation of reality, his own way of critically relating with society and history, would ideally be informed by what he considered the classic form of expression, particularly what he names “invención circunstancial” [circumstantial invention] (256). However, contradicting the traditional idea of a classical writer, and mentioning non-classical English writers such as Wells, Daniel Defoe and Kipling as models, Borges anticipated his mature narratives by suggesting the invention of a “serie de esos pormenores lacónicos de larga proyección” [series of those laconic details that have a long projection] to convey a narrative (258). In effect, Borges postulated ways of manipulating language in such a way

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<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Borges accuses his contemporaries of being “profesionalmente actuales” [professionally modern] in the sense that, for him, to some extent they all used romantic, partial and supposedly personal ways of rendering language and creating narratives (Borges, *Obras completas* 256). At the same time, in this essay Borges criticized psychological novels of the time.

that it imprecisely suggested—and pointed to—reality within a fictional work, rather than a point of view or a sort of “mentira parcial” [partial lie], a practice that he related to romantic writers (256). These complex, yet superficial and (in terms of language) simple, relations that he suggested between narratives and reality through forms of literary expression can be seen as part of Borges’ mature forms of irony: he proposed these forms of expression as adaptations of certain narratives and devices of English ironists—especially of their understatements and ironies, even as he was undermining his own argument by irony.

Borges’ essay “El arte narrativo y la magia” (1932) can be seen as an extension of the ideal forms of literary expressions first presented in “La postulación de la realidad”. In this essay, Borges briefly analyzed William Morris’ *The Life and Death of Jason* and Edgar Allan Poe’s *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*, using the same notion of verisimilitude presented in the previous essay. For Borges, the process of constructing narratives through the use of detail, rather than trying to encompass all the complexities of reality itself or even of personal experiences, would be the only (in his own words) “honorable” way of conceiving contemporary narratives. In this essay, Borges suggests that other forms of expression would lead to a questionable “simulación psicológica” [psychological simulation] (271). Once again, Borges is pointing to English writers, and at the same time criticizing the prevalent model of the twentieth-century psychological novel; specifically, he is commenting on the generalized acceptance of the psychological novel as the new path for the development of Argentinean and other local narratives. In “Paul Groussac”, Borges continued his personal crusade against the emphasis on language over theme so favored by Argentinean critics and readers of the time. For him, contemporary Argentinean narratives lacked imagination, and writers tried to compensate for it with a labored style (727). In this particular essay, Borges found a literary model in French-born Argentinean writer Groussac (1848-1929), and at the same time, suggested an obscure—and almost forgotten—model. According to Borges,

despite the usually unappreciated, ironic and apparently placid style, Groussac's techniques would later inform Borges' literary expressions and mature narratives. Borges' later narratives are described elegantly in his own earlier depiction of Groussac's prose: "reservada, cómoda en la ironía, retráctil" [reserved, comfortable in its irony, retractile] (272).

Borges' early critical views on his evolving relations with European, hemispheric and local writers were fully developed in his 1955 "El escritor argentino y la tradición".<sup>32</sup> Thus, this critical essay can be directly compared to Machado's 1872 "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade". As Machado had done in the 1870s, Borges in the 1950s briefly reassessed the current state of contemporary national literatures. In the essay, he questioned some specific Argentinean narrative traditions, particularly Gauchesque narratives and their use of local color and languages; he concluded by dismissing the very existence of an authentic Argentinean literature. More significantly, Borges finally and more forcefully suggested innovative ways of reading European writers, and proceeded to recommend particular English ironists as models. As in Machado's articles, Borges created an ideal writer for his mature narratives, establishing, at the same time, the starting point for his implied reader (in the case of Borges, a cosmopolitan reader knowledgeable about the canon of world literature).

In his 1955 work, "El escritor argentino y la tradición", Borges first questioned the role of Gauchesque literature as the most authentic Argentinean literary tradition of the time. Borges did not subscribe to the idea, advanced by some critics, that "la tradición literaria argentina ya existe en la poesía gauchesca" [the Argentinean literary tradition already exists in Gauchesque poetry] (316). At the beginning of the twentieth-century, for Borges, there was no authentic Argentinean literature or narrative. Moreover, Borges confirmed Machado's

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<sup>32</sup> This essay was included in the first edition of Borges' *Obras completas* published by Emecé in 1957, collected along other earlier essays in *Discusión*, but was first presented in 1951 and published as a typed transcription in 1953. See Daniel Balderston <http://lirico.revues.org/1111>



view on national literatures, particularly with respect to the rejection of local color, Indianist (in the case of Machado) or folkloric themes (in the case of Borges), settings and languages: “La idea de que la poesía debe abundar en rasgos diferenciales argentinos y en color local argentino me parece una equivocación” [the very idea that (national) poetry must exceed in Argentinean particular traits and in Argentinean local color seems to me a mistake] (319). In opposition, Borges argued with the use of ironic examples, such as the idea that the love for the use of local color is a European literary trend and therefore it should be discouraged among Argentinean writers, particularly by nationalists. Borges also stressed the fundamental and for him inevitable relations between Argentinean and European literatures. For him, the typical Argentinean narratives were indisputably in debt to European and other hemispheric literatures.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Borges believed it was an arbitrary convention that certain narratives were considered typically Argentinean, since the use of local color and themes did not assure an appropriate form of national narrative. He used Shakespeare to corroborate this particular argument, emphasizing the fact that the English dramatist did not limit himself to English themes and settings. Borges came to the conclusion that Argentinean culture and literature were part of “la cultura occidental” [Western culture] (323), more specifically of European cultural and literary traditions. Nonetheless, for Borges, Argentinean writers were not limited by a particular European model: “podemos manejar todos los temas europeos, manejarlos sin supersticiones, con una irreverencia que puede tener, y ya tiene, consecuencias afortunadas” [We can handle all European themes, manage them without superstitions, with an irreverence that can have, and already has, fortunate consequences] (323). In this particular excerpt, Borges was describing his own mature appropriation of European

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<sup>33</sup> Borges used the example of intertextualities in Ricardo Güiraldes’ *Don Segundo Sombra* with Kipling’s and Mark Twain’s works, which were no less Argentinean for having been influenced by foreign authors and which, although ostensibly a “Gauchesque” work, had little to do with either the poetry of gauchos or the tradition of Gauchesque poetry (which he differentiated as two different trends).

literatures, as well as his own approach to adapting the narratives and devices of his literary models.

In his essay about the Argentinean writer, Borges categorically characterized his own distinctive literary development, in relation to European models. In language similar to that of Machado in his “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira”, Borges suggested that “Ser argentino es una fatalidad y en ese caso lo seremos de cualquier modo” [to be Argentinean is fate, and in this sense we will be Argentinean in any case] (324). Borges thus stressed the fact that in order to produce and develop more critical and complex Argentinean narratives, Argentinean writers had to transcend literary prejudices and expectations (with respect to the use of local color, but particularly of Gauchesque narratives), and to reappraise their attitudes toward intertextual relations with European culture (particularly with respect to the usual subordinate attitude towards European writers). The ideal writer of Borges’ mature narratives echoed that of Machado in nineteenth-century Brazil: instead of overt nationalistic references, this writer should have an “intimate feeling” of nationality (Assis, *Obras completas* 1205). Borges expressed the same idea in different terms: he wrote about the inevitability of being Argentinean, even when dealing with different themes and advocate the freedom to adapt European narratives and to use the device of their writers. This 1955 essay on the Argentinean writer demonstrates that Borges continued to develop this critical project long after the publication of the best part of his mature short narratives, particularly those collected in book form during the 1940s.<sup>34</sup>

Borges addressed his views on intertextualities with European writers and literatures in an essay that epitomized his critical views and narrative project: “Kafka y sus precursores”.<sup>35</sup> In what would become one of his most often quoted statements, using Kafka’s innovative narratives as examples, Borges concluded that “cada escritor *crea* a sus

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<sup>34</sup> *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941), *Ficciones* (1944) and *El Aleph* (1949).

<sup>35</sup> “Kafka y sus precursores” is from 1951, and was first published in book form in *Otras Inquisiciones* 1952.

precursores. Su labor modifica nuestra concepción del pasado, como ha de modificar el futuro” [each writer *creates* his own predecessors. His labor modifies our understanding of the past, and will modify the future] (Borges, *Obras completas* 90). This essay thus served as a definitive response to Borges’ early and local critics as he explained his own manner of relating to European hypotexts, as well as to local and hemispheric writers and narratives. By suggesting another way of conceiving literary history and relations between writers, Borges used irony—the atemporality introduced in the idea of creating one’s precursors—to illuminate the development of his own use of intertextualities with European literatures, particularly with his set of English ironic and non-canonical models in his early critical works, i.e., De Quincey, Stevenson and Chesterton, among others.

With this twentieth-century Argentinean literary project—hypertextualities with multiple writers, local or European; the critique of local color, themes and subjects as signs of an independent national literature, and particularly the sense of being a national absent any effort—Borges matched the accomplishments of Machado in nineteenth-century Brazil, especially in critical terms, but also in terms of narrative. For Machado and Borges, their initial role as critics and essayists enabled them to reassess their national literatures and to rethink their own individual and Brazilian or Argentinean narrative projects. To paraphrase Borges in “Kafka y sus precursores”, as critics, Machado and Borges modified the past by conceptualizing new European, local and hemispherical models. Concurrently, they modified the immediate future by creating guidelines for developing their innovative and mature narratives; and consequently, they influenced later Latin American literatures with their seminal work that was created long before the concept of Latin America as a space of creative literature had been widely accepted.

Machado and Borges both developed their literary projects in their articles, essays and critiques. Nevertheless, the most recognized outcomes of those literary projects were their

mature narratives. A closer examination of the evolving intertextualities of Machado's and Borges' narratives with the work of English ironic writers, signals their departure from recognized literary models and their transition to a more ironic mode. Such an inquiry demonstrates how irony became essential to their literary development and to the resulting reception of their works locally and internationally.

### 1.3 Development of English Intertextualities in Machado's Work

The relations between Machado de Assis and the English language and literature are an important, yet controversial topic for critics and biographers. According to some critics, Machado's transition to a more mature and ironic mode in the 1880s, particularly after *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, is related to the development of intertextualities with English writers within his work. In "A Emergência do paradigma inglês no romance e na crítica de Machado de Assis" [The emergence of the English paradigm in the novel and in the criticism of Machado de Assis], Guimarães, for example, makes this linkage; however, he never uses the word irony in his essay, preferring the term "humorismo inglês" [English humor] (101). Although it presented direct intertextualities with French romantic and realist models, Machado's first novel, *Ressurreição* (1872) was, according to Machado himself, loosely based on a Shakespeare quote.<sup>36</sup> As established, Machado was writing in a period defined by pervasive French literary influence that enveloped nineteenth-century Brazil; however, early on in his literary career he introduced English writers as an alternative to more conventional literary models and traditions. After publishing his first novel, Machado, as

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<sup>36</sup> "Minha idéia ao escrever este livro foi pôr em ação aquele pensamento de Shakespeare: 'Our doubts are traitors,/And make us lose the good we oft might win,/ By fearing to attempt'. Não quis fazer romance de costumes; tentei o esboço de uma situação e o contraste de dois caracteres; com esses simples elementos busquei o interesse do livro. A crítica decidirá se a obra corresponde ao intuito, e sobretudo se o operário tem jeito para ela." [My idea, when writing this book, was to put into action that thought of Shakespeare: 'Our doubts are traitors,/And make us lose the good we oft might win,/ By fearing to attempt'. I didn't want to write a social novel; I attempted a draft of a situation and the contrast between two characters; with these simple elements I searched for some interest in the book. The critics will decide if the work matches its intent, and above all if the worker is up to the job] (Assis, *Obra completa* 236).

mentioned earlier, directly denounced the overwhelming presence of French language and cultural models in Brazilian literary contexts of his time in his famous essay “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade” (*Obra completa* 1210). Moreover, he identified strong textual and cultural relations between French romantic writers (for instance, Hugo, Gautier and Musset) and Brazilian writers: according to him, French romanticism still “seduced” young writers of his time (1207). To corroborate his arguments vis-à-vis the lack of cultural autonomy in Brazilian traditions, Machado searched for examples in relation to national literatures and literary models in authors such as Longfellow and Shakespeare (1205). His early creative works, particularly his early poems,<sup>37</sup> presented a more literal approach to romantic and realist European aesthetics of the nineteenth century, more specifically to French literary models. In his early works, Machado typically only refers casually to English writers, particularly canonical writers such as Shakespeare, without pursuing any more complex hypertextual relations with them.

Thus, *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* represented a transition from uncritical relations to French models and intertextual references to canonical English authors to more specific intertextualities with English ironic writers. With this novel, Machado signaled a major change in his literary project, by dramatically shifting the narrative to the point of view of Brás Cubas; this protagonist is a member of a wealthy Brazilian family of the nineteenth century, whose great-grandfather was a cooper turned farmer. More importantly, his grandfather was the first Cubas family member to study in Portugal, achieve a position in the government and make acquaintance with important people of his time, accomplishments that

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<sup>37</sup> Here is an excerpt of the poem “Visio”, from *Crisálidas* (1864): “Eras pálida. E os cabelos,/ Aéreos, soltos novelos/ Sobre as espáduas caíam...” [You were pale. And your hair/ ethereal, loose curls/fell over your shoulders...] (Assis, *Obra completa* 401-2). The poem is about a woman as a vision, and an unattainable but imagined, and briefly described, physical love. Moreover, in *Crisálidas*, Machado use paratextualities and intertextualities with writers such as Alfred de Musset and Madame de Staël. In a letter to Dr. Caetano Figuera published as an afterword for the first edition of *Crisálidas*, Machado himself recognizes his uncritical attitude toward his literary models: “no culto das musas não sou um sacerdote, sou um fiel obscuro da vasta multidão dos fiéis” [in the adoration of the muses, I am not a priest; I am just one more faithful and nameless believer in a vast multitude of believers] (Assis, *Chrysalidas* 163).

elicited this judgment: “Neste rapaz é que verdadeiramente começa a série de meus avós” [In this fellow the line of my ancestors really begins] (628/ Trans. Grossman *Epitaph of a Small Winner* 8). Brás tells his life story from the grave, and begins with his death, in order to subvert the expectations of the readers—“Suposto o uso vulgar seja pelo nascimento” [Granted, the usual practice is to begin with one’s birth] (625/5). After describing his burial and his delirium before death, he proceeds to recount his life story, in a series of misadventures that, at the end, amount to nothing. Brás never once in his life had to work or to produce anything; he and his only sister are the heirs to the family fortune. As the narrator Brás states: “coube-me a fortuna de não comprar o pão com o suor do meu rosto” [I had the good fortune of not having to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow] (758/209). Brás’ self-proclaimed great idea in life was an anti-hypochondria plaster, the fixed idea that, ironically, led to his own death. The character’s life is futile, useless, in spite of the fact that he does not consider himself so: he disguises his futility in preposterous theories about life, love and other issues. In the conclusion, the narrator states that the only thing between him and his posthumous fame, due to his great idea, was death itself, then he proceeds to unveil the series of negatives that resulted from his evidently empty life: “Não alcancei a celebridade do emplasto, não fui ministro, não fui califa, não conheci o casamento” [I did not achieve celebrity, I did not become a minister of state, I did not really become a caliph, I did not marry] (758/209). This last sentence of the book is highly relevant, since it reveals the narrator’s incapacity to create a legacy of something important, which is disguised as a broader pessimistic type of philosophy: “Não tive filhos, não trasmiti a nenhuma criatura o legado da nossa miséria” [I had no progeny, I transmitted to no one the legacy of our misery] (758/209).

When Brás, the narrator of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, mentions the English writer Sterne at the beginning of the novel,<sup>38</sup> Machado was not pretentiously alluding to a known writer, rather he was establishing new hypertextual relations with the English ironist. First, by referring to Sterne, Machado was dislocating his intertextualities from romantic and realist French models and connecting with a specific English ironist. Second, when intertextually, and architextually relating the narrative of Brás Cubas' memoirs to the "forma livre" [free form] of Sterne (Assis, *Obra completa* 625), Machado was signaling his transition from a more literal and romantic mode to a more ironic one in order to challenge his contemporary readers and critics. Speaking in the first chapter about his own funeral, Brás Cubas plays with the romantic idea of relating the weather to the characters' feelings: it was raining, and a supposed friend, who was there only because he had inherited money from the deceased, had uttered at the graveside: "Vós que o conhecestes, meus senhores, vós podeis dizer comigo que a natureza parece estar chorando a perda irreparável de um dos mais belos caracteres que têm honrado a humanidade" ['You who knew him may well affirm with me that nature herself appears to be weeping her lamentation over her irreparable loss, one of the most beautiful characters that ever honored humanity by his presence in our poor world'] (626/5). This is an example of what Machado called Sterne's free form, as it is one of the seemingly unnecessary turns in the narrative; in addition, Machado evoked this passage from French romantic models, in order to translate it into a more ironic mode.

Indeed *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* marked a transition both in Machado's work and in the Brazilian literary production of the time (Guimarães 95). Machado adapted the unreliable eighteenth-century English narrators—associated with writers such as Sterne, Thackeray, and Fielding—to late nineteenth-century Brazilian society: the cultural adaptation of these English ironists was the way Machado found to critique his society, avoiding direct

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<sup>38</sup> In the first edition of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, the narrator also mentions Charles Lamb (Gomes 58).

statements or commitments to enclosed systems of thought (105). Machado's narrator in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* is directly identified with the contemporary Brazilian elite; while this distanced Machado, as author, from his ideal readers, it established a close relation to most of the real readers, who were a major part of the readership in nineteenth-century Brazil. In a later chapter, Machado has his protagonist, Brás Cubas, describe his ambitions, dreams which demonstrate simultaneously his lack of commitment, and his attachment to values shared by his class: "Grande futuro? Talvez naturalista, literato, arqueólogo, banqueiro, politico, ou até bispo—bispo que fosse—, uma vez que fosse um cargo, uma preeminência, uma grande reputação, uma posição superior" [A great future? Perhaps I would be a naturalist, a man of letters, an archeologist, a banker, a statesmen, or even a bishop—any profession, provided that it entailed preeminence, reputation, a status of superiority] (Assis, *Obra completa* 653-4; Trans. Grossman, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* 51). In this way, Machado, the author, is criticizing this hypocritical gaze, without making a direct statement, but by exaggerating the narrator's desire for greatness, and the appearance of greatness, juxtaposed with his obvious failures, i.e., using the narrator's overstatements to highlight the author's own ironic intention.

Machado used English literary models not only in terms of intertextuality, copying and reproducing their styles and devices, but also as a way of criticizing his peers with their uncritical and naturalized use of French literary models and paradigms. Nevertheless, "[a]o incluir as referências inglesas, elas mesmas baseadas na multiplicidade de paradigmas e constituídas em tensão com os modelos continentais, Machado criava um efeito de abismo, do qual a crítica demoraria para se desvencilhar" [by including English references that were themselves based on multiple paradigms and constructed in tension with other continental models, Machado created a *mise en abyme* effect, which critics would take a long time to disentangle] (Guimarães 108).



This “*mise en abyme* effect” created in Machado’s narrative was evident in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Machado was not only referencing or simply imitating Sterne’s style and devices, but he was also engaging in intertextualities with his English predecessor. The narrator of Machado’s novel, for example, has the same self-consciousness of Sterne’s narrator in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, as we are going to see in more detail; however, by contrast to the English writer, Machado’s humor tends to be, simultaneously, overstated, obscured under the overwhelming perspective of the narrator, as well as more pessimistic.<sup>39</sup> In the words of Machado’s narrator, he twisted his literary models (Xavier de Maistre, Sterne) adding to them what he calls “rabugens de pessimismo” [peevish pessimism]: “Escrevi-a [as memórias] com a pena da galhofa e a tinta da melancolia” [I wrote it (the memoirs) with the pen of Mirth and the ink of Melancholy] (Assis, *Obra completa* 625/ Trans. Grossman, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* 8).

The result of these clever interpolations with English ironists is a complex sort of parody: one whose target was not the parodied text, but Machado’s contemporary society and cultural contexts, as we shall see next. Contrary to the opinions of some critics, such as Silvio Romero (Gomes 11), who point to an alienated and uncritical writer, Machado’s intertextualities with English ironists did not distance Machado from his own time and country. Machado and Borges narrated their stories from the point of view of the happy few—the elite—rather than the characters of choice of their contemporaries who followed romantic and realist traditions, i.e., people confronting major difficulties in life. This was new in the history of Brazilian fiction: “This narrator is an invention that breaks new ground” (Schwarz, “A Brazilian Breakthrough” 103). Therefore, to some degree Machado used irony precisely to distance the reader from those realities in order to offer a better understanding of them. While he parodies Sterne’s narratives in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, he also

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<sup>39</sup> According to Michael Bell (116): “Sterne’s humour is not satirically destructive so much as an intensification of self-consciousness”.

satirizes the Brazilian upper class of the end of nineteenth-century in the voice of his protagonist, a childless, and in many ways sterile, slave owner who, after death, narrates his own life story according to his own specifications.

A number of parallels between Machado's first mature novel and Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, are observable: the playful tone towards his implied readers, the constant attempt to indulge his reader's prejudices and expectations, and even to "menoscabar o leitor" [to belittle the reader] (Gomes 45).<sup>40</sup> In Chapter IV of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, for example, the narrator teases the reader: "Veja o leitor a comparação que melhor lhe quadrar, veja-a e não esteja daí a torcer-me o nariz, só porque ainda não chegamos à parte narrativa destas memórias. Lá iremos. Creio que prefere a anedota à reflexão, como os outros leitores, seus confrades, e acho que faz muito bem. Pois lá iremos" [Let the reader find the comparison that fits best, let him find it and not stand there with his nose out of joint just because we haven't got to the narrative part of these memories. We'll get there. I think he prefers anecdotes to reflection, like other readers, his confrères, and I think he's right. So let's get on with it] (Assis, *Obra completa* 629/Trans. Grossman, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* 11). Gomes compares this excerpt from Machado's novel with Chapter 20 of the first book of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*: "How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter?" (45). The similarity here lies not only in the playful tone, but also in the dialogue with the reader, highlighting the awareness of the narrator with respect to the narrative.

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<sup>40</sup> Gomes (1939) observes a number of parallels between Machado and Sterne: the use of suspension points instead of words (44) in chapter 55 (Assis, *Obra completa* 683-4), and the use of short and sometimes misplaced chapters (Gomes 48) in Chapter 130: "Para intercalar no capítulo CXXIX" (Assis, *Obra completa* 740). In terms of narrative, Gomes also draws attention to the presence of Sterne's intertextualities within Machado's novel: the narrator of Machado's novel, as Sterne's Tristram Shandy, constantly promises chapters, theories and details, but seems to ironically put them aside, teasing the reader's expectations (46-7). More than that, but still on the surface of the narrative, Gomes relates Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* to *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* by the curious juxtaposition of the narrators: the character of the first novel starts narrating it before the man was conceived, and the latter after he is dead (49).

For my purposes, Machado's interplay with Brazilian contemporary social prejudices and cultural expectations is of equal or greater importance. A good example of this interplay appears in Chapter XI of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, "O menino é o pai do homem" [The child is father to the man]. In this chapter, the narrator explains his violent behavior towards the house servants, and also the complicity of his father, as if it were a harmless anecdote: "Desde os cinco anos merecera a alcunha de 'menino diabo' [...] um dia quebrei a cabeça de uma escrava porque me negara uma colher do doce-de-coco [...] meu pai tinha-me em grande admiração; e se às vezes me repreendia à vista da gente, fazia-o por simples formalidade: em particular dava-me beijos" [From the age of five, I deserved my nickname of 'little devil' (...) One day, for example, I hit a slave on the head so hard that blood ran from the wound, because she had refused me a spoonful of the egg-and-coconut paste that she had been making (...) my father held me in great admiration; and if at times he scolded me before others, he did so as merely as a formality: in private, he would kiss me] (Assis, *Obras completas* 638-9/Trans. Grossman, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* 26). The light tone of this excerpt, as most of Brás' narration, paradoxically highlights the cruelty of the character, and serves to criticize his behavior, i.e., most readers of the time (part of the nineteenth-century Brazilian elite), would not notice this behavior as exceptional and if they did, would not view it as flawed. Reading the character as flawed, nonetheless, depends on the position of the reader, and also emphasizes the ironic distance of Machado from the Brazilian society of his time.

Machado chose deliberately to introduce these intertextualities with English ironists, not highly regarded in nineteenth-century Brazil. With equal deliberation, Machado adapted the devices of English ironists to narrate his story from the point of view of an upper-class Brazilian slave owner, making it not only attractive, but challenging and relevant to his contemporary Brazilian readers and critics. Machado found a vehicle for his ironic, and

sometimes deceptive, critique of his society in the humor produced by these distancing devices of the English ironists. As illustrated above, by using the voice of the slave-owner narrator, who understates his prejudices, Machado made a statement, at least for his ideal reader, by subtly criticizing the narrator, and hence the social class to which he belongs.

In another fundamental step towards a more mature and ironic mode, Machado published *Papéis avulsos* [*Scattered Papers*] (1882). Typically, Machado's short narratives later appeared in Latin American short story anthologies or in the three compilations of English translation of his published short stories: *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories* 1973; *The Devil's Church & Other Stories* 1985; and *A Chapter of Hats: Selected Stories* 2009. In fact, until the 1973 publication of *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories*, only five of Machado's short stories had been published in English translation (Assis, *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories* vii). Nevertheless, critics including Pereira (1955) praise him as a short story writer, rather than as a novelist (vii). In spite of the praise, Machado's short narratives, nonetheless, are not studied and analyzed as much as his mature novels by English-speaking or by Brazilian critics (Gledson, *Por um novo Machado de Assis* 35).

This book, *Papéis avulsos*, is relevant for two reasons: first, it reiterates Machado's literary developments in relation to the English ironists; second, this was his first collection of short fiction to incorporate social critique into a new complex set of literary models. As indicated, Machado is most frequently recognized today as a novelist, rather than a short story writer,<sup>41</sup> especially in the English-speaking world. By contrast, Borges' prose fiction was limited to short narratives. Therefore for this thesis, *Papéis avulsos* is important because it represents a genre in the Brazilian Machado's literary project shared by Borges, the

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<sup>41</sup> Machado wrote an impressive number of short stories: over two hundred. Some critics, such as Lúcia Miguel Pereira and Renard Perez, argue that Machado was more accomplished as a short fictional writer than as a novelist. According to Pereira, "it was undoubtedly as short story writer that Machado de Assis wrote his masterpieces" (Assis, *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories* vii). Perez states that Machado is "a world master of the short story" (vii). Contemporary critics such as Luis Augusto Fischer (128) affirm Machado's role in the history of the short story genre, alongside other more established authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe and Borges.

Argentinean counterpart of this comparative study. As in his first mature novel, Machado's *Papéis avulsos* reflects on the dual catalyst for his increasingly ironic tone: first, his maturing firmly disenchanted view of Brazilian society; and second, the new set of unconventional literary models that he introduced. Nevertheless, this is an idiosyncratic book within Machado's work. According to Gledson, it can be understood as a fictional experiment, based on his earlier critical work, particularly that of "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira" and in his critique of Eça de Queirós' *O Primo Basílio* (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 10-1).

In his earlier critique, "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade", Machado criticized—as noted earlier—the use of local color to define Brazilian literature; he suggested that one can be a national writer irrespective of the setting or the time in which the fictional narrative takes place. *Papéis avulsos* can also be related to Machado's article on *Primo Basílio* [Cousin Basilio] (Assis, *Obra completa* 1232-42). In it, Machado criticized European realism and naturalism in these terms: "Voltemos os olhos para a realidade, mas excluamos o Realismo, assim não sacrificaremos a verdade estética" [Let us turn our eyes to reality, but let us exclude realism; by doing so, we will not sacrifice aesthetic truth] (1242). Here, Machado differentiates realism from aesthetics, suggesting that realistic constraints limit literary expression. In *Papéis avulsos*, Machado put those premises into effect, creating his most unusual book. For the purposes of this comparative study, the book provides at least two keys to understanding Machado and his subsequent reception: first, it documents his transition from romantic and realistic French to ironic English literary models, and to a more ironic mode; second, the range of settings, stories, and "fantastic" themes, along with an "unrealistic" style, merge to resemble Borges' narratives of the next century, and thus to what will be identified later as the Latin American new narrative of the twentieth century. Regardless of the reiterated critical claims for *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* as a precursor of the new Latin American narrative, I argue that Machado's collection of short

stories in *Papéis avulsos* is a more suitable narrative model for subsequent comparative analyses than his first mature novel.

English critic John Gledson, in his preface to the latest Brazilian edition of *Papéis avulsos* draws attention to Machado's short narrative experiments as "um jeito de lidar com o contraste entre realidades brasileiras, teorias europeias e os modelos ficcionais que estas engedram" [a way of dealing with contrasts in Brazilian realities, European theories and fictional models that these realities and theories create] (13). For Gledson, the question posed by Machado's narratives is: how to use European theories and literary models that would otherwise have been misplaced in a nineteenth-century Brazilian socio-cultural context to create a national literature. Hence, for Gledson, the underlying issue in Machado's short stories was the creation of a local literature that would be in dialogue with other national traditions, but not in a subordinate way. In this thesis's critical terms, I re-state Gledson's question as: how to intertextually adapt specific European literary models in order to deal with the preeminent nineteenth-century question of "como escrever ficção no Brasil" [how to write fiction in Brazil] (13). In this collection of short stories, Machado achieved ways of being a Brazilian writer by adapting particular English literary models.

Using Machado's short stories, "O alienista" and "Teoria do medalhão", I proceed to illustrate the main theme of *Papéis avulsos*, i.e., nineteenth-century Brazilian society viewed obliquely and ironically through two lenses: first, a variety of novel experiments with literary models, settings, places and forms of narrative; and second, various parodies and allegories of established literary genres and texts. The critic Gledson suggests that another interpretive key to this short stories collection lies in the conventional Brazilian form of imitation of more central European cultures and models (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 17-8). This is evident in a multi-layered, complex and concise narrative, in which Machado uses parody and intertextualities with English ironists to criticize his peers in their uncritical use and unimaginative imitation

of cultural and literary models—particularly French—while concurrently producing his unconventional ironic inversion of European models, in this case, English ironists.

One of the most famous short narratives opens the collection: “O alienista” [The Psychiatrist]. It will serve as an example of Machado’s social critique and at the same time, will illustrate his critique of the uses and uncritical acceptance of European theoretical and literary models in nineteenth-century Brazil. Roughly, “O alienista” can be understood as a reaction against nineteenth-century European scientism: a story of a physician who studies and seeks to understand madness. In the end, he detains in a mental hospital every person of Itaguaí, a small town in Rio de Janeiro state, only to notice that he himself, the only sane mind, is the one who should be incarcerated. In his study of Machado’s “English influences”, critic Gomes (34) pointed out parallels between this short story and Swift’s “A serious and useful scheme to make a hospital for incurables” (1733). In his ironic but plausible narrative, Swift suggested the construction of a hospital for morally incurable patients, only to conclude that the number of beds should be reduced to 200,000; he reasoned that if all “incurables” were arrested, Great Britain would not have the money to sustain their health care. As with Machado’s character in “O alienista”, Swift is playing with the idea of mental health as a relative concept: if the average is to be morally wrong, the morally right are the exception. In that case, inverting meanings, a deviant would be healthy, whereas a good person would be sick.

Here, distancing ourselves from the nineteenth century, we can imagine Machado’s critique of more conventional French references, i.e., the third-person narrator places Itaguaí’s story in parallel to the French Revolution’s facts and history. In this frame, Itaguaí has its own “Terror”, and its own “Restoration”; further it has its own revolutionary process, for which the model in the nineteenth century was, and in some sense it still is, the French Revolution (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 20). Nonetheless, the inclusion and repetition of these

historical references drains them of significance, almost as if they are metaphors (21). The conclusion is that, being a metaphor, almost an empty image, these references to French history are not a model or an explanation for what might happen in the town of “O alienista.” On the contrary: Itaguaí’s revolution is interrupted by a series of unimportant events including unexpected invasions and dissension, as well as the petty vanity of some characters (21). As Gledson suggests in his preface to *Papéis avulsos*, there are no proper models (either historical or literary): “tudo está reduzido a um mundo de violência e vaidade mesquinha” [everything is reduced to a world of violence and petty vanity] (21).

Therefore, I conclude that Machado’s short story “O alienista”, by normalizing these references through endless repetition that drains them of all significance, parodies a fiction of a French interpretive framework vis-à-vis history—in this case—but more generally to literature and other aspects of society. While the main reference is to French history, Machado suggests in the margins other possible models. These brief references to alternative models are understated, and can be interpreted with the knowledge of Machado’s position about the overwhelming presence of French references in Brazilian culture stated in his early articles. In “O alinenista,” references to other facets of European and Brazilian history and even to biblical texts are observable: references to Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution, to riots during the Brazilian monarchy, and to The Book of Revelation in the Bible (20).

This reading can be corroborated by the next short story in the collection, “Teoria do medalhão,” which is worthy of detailed examination. While “O alienista” plays upon empty French historical references and literary models,<sup>42</sup> “Teoria do medalhão” presents a complete turn in perspective: by means of dialogue, Machado, as the author, sustains the incorporation of intertextualities with “another’s language, another’s style, another’s word” (Bakhtin 69).

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<sup>42</sup> The satirical and moralistic tone of “O alienista” can be compared to Voltaire’s *Candide*, for instance.



The title “Teoria do medalhão” was translated into English by Helen Caldwell as “Education of a Stuffed Shirt” (Assis, *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories* 113-22). This translation is misleading: by contrast to the idea of a “stuffed shirt”, with its negative connotation, “Medalhão” has an ambiguous meaning. According to Marcela da Silva Nascimento, “Medalhão” can be defined more neutrally as an important person, or in a pejorative sense as someone placed in an important post, without the resources or experience to hold the position (Rocha, *À roda de Machado de Assis* 359). Relevant in the idea of Medalhão is the external sign, i.e., how people perceive the Medalhão: he can be viewed with admiration, envy, hate or other emotions. Moreover, stuffed shirt in English denotes a predefined attitude, whereas taking any attitude would be a problem for a proper Medalhão, as I will demonstrate.<sup>43</sup> A more neutral translation for Medalhão would be “an establishment man”; or even a less colorful, but more precise, “important man”, or “Eminence”. Thus the title, “Teoria do medalhão”, might be translated as: “The Making of an Important Man” or “Etiquette for an Eminent Man”. The ambivalence in the idea of Medalhão is important for my purpose, because the concealment of the irony through understatement and vague words is intentional; together, they make the story and its outcomes much stronger.

The subtitle of this short story is “Diálogo” [A Dialogue], which refers to the dialogue between a wealthy father and his son, in which the father explains how the world—Brazilian society in the nineteenth century—works. The format in itself hints at the ambivalence of the short story and its playfulness: what we are about to read are not necessarily the writer’s opinions and points of view, but simply statements made by characters.

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<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the translation of “Teoria” (literary “Theory”) proposed by Caldwell is “Education”: it sounds contradictory to educate someone to be a stuffed shirt, in spite of the fact that what happens here is a sort of education of a “Medalhão”. This translated title reveals too much of the irony of the short story, in the sense that it presents to the reader in the beginning the contradiction of educating someone to be a somewhat questionable person, thereby discouraging other interpretations. In contrast, the Portuguese version of the title is much more neutral, and could be freely translated as “A theory on how to become a great person”, which is not necessarily contradictory and which does not require a moral judgment from the reader right from the start.

The father's words can be read as literal, but Machado's intentions are nothing but ironical; he presents the dialogue as that of a landowner, with all his prejudices and malice in order to expose them. I will demonstrate how an implied reader can engage with this set of concepts—and later how those concepts are related to Machado's own society. Essentially, I propose a reading of Machado's irony that will move from the rhetorical and textual level to the socio-historical level.

First, I highlight the irony in the speeches of this father. At the beginning, the father mentions that his son has come of age, i.e., he just turned twenty one. The father then suggests that it is time that his son choose a profession: “Mas, qualquer que seja a profissão de sua escolha, o meu desejo é que te faças grande e ilustre, ou pelo menos notável, que te levantes acima da obscuridade comum” [But, whatever the profession of your choice, I want you to be great and illustrious, or at least known in the best circles. Lift yourself above the ordinary level of obscurity] (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 99-100/trans. Caldwell, *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories* 113). When asked what would be the best career to follow, the father replies: “Nenhum me parece mais útil e cabido que o de medalhão” [No calling, in my opinion, is more useful, more generally accepted, than that of the stuffed shirt] (100/114). The father then proceeds to define the traits of a proper Medalhão: moderation, correctness, a measured tread and forty-five years (this is not an arbitrary date: “é a data normal do fenômeno” [it is the normal date for the phenomenon to occur]—101/114).

If we consider Machado's story as a parody of a Socratic dialogue—one possible framework—we might examine the political and ethical connotations of the dialogue format. In this sense, we can add to Machado's rhetorical ironies another ironic level: the engagement necessary to read the story. About Socratic dialogue, Colebrook (28) asserts: “[it] shifts the concept of irony from simple rhetorical use to complex rhetorical engagement, such that the boundary between an accepted literal meaning and an ironical meaning is shown to be

political and ethical”. My point is not to further the comparison between Machado’s fictional dialogue and the tradition of Socratic dialogue, but to examine the structure of the story as an invitation, a challenge to the reader to be actively engaged, i.e., to understand how the words and concepts in the speech of the characters are being used, to accept or reject the literal meaning and to look for alternative explanations.

After explaining the traits of a Medalhão, the father proceeds to what he considers “the heart of the matter”. As he draws attention to the next assertion, he again challenges the reader to engage with his rhetoric: “Uma vez entrando na carreira, debes pôr todo cuidado nas ideias que houeres de nutrir para uso alheio e próprio. O melhor será não as ter absolutamente” [Once entered on this career you must exercise great caution in the choice of ideas you nourish in respect to others, and to yourself. The best thing will be not to have any] (101/114). The rhetorical irony here is expressed by overstatement. At this point, it is possible that the reader will start questioning the father’s intentions, i.e., what kind of father would recommend that his son be a man of no ideas? Nevertheless, the father goes on about the topic of ideas; he is interrupted by the son who suggests that, in any case, he does not have any. The father then adds: “Tu, meu filho, se não me engano, pareces dotado da perfeita inópia mental, conveniente ao uso deste nobre ofício” [You, my son, if I am not mistaken are endowed with the perfect mental inadequacy so necessary to the practice of this noble calling] (101/115). Now the father’s contradictory statement (“endowed with mental inadequacy”) directs attention toward the corruption of the father’s ideas: for the father, it is essential for the Medalhão to be mindless.

With these examples of the overstatements and contradictions in the father’s speech, we have a clear example of the rhetorical irony in Machado’s short story. The aim of these textual ironies in it can be read as a general critique of “the dedication of men to the superficial, to the inauthentic, the mediocre”, as suggested by Grossman (Assis, *The*

*Psychiatrist and Other Stories* viii). The critic Grossman, in the introduction to the collection in which Caldwell's translation of "Teoria do medalhão" was published, compares Machado's dialogue with that in C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* (viii). Clearly, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) was written long after Machado's "Teoria do Medalhão". In my view, Grossman compares Machado's narrative to Lewis' in order to validate Machado's deserved place among good writers in the canon of world literature. In *The Screwtape Letters*, the demon has the same role as the father in "Teoria do medalhão." In a series of letters, the demon, whose name is Screwtape, recommends the use of clichés to replace original thoughts, along with other morally questionable advice, much as the father does in Machado's story. There are other parallels that are highlighted by Grossman: "both the father and Screwtape warn against unaccompanied walks and against reading of authoritative works" (viii). Ironical advice, delivered in overstatements and contradictions, is common to both narratives. Quite clearly in "Teoria do medalhão", Machado specifically criticizes Brazilian society of his time and its tendency to avoid original thought in favor of simply copying European theories and models. The lack of original ideas apparent in the fictional character represents the nineteenth-century Brazilian tendency towards uncritical imitation.

In this sense, according to Gledson, "o imitador, ou até mesmo o plagiário, vira símbolo nacional [...] o medalhão torna-se um 'original'" [the imitator, even the plagiarist, becomes a national symbol [...] the medalhão becomes an 'original'] (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 22). Furthermore, speaking through the father, Machado makes an important, yet oblique (or even self-ironic), statement regarding irony, one of the few in his fictional work. When talking about the necessity to reproduce ready-made thoughts and platitudes, the father states: "Somente não debes empregar a ironia, esse movimento de canto de boca, cheio de mistérios, inventado por algum grego da decadência, contraído por Luciano, transmitido por Swift e Voltaire. Não. Use antes a chalaça" [Only, you must never make use of irony, that vague

movement at the corner of the mouth, that thing of mystery, invented by some decadent Greek, caught by Lucian, passed on to Swift and Voltaire. A trait befitting sceptics and men of enlightenment. No... rather the vulgar story!]) (110/121). This statement from the father can be read as a signal to the reader that the story is to be read as ironic: the implied author is clearly saying that he cannot be a Medalhão himself, or that he does not agree with the advice being given, since he is making use of irony.

Thus, Machado uses irony as a means to transform a mere copy into a more intricate textual relation: the prohibitions of the fictional father, handled ironically, become Machado's mode of expressing his narrative project in his own fiction. If read literally, the prohibition of the father with respect to irony is a suggestion to be unoriginal, to ignore contrary opinions and only to use socially acceptable words. The astute reader who correctly interprets the textual intention of Machado's irony, nonetheless, will understand the writer's abhorrence of societal preference for hegemonic manufactured discourse and its concomitant rejection of original thought. The brief genealogy of rhetorical and narrative ironists—Lucian, Swift, and Voltaire—presented in the short story is informative. In these choices, Machado selected both French and English models. Machado's contemporary culture, as shown, was more favorable to French models, and the fact that Swift is associated with Voltaire, only highlights the choice of the English model. Attention is thus directed to the English ironist who was not as common a model as Voltaire or Lucian, the more classical Greek references in Machado's time. As in "O alienista", Machado is signaling his personal transition from French to English models, as a sign of his innovation.

Several other narratives in *Papéis avulsos* use a similar approach. In "D. Benedita", Machado uses irony, particularly through overstatement, to satirize current notions of realism, and the volubility of the main character, a commentary that can be related to contemporary societal trends. Machado makes a similar point in "O anel de Polícrates", a story about an

inexpressive character, afflicted by, according to Gledson, “a incapacidade de criar algo permanente” [the inability to create something relevant] (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 29). In it, Gledson highlights the obvious irony in a commentary on the hegemony of French culture in nineteenth-century Brazilian society, spoken by the main character, a fictional version of Machado’s friend, Artur Oliveira, a writer who was one of the first Brazilian disciples of the French poet, journalist and critic Théophile Gautier (30). In summary, the main point is that the *Papéis avulsos*’ stories usually target nineteenth-century Brazilian society through the use of parodies and satires of typical Brazilian characters, customs, ideologies and references, along with intertextualities with European models, at the period of Machado’s transition from French to English literary sources.

Although less didactic in its narrative and more allegorical than *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, the short stories in *Papéis avulsos* represent good examples of Machado’s successful transition from hegemonic French models to the English ironists, a particularly unconventional shift in nineteenth-century Brazil. In making this shift, he adapted intertextually the ironic device of the English, particularly favoring the eighteenth-century writers Sterne and Swift. At the same time, these narratives established their implied reader, because an innovative narrative implies a new mode of reading. In mentioning Sterne in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, and Swift, along with irony as device in “Teoria do medalhão”, Machado was educating his readers about his intertextual and cultural relations to European models, particularly his new and unconventional English ironic models. Thus ironically, Machado played an innovative role in subtly provoking nineteenth-century Brazilian society to question the propriety of the hegemonic French model and to consider other alternatives. This ultimate irony is the result of Machado’s critical, original and creative relations with his own society, his own national narratives and with European cultures and literatures.

In spite of the evident contextual and textual differences, Borges' narrative developments took a similar path in the next century. A closer examination of Borges' narrative trajectory in relation to his English literary models will help us compare these two writers' attitudes towards their literary models and social contexts.

#### 1.4 Development of English Intertextualities in Borges' Work

Borges' relation with English literature is a non-controversial topic, in contrast to Machado's. Indeed, it is standard practice for Borges' critics to relate his narratives to English literary models and traditions. In contrast to Machado—whose family origins and nineteenth-century Brazilian cultural background distance him from his English models—Borges was born in cosmopolitan twentieth-century Buenos Aires, into a bilingual environment provided by a family of partial English heritage.<sup>44</sup> Borges' emphasized the role of English in his formation, stating for example that he did most of his early readings in English: "it's natural that the first word that comes to mind is often an English one" (quoted in Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 17)

Borges' early works, particularly books prior to *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935) and more specifically his early poems, were constructed in the tension between multiple European and Argentinean cultural, linguistic and literary traditions. *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923), *Luna de enfrente* (1925) *Cuaderno San Martín* (1929), and *Evaristo Carriego* (1930), for example, would be directly and literally about Buenos Aires and its suburban peripheries, including some use of local color associated with imagery and language.

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<sup>44</sup> Borges' paternal grandmother, Frances Haslam, was born in 1845 in Staffordshire, England (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 8). Furthermore, biographer Rodríguez Monegal affirms that Borges first learned to read in English, even before he could read in Spanish, and that he first read *Don Quixote* in an English translation (15). In other words, Borges' access to literature, including Spanish literature, was first mediated by the English language: this biographical anecdote can in a way define Borges' relations to other European literatures, since it defines him as a bilingual writer, for whom Spanish and English had the same value.

For my purposes, I note that in these early books that there are clear influences of French nationalistic and avant-garde models. The first lines of the first poem collected in *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, “Las calles”, synthesize Borges’ early poems: “Las calles de Buenos Aires/ya son mi entraña” [The streets of Buenos Aires/Are now my essence]. The book’s primary theme is Buenos Aires, its streets, suburban neighborhoods and characters. In these early books, critics identify “el primer Borges” [the first Borges] (Franco). According to Norberto Galasso (14), this first Borges would be “el juvenil, que buscaba la identidad nacional a través de la literatura” [the juvenile writer, who searched for a national identity through literature]. This modern, nationalistic mode would later be dismissed by Borges, along with his early books. In effect, Borges would later be recognized as the preeminent Spanish-speaking critic of realism, naturalism, and other European movements, particularly French traditions (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 117-8), including its avant-garde. With respect to his early books, in 1969 Borges would state to his friend Adolfo Bioy Casares (511): “Un escritor pasa la primera mitad de su vida en aprender y la segunda en olvidar lo que aprendió. Estoy limando viejos poemas [...] a veces en esos viejos poemas hay buenas ideas ocultas por una retórica atroz” [A writer spends the first half of his life learning, and the second one forgetting what he had learnt. I am polishing old poems [...] sometimes, in these old poems, there are good ideas hidden by atrocious rhetoric].

Using the division proposed by Borges to classify his work, he first learned to use European and Argentinean literary models; subsequently, he abandoned those in favor of the unconventional models of English ironists. Initially, Borges was writing under the influence of writers such as Leopoldo Lugones, an Argentinean poet regarded as the best model in early twentieth-century Argentina for writing in Spanish and who was widely imitated (Ferrari 210). Later in life Borges would state that Lugones wrote “en español versos franceses” [French verses in Spanish] (Bioy Casares 397). While Lugones adapted these conventional



literary models to the Spanish language and Argentinean context, he was still in respectful thrall to the more traditional paradigm of French cultural and literary models. In a foreword to *Fervor de Buenos Aires* written in 1969, Borges also mentioned Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno and Argentinean writer Macedonio Fernández as two of his early literary heroes.<sup>45</sup> Borges stated that, through Unamuno, he wished to be “un escritor español del siglo XVII” [a seventeenth-century Spanish writer] and, through Macedonio, he wanted to “descubrir las metáforas que Lugones ya había descubierto” [find the metaphors that Lugones had already discovered] (Borges, *Obras completas* 15). In another preface written when organizing his complete works in 1969, Borges stated that, in his early poems, he mistakenly tried too hard to be, at the same time, a modern and an Argentinean writer (61).

As suggested, the second half of the evolution of Borges’ fictional work, his forgetting process, would be marked by unconventional models of the English ironists. Of course, some English intertextualities appeared in Borges’ early production, given his upbringing and his formative readings.

For example, he opens *Evaristo Carriego* (1930), a nostalgic book about a minor Argentinean writer,<sup>46</sup> with a quote from the nineteenth-century English essayist, Thomas De Quincey: “...a mode of truth, not of truth coherent and central, but angular and splintered” (Borges, *Obras completas* 111). This quote would inform the notion of truth used by Borges in this specific biography of the Argentinean writer Evaristo Carriego, but can also be related to the well-known “angular and splintered” notions of truth established in his mature short fictions. Noteworthy in two essay collections—*Inquisiciones* (1925) and *Discusión* (1932)—is Borges’ initial incorporation of intertextualities and metatextualities with English writers in

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<sup>45</sup> In this foreword, the writer also mentions that what the later Borges has in common with the early Borges is his attraction to Arthur Schopenhauer, Robert Louis Stevenson and Walt Whitman (Borges, *Obras completas* 15).

<sup>46</sup> Later on his life, Borges despised his Argentinean predecessor: “¿qué puede esperarse de un libro sobre Evaristo Carriego? ¿De un libro sobre un insecto?” [What can one expect from a book about Evaristo Carriego? A book about an insect?] (quoted in Bioy Casares 557).

the period prior to his transition to a more mature and ironic mode. The architextual relations with the essayistic genre, particularly related to De Quincey's essay form, would become an important feature in Borges' mature works; this proved to be an important format for Borges to call into question narratives and narrative traditions in general, and particularly his own fictions. In these early books, Borges was already "developing a critical theory to suit his poetic experiments" (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 204). Not only was he establishing a framework for his personal literary project, he was, more importantly, developing his intertextual, architextual and metatextual relations with English ironists into more complex forms of intertextualities. Borges was progressing from citations and allusions to literary models and genres; subsequently, he advanced to critical discourses about literary traditions, with the introduction of his specific forms of irony.

As I mentioned earlier, the essay, "El escritor argentino y la tradición" is an example of Borges' later meditations on fiction, national literature and cultural traditions. In this essay, Borges examines two trends with which he disagrees: first, the use of regional language and local color as signs of Argentinean literary autonomy (Borges, *Obras completas* 317-8); and second, the prevalence of French intertextualities in canonical Argentinean books. As an example, Borges argues that *Don Segundo Sombra*, a book by Ricardo Güiraldes considered as a typical Argentinean narrative, was entirely dependent upon "la técnica poética de los cenáculos franceses de su tiempo" [the poetic technique of French literary circles of his time] (321). For Borges, there was no pre-ordained continuity between the Spanish and Argentinean cultural traditions, and at the same time, and paradoxically, neither was there a complete detachment from the past, as some nationalists wished. In his view, Argentinean cultural traditions could thus be directly related to European traditions as a whole—including and emphasizing French models (322).

By declaring in “El escritor argentino y la tradición” that an Argentinean writer’s “patrimonio es el universo” [patrimony is the universe] (324), Borges was establishing not just a framework for Argentinean literature, but for his own narrative development. Borges’ literary program could be summarized as “[a] literature that is related to foreign literature but not in any subordinate way” (Sarlo, *A Writer on the Edge* 5). This lack of subordination to European literary models, in other words, the local appropriation and adaptation of them, is a feature shared by Borges and Machado.<sup>47</sup>

Another key work for understanding Borges’ literary evolution is *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935). Written in the middle of this on-going process of establishing his own literary voice, this collection of short stories represents his first step toward the production of his mature short narratives, a genre through which Borges became more widely recognized by critics in diverse cultural contexts. This book represents Borges’ first experiment with the short story genre and with the architextuality<sup>48</sup> that is typical in his mature short narratives: “a combination of fiction and essay” (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 265). By combining these two usually unrelated genres, Borges would emphasize his own adaptation of European literary models and conventions (265), and would start constructing his unconventional metafictional, and sometimes, nihilistic interplay between reality and fiction.

The short story “Hombre de la esquina rosada” [Street-corner Man] is considered his first real attempt at the short story genre. This short narrative represents an important link between the early and late Borges: it still shares a common Argentinean cultural background, yet announces Borges’ personal breakthrough. Later, Borges discounted this first short story experiment as a cornerstone of his fictional and narrative evolution (254). My interest is in drawing attention to the presence in this piece of both the early Borges, with his connections

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<sup>47</sup> For Morello-Frosch, Borges’ “literary program” established “the starting point of modern Argentine literature” (quoted in Aizenberg 28).

<sup>48</sup> See page 24 for a brief definition of Genette’s concept; here I refer to Borges’ usage of a short story to relate to an entire genre.

to distinctive Argentinean topics, characters and language (knife duels, hoodlums, *lunfardo*,<sup>49</sup> etc.), and the later, mature Borges with his more unusual literary models. In “Hombre de la esquina rosada”, critics have cited intertextualities with the narratives of English writers such as Chesterton and Kipling, which they related to the abundance of “circumstantial details and vivid visual images” (245); indeed, Agatha Christie is cited, in view of the plot twist at the end of the story (245).

Borges’ first collection of mature short stories, however, is *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* [The Garden of Forking Paths] (1941)—later included in *Ficciones* (1944). In this book are some of Borges’ most famous short stories: “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*”, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, and “La biblioteca de Babel”, among others. The book provides evidence of Borges’ transition from a poet and essayist to a well-known and highly regarded short narrative writer. Borges’ metafictional and ironic narratives, along with his distinctive imagery, outline the definitive template in this collection; “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*”<sup>50</sup> is a fine example of the metafictional elaboration of his ironic prose. In this “theoretical fiction” (Sarlo, *A Writer on the Edge* 31), Borges discusses “knowledge” produced by texts (32), and by the act of reading in itself.

Pierre Menard is a fictional writer, and the short story appears to be a eulogy for this character. Borges sets the stage with the creation of an interpersonal network of relations, in which the narrator refers to both real and fictional characters, in order to create a fictional literary life: the narrator does this to establish his bona fides as an authority on Menard. Within the fictional world, Borges establishes the narrator as an unreliable character, who

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<sup>49</sup> *Lunfardo* was the dialect of the working classes in Buenos Aires originated with the arrival of immigrants, particularly Italians, from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century.

<sup>50</sup> “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*” is the first short fiction Borges wrote after an almost fatal accident in 1938, according to Borges, in order to prove to himself that he was still sane: “Cuando empezó a recuperarse, no supo dónde estaba ni qué le pasaba; entonces pensó que había perdido la razón. Después, al comprender el sentido del texto que la madre leía, empezó a llorar; se había dado cuenta que no estaba loco. Para probarse su cordura decidió escribir un cuento” [When recovering, he did not know where he was or what had happened; he then thought he was losing his mind. Later, understanding the meaning of a text his mother was reading for him, he started to cry. To prove to himself he was sane, he decided to write a short story] (Vázquez, *Esplendor y Derrota* 161). This is the second narrative in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.

seeks recognition; he wishes to convince the reader of his status. Given the place of the narrator, the reader has to accept him and his authority, based only on his word for it. The narrator proceeds to list what he describes as the “visible” part of Menard’s oeuvre, a total of thirteen pieces that includes sonnets, essays and forewords. Enumeration is common in Borges works; often he lists things that, combined, convey an apparently stable picture of a given situation or object—in this case an imaginary collection of literary works.<sup>51</sup> The list in “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*”, ranges from a work such as “un artículo técnico sobre la posibilidad de enriquecer el ajedrez eliminando uno de los peones de torre” [A technical article on the possibility of improving the game of chess, by eliminating the rook’s pawns] (Borges, *Obras completas* 842/trans. Irby, *Labyrinths* 63) to “una transposición en alejandrinos del *Cimetière marin* de Paul Valéry” [a transposition into alexandrines of Paul Valéry’s *Le cimetière marin*] (843/64). In spite of the fact that the works listed are mostly abstract ideas (and sometimes inconsistent, for instance “writing about a possibility”), the list is somewhat credible, even though many of them are pointless. Nevertheless, after completing the list of “visible” works, the narrator draws attention to Menard’s invisible works: “la [obra] subterránea, la interminablemente heroica, la impar” [the subterranean, the interminably heroic, the peerless (ouvre)] (843-4/65).

The narrator then proceeds to describe Menard’s “other work”: “Esa obra, tal vez la más significativa de nuestro tiempo, consta de los capítulos IX y XXXVIII de la primera parte del *Don Quijote* y fragmentos del capítulo XXII” [This work, perhaps the most significant of our time, consists of the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of chapter twenty-two] (844/65). The narrator then proceeds to highlight the incongruity of Menard’s project: “Yo sé que tal afirmación parece un dislate” [I

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<sup>51</sup> Examples of enumeration in Borges’ work can be found in “El Aleph”, when describing the object in which the characters can see everything at the same time; and even the famous list of animals from certain Chinese encyclopedia mentioned by Borges in his essay “El idioma analítico de John Wilkins”, and used by Michel Foucault in the preface to *Les Mots et les Choses*.

know such an affirmation seems an absurdity] (844/65). By drawing attention to the absurdity of Menard's primary work, the narrator is clearly inviting the reader to engage with his claims. By accepting the absurdity of the situation, the reader can begin to examine the narrative with increased skepticism. Nonetheless, the narrator also states that "justificar ese 'dislate' es el objeto primordial de esta nota" [to justify this 'absurdity' is the primordial object of this note] (844/65). In this contradiction lies the verbal irony of the narrator: he is either a) using a self-conscious and self-deprecating strategy to prompt the execution of an endeavor, one which the reader knows is both clearly impossible and is also totally pointless; or b) he is plainly playing with a concept. In effect, Borges presents his readers with a highly interesting unreliable narrator.

Borges' ironic intention is partially revealed in: these highlighted and explained contradictions; the overstatements of the narrator ("the most significant [work] of our times"); and in the comparison of this seemingly absurd project with Borges' own real literary project. The narrator proceeds to explain Menard's project in further detail. This re-writing of *Don Quijote* is not a modern version of the classic character; indeed Menard "No quería componer otro Quijote—lo cual es fácil—sino *el Quijote*" [He did not want to compose another Quixote—which is easy—but *the Quixote itself*] (844/65). Clearly, this too is an impossible objective, i.e., not copying the original *Quijote*, but writing a new text, that somehow will have to be identical to the original. Absurd as this project may be, Borges through his narrator will arrive at certain conclusions from this premise.

For example, at the story's end the narrator quotes from Menard in order to question a popular form of reading, i.e., the transformation of an author into a paragon: "la gloria es una incomprensión, quizá la peor" [fame is a form of incomprehension, perhaps the worst] (847/70). In another form of reading, i.e., an intentional "erroneous attribution", Borges' narrative connects the exact copy but, for the narrator, ostensibly superior version of *Don*

*Quijote* to a French writer, the fictional character Menard, as well as to the actual Spanish author Cervantes. Critics, including Rolando Costa Picazo and Irma Zangara, suggest—in the notes to the critical edition of Borges' *Obras completas* (930-1)—that the Pierre Menard's story is “una parábola de la traducción” [a parable of translation] (931). An alternative explanation is that Borges displaced the reference, attributing the better version of the *Quixote* to the fictional French writer Menard, in order to ironically invert the expectations of his contemporary readers regarding common European literary models and traditions, i.e., beginning with the title, he is playing with the reader, as the author of the *Quixote* was universally known to every informed reader in twentieth-century Buenos Aires. Another possibility is that Borges used this device to encourage the free form of appropriation of European models that, according to his essay “El escritor argentino y la tradición”, should be the privilege of all Argentinean readers, critics and writers. With respect to the points made thus far in this thesis, the best option is that Borges satirized the choice of France as a model for Argentinean writers and cultured people of the time.<sup>52</sup>

“Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, from the same collection of short stories, introduces a conversation between the narrator, a fictionalized version of Borges, and his (real but here fictionalized) friend Bioy Casares, in which they discuss an interesting quote from an encyclopedia that mentions a country called Uqbar. As the narrator progressively discovers strange facts about the imaginary country Uqbar (mentioned in some encyclopedias but not others), a series of other fantastic events are discovered or occur, such as an encyclopedia of a world created by a group of philosophers, and financed by a rich American character. After the narrator finds this mention of the imaginary country, Uqbar, he discovers this idea to be a plot of the intellectual creation of an entire alternative world, Tlön, related to the creation of a

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<sup>52</sup> In his literary biography about Borges, Rodríguez Monegal (331) affirms that “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*” “was meant to be a satire of French literary circles (which were, of course, the model for similar circles in Argentina)”. Nevertheless, this short story went beyond mere satire, turning into a metafictional reflection on reading and writing, especially when one compares Menard's version with Cervantes' own words in the context of his novel.

proper encyclopedia for this world, *Orbis Tertius* (also written in the languages of Tlön). In this short story, this imaginary world and its languages eventually replace the world of the narrator. By the end of the story, however, the narrator is more concerned with his translation of the English Renaissance poet Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*. The narrator mentions other English writers, such as De Quincey and Shakespeare, as well as a number of Borges' Argentinean peers: Xul Solar, Néstor Ibarra, and Bioy Casares, among others. The collision between the two worlds, one imaginary, and the other close to reality (this ideal of reality being helped by the identity of the narrator and people around him), is part of Borges' irony in this text: the imaginary world and the real world of the text are intermingled, leading to the conclusion that the world of the reader can also be a representation, because the alternative world is taking over the narrator's real world although he is unaware of this hijack.

When describing some concepts that are current in the imaginary world of Tlön, the narrator makes an assertion that resembles that of the two real Borges' essays about literary continuity and adaptation—"El escritor argentino y la realidad", and "Kafka y sus precursores": the narrator (the fictionalized Borges) states that in Tlön "No existe el concepto de plagio: se ha establecido que todas las obras son obras de un solo autor, que es intemporal y es anónimo. La crítica suele inventar autores: elige dos obras disímiles [...], las atribuye a un mismo escritor y luego determina con probidad la psicología de ese interesante *homme de lettres*" [The concept of plagiarism does not exist: it has been established that all works are the creation of one author, who is atemporal and anonymous. The critics often invent authors: they select two dissimilar works (...) attribute them to the same writer and then determine most scrumptiously the psychology of this interesting *homme de lettres*] (Borges, *Obras completas* 837-8/trans. Irby, *Labyrinths* 37). This idea mirrors that found in "Pierre Menard, autor de *Quijote*", i.e., a text can change through reading, and that "erroneous attribution" is an essential part of literary production—if you attribute a certain work to a different writer



(for instance, *Don Quijote* by Menard), the critical outcome could be startlingly different. Therefore, there is no need for innovations or originality on the part of the author, since originality arises from the reading of literature: however, the ever-original Borges offers, in his literary project, new readings of old narratives, tropes and devices. Borges does not miss the opportunity to criticize the French model in his ironic statement about a *homme de lettres* that, essentially, does not exist. With that, Borges realizes a dual thrust, i.e., criticism of the psychological novel of that time, and also of current literary criticism based on the life of an author.

Rodríguez Monegal (*A Literary Biography* 333) highlights the intertextual relations of this short narrative with English writers such as Sir Thomas More and Jonathan Swift, and also to theories of the English philosopher Berkeley.<sup>53</sup> “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” can thus be read as Borges’ appropriation of literary devices used by authors such as Swift: by telling a story of distant lands, and imaginary places, the writer critiques his own society with respect to the expectations of his contemporary readers, while signaling an innovative arena for Argentinean narratives. In this short story, Borges is establishing architextual relations with the English satirical and ironic tradition, but most significantly, he presents hypertextualities that indirectly incorporate English ironists: he is not directly reproducing the style and tropes of writers such as More and Swift. Rather, much as in the case of Menard, Borges is establishing himself as the writer of those ironic devices through an act of erroneous attribution, i.e., he gives these devices new directions and meanings by lending his name and socio-historical position. Borges’ main cultural and literary adaptation of the

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<sup>53</sup> In *A Literary Biography*, Rodríguez Monegal (333) also points out in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” the circumstantial and plot relations with C.S. Lewis’ novel *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), a book which Borges’ first read when recovering from his accident in 1938, inscribing Borges’ story in a “utopian science-fiction” tradition: “In both there is a great concern with imaginary languages [...] But chiefly what brings the two works together is their allegorical point of view [...] Both Lewis and Borges are using one of the oldest methods of describing reality: through the distorted mirror of utopia.” Rodríguez Monegal proceeds to compare Borges’ and Lewis’ narratives, also in terms of political allusion in their “reference to totalitarian regimes” (334), but concludes that the contrasts between them are more evident: “instead of writing about the adventure of the discovery of utopia, he [Borges] concentrates on the adventure of the discovery of texts about utopia” (334).

English narrative model is to convey a world constructed out of texts, rather than out of utopian or fantastic fictional reality. This textual world begins to invade the narrator's reality, and assimilate with it, leading to the previously referenced conclusion that Tlön has become the narrator's real world.

This short narrative presents a comment on reality as well as on fiction itself: it points out the satirical nature of the English narrative traditions of writers such as Swift. Further, it comments on the traits of the narrative itself in the interplay between the encyclopedic and the narrator's worlds. Finally, it comments on the world outside the text, i.e., the early-twentieth-century Argentinean socio-cultural context. At the end of the short story, the narrator concludes: "El contacto y el hábito de Tlön han desintegrado este mundo" [The contact and the habit of Tlön have disintegrated the world] (Borges, *Obras completas* 841/Trans. Irby, *Labyrinths*). In my view, Borges is commenting on the relation between national cultures. I interpret this short story as a comment on the lack of autonomy of Argentinean culture and society of Borges' time, in the sense that the uncritical acceptance of European models has distorted the development of an authentic Argentinean culture. Such an interpretation reflects the artificiality of the cultural sphere of early twentieth-century Argentina and its lack of grounding in its surroundings; indeed, it is closer to Europe, or European literary trends of the time, than to Argentinean reality and culture. This fictional *mise en abyme* created by Borges in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", related to the story itself, but also to its models and references, introduced him as "a new writer" (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 338), the transnational short story writer he soon would become.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Borges' contemporary readers and critics did not immediately accept these initial short stories. Nineteenth-century European realism and social realism of the early twentieth century were more popular throughout Latin America than the

authors and genres Borges had been advancing particularly after the 1940s.<sup>54</sup> Borges was increasingly interested in fictional discourse as such: he was interested in authors who emphasized plot, structure, and genres in which the logic was determined by fiction, such as fantastic and detective genres. In Rodríguez Monegal's view, Borges was not attracted by the rules of realism or the "chaotic 'real' world of science" (354). In his essay "La postulación de la realidad", Borges states that the most difficult, and probably the best, method of postulating reality is "la invención circunstancial" [circumstantial invention] (Borges, *Obras completas* 257). As an example of this method he mentions H.G. Wells' and Daniel Defoe's narratives, and their unconventional use of intricate details to construct them. Borges was not only discussing literary devices, but minor and previously disregarded English writers, suggesting a place for them as models for his narratives. In addition, the prologue to Bioy Casares' novel *La Invención de Morel* (1940) is considered by critics a turning point not only in Borges' career, but also a turning point for Latin American narratives: Borges' views on cultural traditions, fiction and realism, and also on literary models, attracted the attention of such important twentieth-century Latin American writers, as Octavio Paz, Juan José Arreola, and Julio Cortázar (Rodríguez Monegal, *A Literary Biography* 354-5). Notably in this prologue, Borges emphasizes the importance of rigid plots, mentioning Chesterton and Kafka as models. Further, he develops his reactionary position against realism, social realism and other literary trends of his time, most of them French trends and models that came to Argentina primarily through Spanish critics and writers. In this prologue, Borges also supports minor and sometimes disdained literary genres such as adventure and detective stories, and also science fiction (354). These intertextualities with less regarded models and genres informed Borges' mature fiction, and divided Spanish-speaking critics and writers of his time.

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<sup>54</sup> Borges made his literary models recognized mainly through his mature fiction (in the 1940s), but also earlier through his translations (Kafka), essays ("La postulación de la realidad", "El arte narrativa y la magia", etc.) and prologues (the introduction to Bioy Casares' novel *La invención de Morel*).

Regardless of their controversial nature, Borges' narratives and theories on fiction created a new mode of reading, a new way of creatively and intertextually relating to European models and a new implied reader that can be compared to that of Machado. We have seen that both created new narratives that propose adaptations of unconventional English ironists, in reaction to more conventional French romantic or realist models in late-nineteenth-century Brazil and early-twentieth-century Argentina. Each in his own time and place, in his particular way, anticipated innovative forms of intertextual and cultural relations with other European literary traditions that would be essential to later writers from the region that would become known as Latin America. Thus these two writers made a major contribution to the institutionalized recognition of Latin America as a field of writing and thought.

In spite of the similarity in the authors' attitudes toward literary models and traditions, intertextualities in Borges' narratives can be considered more complex and multi-layered than those presented in Machado's mature narratives. Borges' relations with European models in general, and with specific English models, and to his own socio-historical context, are not as evident or didactic as that of Machado in his mature novels or short stories. Machado presented his literary models through his narratives, with the prime example of his mention of the writer Sterne in the first pages of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Other examples include some devices or assessments that he discussed, albeit ironically, with his readers, as is the case of "Teoria do medalhão" with respect to irony, or even Brás Cubas with respect to his overt social critique. By contrast, Borges more than presenting models or devices, created literary artefacts that stimulate considerations of the reader's role, as in "Pierre Menard, autor de *Quijote*". Such considerations can lead to discussions that go beyond socio-historical considerations, encompassing issues that are usually related to literary theory and philosophic discussions. However, more importantly for

my purpose, Machado's and Borges' role as mediators between their societies, their literatures, and European cultures, including their transition from French models to particular English ironic models, can be directly compared. As with Machado, Borges' irony results from intertextualities and cultural relations established with his own society, his own literary traditions and European literary traditions, particularly English ironists.

A comparative analysis of Machado's and Borges' transition from French to specific English ironic models, and their general attitude towards these literary traditions, will help to establish the centrality of irony and their distinctive literary models within their trajectories, and to the later critical reception and creative appropriations of their narratives locally and globally.

### **1.5 Cross-cultural Irony**

To understand what I term cross-cultural irony, it is important to stress the multiplicity of intertextual relations within Machado's and Borges narratives, and at the same time, the relation of these narratives with their own unique socio-historical and geographical contexts. As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, Machado's and Borges' works produce meaning through two primary mechanisms: first, in their relations with their multiple literary models, for my purpose, with specific English ironists; second, in their cultural adaptations of these models to their contemporary societies and readers.

These multiple textual and cultural adaptations established in Machado's and Borges' mature narratives are not exclusively related to European models. Machado's and Borges' narratives departed from multiple sets of literary references: on the one hand, Portuguese, Spanish, French or even English (European) cultural contexts did not have precedence over Brazilian or Argentinean contexts; however, neither of these Brazilian and Argentinean national cultures were unified in Machado's and Borges' lifetimes. As I demonstrated, these multiple textual and cultural relations can be perceived in the evolution of Machado's and

Borges' works, specifically in the developments of hypertextualities with English ironists within their works. The presence of English ironic intertextualities in Machado's and Borges' narratives, nonetheless, did not exclude their cultural relations to other European narrative traditions or with local discussions about a national literature. On the contrary, it drew attention to these multiple literary models by suggesting new critical and creative ways to relate with European writers and narratives that were uncommon in late nineteenth-century Brazil and in early twentieth-century Argentina. The use of these unfamiliar types of irony served to counterbalance the dominant model of French cultural and literary traditions.

As for the cultural and social tensions within Machado's and Borges' narratives, they represented the transitional times in the lives of these writers. Machado lived through Brazilian independence (1822) and its transition from monarchy to a republic (1889). In more specific terms, Brazil was freed from Portuguese cultural and economic dominance, only to fall under other neo-colonial dependencies. While economically Brazil was in debt to England, culturally it followed the French model. Borges lived in a wealthy society that had experienced impressive economic growth at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, but which locked recent immigrants out of the political and social life of the country. Primarily because of its role in international commerce, Argentina was under England's diplomatic and economic control before the First World War (Galasso 23). Nonetheless, culturally, Argentina was more indebted to French models, at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century (23), than to Spanish or English models.

In effect, there is an important contextual difference between Machado's and Borges' cultures. In Machado's culture, English literary models in general were not as well recognized as in Borges'. European books (particularly non-Portuguese) and translation into Portuguese were not as easy to obtain in nineteenth-century Brazil, as their counterparts were in twentieth-century Argentina. This partly explains the differences in the literary models

chosen by each writer: Machado looked to canonical writers (Shakespeare, Sterne, Dickens), while Borges went beyond the canon, in general avoiding established writers in favor of less prominent and even “minor” ones (De Quincey, Stevenson, Chesterton). Machado’s English models would have been unconventional in relation to nineteenth-century Brazil, even if they were relevant in other cultural contexts, such as in the English-speaking world. For Borges, in a society in which English models were not as unusual as in Brazil, even though the cultural models of choice were usually French, it was necessary in order to achieve this cultural dislocation, to look further within English literary traditions and to select iconoclastic, “minor” and at times forgotten writers.

Nonetheless, both Machado and Borges can be considered metafictional ironists: their fictional works usually draw attention to their construction as such, from architextual issues of perspective to metatextual issues of reading and interpreting. In their metafictional ironies, Machado and Borges question not only external reality, but the fundamental fictional traits of the text itself. In spite of Machado’s and Borges’ particular uses of irony, or the changing definitions of it from a rhetorical trope to a vital feature of literature, their fictional works correspond to modern notions of metafictional irony as a distinctive literary value (Booth ix). Moreover, with respect to their affinity to English ironists and to irony as a literary device, Machado’s and Borges’ mature works manifest sophisticated rhetorical and narrative ironies. These range from quoting recognized ironic writers in order to highlight their own ironic intentions (Booth 54) to parodying English ironic writers, in the modern sense of parody as an ironic inversion of the models, i.e., a copy that adds to the resulting text other layers of meaning. We have seen in this chapter that both Machado’s and Borges’ narratives can be compared to those of English writers: “Teoria do medalhão” compared to Lewis’ *The Screwtapes Letters*, and “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbius Tertius” compared to Swift’s or More’s narratives. However, the ironic intention of Machado’s and Borges’ narratives was to address

socio-historical and cultural issues related to Brazil and Argentina, not those related to English society and prejudices, as the English hypotexts did.

Machado's and Borges' adaptations of these English ironists can thus be linked to the notion of "historical return" (Frye 40) in the relation between writer and readers. In this case, the relation between Machado and Borges and their literary models can be understood as an ironic mode of literary history. First, Machado and Borges were readers of their models, including the English ironists. As readers, they individually interpreted or decoded ironic intent. Subsequently, as writers they personalized the ironic intention in consonance not only with their reading, but also with their surrounding socio-cultural context. Within those contexts, their cross-cultural irony would have produced creative and critical tension with traditional national narratives that followed colonial and neo-colonial models.

Machado's and Borges' intertextualities with specific English ironists result in what I term cross-cultural irony: an irony that clearly carries an English intertext, but that is adapted to the writers' own Brazilian and Argentinean contexts and contemporary readers by referring to local types, issues, prejudices and expectations. Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural irony signals the ironic inversion of the narrative and devices of these literary models. What I identify as cross-cultural irony is the type of irony in Machado and Borges that plays an essential role in the reception of their narratives in multiple contexts: it allows for ambiguity, that is, it opens the text to different critical approaches, from a completely intertextual, to a socio-historical approach, allowing thus for multiple readings at multiple levels. Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies, therefore, are seen as an essential part of the evolution of their personal narrative projects, as well as of both Brazilian and Argentinean modern narrative traditions.

In the next chapters, I will first analyze the local contemporary critical reception of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives, particularly in relation to their cross-cultural



ironies. The focus will then shift from local to the English-speaking reception of Machado's and Borges narratives, to identify the place of each author within these cultural and literary contexts. A closer examination of the contrast between Machado's and Borges' cultural adaptations of the ironic devices used by their English models and the critical interpretations of their innovative narratives in multiple cultural contexts will help us compare the relevance of these literary models for their narrative developments, and consequently to the literary and critical contexts of Latin America and other Euro-American countries.

## 2. Critical Readings: Early Reception in Brazil and Argentina

This chapter addresses the early local critical reception of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis's and Jorge Luis Borges' mature narratives, particularly in relation to their intertextualities with English ironists. The focus will be on the tension in Machado's and Borges' mature narratives between their ideal or implied readers and their real contemporary readers and critics—in late nineteenth-century Brazil and early- to mid-twentieth-century Argentina. The patterns of communication inscribed in Machado's and Borges' fictional works, and in the intertextualities within them, will be contrasted with the actual contemporary and local critical reception of their mature and more ironic narratives. The aim here is to analyze the impact of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies on local critics, which will enable us to understand how these ironies were read as elitist and alienated from social reality by the same critics who saw no elitism or alienation in texts by authors who chose French intertextualities.

One measure of Machado's and Borges' relations with their socio-cultural contexts is the initial negative critical reception of their mature narratives. The critical and creative relations both authors established in various ways with their immediate contexts can also be measured by the evolution of their fictional works as well as by the concomitant evolution of English ironic intertextualities within them. The early local critical reception of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives reflects expectations with respect to the whole body of work of these writers up to the point in which they shifted to a more ironic mode. The initial critical reception reflects expectations associated with literary models, since they are constructed under more conventional late nineteenth-century Brazilian and early twentieth-century Argentinean colonial and neo-colonial cultures, as well as under local literary and critical traditions. Subsequent developments in Machado's and Borges' fictional works can thus be

seen as a critical response to those local, hemispherical and European cultures and literatures, as well as to the reception by their early critics. Once these relations with early local critics are established and analyzed, it will be possible to compare them with the later international critical reception, particularly with English-speaking critics. It will thus be possible to reassess the multiple functions of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies within these critical frameworks, as well as the importance of their narratives both within the English-speaking world and the region that would come to be defined as Latin America.

## 2.1 Challenging Contemporary Critics

Machado's and Borges' appropriations of their English models proved to be a challenge for contemporary readers and critics. The initial critical reception of Machado's and Borges' mature work was divided.

Machado was first and foremost considered—by his local critics—to be a mere imitator of English ironists, particularly of Sterne (Romero 131). In fact, Machado was expected to continue his early fictional works (for instance, *Ressureição*) with their more direct relations with French romantic models. Alternatively, he was expected to uncritically embrace contemporary European literary aesthetics, such as Eça de Queirós' French-influenced Portuguese realism, or even directly refer to French realism and French writers of the time, as I will demonstrate in this chapter.

Borges was not considered a mere imitator of any specific English ironists, and enjoyed a much more supportive cultural context than that of Machado in his transition from poet to short narrative writer, and from French to English ironic models (in his case, a return to his formative readings). Nevertheless, in opting for non-realist narratives, fantastic plots and the use of metafictional ironies, Borges was initially isolated from his contemporaries. Argentinean critics such as Ernesto Sábato, in 1945, considered Borges an idiosyncratic,

distant and even cold writer, more concerned with European literary traditions, devices and other intellectual issues, than with his own contemporary society: “esos artistas [de las clases altas] surgieron desgarrados por fuerzas contrarias [...]: por un lado veían a Europa como paradigma de cultura [...]; por otro, sentían el llamado de su tierra [...]. Borges también ha estado sometido a esa doble tensión. Pero, más literario que vital, más refinado que poderoso, ha producido una obra frecuentemente bizantina, aunque hermosa” [these artists (from the upper classes) were torn apart by contradictory forces (...): on one hand, they saw Europe as a paradigm of culture (...), on the other, they felt the call of their own land (...). Borges was also under the same tension. However, being more literary than vital, more refined than powerful, Borges has produced a frequently Byzantine oeuvre, albeit beautiful] (Sábato quoted in Bastos 159).

Much like Machado, Borges would initially be considered by critics as a writer disconnected from reality, particularly from his own Argentinean and Latin American socio-historical contexts. For instance, in 1945, Sábato (quoted in Bastos 153) criticized Borges’ continuous and hyperbolic references to narratives and devices drawn from a limited number of literary models, one example being De Quincey; for Sábato, Borges’ work presents “fósiles diversos: manuscritos de heresiarcas, naipes de truco, Quevedo y Stevenson, letras de tango [...], Lewis Carroll [...], Franz Kafka [...], Stuart Mill, de Quincey [...]” [diverse fossils: heresiarch’s manuscripts, trick cards, Quevedo and Stevenson, tango lyrics (...), Lewis Carroll (...), Franz Kafka (...), Stuart Mill, de Quincey (...)]. Harsher Argentinean critics and literary rivals, for instance, Alfredo Arfini in 1968, argued for the lack of originality in Borges’ fictional works, particularly after his accomplishments as a short-narrative writer had been acknowledged; perhaps this was an expression of resentment that such an unconventional writer and his narratives should receive wide international recognition. The most common criticism was that everything Borges proposed had already

been accomplished by his English ironic models. Arfini, for example, wrote and published a pamphlet with the blunt title *Borges: Pobre ciego balbuciente* [Borges: Poor Mumbling Blind Man]: “Afirmo que no es verdad que *Borges* sea ‘un prestigioso e ilustre hombre de letras’ [...] El es, eso sí, un inepto haragán que ha escrito comentarios ficticios sobre libros imaginarios; un cerebro tenebroso y no lúcido: un compilador conformista, antojadizo y falible, con inclinación a tartamudear [...] un lector desapasionado de *Mauthner*, *Shaw*, *Bloy*, *Kafka*, *Coleridge* y *Carlyle* [...] un snob literario, hipersensible, introvertido e infantil; un tenebroso argentino, que juega a ser, entre otras cosas, inglés.” [I claim that it is not true that *Borges* is ‘a prestigious man of letters’ (...) He is really an inept and lazy author of fictitious commentaries of imaginary books; he has a gloomy rather than lucid mind: a conformist compiler, capricious and fallible, inclined to stutter (...) he is a dispassionate reader of *Mauthner*, *Shaw*, *Bloy*, *Kafka*, *Coleridge* and *Carlyle* (...) a literary snob, hypersensitive, introverted and childish; a gloomy Argentinean who imagines himself to be, among other things, an Englishman] (Arfini 7-8).

Most contemporary Argentinean critics (including Sábato, along with other writers and critics younger than Borges, such as Adolfo Prieto and César Fernández Moreno) who initially commented negatively vis-à-vis Borges’ mature narratives, nonetheless, considered Borges a great yet “arbitrary” Argentinean poet, and not a prose writer (Sábato quoted in Stabb, *Jorge Luis Borges* 139).

Machado’s and Borges’ adaptations of their English literary models’ narratives and devices, especially in the creation of their idiosyncratic and innovative modes of cross-cultural irony, presented critics with an interpretive and transformative challenge: the prevalent English ironic hypertextualities within their mature works established new possibilities for reading and interpreting. Their cross-cultural ironies even permitted divergent critical interpretations that were informed both by: 1) lack of acceptance of these

specific European writers as models by critics; and 2) the uncritical parameters established and maintained by earlier and contemporary Brazilian and Argentinean writers with their more conventional relations to colonial and neo-colonial European literary models.

The main goal of this chapter's analysis is to understand how the outcomes of these complex networks of cultural and narrative intertextualities within and around Machado's and Borges' mature works were re-introduced to Latin America, much later, as models for new creative and critical reassessments and adaptations of local, hemispherical and European literary and narrative traditions. To advance this understanding, we must analyze how multiple critical assessments of their innovative approach using cross-cultural ironies affected the critical reception both locally and in the English-speaking world.

## 2.2 Machado as an Imitator of English Ironists

The ironic devices that Machado used in his mature narratives to guide and, at the same time, to create their implied readers challenged his contemporary readers and critics and resulted in a rather negative critical reception. In 2008 Brazilian critic Guimarães concluded: “foi alto o preço que Machado pagou pelas referências inglesas” [Machado paid a high price for his English references] (103). The general negative attitude towards Machado's innovative narratives was expressed by the contemporary critic, and Machado's literary rival, Romero in his 1897 critique: Machado was “um simples macaqueador de Sterne” [a mere imitator of Sterne] (quoted in Gomes 11). Romero, inappropriately in my view, uses Machado's own intertextualities with Sterne in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* against the novel. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, Machado used the unreliable narrator of authors such as Sterne to convey an overt criticism of his own society; the example I used was the narrator of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Early in the novel, Machado reminded readers of Sterne's ironic devices, such as the interplay with

readers' expectations. However, Machado made his narrator ironically speak for the Brazilian elite of his time, which made the narrative relevant to his own socio-historical context. Machado recognized that Sterne had written in a different societal context altogether; Romero apparently did not. For Romero, Sterne was an original and interesting author, whereas Machado seemed odd and derivative.

With an equal lack of enthusiasm, Romero critically reviewed Machado's cross-cultural ironies, particularly in *Papéis avulsos*, and the evident and complex set of English ironic hypotexts in his other initial mature works. In view of that reception, one may confidently state that, by the 1880s, the fundamental critical and ironic intertextualities and cultural adaptations of English ironists proposed by Machado were not yet fully accepted by contemporary critics.

Certainly, his contemporary critic Romero was not positively impressed; as earlier indicated, he considered Machado's narrative novelties superficial and colorless and his literary models too unconventional and misplaced to relate to Brazilian cultural contexts. In his critique of *Papéis avulsos*, Romero mentions the disconnection between Machado's short narratives and the latest European literary trends, arguing that, by not being in touch with the French naturalist aesthetics of his time, Machado can only be a belated romantic and classicist writer: "Quando ele [Machado] apareceu, já na Europa o romantismo entrava plenamente em dissolução e no Brasil o olhar exercitado podia bem distinguir os germens de decadência que lhes rompiam o seio [...] O Sr. Machado tinha, portanto, de ocupar um lugar secundário na cauda do romantismo, na frase de Zola, a não ser ele uma inteligência superior. [...] Natureza eclética e tímida, sem o auxílio de uma preparação conveniente, entrou a ser um parasita, espécie de comensal zoológico, vivendo à custa de uma combinação de classicismo e do romantismo" [When he (Machado) appeared, Romanticism was completely finished in Europe, and in Brazil the trained eye could notice the germs of decay that tear at its breast

(...) Mr. Machado had, thus, occupied a secondary position at Romanticism's tail, to use Zola's phrase, since Machado did not possess a superior intelligence. Of an eclectic and shy nature, without the help of a proper education, Machado became a parasite, a sort of zoological co-feeder (commensal) who lives at the expense of a combination of Classicism and Romanticism] (quoted in U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 146).

Urbano Duarte in 1881, another of Machado's contemporary critics, writing upon the publication of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, highlights its perceived flaws, particularly (for the critic) its superficial ideas and tedious style, but he also points out its "humorismo de bom gosto" [well-tempered humor] (133-4). Nevertheless, Duarte does not recognize the models for this so-called good taste in humor. Similarly, he does not appreciate, in what is for him the apparently tedious narrative style of Machado, the cross-cultural ironies proposed by Machado's intertextualities with English ironic writers who critically informed the writer's general humoristic narratives and understated style and ironies: "Em suma, nossa impressão final é a seguinte: a obra do Sr. Machado de Assis é deficiente, senão falsa, no fundo, porque não enfrenta o verdadeiro problema que se propôs a resolver e só filosofou sobre caracteres de uma vulgaridade perfeita; é deficiente na forma, porque não há nitidez, não há desenho, mas bosquejos, não há colorido, mas pinceladas ao acaso." [In short, our final impression is as follows: Mr. Machado de Assis' work is deficient, if not fake, shallow because it does not face the real problem it proposes to solve, and only philosophizes about perfectly common characters; the work is deficient in its form, because there is no focus, no design, but instead sketches, there are no colors, but loose strokes].

There was another more positive aspect to the initial critical reception of Machado's mature narratives. The positive reception, nonetheless, was equally based on partial, incomplete readings of Machado's irony. To understand this partial acceptance of Machado's mature narratives, it is important to stress Machado's major role within the intellectual sphere



of the society of his time and his place among literary societies as a writer and critic. Since the beginning of his career, Machado had been admired and celebrated by his colleagues and recognized as a novelist and a poet, as well as a critic of literature and theatre. Machado was first celebrated as a writer after the publication of his initial collection of poems (*Crisálidas* 1869), but especially after the 1870s, with the publication in newspaper and in book form of his early novels (Piza 147). His first novel *Ressureição* [Resurrection] was published in book form in 1872. Before the release in book form of his first mature narratives in 1881, Machado was being praised by friends and admirers, such as writer Capistrano de Abreu (quoted in U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 129-33). These positive reviews, however, were usually vague when analyzing Machado's mature narratives, particularly with respect to his literary models. Almost every critic at the time, particularly right after the publication of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and *Papéis avulsos*, would make general statements about Machado's humor. Typically, there were comments about his pessimistic tone, along with the difficulty of categorizing his mature narratives within conventional literary genres.

Capistrano de Abreu commented on *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881) in the same year that it was published; his comments range from a discussion of the genre to which it might belong to the admission of his lack of knowledge to adequately judge the book (quoted in U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 129-33). In spite of that, Abreu's article is biased in favor of Machado's literary innovations; for example, he states that it would be better for a hypothetical reader to not fully understand Machado's narrative. For Abreu, the fact that it is possible for a given reader to misunderstand Machado's mature narratives would prove that, on the one hand, this reader is, in Abreu's words, "sane", and a little bit of a "fool" (133); and, on the other hand, it suggests something new in terms of narrative and literary genres, writers, and devices: "Este trabalho [estudar a obra], muito interessante aliás, não o tentaremos aqui, porque muita coisa existe que não entendemos. Diremos simplesmente

ao leitor: *tolle et lege*. Talvez desejasse mais animação e variedade no estilo; que certas antíteses fossem menos empregadas, que os saltos fossem menores; que os contrastes não fossem tão crus. Não importa! *Tolle et lege*. Se entenderes, hás de passar algumas horas únicas – misto de fel, de loucura, de ríctus. Se não entenderes, tanto melhor. É a prova de que és um espírito puro, consciencioso, firme, ingênuo, isto é, um pouco tolo” [This work (studying the oeuvre), although very interesting indeed, will not be attempted here, because there is much that we do not understand. Let us say to the reader simply: *tolle et lege*. Perhaps I might wish for more excitement and variety in terms of style; or that certain antitheses were less used, that the cuts were less evident; that the contrasts were not so raw. It does not matter! *Tolle et lege*. If you understand it, you will have spent a few unique hours with it—a mixture of gall, of madness, of rictus. If you do not understand, all the better. That proves that you are a pure spirit, conscientious, firm, naïve, that is, a bit of a fool] (133). Although he does not name it, it appears that Abreu noticed Machado’s cross-cultural irony, when he states the possibility—and the advantages—of not fully understanding Machado’s narratives.

Xavier Carvalho, in his 1882 article about *Papéis avulsos*, calls it a masterpiece, and suggests that Machado and his collection of short narratives do not fit into any existing literary trend. With this assessment, Carvalho stresses Machado’s originality: he praises Machado’s innovative and unusual narratives and literary devices, by comparing him to French writer Ernest Daudet (quoted in U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 139-140).

As with most of the criticism of that era, these positive responses to Machado’s mature works are usually vague in a critical sense, and sometimes even hasty or shallow; in Abreu’s case, it was based on nothing more than the critics’ acknowledged ignorance; in Carvalho’s article, he points to writers and traditions that were within the comfortable repertoire of critics’ knowledge base. This reception was usually linked to the more traditional frames of reference of contemporary critics (French literatures), and they were

silent or evasive with respect to Machado's English ironic models. Thus, the cross-cultural ironies present in Machado's mature fictional work did not directly inform the majority of these early local critical responses.

Nevertheless, there was one exception: Arthur Barreiros was a contemporary of Machado who briefly mentioned, for the first time in a positive light, the possible connections between Machado's mature narratives and English ironists. In 1880 (the same year *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* was released in newspaper serialization), Barreiros praised Machado's novel and loosely suggested that it was "inspirado diretamente nos humoristas ingleses" [directly inspired by English humorists] (quoted in Guimarães 101). In other words, Barreiros was the first to note in a positive light the unique place of Machado's mature narratives within Brazilian critical and literary traditions, and even the particular relations of Machado's mature work to unconventional European narratives. In his lifetime, Barreiros was not regarded as an important critic, rather he was a close friend of Machado. In 2008, Brazilian critic Hélio Seixas Guimarães ("A emergência do paradigma inglês" 95-108) mentioned Barreiro's brief comment in an article about Machado and his English models. In fact, the non-French parameters were more commonly not understood or accepted by either Machado's positive or negative contemporary critics: it was only fifty years later, in the 1930s, that Eugênio Gomes made the first serious attempt to study Machado's "English influences" (103).

However, for contemporary critics, such as Silvio Romero, particularly when considering English ironists, Machado was nothing more than an imitator and even an outsider and alien writer within Brazilian cultural and literary contexts (101). According to Guimarães (102), only after the 1891 release in book form of *Quincas Borba*,<sup>55</sup> were the relations between Machado and eighteenth-century English ironists considered in a more

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<sup>55</sup> It is Machado's third mature novel and part of the trilogy, along with *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and *Dom Casmurro*, which led to Machado being recognized as a major author within Brazilian literature and criticism.

balanced and impartial critical approach, as well as what was then called Machado's "humor" in a broad sense. José Veríssimo, a major Brazilian critic of the time, affirmed in 1892 that Machado was definitely a "humorist": not a mere imitator of any given writer. Veríssimo viewed Machado as a continuation of writers who promoted the development of certain "humoristic"—or, in the terms proposed by this thesis, ironic—English tradition (Veríssimo quoted in Guimarães 102).

After the 1890s, the critical debate shifted from assessments of Machado as a simple imitator of English writers and favorable yet uncritical readings of his mature works, to the discussion of the place of Machado's humor within his socio-historical and geographical contexts. Slowly, Machado's cross-cultural ironies started to be associated with Brazilian culture and society. The lack of acceptance of Machado's mature prose, from this point on, was usually related to his incorporation of the work of English ironists as pointed out by Machado himself (102). Machado's mature narratives and cross-cultural ironies, along with his implied readers, would be associated by contemporary critics with unconventional European models. More importantly, these intertextualities with English ironists, although later recognized and, in a sense, accepted, would raise the question of Machado's intertextualities with his immediate social, cultural and, more specifically, literary contexts: Machado, on the one hand, was usually considered a great writer in terms of style, but, on the other hand, he would be considered an elitist and even evasive writer, with no connections with his socio-historical context.

The question of Machado's place in or lack of connection with Brazilian society informed a great part of the Brazilian criticism of his work during the end of the nineteenth and the first half of twentieth-century.<sup>56</sup> These Brazilian critical parameters only began to change much later, particularly with Brazilian critics such as Astrogildo Pereira and Antonio

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<sup>56</sup> Later critics (for instance, Brazilian modernist writer Mário de Andrade in the 1930s) still argued that Machado's literary relations with English ironists were a form of escapism and elitism (Guimarães 102-3).

Candido, who in the 1950s and 1960s began to re-assess Machado's satiric tone and ironic critiques of his social context. More importantly, these parameters would completely change after North-American critic Helen Caldwell's interpretations of *Dom Casmurro*: when published in the early 1960s, she clearly associated Machado's oblique critiques of his society (particularly with respect to the role of women among nineteenth-century Brazilian elites) to the adaptation of the narratives and devices used by English ironists, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

From the nineteenth- to later twentieth-century critical reception of Machado's mature narrative in Brazil, the reception of his cross-cultural ironies changed significantly. The newness of Machado's mature narratives, particularly the hypotexts of English ironists within them, made possible different and even contradictory readings of his narratives. As we have seen, Machado's mature narratives, in their multiple intertextualities with English ironists, created a critical problem vis-à-vis the lack of connection between his fictional works and their implied readers; that problem would only begin to be addressed long after Machado's death. As earlier noted, this re-assessment was delayed until the second half of the twentieth century, when Caldwell and other English-speaking critics discovered him. This eccentric place created by Machado's mature narratives within nineteenth-century Brazilian critical and literary traditions can, nonetheless, be compared to Borges' twentieth-century narrative innovations and the respective Argentinean initial critical reception of them.

As with Machado's mature narratives, Borges' innovations were not fully appreciated by his contemporary critics and readers. A closer look at Borges' implied readers and the early critical reception of his mature narratives will illustrate twentieth-century Argentinean literary expectations and social prejudices, as well as the place of Borges' cross-cultural ironies within their original contexts.

### 2.3 Borges and the European Avant-Garde

From the beginning of his literary career, Argentinean critics and readers were divided in their reactions to Borges' work. Particularly during the 1930s, Borges' poetry and prose received a contradictory critical reception: his poetry was admired and exalted; his prose, by contrast, especially his essays collected in *Inquisiciones* (1925) and *Discusión* (1932), were considered at best "childish" and "mediocre", to use Ramón Doll's words in 1933 (quoted in Bastos 120). The critiques of Borges' initial works collected in the journal *Megáfono*, issue 11 of 1933, are good examples of this critical division: critics such as Doll and Enrique Anderson Imbert confined their positive judgments of Borges' innovation and distinction as a writer to his poetic productions, while condemning his essayistic prose as too artificial, cold and even contradictory (122).

Early local critics usually admired Borges' poetry and erudition, not to mention what they viewed as his literary potential. Therefore, Borges' transition from poetry and essays to short narratives, particularly in his first collection of short stories *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941), surprised many Argentinean readers and critics. Transtextualities with unconventional narratives, devices and literary genres in his mature narratives provided readers and critics with unconventional patterns of communication that resulted in an initial lack of acceptance of his innovative fictional works. The critics' praise of his poetry did not deter Borges from his determined pursuit of his own innovative experiments with prose. Thus, his was an ironical response to his early critics' expectations vis-à-vis literary models and genres; iconoclastically, Borges pursued the development of his own narratives. In pursuing this course, Borges opened pathways to new interpretive and critical possibilities—as well as new opportunities for developing his own and others' narratives within Argentina.

During the 1940s, Borges' more ironic and mature narratives further divided critics and readers in Argentina. For some critics and readers, Borges' use in *El jardín de senderos*

*que se bifurcan* of a complex set of literary models and devices, associated with unconventional English ironists simply confirmed their judgments vis-à-vis the contradictions and superficialities perceived in his early prose production. Others judged the book as not as straightforward in presenting its guidelines as, for instance, were Machado's first mature narratives; therefore, readers could not "take an active part in the composition" of its narratives (Iser ix). Unlike Machado in his mature narratives, Borges' did not directly address his readers through his adaptations of European narratives and devices, regardless of how they related to Argentinean readers' and critics' literary expectations; this deficiency was magnified for those with negative expectations. Indeed, both earlier and later Argentinean critics harshly criticized Borges' prose.

In the development of these mature narratives, Borges defined the crucial role of the reader, viewing the author and reader as co-equal partners in the interpretation of meaning. Borges' implied readers would be essential characters inside his fictions, and the reading process itself would be an essential theme of his narratives. The relations between these implied readers and Borges' narratives would be more complex and ironic than, for instance, the direct dialogue of Machado with his own implied readers in late nineteenth-century Brazil. Borges' mature narratives can thus be related to Iser's perspective in relation to the development of the reading process (xiv): it "has become more complex in the twentieth-century novel, for here the [reader's] discovery concerns the functioning of our own faculties of perception".

One good example of Borges' complex and ironic dialogues with, and creation of, his implied reader is the short story "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain."<sup>57</sup> Much like "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*", this short story is a fictional essay, or a "theoretical fiction" (Sarlo 1993: 31). Echoing the essay form of De Quincey or Swift, Borges created an intricate

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<sup>57</sup> "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain" was first published in the Argentinean literary magazine *Sur* in 1941 (year 10, n.79). After that, it was collected in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.

interplay between reality and fiction, book and world (Iser 1974), questioning not only literary expectations, but, in this case, the very notion of truth.

In this short story, the narrator comments on the works of the fictional writer Herbert Quain after his death; he begins by questioning the laconic elegy of the literary supplement of the *Times* magazine, and comparing the fictional writers to real ones: “El *Spectador*, en su número pertinente, es sin duda menos lacónico y tal vez más cordial, pero equipara el primer libro de Quain—*The God of the Labyrinth*—a uno de Mrs. Agatha Christie y otros a los de Gertrude Stein” [In its relevant issue, *The Spectador* is undoubtedly less laconic and perhaps more cordial, but compares Quain’s first book—*The God of the Labyrinth*—to one of Mrs. Agatha Christie’s and others to Gertrude Stein’s books] (Borges, *Obras completas* 552). The narrator proceeds to comment on Quain’s famous modesty, and experimental oeuvre, revealing himself at the end as the writer of the collection of short stories in which this theoretical fiction is inscribed: “Del tercero [libro de Quain], *The Rose of Yesterday*, yo cometí la ingenuidad de extraer ‘Las ruinas circulares’, que es una de las narraciones del libro *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*” [From the third (book of Quain), *The Rose of Yesterday*, I was ingenuous enough to extract “Las ruinas circulares”, one of the narratives of the book *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*] (557). In fact, by presenting a review of the works of a fictional writer, and by suggesting that Quain was the literary model for one of his own short stories, Borges’ “Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain” led some readers, even some sophisticated readers, to believe in the existence of such a writer and his books, a curious response in view of Borges’ intention. In the story, the writer, i.e., Borges was proposing a cultural and intertextual relationship with the reader via expectations, in this case vis-à-vis literary genres and the idea of reality itself.

In this short narrative, Borges presented his readers with “gaps in the text” which gave them “the motivation and the opportunity to bring two poles of meaning together” for



themselves (Iser 34). In the terms of this thesis, these “gaps in the text” can be understood as possible results of Borges’ cross-cultural ironies in relation to his implied readers. One “pole of meaning” can thus be considered Borges’ mature narratives with their cultural and intertextual relations with multiple European narratives; the other pole of meaning is his contemporary society and its specific cultural expectations: Borges is challenging here the knowledge of his educated peers, perhaps suggesting himself as first among equals.

Deconstructing the reading process through his fictional works was to become one of the most prominent themes of Borges’ mature narratives, particularly in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*. Similarly, it was a theme, as previously noted, in “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*,” also collected in the 1941 book. In the latter, Borges presented some ironic guidelines for his implied readers, suggesting specific techniques for reading narratives and literatures in the fictional project of the fictional character Pierre Menard. Menard had the intention of composing *Don Quijote*, not only modernizing the actual novel, but re-writing it letter by letter, by means of forgetting it and writing it anew, not as Cervantes, but as Menard, a nineteenth-century French writer. The narrator concludes by explaining Menard’s project in terms of reading: “Menard (acaso sin quererlo) ha enriquecido mediante una técnica nueva el arte detenido y rudimentario de la lectura: la técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones erróneas. Esa técnica de aplicación infinita nos insta a recorrer la *Odisea* como se fuera posterior a la *Eneida* y el libro *Le jardín du Centaure* de Madame Henri Bachelier como se fuera de Madame Henri Bachelier” [Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution. This technique, whose applications are infinite, prompts us to go through the *Odyssey* as if it were posterior to the *Aeneid* and the book *Le jardin du Centaure* of Madame Henri Bachelier as if it were by

Madame Henri Bachelier] (Borges, *Obras completas* 538; trans. Irby in Borges, *Labyrinths* 71).

The patterns of communication suggested in Borges' fictional narrative, "erroneous attribution" and "deliberate anachronism," are related to his intertextualities with literary models and traditions. At the same time, they challenged contemporary notions of originality and of the relations between writers as readers and readers as writers. The narrator of this short story argues that Menard's version of the *Quijote*, even if literal, is superior to that of Cervantes, since it was written and read in other times and with other cultural, social and historical constraints. However, the narrator is unreliable, according to the several clues that lead the reader to distrust what he says. Then from a straightforward comparison of the Cervantes' original citations in their contexts, with those of Menard in his context, one can convincingly counter-argue that the story makes a case for the superiority of the original (or hypotext). This short story suggests two opposite outcomes: that the same narrative could be read in different ways, by different readers in different times and places. Furthermore, by proposing certain techniques of reading, Borges was indirectly commenting on his own cross-cultural ironies and their actualization by his transcultural implied readers. Therefore, in order to navigate successfully through Borges' mature short narratives, these readers must actively play a significant role in the construction of meaning.

Those ironic devices that Borges used to create his implied readers may not have been understood by some of his contemporary readers; such a lack of understanding may have fuelled in part the initial and negative critical reception of Borges' mature short narratives. Two aspects of his mature narratives created problems for Borges' contemporary readers; first, his complex and multi-layered form of intertextualities with European literatures, particularly with English ironists; second, his original cultural contexts and literary expectations. Butler argues that "Borges' stylistic austerity, [and] his English understatement

[...] made it difficult for a first generation of Spanish-speaking readers to follow him (118-9). First and foremost, the initial negative reception of Borges' cross-cultural ironies was represented (at least for Borges' supporters of the time) by the fact that he did not receive the Premio Nacional de Literatura for the triennial of 1939-1941 (Bastos 137). The division between negative and enthusiastic critics of Borges in fact increased and became even more contradictory after the initial critical reception of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.<sup>58</sup> In response to his failure to obtain the Premio Nacional de Literatura, *Sur* magazine published "Desagravio a Borges" [Apologies to Borges] in 1942 (137), the first compilation of articles praising Borges' short narratives. Nonetheless, even among critics favorable to his narrative innovations, one can detect ambiguous readings, and even concealed negative and contradictory assessments—particularly in Anderson Imbert's and Sábato's articles.

The Argentine writer, critic and academic Enrique Anderson Imbert was a contemporary of Borges and from 1947 onwards would teach in North American universities. In this compilation, Anderson Imbert points out the limited universe of Borges' narratives in terms of themes and literary models, i.e., Borges' "visiones de anacoreta bibliófilo" [visions of a bibliophile anchorite], and at the same time he mentions Borges' "maliciosa dialéctica [...] que nadie dejará de tomar en serio" [malicious dialectic... that no one will fail to take seriously] (quoted in Bastos 139). Overall, Anderson Imbert expressed disapproval of Borges' multiple intertextualities with English ironists; he viewed them as a static relation with a monoglossal set of references (Bakhtin 12), disregarding other possible intertexts within Borges' narratives. The critic thought of the writer as distanced from his surroundings and situated him in a very specific Argentinean elite of the time. Indeed, for Anderson Imbert, Borges' universe was, in terms of references, but mainly with respect to society,

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<sup>58</sup> Anderson Imbert's famous adage can represent the common contemporary reception of Borges' mature narratives, negative or positive, and even some of the later critical response to Borges' fictions: "Borges es un escritor para escritores" [Borges is a writer for writers] (quoted in Bastos 138).

“muy pequeño pero impar” [very small but singular] (quoted in Bastos 139). Anderson Imbert also did not fully accept Borges’ cross-cultural ironies, in the sense that he failed to acknowledge Borges’ cultural and intertextual relations with the literary expectations of his readers as strengths of his mature narratives; although readers took those references seriously, the critic viewed them as a mere display of Borges’ erudition, and not a complex adaptation of literary models for an Argentinean readership, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1. Contradictorily in spite of these criticisms, Anderson Imbert praised Borges’ mature narratives exceedingly (in Bastos 139).

The celebrated Argentinean writer and intellectual, Ernesto Sábato wrote favorably on Borges’ collection of short stories, but at the same time pointed out what he considered Borges’ lack of originality. For his comparison of Borges’ narratives to those of English ironists, particularly G.K. Chesterton and Lewis Carroll, he chose adjectives such as “apoplético” [apoplectic] and “matemático” [mathematical] to differentiate and qualify Borges’ own works as too contradictory, shallow and artificial (quoted in Bastos 140). Sábato, a decade younger, did not fully value Borges’ cross-cultural ironies or his view on the issue of literary adaptation and originality, as expressed in “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*”.

Other critics included in “Desagravio a Borges”, such as Argentinean literary critic Luis Emilio Soto, praised Borges’ humoristic tone and social satire: humor as a result of his “pasión por la inteligencia” [love for intelligence], and satire in the sense that, according to Soto, by focusing on short stories, Borges “ha explorado regiones vírgenes” [had explored pristine territory]. The critic contrasted that to Borges’ peers, who—in his view—were only reiterating the novel, especially what was known as “novela de la tierra”, or telluric novel that was to be the voice of the land (Bastos 142). Nonetheless, most of these enthusiastic critics (such as Eduardo González Lanuna, Bioy Casares, Manuel Peyrou)—perhaps as a result of a

lack of understanding or means to evaluate Borges' innovative narratives—limited their articles to personal accusations against opposing critics and members of the national awards' committee. Response to “Desagravio a Borges” further increased the polarization of the initial critical reception of Borges' work. Moreover, “Desagravio a Borges” provoked some critics to react more directly against Borges' mature narratives.

Following the 1945 publication of *Ficciones*,<sup>59</sup> Sábato produced what would later be considered by critics the “classical statement of the anti-Borges position” (Stabb, *Jorge Luis Borges* 139). In it, he cited: Borges' obvious reliance on and use of literary models; his continuous rearticulation of a “limited number of ideas”; Borges' playfulness; his lack of humanity—the “geometrization” of his narratives, in Sábato's words; and finally his negative appraisal of the “psychological novel” (139). Basically, Sábato considered Borges a mere imitator of English ironists and their literary devices (especially of their sense of humor and understatement in a general sense). In addition, he perceived Borges as an intellectual writer, rather than one concerned about the major changes ushered in by Peronism, a major concern of Sábato. Essentially, their view on the role of literature, and perhaps of art in general, or in life were at variance. Sábato viewed literature as a tool for social change, a way of interpreting the historical moment and engaging readers in the process. By contrast, Borges understood time as being circular, i.e., that nothing absolutely new would ever happen. Borges's stories typically convey the idea that everything has already been done or written, as for instance in “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*”. Along with some other writers, Sábato disagreed with the more senior Borges: they believed that their experiences at that moment were different from the past and that writing could intervene in history in order to divert its course.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ficciones*, a collection of Borges' initial mature narratives that include *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* and *Artificios* (1944), was first published in 1944.

The main critiques of Borges' narratives were divided thus along generational lines. Younger writers shared the notion of an engaged writing, renewed by a committed sort of realism, particularly by the political, social and existential realism of mid-twentieth century Argentina (as represented by Sábato and Adolfo Prieto); moreover, those younger writers placed art in a very particular position within society and politics (Stabb, *Borges Revisited* 110). For younger writers such as Sábato and Prieto, Borges' fictional fantasies were merely art for art's sake, rather than the committed and politicized literature they were claiming for themselves and for their literary models (110).

Prieto's book *Borges y la nueva generación* (1954), for instance, is the first study fully dedicated to Borges' fictional works; in it, he expands and develops Sábato's negative and ideologically-biased critical response to Borges' mature narratives. Discussing Borges' fiction, Prieto states: "1) ingenio, erudición y gran estilo, no garantizan una gran literatura; 2) sin conocer previamente el itinerario, nadie debe emprender un viaje" [1) wit, erudition and great style do not guarantee great literature; 2) without previously knowing the itinerary, no one should undertake a trip] (quoted in Fló 84). For Prieto, Borges' fiction was unnecessary, because he was strongly associated with a cultural elite of writers that "gastan la literatura como un lujo" [spend literature as a luxury] (84), and was therefore not a committed writer, such as Prieto. Commenting on Prieto's book on Borges, Juan Carlos Portantiero highlights Prieto' eloquent critique of a number of writers, represented by Borges, that looked at literature as "un juego, un divertido pasatiempo, en el que debía estar proscripta la aventura del hombre" [a game, a fun pastime, in which human adventure should be proscribed] (88).

The initial critical reception of Borges' mature narratives in the region that was becoming identified as Latin America was also influenced by broader contemporary literary expectations associated with society and politics. At that time, critics were influenced by the direct and committed aesthetic of mid-twentieth century social realism when Cold War

politics divided nations and responses to increasing U.S. influence in the region were intensifying, particularly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. For example, the Cuban critic, Roberto Fernández Retamar, censured Borges for two quite different reasons: first, for what he perceived as the overwhelming reliance on European literary models in his writing; and second, for his place within the Argentinean elite (Stabb, *Borges Revisited* 112). This was one of the instances of the negative criticism of Borges himself rather than of his fictional works. It represented the tendency of some writers and critics to assume that an author's work should be consistent with his politics. This line of criticism in Latin American was represented by critics such as Fernández Retamar, Jorge Abelardo Ramos and J.J. Hernández Arregui (Stabb, *Borges Revisited* 111). These critics focused on Borges' unconventional intertextualities with unanticipated European writers in order to criticize the author's personal distance from Argentinean and Latin America literatures and peoples, and they used these as examples of his elitist proximity to "the cosmopolitan taste of Buenos Aires intellectuals" (111). Those same critics came to a simple conclusion about the readers who at that time were delighted by the literary devices introduced and employed by Borges; those "deluded readers" were part of the elite increasingly associated with the reactionary sectors of Buenos Aires. Further, they felt that this limited appreciation of Borges' art, focused solely on style and literary sources, led those deluded readers away from thinking about what was happening in the society around them.

European critics, particularly in academic circles, were beginning to appreciate Borges' mature narratives. Some directly contradicted the local and initially negative critical reception of Borges' work; European critics, such as Roger Caillois,<sup>60</sup> focused attention on Borges' narratives, rather than his poetry, introducing readers to French translations of Borges' mature short stories. In English, Borges narratives appeared sparingly in 1940s and

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<sup>60</sup> Although Callois was born in France, he spent World War II in Buenos Aires. He was very close to Borges. During his stay in Buenos Aires, he wrote anti-fascist material.

1950s North-American journals, this accelerated after the 1962 publication of *Ficciones* in English translation. His narrative works would thus be resurrected in North-America by academics such as translator Thomas Di Giovanni and writer John Updike, and, more importantly, by French intellectuals such as Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault. These European and American critics hailed Borges' narrative innovations and cross-cultural ironies, indicating a positive critical reception of Borges' work, which both internationally and nationally, shifted attention away from his Argentinean culture and society.

Across the range—local, national and international—of critical commentary vis-à-vis Borges' mature short narratives, two generalizations emerge: first, the critical responses to them were complex; second, the innovations presented by Borges' narratives, particularly in their cross-cultural ironies, polarized contemporary and also later critics. Borges' cross-cultural ironies enabled different and even contradictory forms of reading and assessing his mature narratives. According to Stabb (*Borges Revisited* 101), Borges “was the first Latin American writer to be taken seriously by international criticism”, a confirmation of the assumptions of local critics who related Borges to the cosmopolitan elites of Buenos Aires. Of course, before Borges, there were other writers from Latin American countries who received favorable attention from international critics, including, of course, Brazil's Machado, Nicaraguan poet Ruben Darío, and the first Nobel Prize winner from Latin America in 1945, Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral. Nevertheless, in terms of the reception and influence of his works, Borges emerged internationally as the pre-eminent, most relevant Latin American writer. Typically, these European and American critics did not associate him with Argentinean society; rather, Borges' mature narratives were above all culturally and intertextually related to international literary and narrative expectations, particularly in their intertextualities with English ironists, and also in relation to other European cultures and literatures. The Latin American critics Rodríguez Monegal (1978) and Sarlo (1993) attempted



to reconnect Borges' narratives with their original socio-historical context but only after the internationalization of Borges' narratives by Foucault, Updike, and others.

I turn now to a comparison between the local reception of Machado's and Borges' works, as well as of the development of that reception through time, to highlight the centrality of these authors' cross-cultural ironies, as well as the newness of their work within their original cultures.

## 2.4 Comparing the Local Reception of Machado's and Borges' Works

Examined side by side, we can now summarize the parallels and differences between Machado's and Borges' intertextualities with English ironic writers, as they were reassessed and developed; further, we can evaluate the writers' continuous cultural relations with contemporary critics and readers. Machado and Borges were considered unconventional writers within their national literatures, and their mature narratives presented a challenge in critical terms within their original cultures.

Initially, local critics were divided by Machado's and Borges' mature narratives, arguing especially for the place (or lack of place) of their fictional works within Brazilian and Argentinean cultural and literary traditions. Both writers were praised by certain contemporary critics and writers<sup>61</sup> and both found their places among certain literary groups.<sup>62</sup> However, Machado and Borges would only be accepted and considered major Brazilian and Argentinean writers within their own societies much later, largely after their acceptance among international critics: their works were reassessed by Brazilian and Argentinean critics after the positive critical reception of French and North-American critics.

In the case of Machado, his works were only completely reassessed and studied after his death, although during his lifetime, there were a number of well-known studies.

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<sup>61</sup> For instance, Machado was praised by Brazilian critic Veríssimo; and Borges by Argentinean writer Bioy Casares, among others.

<sup>62</sup> Machado was the first president of the Academia Brasileira de Letras, while Borges was part of an important group of writers and intellectuals in twentieth-century Argentina related to the journal *Sur*.

Nevertheless, most were superficial in critical terms or even personally biased, i.e., strongly positive or negative vis-à-vis Machado's innovative narratives.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, two generations of Brazilian critics would engage in a more mature and critical analysis of Machado's narratives: first, late in Machado's life (in the 1890s); and second, especially after his death in 1908, with a further surge of interest after the 1930s.

First, I drew attention to the 1890s generation of critics who initiated the assessment of Machado's work. The first group—Araripe Júnior and José Veríssimo—pointed out his innovative approach and his unconventional uses and adaptations of literary devices; they emphasized Machado's innovations and distinctive sense of humor (in the terms of this thesis, his cross-cultural ironies) rather than trying to situate him within literary canons and traditions (U. Machado 21). A different perspective was offered by Magalhães Azeredo, who positively responded to Machado's second mature novel *Quincas Borba*, highlighting its critical dialogues with Brazilian society of the time (21). Finally, an even more effusive critic, José Nastácio, prematurely placed Machado among highly regarded canonical and more mainstream European literary writers, such as Maupassant and Zola (21).

On the occasion of Machado's centenary in the 1930s, critical interest in the writer's narratives was renewed, and foundational studies (such as Lucia Miguel Pereira's 1939 seminal literary biography of Machado) started to emerge. In addition, translation of his mature works into Italian, German, French and Spanish was initiated (U. Machado *Dicionário* 339). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1950s that Machado's mature novels were translated into English by William Grossman (*The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* 1951) and Helen Caldwell (*Dom Casmurro* 1953). By the 1960s, the number of editions of Machado's work in English exceeded those in the original version (U. Machado *Dicionário* 339). This surge of international interest along with Caldwell's *The Brazilian Othello of*

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<sup>63</sup> Romero's appraisal of Machado's mature narratives as mere copies of original writers' works, particularly Sterne, is a fine example of these early studies.

*Machado de Assis* (1960) marked a transition in Machado's critical reception within Brazil. In this book, Caldwell praised Machado's adaptations of English ironists, pointing out his oblique critique of nineteenth-century Brazilian society. While Caldwell's critical revision was of major importance to the history of the critical reception of Machado's narratives, initially they did not find a wider readership in English translation. Primarily, they were accepted and studied primarily in the original Portuguese among North-American, and other English-speaking academics and intellectuals.

By contrast to Machado, the interpretations of Borges' work developed significantly during the writer's lifetime. In the early years after their publication, Borges' mature narratives were accepted and included in the canon of world literature as defined by critics and intellectuals such as Roger Caillois, in France, and John Updike, in North America. Nevertheless, Borges' narratives were still being harshly and regularly criticized particularly by Argentinean and Latin American writers and critics. As previously mentioned, younger critics such as the Argentinean writer Sábato and the Cuban critic Fernández Retamar launched fierce criticisms during particularly turbulent political moments in the late 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, in contrast to Machado, Borges was accepted earlier by international critics and readers, following the English translation of his mature narratives; these reviews began after the 1940s, particularly among academics, with a strong surge in the 1960s, on the publication of *Ficciones* in English translation. Borges' narratives were usually praised for their distinctive and close relations with English as a language. Furthermore, the fact that Borges assisted Di Giovanni with later translations is usually mentioned to establish Borges' connections to English as a language and to English literatures.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, Borges' work in French translation was most responsible for the initial critical appraisal of his mature narratives, and the consequent internationalization of his prose

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<sup>64</sup> Later critics such as Rodríguez Monegal (*A Literary Biography* 460), for instance, would even argue for Borges' status as an English writer, a status that was clearly rejected by the writer himself.

work (Stabb, *Jorge Luis Borges* 143). Contemporary French intellectuals, such as Maurice Blanchot, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida found resonance in Borges' theoretical fictions; they were particularly intrigued with Borges' questioning of the reading process and his view of the writer not as a source, but as a copyist, or fundamentally as a reader himself, as in "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*"). Clearly, Borges' work informed their theories on authorship and the communicative process.

Borges became "a cult writer for literary critics who discover in him the Platonic forms of their concerns: the theory of intertextuality, the limits of the referential illusion, the relationship between knowledge and language, the dilemmas of representation and of narration" (Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges* 5). Rodríguez Monegal (Alazraki 267) states that "los franceses han sido los primeros viajeros no hispánicos en intentar una cartografía de esa *terra incognita* que cubre el nombre de Jorge Luis Borges" [The French were the first non-Hispanic travelers to try to map this *terra incognita* covered by the name of Jorge Luis Borges].

Rodríguez Monegal mentions what is probably the first published translation of Borges' work into French, in 1939 by Néstor Ibarra (267), and connects Borges to the *nouvelle critique*, or the New French Criticism, identified with names such as Blanchot, Genette, and Foucault. According to Rodríguez Monegal, Foucault went beyond Blanchot and Genette in his judgment of the import of Borges' work with the comment that Foucault "apunta el centro de la escritura borgiana" [points to the center of Borgesian writing] (287); by this, Foucault meant the destruction of existing literature in order to re-construct a new one. In France, response to Borges' fiction took different turns from those taken by English-speaking critics: there, critics moved beyond Borges' narratives to more philosophical issues,

such as Foucault's ideas of the relations between knowledge and language;<sup>65</sup> in the English-speaking worlds, critics focused on the literary aspect of his works. This literary aspect presented by English-speaking critics, particularly in terms of continuation and adaptation of English models, will be the focus of the next chapter of this thesis.

This initial international reception proved very important to the later Argentinean critical reception of Borges' work. Increasingly in highly politicized Argentina, he was scrutinized with regard to his relations with his own society, his position as a transnational author and his perceived distancing of himself from his own country. The evolution of Borges' transnational reception would thus echo that of the early critical reaction to his works in Argentina, in the sense that it divided critics; further, it highlighted new forms of critical and narrative developments, locally and internationally. The latter was observable particularly in the English-speaking world, in academic terms, and in Latin America, in terms of narrative and adaptations of cultural ironies.

Both authors' mature narratives were translated into English and published primarily during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the critical reception of their work from this period can be compared. Most importantly, in the English-speaking reception of their fictions, most critics within these contexts tended to overlook both Machado's and Borges' cultural and intertextual relations with the Brazilian and Argentinean society of their own times. Even critics who considered their ironic critiques towards their society's prejudices and expectations (such as Caldwell in relation to Machado's *Dom Casmurro*) departed from the intertextualities established by Machado and Borges with particular English ironists and their

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<sup>65</sup> "This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other" (Foucault xv). The fact that Foucault read Borges (by now familiar enough to readers to be evoked only by his surname) as having shattered *our* thought, and "collapsing the distinction between the Same and the Other" definitively places the Borges text as inspiring European thought itself.

narratives and devices to experience a typically de-contextualized reading. Nevertheless, the relevance of the English-speaking critical reception to the revision of Brazilian and Argentinean critical traditions, particularly with respect to Machado and Borges, but also in a wider sense was significant. The fundamental critical question thus is to understand how Machado's and Borges' intertextualities with English ironists, even though primarily adapted for and aimed at their own social and cultural contexts, affected the critical reception of their works in the English-speaking world.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the early local critical reception of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives was predominantly negative. I focused on the relations between Machado's and Borges' critical and fictional works with contemporary critics and readers. This chapter has demonstrated that Machado and Borges, either in their early critical works or in their mature narratives, created a unique implied reader: their cross-cultural ironies required the historically and geographically informed actualization of anti-neocolonial readers, in the case of Machado, or cosmopolitan readers, in the case of Borges. Their implied readers were produced in the intertextualities established with English ironists; with their own particular critical view on what would become their national literatures; and with their contemporary readers and critics. The fact that Machado's and Borges' early critical works and mature narratives were not initially fully appreciated or accepted only highlighted Machado's and Borges' unconventional English literary references and mature narrative innovations. Nevertheless, the contradictory early critical reception of these mature narratives attested to the importance of Machado and Borges within their social and cultural contexts, particularly with respect to the development of Brazilian and Argentinean narratives.

In the next chapter, the focus will be on the development of the English-speaking critical reception of Machado's and Borges narratives, and on the place of each author within

this framework. After that, I will look at what I term the revisionist English-speaking reception of Machado's and Borges' new narratives and cross-cultural ironies, and their return as literary models for Latin American new narratives of the twentieth century. A closer examination of reviews of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives in multiple contexts will contribute to an explication of how particular intertextualities with English ironists, along with the creation of their distinctive transcultural implied readers, affected the development of an asymmetrical English-speaking critical reception of Machado's and Borges' narratives, as well as the consequent return of these narratives as literary models to Latin American writers and critics.

### **3. Converging Readings: Discoveries by English-Speaking Critics**

The most relevant critical assessments of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis' and Jorge Luis Borges' mature narratives began appearing in the English-speaking world in the late 1950s (in the case of Machado) and during the 1960s (in the case of Borges). Nonetheless, critics in those contexts interpreted their works quite differently. In this chapter, I address the initial English-speaking critical reception of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies, by critics who read their work in their original languages and in English translation. The focus of this part of the thesis will thus shift to the reception and interpretations of their mature narratives by English-speaking critics. My aim is to document the recognition of Machado's and Borges' fictional works as literary events in the English-speaking world, i.e., the confirmation of readers' and critics' responses to these works, mediated by their horizons of expectations. This documentation and the analysis of the resulting significance of these literary events in the English-speaking world will provide a platform for the consequent reassessment of Machado's and Borges' works in Brazil and Argentina; further, it will also serve in an appraisal of the significance of the parallel reappropriation of their works by Latin American critics and writers.

In summary, I will analyze the critical reception of Machado and Borges after the 1960s, in order to establish the presence of the narratives of these two writers in relation to social, cultural and literary expectations of English-speaking critics. An examination of the issues involved in translating the works will aid in the definition of those horizons.

#### **3.1 Cross-cultural Ironies Lost, Modified or Created in Translation?**

The reception of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives by critics in the English-speaking world developed quite unevenly. In terms of the Anglo-American reception of Machado's narratives, there were two responses: first, at best, they were associated with



Machado's English models; or second, they were ignored, as they were perceived as being too connected to Brazilian socio-historical and geographical references and too hard to adapt to Anglo-American cultures.

The English-speaking reception of Borges' short narratives, by contrast, was favored by the presumed translatability of his works, not only in terms of language, but also in cultural terms. Borges' narratives were read as though they were more universal: on the one hand, the connection between Borges' narratives and their original society was not as evident or as significant as Machado's oblique yet defining relations to his own; on the other hand, the transcultural implied reader within Borges' mature narratives was more connected to a broader range of cosmopolitan twentieth-century readers than were the few contemporary implied readers within Machado's mature narratives. Borges' cross-cultural ironies were thus accessible in two zones of reception: in his own cosmopolitan Argentinean culture, as well as in Anglo-American cultures. Machado's cross-cultural ironies, by contrast, were thought to be too culturally specific to his own socio-historical, cultural and geographical background.

Machado's first translators into English (Grossman and Caldwell, in the 1950s) rated his novels above the short narratives for which he is usually praised by Brazilian critics and later English-speaking critics.<sup>66</sup> Machado's mature novels, nonetheless, presented translators with two critical problems: first, in terms of language in general; and second, specifically with respect to his cultural adaptations of his chosen literary devices. One result was the commercial predicament that would accompany the acceptance (or lack thereof) of Machado's work in the English-speaking publishing world for years. In this sense,

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<sup>66</sup> Brazilian critic and biographer Lúcia Miguel Pereira went so far as to state that Machado was a better short story writer than a novelist (Gledson, *Por um novo Machado de Assis* 35). English critic John Gledson, in support of Pereira's view, states that "há boas razões para se imaginar que o conto seria mais condizente com o gênio do autor" [there are good reasons to imagine that the short story would be more appropriate for the spirit of the author]: for instance, his penchant for anecdotes, as well as his use of seemingly unimportant details that could change a narrative (35). In 1921, Isaac Goldberg collected a number of Machado short stories in English translation in the book *Brazilian Tales*. Nonetheless, regardless of early attempts to publish his short stories in English translation, Machado has been better known in the English-speaking world as a novelist. His *Papéis avulsos* has still not been translated in its entirety as a single collection.

Machado's cross-cultural ironies, aimed at his few Brazilian implied readers of the late nineteenth century, would be a bridge as well as a barrier for the broader reception of his works in translation. In my reading, I emphasized his intertextualities with English ironists within the rhetorical and even stable ironies of Machado's mature narratives, and their relations with Brazilian society. A good example was seen in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*: in this novel, Machado appropriated some of Sterne's literary expressions and devices, such as the unreliable narrator and the dialogue with readers, to criticize the members of the nineteenth-century Brazilian elite, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1. However beyond Brazil, Machado's highly original cultural adaptations of these English ironic devices would lose part of their complexity and contextualization both in the early bilingual (Portuguese/English) critical reception of his works in their original language, and in the resulting translation into English.

In terms of language in general, Machado's concise narratives, in a language already regarded as concise,<sup>67</sup> proved a problem for translators; further, they were challenged by his typically ironic use of ellipses, deliberate semantic contamination and other literary devices (Patai quoted in Graham 91).<sup>68</sup> In analyzing and comparing Caldwell's 1950s and Scott-Buccleuch's 1990s translations of *Dom Casmurro*, Daphne Patai describes some of the difficulties in translating Machado's narratives; in particular she emphasizes those related to the decisions made by translators in adapting Portuguese syntax into English. Further, Patai stresses the difficulty of translating Machado's style and his "unique and slightly ironic" use of his original language into English; such adaptations produce the losses that occur in the

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<sup>67</sup> As *Dom Casmurro*'s translator Robert Scott-Buccleuch would later state: "[t]wo words in Portuguese require four or five in English for their meaning to be fully conveyed" (quoted in Graham 98).

<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, as Patai describes in her essay "Machado in English", there are some indispensable words in Portuguese in Machado's narratives which cannot be directly translated into English (quoted in Graham 94). For instance, *agregado* is a major concept in *Dom Casmurro*, and in other Machado's narratives, which means a sort of dependent living within the household, with no specific role, in an ambiguous position in relation to the family, who is represented in *Dom Casmurro* by the character José Dias. Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz define *agregados* as "men or women attached to a family as permanent adjuncts, who could be put to any and every task to hand" ("A Brazilian Breakthrough" 100).

transpositions (92). Patai considers that Scott-Buccleuch's translation of *Dom Casmurro*, focusing on the plot rather than Machado's narrative, eliminates certain rhetorical and even stable ironies, along with nine entire chapters; thus, the narrator's digressions are lost in favor of making the narrative more concise and palatable for an Anglo-American readership (97). In my view, however, beyond losing minor literary devices and the overall flow of the narrative, the final result severely compromises Machado's more complex cross-cultural ironies, since the narration is intimately connected to Machado's fundamental critique of his own society, and to the social and cultural prejudices and expectations of his contemporary readers and critics. Caldwell's translation, although it tends to be a more literal and respectful transposition of Machado's style and literary devices, is based too heavily on the ostensible universality of Machado's narratives; further, it deprives English-speaking readers of much of the cultural adaptation references that Caldwell herself chooses to omit. Caldwell did not address the critical problems in translating Machado's narratives, or provide further notes with respect to Machado's socio-historical background within her translation; such aids would assist readers to accomplish the required cultural adaptations (for instance, street names, train stations, landmarks, etc.).

Nevertheless, Caldwell, in her introduction and also in critical studies, along with Scott-Buccleuch, emphasized the universality attributed to Machado. Most significantly, these two translators stressed Machado's obvious intertextualities with English ironic writers and narratives. In her preface to *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis*, Caldwell went so far as to suggest that English-speaking readers will be the ones to "truly appreciate the great Brazilian", because of Machado's own close and continuous relations with English writers (v).<sup>69</sup> Scott-Buccleuch, corroborating Caldwell's perspective in a conference on translation in Rio de Janeiro in 1980, affirmed that "for the European (and I'm referring

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<sup>69</sup> Particularly, in the case of Caldwell's study, this is because of recurring intertextualities with Shakespeare within Machado's mature narratives (vi).

mainly to the English), both the cultural shock and what we might call the linguistic shock are relatively mild. Machado de Assis did not veer much from the traditional European path” (quoted in Graham 98). Machado’s intertextualities with and ironic adaptations of European literatures and genres in a broader sense, and of English narratives in a narrow sense, were thus highlighted and used to translate, critically assess and also publicize Machado’s mature narratives in the English-speaking world. In translation and cultural adaptations of Machado’s fictional works, as well as in the initial critical appraisal of them, the fundamental engagement with nineteenth-century Brazilian society and readership was overlooked in order to emphasize Machado’s alleged universality. More importantly, the relevance of Brazilian society within Machado’s narratives would be generally disregarded in order to emphasize their evident connections with cultural and literary expectations particular to English-speaking readers and critics.

In the case of Borges, issues of translation were among his prime concerns and were an important part of the development of his narrative.<sup>70</sup> Critics such as Waisman argued for the importance of translation theory within Borges’ own literary development and his somewhat idiosyncratic views on the topic (11). The first translations of Borges’ narratives into English, nonetheless, were not as closely associated with the writer himself—or to his views on translation—as they would become later. During the 1960s and the 1970s, Borges worked closely with Thomas Di Giovanni in translating primarily his short stories, but also his poems. Earlier translations into English were more literal, and completely overlooked the original Argentinean society and culture of Borges. Di Giovanni denounced these initial mistranslations, pointing out the usual “lack of historical and biographical information” of such attempts to translate Borges’ fictional works (*Borges on writing* 148). From Di Giovanni’s perspective, the primary problem with these initial English translations of Borges’

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<sup>70</sup> Machado also devoted himself to a limited number of translations, but not as consistently as Borges. Moreover, translation was not as important a part of Machado’s literary development as it was for Borges.

narratives was the excessive, pedantic reverence towards the original Spanish version, and the fear of not adequately interpreting in English the depths and complexities of Borges' style (157). While Di Giovanni noticed and addressed these problems and issues in his cultural adaptations of Borges' work (particularly in relation to Borges' poetry), he was contradictory in emphasizing a certain "timeless quality" in the Argentinean's literary expressions and devices (109): Di Giovanni chose to emphasize Borges' universality and translatability. Consequently, it appears that Borges was prescient in choosing the cross-cultural devices of the English ironists as they subsequently worked in favor of the translation of his narratives into English.

In terms of language, Borges' close and continuous relation with English writers and literature also worked in favor of the translation of his narratives. In particular, the dialectical opposition and new synthesis that he developed between traditionally Spanish baroque literary expressions and the concise and direct language structures of English informed the English translation of his narratives. Translators such as Di Giovanni usually emphasized the specificities of Borges' Spanish literary expression, particularly in relation to his English narratives and writers. He asserted, for example, that Borges "changed the Spanish language" (135), and also that in hearing one of Borges' sentences he could "hear an English sentence beneath it" (137). Moreover, Di Giovanni went so far as to assert that "since English made Borges and since he is giving Spanish an English cast, he fulfils himself in English; his work becomes more itself in English" (137). By contrast to Machado's work, Borges' mature short narratives focused on a wider cosmopolitan readership. In his literary project, he expansively suggested ways of producing narratives that might qualify for consideration alongside the classics of world literature; he did not limit himself to merely suggesting alternatives for the development of his own and Argentinean narratives in cultural and intertextual relations with particular neo-colonial models. In terms of the textual intentionality of Borges' work, his

mature narratives went beyond Machado's literary innovations and developments, in the sense that Borges aimed not only at Argentinean literature of his time and his own culture, but also at a global canon of literature. Borges was thus concerned with his place within this broader canon; in the process, he simultaneously established a relevant place for other Latin American writers.

In highlighting Borges' translatability and the theoretically direct transposition from Borges' original Spanish expression into the English language, initial translators and critics overlooked the relations between Borges' narratives and their own Argentinean society and culture, and also with his own local literature and literary customs in favor of more recognizable (at least in the English-speaking world) literary traditions and writers. In reading both Machado's and Borges' works, translators and critics emphasized the writers' personal adaptations of English narratives, the hypotexts of English ironists within these fictional works; Borges would also emphasize these hypotexts himself. The aim of this selective associative strategy was primarily to validate Borges' narratives within the English-speaking world, and consequently within broader Euro-American cultures and literatures.

On the one hand, Machado's narratives were read and assessed initially in Portuguese by academics, who usually, and for the sake of publicizing his works, would later translate them into English.<sup>71</sup> One of the problems in translating Brazilian writers was the original language, of course; however, in the case of Machado, the main problem was the difficult cultural adaptation of his literary expressions and devices, particularly of his cross-cultural ironies. Machado's narratives, nonetheless, met with an enthusiastic response from critics and intellectuals.<sup>72</sup> The positive academic reception, along with the selective critical reception

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<sup>71</sup> Patai, discussing the translation of Machado's work into English, asserts that Brazilian narratives in general are usually translated by professors as "labors of love": academics undertake the task of translating certain Brazilian writers, such as Machado, in order to make them widely known in the English-speaking world, and also in other Euro-American cultural contexts (quoted in Graham 87).

<sup>72</sup> For instance, Machado's novels were praised in major literary reviews, such as the *New York Times Book Review* and the *The New Yorker*, particularly in the 1950s (Fitz "The Reception of Machado de Assis" 19).

among intellectuals and writers, secured the relatively important role of Machado's mature narratives in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, with respect to a larger audience, Machado's narratives were characterized in the 1990s as "still in the search of a significant English-speaking readership" (Patai quoted in Graham 89). Borges' mature short narratives, by contrast, found a wider readership from the beginning of their translation into English, including (but not limited to) academics and intellectuals.

Beyond questions of translation, I propose that the asymmetrical initial English-speaking critical reception of Machado's and Borges' works is also directly related to the English ironic intertextualities within their narratives. With different literary and ironic models, Machado's and Borges' adaptations of English ironists resulted in different later interpretations by critics and readers in the English-speaking world. On the one hand, Machado's mature narratives were overshadowed by "major" English writers (particularly Sterne, but also Shakespeare and Dickens, for example), by the relative exoticism of Portuguese-language authors for the English-speaking world and by the difficult cultural adaptation of their literary devices to non-Brazilian cultural contexts. By contrast, Borges, through his preference for "minor", yet popular, English writers such as Stevenson, made his mature short narratives more accessible to the English-speaking reader; in addition he incorporated English linguistic or stylistic features into his adaptations into Spanish.

The sparse critical reception of Machado's work in the English-speaking world focused on his adaptations of English ironists in his mature narratives, especially in his novels. From the 1960s onwards, this focus became more evident when his novels entered the Anglo-American horizon of expectations through what Jausss calls "[their] implicit relationships to familiar works of the literary-historical surroundings" (24). Academic and literary critics within these contexts (such as Caldwell in the 1960s, and Sontag in the 1990s)

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Later, in the 1990s, Machado's novels were reviewed in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* (Patai in Graham 90), and by intellectuals such as Susan Sontag (Assis, *Obra completa* 219-27).

found hypotexts of English writers in Machado's narratives that, in many ways, corresponded to certain literary models and traditions common to their own cultures. The critical reception of Machado's mature narratives in the English-speaking world was instrumental in the development of broader assessments by Euro-American critics and readers, and also for later reassessments of Machado's narratives by Brazilian critics.

In the 1950s, that critical reception in the English-speaking world only began after the publication of English translations of Machado's novels by Caldwell and Grossman.<sup>73</sup> Earlier, Machado's work had been translated into German, and later Spanish and French after Machado's 1908 death; some of these were re-issued for the 1939 centenary celebration of his birth. However, these early translations into German, Spanish and French did not elevate Machado to prominence within Euro-American literatures; in those early days, the importance of his work was acknowledged only within his native Brazil.<sup>74</sup> In fact, Machado's mature narratives would only find international resonance among critics, readers and writers outside of Brazil after the 1950s, with the translation and the frequent (usually academic) publication of his novels in English. As mentioned earlier, the number of editions of his mature novels in English translation would surpass the number of editions in their original Portuguese language in the 1960s (U. Machado *Dicionário* 339).

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<sup>73</sup> Brazilian writer Érico Veríssimo gave a series of lectures on Brazilian literature that was published as *Brazilian Literature: An Outline* in 1942. In it, there is a chapter dedicated to Machado.

<sup>74</sup> During the 1940s Machado's mature novels *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (in 1940) and *Dom Casmurro* (in 1946) were published in Spanish translation in Argentina, with unenthusiastic (or apparently no) response by critics and readers. Borges could have read Machado's novels in translation then, or even in the original language, since he mentioned (in a 1985 interview to Roberto D'ávila) he had read works by Portuguese writer Luís de Camões and Brazilian writer Euclides da Cunha in Portuguese. Moreover, Borges himself had Portuguese ancestry (Fischer 39). Borges had also possibly translated Machado's short story "A cartomante" [The Fortune teller] into Spanish for the *Revista Multicolor de los Sábados* in the 1930s (Helft). The magazine was edited by Borges himself and his friend Ulyses Petit. Unfortunately, the translations published in this magazine were not signed, but Borges' knowledge of Latin as well as of certain Lusophone writers lead me to believe that he was responsible for the translation (see Borges' *Destino y obra de Camoens* and "Portugal"). However, there are no allusions to Machado in Borges' critical works. Furthermore, I could not find any mention of Machado's work in the numerous interviews with Borges to which I had access in my research.



I turn now to an analysis of the English reception of each writer individually. In particular, I examine the extent to which the writers' cross cultural ironies featured in those reviews.

### 3.2 Machado in English Translation: Beyond Neo-Colonial Brazil

Machado's narratives were studied and assessed by English-speaking academics and critics, in the original and also in translation; they were analyzed primarily through their relationship with hypotexts familiar to English readers. In North America especially, but also in broader Anglo-American and European cultures, appraisals of his narratives were usually related to their intertextualities with English ironists, i.e., eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers who used unreliable narrators or at least narrators aware of their narrative devices and of their readers. While Machado favored Sterne, he also referenced Dickens and Swift, among others. Critics limited their comparison of Machado's narratives to these canonical English writers who followed ironic and more satiric English literary conventions (also related to Swift and Sterne); those writers distinguished by their use of irony to achieve a "traditional satire on human pretensions" (Bell 109). To creatively adapt his writing, Machado established intertextualities with central writers within the English literary canon (from Shakespeare to Dickens).

Specifically, the first appraisals of Machado's work appeared in the 1950s, following the translation of Machado's novels into English: "*Epitaph of a Small Winner* (1951; 1952), *Dom Casmurro* (1953; 1966), and *Philosopher or Dog?* (1954)" (Fitz 17). The first translation of *Dom Casmurro* into English, by Caldwell, was published originally only in England; subsequently, it was introduced in the United States in the Latin American Boom enthusiasm of the 1960s (Fitz 33). Fitz describes the reception of Machado's work in the 1950s as follows: "for most Americans in the early 1950s, Machado would have been a writer they admire, for his technical inventiveness, but one whose critique of their own culture they

would never embrace” (20). According to Fitz, during the 1950s the United States was not as concerned with Latin America as it would become in the 1960s (17). Nonetheless, one example of the critical reception of Machado’s work in the U.S. quoted by Fitz reiterates my point about the English-speaking reception being focused on the English hypotext within his work: “H.C. Webster, for example, writing in 1952, declares that Machado ‘imitates Sterne too slavishly’” (21). These references to English writers will recur regularly in the English-speaking reception of Machado’s work.

As an example, Caldwell in *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis* (1960) develops her theories about *Dom Casmurro*’s narrative not only in its intertextual relations with Shakespeare’s *Othello*, but also in relation to Machado’s cultural adaptations of select English ironists’ literary expressions and devices. For Caldwell, the biased narration in the novel *Dom Casmurro* functioned not only in relation to its implicit and ironic dialogue with Machado’s society and culture, but also through its intertextualities with the writer’s English models. Caldwell’s critical readings thus transposed Machado’s narratives into works that could speak to twentieth-century English-speaking readers. By relating Machado’s *Dom Casmurro* to the English literary canon and analyzing it in its critical relations with English narratives and devices, Caldwell proposed an interpretation that was possible only because of her own knowledge and experience as an English-speaking reader and academic. In fact, Caldwell relates the themes of *Dom Casmurro* to a twentieth-century socio-historical period, as she considers, through a feminist lens, the connections between the narrative and the notion of reality; she directly evaluates Machado’s novel vis-à-vis social and cultural experiences and expectations of her own time. Caldwell de-emphasized Machado’s idiosyncratic local social and cultural positionalities, in *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis*; rather, she was reading his text from the perspective of mid-twentieth-century

experiences of “common sense” gender prejudice as a whole—uniquely placing Machado not only among English ironists, but among canonical male writers.

Nevertheless, because of the recognizable intertextualities with English ironists, English-speaking critics ranked *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, as the most favored of Machado’s mature novels within the English-speaking world.<sup>75</sup> Critics such as Susan Sontag (Assis, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* xiv) argued that Machado’s narrative in *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* was modelled largely on Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*; she noted, in particular, its playful tone towards the reader, and “whimsical” construction (xiv). In her assessment of Machado’s novel, Sontag stated that Sterne is considered an “ultra-eccentric, marginal genius [...] who is most notable for being uncannily, and prematurely, ‘modern’” (xiv) in the English-speaking world—qualities that are commonly mentioned by critics vis-à-vis Machado. Sontag proceeded to argue that in the twentieth century, Sterne, outside the English-speaking countries, is one of the most influential writers in world literature, along with Shakespeare and Dickens; she added that this was particularly true in countries under dictatorship where irony would play an especially vital role (xiv-xv). Sontag reasoned that “[p]erhaps the reason so much commanding prose literature has been issuing for decades from Central and Eastern Europe as well as from Latin America is not that writers have been suffering under monstrous tyrannies and therefore have had importance, seriousness, subjects, relevant irony bestowed on them [...] but that these are the parts of the world where for over a century the author of *Tristram Shandy* has been the most admired” (xv). Effectively in this excerpt, Sontag is arguing for the precedence of intertextualities with English ironists and new relationships with the cultures of readers of translations (like her own); these readers decode irony vis-à-vis their knowledge of the models and their own cultures, and not necessarily of the original socio-historical

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<sup>75</sup> Critics tend to focus on *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, according to Susan Sontag in the foreword to a translation of this novel (*Epitaph of a Small Winner* 2008). Sontag’s foreword was reproduced in Portuguese translation in Machado’s *Obra completa* (2008: 226).

determinants. This reception echoes the majority of the critical reception of Machado's narratives earlier outlined.

Sontag then assesses Machado in wider humoristic and unreliable narrative traditions, mentioning writers as diverse as Robert Walser and Samuel Beckett as examples (xv); in that assessment, she stresses these writers' playful and deceptive dialogues with their implied readers. Nevertheless, she did not further analyze Machado's intertextualities with his own society and his own culture, or the suggested connections between Machado and these later Euro-American writers. For Sontag, there were three characteristics that made *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* most suitable for English-speaking readers, including critics: first, the recognition of Sterne's literary style and devices in it; second, arguably the more straightforward playfulness of this unconventional narrative; and third, the teasing approach of Machado's narrators to readers. In fact, that appeal to readers seems to be the aim of her afterword: Sontag wants to present a more palatable writer to English-speaking readers. According to Sontag's appraisal, it is possible to overlook contextual constraints—the novel's heavier ironies aimed at its contemporary readers' expectations—in favor of broader cultural and intertextual relations between Machado and more familiar narratives and devices within the English-speaking world. For Sontag, "Machado de Assis' novel belongs in that tradition of narrative buffoonery—the talkative first-person voice attempting to ingratiate itself with readers which runs from Sterne" (xv); additionally, the narration could be perceived as a parody of "the protagonist of the great spiritual autobiographies" (xv-i).

As I have argued, and we now see clearly in Sontag's assessment, the horizon of expectations of English-speaking critics was intensely focused on the hypotexts of familiar English ironists within Machado's narratives. From comments in journals like *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times Book Review* in the 1950s, to Caldwell's *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis* (1960), to Sontag's foreword (originally published in 1990), to

Bloom's *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (2002), we observe the centrality of Machado's readings of English ironists, in particular of Sterne, in the development of the English-speaking academic and critical reception of his narratives. Bloom (*Genius* 675) went as far as to suggest that "Sterne's spirit freed Machado from any mere nationalistic demands that Brazil might have hoped to impose upon him." According to Bloom, Machado's mature narratives were constructed exclusively from his personal assessment of English narratives. Bloom argued that in making these idiosyncratic choices, Machado eschewed two competing literary devices: first, any complex and critical intertextualities with a polyphonic set of European, hemispheric and/or Brazilian writers; second, any competing hypertextualities with other cultural and socio-historical specificities. Consequently, Bloom is part of a significant English-speaking critical tradition associated with Machado's narratives that was initiated with Caldwell's critical study, and which advanced to Sontag and other English-speaking critics: for those critics, Machado was relevant in these contexts largely, as stated earlier, because they could relate to the obvious intertextualities with English ironists.

Machado advances to become a "universal" writer in the comparisons suggested by translator Grossman in his preface for the collection of stories *The Psychiatrist and Other Stories*. As examples, he compares Machado to the English writers C.S. Lewis and Jonathan Swift, to conclude that Machado presents his critique, "now biting, now compassionate, of human inadequacy" (in Assis, *The Psychiatrist* x).

However, in spite of the obvious intertextualities with English ironists within Machado's mature narratives, his novels did not find—and are still searching for—a wider readership within the English-speaking world. As indicated, the translation and subsequent

critical reception of Machado's narratives focused primarily on his mature novels, particularly the three best-known and critically acclaimed ones.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, Machado's mature short narratives are arguably more relevant than his mature novels to later developments in Latin American new narratives, including to Borges' mature narratives: they present settings and stories quite different from those typical of Machado's novels. Whereas his novels are usually limited to family tales of households in nineteenth-century urban Rio de Janeiro, his short stories, by contrast, are situated in diverse settings: from the imaginary city of Funchéu (in "O segredo do Bonzo") to the suburban fringes of Rio de Janeiro (in "O alienista" or "O espelho", for instance). Furthermore, his stories in *Papéis avulsos* encompass a variety of characters and circumstances: for example, the republic of spiders in "A sereníssima república" and the apparition of the Athenian General Alcibiades in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro in "Uma visita de Alcibíades."

In his short narratives, particularly those in *Papéis avulsos*, Machado presents fantastic themes and non-realistic styles, as culturally and intertextually related to the English ironists. In his early critical articles,<sup>77</sup> Machado suggested Dickens as a literary model for a possible Brazilian short narrative tradition, one non-existent in the late nineteenth century. Later, Machado developed his series of short stories in parallel with his longer mature narratives. For the short narratives in *Papéis avulsos* and other mature short narratives in his collections, such as *Histórias sem data* (1896) and *Páginas recolhidas* (1899), Machado turned to Dickens, Swift and other English ironists. I agree with the critics who suggest that Machado's mature short narratives might have found a more receptive audience in the English-speaking world than his novels: in both genres, Machado used hypotexts of English ironists; however, the short narratives present readers with plots, settings and cross-cultural

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<sup>76</sup> These were the novels acclaimed especially by Brazilian critics, but also best known by English-speaking critics: *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, *Quincas Borba* and *Dom Casmurro*.

<sup>77</sup> For instance, "O passado, o presente e o futuro da literatura" (1858).

ironies more open to interpretation by cosmopolitan readers than the usual domestic Rio de Janeiro references of his mature novels.

For instance, in “A sereníssima república”, Machado describes the electoral system of a community of spiders, through the narrative of a naturalist. In it, he not only critiques the propositions for the renewal of the electoral system in his contemporary Brazil, but also parodies nineteenth-century scientific discourses. The narrator of this story claims that he has discovered “uma espécie araneida que dispõe do uso da fala” [a species of spider that can speak] and that his intention, with his report was “ressalvar os direitos da ciência brasileira, por meio de um protesto em tempo; e, isto feito, dizer-vos a parte em que repute minha obra superior à do sábio de Inglaterra” [to make it right for Brazilian Science, by making a protest in time; to point out the part in which my work is superior to the wise man from England], referring, of course, to Charles Darwin (Assis, *Papéis avulsos* 199-200).

“O espelho” [The Looking Glass] is another good example of an interesting and wide-ranging imaginative plot: it is the narrative of a man who can only see himself in the mirror when wearing his uniform. This story, then, also proposes a theory of the soul: “não há uma só alma, há duas [...] uma que olha de dentro para fora, outra que olha de fora para dentro [...]” [we have more than one soul, we have two (...) one that looks at us from within, and another that looks at us from the outside] (209). The first soul lies within, following the usual idea of a soul as the spiritual part of the self; the second one is what the narrator calls “external soul”: “um espírito, um fluído, um homem, muitos homens, um objeto, uma operação” [a spirit, a fluid, a man, many men, an object, an operation] (209). At the end of the story, the narrator reveals that his uniform was his external soul, that is, without it he could not see himself as a fully formed person. There is a fantastic element in this story that is not common to all of Machado’s short stories: the narrator realizes on looking in the mirror, that his image starts to fade. Eventually, he realizes that, only when wearing the

uniform, is his image clear. To me, this fantastic element, not only makes this short story more universal,<sup>78</sup> it is also more strictly associated to what would be conceived of, much later, as a prime characteristic of the Latin American Boom.

A highly creative story, “O segredo do Bonzo” is situated in an imaginary place. In it, Machado proposes travel to an imaginary land, a narrative journey he achieved through a critical exposition of the relations between fiction and reality. To accomplish this, Machado created a preposterous theory about the primacy of opinion over facts. Particularly in this story, Machado adapted devices of eighteenth-to-nineteenth-century English ironists for a satirical purpose. Machado is openly parodying the sixteenth-century Portuguese traveler and writer Fernão Mendes Pinto; indeed, the story’s subtitle is “Capítulo inédito de Fernão Mendes Pinto”—Unpublished Chapter by Fernão Mendes Pinto. In fact, Machado’s narrative actually points to Swift and to Sterne in the cross-cultural ironies proposed in this short story: irony here is accomplished in adapting certain methods used by these English ironists. Specifically, he distances the narration from its time and place, thus giving “realidade à invenção” [authenticity to the invention], according to Machado himself (248)—that is, providing his literary invention with verisimilitude.

Machado’s mature narratives attracted only a select but yet important audience in the English-speaking world. While their appreciation was restricted to the narratives’ intertextualities with English writers, from this limited readership emerged at least one major contribution to the development of Brazilian criticism associated with Machado’s mature narratives; significantly, that contribution related to his cross-cultural ironies. Caldwell’s main achievement was apparently simple, yet essential for subsequent Brazilian critics: she offered an original reading of *Dom Casmurro* in the consideration of Machado’s cultural adaptation of the devices of particular English writers.

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<sup>78</sup> As an example of its “universality”, Machado’s story was compared to the 1842 story “The Overcoat”, by Russian author Nikolai Gogol. With a similar plot, the main character in Gogol’s short story defines himself through his expensive overcoat (Weber).



For that original contribution, I proceed to its source: *Dom Casmurro* (1899), one of Machado's most important works. The novel tells the story of a jealous man, Bento Santiago, from his own perspective: at the end of his life, he remembers his relationship with a girl named Capitu from their childhood, up to the point he recorded this remembrance. Written in the first person from the viewpoint of only one character, the narrative sounds like an innocent remembrance of a life, with all its understatement. However, it is designed to convince the reader that Capitu is capable of betraying her husband-to-be. One should not rely on the narrator's false ingenuity, his biased narration and his memory; in fact, the book is more about forgetting than remembering. The narrator maliciously makes the argument that, Capitu, coming from a poor family of mixed ancestry, and being a woman in nineteenth-century Brazil, could only be interested in him for his money. Bearing in mind that Bento Santiago is an unreliable narrator, one can affirm that he is not a victim of Capitu's "art of dissimulation", as argued by the 1927 German critic Giese (quoted in Gomes 66). Quite the opposite more nearly resembles the truth: Santiago gives the impression that he is the victim of Capitu's perfidy, that he is betrayed by his first and only love and also by his best friend. Nonetheless, there are enough clues throughout the book to make the perceptive reader believe that he is just a jealous character—or, at least, that this treasonous plot is not as credible as the narrator wants the reader to believe.

One example of these clues is the scene in which Santiago describes the night at the theatre, when he first saw *Othello*. Subsequently, he compares Desdemona to Capitu: "que faria o publico, se ela deveras fosse culpada, tão culpada como Capitu? E que morte lhe daria o mouro? Um travesseiro não bastava" ['what would the public do if she (Desdemona) were really guilty, as guilty as Capitu? And what death would the Moor give her then? A pillow would not be enough'] (Assis, *Obra completa* 1062/Trans. Caldwell, *Dom Casmurro* 226). If we carry the comparison to its obvious conclusion, the irony of this excerpt is that Santiago

himself was to be compared to Othello in his enraged blindness—the name Santiago being a near anagram for Iago (a “Saint” Iago). In any case, the irony in the novel, if in some cases stable, as in the scene mentioned, can lead to different interpretations of the intentions and prejudices of the narrator: the most common up to the mid-twentieth century being that Santiago was innocent.

It was only in the 1960s that Caldwell offered evidence to support her claim that Capitu did not betray Santiago. According to Schwarz “Caldwell could take justifiable pride in having corrected ‘three generations of critics’, convinced of Capitu’s guilt by the insinuations of her ex-husband, now a crazed widower playing the role of the pseudonarrator” (“Competing Readings” 95). The novel is not about betrayal but jealousy, and this can only be seen if the reader challenges the narrator’s honesty. Machado’s deeper cross-cultural ironies in *Dom Casmurro*, specifically, but also throughout his mature narrative production, were clearly against his own contemporaries’ limited horizons of expectation—not only in terms of culture, but also in social terms: in Machado’s Brazil, readers did not question the narrator’s perspective. On the contrary, they typically tended to sympathize with the character’s charm and wit. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Brazilian writers and critics usually sympathized with Bento Santiago’s restricted viewpoint, considering his tale a disinterested account of the facts, since the character belonged to the Brazilian elite of the time. This was the same class to which Machado’s readers and critics largely belonged. For the elite, the value of the novel was related to Machado’s style. Veríssimo for example, writing in 1900 about *Dom Casmurro*, stated: “Na obra do Sr. Machado de Assis, a emoção é por via de regra [...] de ordem intelectual. Falece-lhe, ou esconde-a ciosamente [...] a emoção sentimental” [In the oeuvre of Mr. Machado de Assis, emotions usually are (...) of an intellectual kind. Sentimentality (...) dies on him, or he does hide it carefully] (U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 225). Veríssimo noticed some ambiguity in the narration,

nonetheless he describes Capitu as “dissimulada, pérfida” [sly, perfidious] and concludes: “não há escapar à malícia das mulheres e à má-fé dos homens” [there is no escape from female malice, and male malfeasance] (229).

Caldwell, however, was capable of seeing through nineteenth-century and later Brazilian prejudices and cultural expectations vis-à-vis gender, class and race, and so on. In her revisionary study of Machado’s novel, Caldwell highlighted the narrator’s “atitudes estereotipadas e convencionais” [stereotypical and conventional attitudes] (Gledson, *Por um novo Machado de Assis* 23), ultimately revealing Machado’s own potential feminism (23), in particular, and his harsh yet indirect critiques of his own society in general; those critiques were stated from the very point of view of the one being criticized: a nineteenth-century male member of the Brazilian elite.<sup>79</sup> Caldwell’s critical study of *Dom Casmurro* drew attention to Machado’s place within his own society, and made Brazilian critics more aware of Machado’s acute yet veiled cross-cultural ironies: this study made by an English-speaking critic drew attention to the unreliability of the narrator and the irony of Machado’s multi-layered narratives and literary expressions.

Machado’s adaptations of English narratives and devices facilitated access for the English-speaking reader to his mature works. Although Machado’s narratives in translation for the most part had limited reception by academic, intellectual and critical readers, they met cultural and literary expectations with respect to literary genres, devices, and particular writers in the English-speaking world. Moreover, Machado’s narratives found resonance in socio-cultural and historical contexts other than their original ones, such as in Caldwell’s mid-twentieth-century feminist critique or in Bloom’s early-twentieth-first-century notion of influences and canonical writers.

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<sup>79</sup> Machado’s cross-cultural ironies, it is important to stress, are not all constructed through the narrator’s point of view, or by using the very perspective of those being criticized. These are just some of the most evident devices used by Machado in his mature fiction, particularly in his novels.

I turn away now from the critical reception of Machado's mature narratives in the English-speaking world to the one that focused on Borges' mature short narratives. By analyzing the initial reception of Borges' narratives in the English-speaking world, I will point out the particular functions of his cross-cultural ironies in the development of the Anglo-American reception; these developments open the door to the reappropriations of these ironies by critics and writers in Argentina and in Latin America, and internationally.

### **3.3 Borges in English Translation: Beyond Cosmopolitan Argentina**

I have argued that Borges' mature short narratives definitively appeared on the Anglo-American horizon of expectations during the 1960s, mainly due to the hypotexts of familiar English ironists. Within these contexts, Borges' works also had in their favor the supposed translatability of his Spanish literary expressions and devices into English. Borges found a wider readership and established an international reputation that exceeded Machado's achievements. Whether that was a result of the focus on Borges' short stories, or because of his narrative themes and evident intertextualities with European literatures, particularly with English ironists, is debatable. While the initial reception by French critics was essential to internationalizing the readership of Borges' narratives, and although French intellectuals, artists and critics conveyed important views of Borges' work within Euro-American cultural contexts, it was the reception of Anglo-American academics, critics and readers that constructed and solidified his place within the canon of world literature. Most significantly, the reception of Borges' work by English-speaking critics defined his place in relation to English ironic traditions and established his important role in adapting and further developing this ironic tradition of "minor" English ironists, such as G.K. Chesterton and Robert Louis Stevenson; these ironists, like Borges himself, frequently used "intertextual allusions [...]"

generally to prompt readers to decode the intended meaning on the basis of larger frames of reference than textual clues provided by the narrator” (Kujawska-Lis 351).

The first significant English translation of Borges’ narratives into English was published in 1962: *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*.<sup>80</sup> English critics and particularly writers (such as John Updike and John Barth) found in Borges’ narratives not only recognizable English intertextualities and devices, but ways of critically and creatively reassessing and developing their own criticism and literature. These English-speaking critics, writers and intellectuals initially placed Borges’ short narratives within Anglo-American canons of modern literature, for instance, as a possible way out for what was considered by some of them “the dead-end [...] of present American fiction” (Updike 223).

As mentioned earlier, Borges was one of the first Latin American writers to be acknowledged and respected by European and North American critics alike (Stabb, *Borges Revisited* 101). After the 1951 publication of Nestor Ibarra’s and Paul Verdevoye’s French edition of *Ficciones*, and after Anthony Kerrigan’s 1962 English version of the same book, Borges’ short narratives experienced surges of enthusiastic and complex critical and readers’ reception first in Europe and subsequently in North America. In France, Borges’ works found their place among intellectuals and philosophers: “French critics of the structuralist and poststructuralist eras were quick to claim Borges as support for their assertions about the conventional patterns human beings use to organize information” (Lindstrom 83). The more relevant English-speaking critical reception of Borges’ mature narratives started appearing during the 1960s, especially after Borges had received the Prix Formentor International in literature in 1961—in advance of publication of his narratives in English translation. At the same time, he launched his career as a professional international lecturer in the U.S.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> This book had a preface by French writer André Maurois.

<sup>81</sup> Borges was awarded the Prix Formentor International in 1961, along with Samuel Beckett. Also in 1961, Borges started lecturing outside of Argentina, at the University of Texas, sponsored by the Edward Laroque

Borges' innovative short narratives or his "theoretical fictions" were central to Euro-American expectations (Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges* 31). Borges' short stories resonated because of their idiosyncratic architextualities with the genre itself (and other genres, such as the essay), as well as in relation to their cross-cultural ironies: critics in Europe and in Anglo-America focused on Borges' ironic and creative adaptations of European writers, narratives and devices. Furthermore, in their assessments, European and North American critics re-articulated the overt relations between Borges' narratives and their contemporary societies (Europe, and the U.S.) in order to address broader cultural and intertextual relations between his fictions and reality.<sup>82</sup> Borges came to be considered by critics in these contexts as part of the canon of world literature. In "Literatura e subdesenvolvimento" [Literature and underdevelopment], Brazilian critic Candido (153) pointed out Borges' narrative primacy with respect to Euro-American culture and literature: for him, these narratives were the first Latin American narratives to be recognized within wider networks of other cultures and literatures.

Updike's critical assessment of Borges' work in his essay "The Author as Librarian" is a good model of the initial critical reception of Borges' short narratives in the English-speaking world.<sup>83</sup> For several reasons, this review of the work was based on the English translation; this practice was the norm among the critics and academicians who reviewed Borges' mature narratives.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the English-speaking critical reception and reviews

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Tinker Foundation (Lindstrom 84). His earlier lectures on English literature at Universidad de Buenos Aires were collected by Arias and Hadis in the book *Borges Profesor*, and translated into English in 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Good examples of these critical appropriations that disregarded the original context of Borges' fictional production were the notions of authorship and readership in poststructuralist theories of writers such as Roland Barthes and Maurice Blanchot. These were in direct or indirect association with Borges' short narratives.

<sup>83</sup> This essay was first published in *The New Yorker* magazine in 1965. It represents initial interpretations by North-American critics, but also by North American writers and intellectuals such as literary critics John Barth, John Ashbery, and Williams Gass, among others.

<sup>84</sup> Updike (223) pointed out two academic and one commercial edition of Borges' works as the only complete books by the Argentinean writer then available in English translation: University of Texas' *Dreamtigers and Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* (both in 1964); and Grove's *Ficciones* (1962). Updike also refers to *Borges, the Labyrinth Maker* (1965), a translation of Argentinean critic Ana María Barrenechea's *La expresión de la*

of Borges' narratives placed them among the modern classics of the canon of world literature: Updike, for instance, related Borges to Kafka and Hemingway. More significantly, North-American critics situated Borges' fictions within the late twentieth-century discussion of the "technical crisis" of literary expression within English-speaking literature of the time; some critics saw them as possible revisions and developments of "literature itself", that is, of North-American literature (Updike 223). With his suggestion that Borges' essays in *Other Inquisitions* gratified American readers "by the generous amount of space devoted to writers of the English language", Updike was reinforcing the criteria that define world literature vis-à-vis the Anglo-American tradition (227). Finally, Updike and other English-speaking critics emphasize the evident hypotexts of English writers within Borges' prose for two reasons: first, to engage English-speaking readers and to publicize Borges' narratives to a wider audience, beyond academics and intellectuals; and second, to establish critical comparisons and intertextual relations between Borges, an Argentinean writer, and more familiar writers within English-speaking critics' horizons of expectation. In his review, Updike then undertakes a brief analysis of the innovations proposed by Borges in reassessing English ironic narratives and devices; this included reference to Chesterton's work and the narratives and cultural devices of other "*fin-de-siècle* and Edwardian giants" (227). In considering Borges' narratives alongside other modern writers (such as Kafka), Updike concludes that "[a]s critic and artist both, Borges mediates between the post-modern present and the colourful, prolific, and neglected pre-moderns" (228). From Updike's perspective, Borges adapted and renovated narratives and devices by nineteenth-century English ironists for broader twentieth-century Euro-American literatures—rather than for specific early and cosmopolitan twentieth-century Argentinean culture.

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*irrealidad en la obra de Borges* (first published in 1957), a study of Borges' mature narratives that helped, to a certain extent, shape the initial critical and academic reception of Borges' work in North-America.

In his 1965 essay, Updike also highlighted two of Borges' mature short narratives, "La espera" and "La biblioteca de Babel", arguing that Borges had really excelled as a writer in the short-story genre (238): "The great achievement of his art is his short stories." By analyzing these two stories and comparing them to Hemingway's (242) and Kafka's (244) narratives, Updike immediately places Borges—an almost unknown writer outside Argentina and limited intellectual and academic circles at the time—within the canon of world literature because of his ability to write in the style of North American and European writers.

For my purposes, Updike points out hypotexts of English ironists within Borges' fictions for one reason: in order to place Borges' narratives as a part of the development of more specific Anglo-American literatures to be "admired and emulated" by English-speaking readers and writers: "In resounding the note of the marvelous last struck in English by Wells and Chesterton, in permitting infinity to enter and distort his [Borges'] imagination, he has lifted fiction away from the flat earth where most of our novels and short stories still take place" (245). Updike thus corroborates a certain "sense of timelessness" (235) in Borges' narratives that was substantiated by earlier and later translators, such as Di Giovanni, of his narratives into English.

To an extent, Updike also acknowledged the original Argentinean society and culture of Borges' narratives, suggesting that the writer's supposed detachment with respect to European literatures was a potential geoliterary issue (236). Consequently, Updike briefly compared Borges' to Machado's place within European cultures and literatures (238), suggesting possible critical comparisons between these two writers in a strictly Latin American cultural context, particularly in relation to their intertextual relations with European writers. For Updike, the works of Machado (in their "absolute skepticism"—238) and Borges suggested that "[p]erhaps Latin America [...] re-enact[ed] the intellectual patterns of ancient Greece" (236-8), in the sense that, in adapting European genres, narratives and devices for



Latin America, their works seemed “inverted and frightful” (238). Updike considered Machado and Borges to be ironic and geographically misplaced revisionist readers of English ironists. He points out that the Brazilian Machado’s and the Argentinean Borges’ narratives were received in the original English culture of their literary models as different and unusual forms of narrative. Updike judged that—using non-English languages—they critically and culturally adapted writers and devices, and de-naturalized conventional readings of more central authors within the English-speaking world. In summary, Machado and Borges thus renewed and (re)created the English ironists and ironic narratives for Anglo-American cultural contexts. Although these two Latin American authors were considered eccentric writers in Updike’s critical essay, nonetheless, both found resonance among English-speaking critics in relation to their adaptations of more recognizable English writers.

The majority of other early reviews of Borges’ short narratives are similar in tone to that of Updike’s 1965 critical essay. Particularly those critics writing in North America, such as Alfred Kazin, George Steiner, and Paul de Man, typically reinforced Updike’s views vis-à-vis Borges’ peculiar adaptations of English writers and similarly compared his narratives and devices with those of certain English ironists (Alazraki 15). These early English-speaking critics and academics characterized Borges as “no solamente como uno de los grandes escritores del siglo, sino, además como un ‘maestro moderno’ sin cuyo nombre el mapa de la literatura contemporánea no podría cartografiarse en su totalidad” [not only as one of the great writers of the (twentieth) century, but also as a ‘modern master’ without whom the map of contemporary literature could not be traced in its entirety] (15). Furthermore, others attested to Borges’ place within Euro-American narratives via his obvious dialectical relations with the English language: these included translators, such as Di Giovanni, and later critics who reviewed his work in the original and in English translation. Borges’ literary style and expression—described by Updike (245) as economic, tactful and courageous—both in

the Spanish and in the English translation, were suggested as possible models for mid-twentieth-century and later English-speaking writers, rather than as a model exclusively for Argentinean or Latin American writers. Borges' cosmopolitan early twentieth-century Argentinean society, in spite of being at times mentioned to emphasize his "oddity" (233) within broader Euro-American contexts, was usually overshadowed by the Anglo-American horizon of expectations.

In the English-speaking critical and academic reception of Borges' narratives, his role as a twentieth-century Argentinean writer was neglected in favor of situating him as an "oddity" within the canon of world literature. By contrast to the English-speaking critical reception of Machado's narratives, which usually restricted the Brazilian writer to comparisons with his chosen English literary models (Shakespeare and Sterne), Borges' narratives were usually compared to unconventional writers; this included those within Anglo-American literatures (H.G. Wells and G.K. Chesterton), as well as to modern writers from the canon of world literature (Kafka and Hemingway). In no way did these comparisons limit Borges' narratives, since they usually appeared in order to convey the place of his works as part of the literary experience of the English-speaking world.

Furthermore, in contrast to the critical reception of Machado's long narratives in the English-speaking world, and also in contrast to the early Argentinean critical reception which preferred Borges' poetry over his prose, initial Anglo-American critics celebrated Borges' short narratives, in particular the innovative stories collected in *Ficciones*. Borges' short narratives led the way to broader critical assessments of his works within Euro-American cultures and literatures.

The critical reception within the English-speaking world shifts the focus away from the socially and politically negative reception of Borges' narratives in Argentina and in Latin America (for instance, by Sábato and Fernández Retamar) to more receptive and

cosmopolitan assessments and appropriations of his works by a wider set of Latin American critics, readers and writers. Critics in multiple cultural contexts, for example, Uruguayan critic Rodríguez Monegal, and Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, eventually reassessed and re-evaluated Borges' work, and at the same time the critics' own national criticism and narratives. Yet this revision also took place much later and in a more peaceful environment, after the divisiveness of the Cold War and associated social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s under Brazilian and Argentinean dictatorships had ended.

Updike himself (236) suggested that Borges was "European in everything except the detachment with which he views European civilization, as something intrinsically strange". Indeed, this English-speaking critical reception established Borges as an example of an eccentric and culturally dislocated writer, a role similar to that assigned to Machado. Nevertheless, in contrast to Machado, Borges' narrative innovations were considered modern twentieth-century adaptations and developments of earlier English ironic traditions of which Borges himself was considered an important part. The English hypotexts and the polyphonic dimensions of Borges' short stories and theoretical fictions thus "returned home" to the English-speaking world as renewed cultural and literary devices and narrative models.

Borges' adaptations of English ironists, alongside the dialectical relations he proposed between Spanish and English literary expressions (favoring the conciseness and focus of particular English writers over the baroque style of canonical Spanish authors), combined to propel his short narratives into major literary works in the English-speaking world, and also in other European and American countries. Furthermore, Borges' short narratives found resonance in these cross-cultural contexts, particularly with respect to the development of various philosophical, critical and narrative traditions.<sup>85</sup> In contrast to Machado, whose

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<sup>85</sup> Borges' works were central, for instance: in relation to structuralism and post-structuralism, in French culture, as mentioned before, in the works of philosophers such as Foucault; to notions of authorship and readership, among French intellectuals; and to the development of narrative devices within the English-speaking world, as exemplified by Updike's critical essay.

intertextualities with English ironists limited the critical and academic reception of his narratives primarily to his own literary models, Borges' narratives found a place within the canon of world literature via the positive reception in the English-speaking world, after translation into English. Nevertheless, in spite of the evident differences between the critical reception of Machado's and Borges' fictions in the English-speaking world, the mature narratives of these two writers in English translation are often seen as distinctive examples of eccentric and culturally dislocated works within international canons and in relation to transnational readers.

Comparing the evolution of the critical assessment of Machado's and Borges' narratives in English translation has furthered my critical argument in relation to the horizon of expectation of the English-speaking world. Comparing some results of the reception of the narratives of these two writers will help us establish the place (or lack of place) of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives and cross-cultural ironies within these cultural contexts.

### **3.4 The International Canon and Transnational Readers**

As previously indicated, Machado's and Borges' mature narratives in English translation started appearing, especially in North America, almost at the same time, during the 1960s. They shared a common critical cultural-literary focus that promoted their function as relevant literary works in the English-speaking world: their similar adaptations of English ironists to their original contexts. Yet the contrast in the place of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives within the canon of world literature, in a broad sense, and within English literature, in a strict sense, demonstrates how their unique adaptations of English ironists affected the critical reception of their works in English translation. In addition to the similar timing of the assessment of Machado's and Borges' narratives, critics, in their reviews,

employed similar critical and literary parameters.<sup>86</sup> Thus, a comparison of the reception of their works in the English-speaking world should obviously emphasize the critical relations between the transcultural implied readers inscribed in their mature narratives and the horizon of expectations with which they were in dialogue in these cultural contexts.

Machado and Borges were considered culturally dislocated writers within English-speaking critical frameworks, particularly in relation to the opposition between their fiction and the common sense related to this context. However Machado's narratives did not correspond to the expectations and biases of Anglo-American critics and readers in relation to Brazil as whole—and to the prospect of a proper Brazilian literature—particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. I propose that this is due to the understated tone and urban themes and settings, instead of the expected stereotypically strongly stated local color; and also due to the unconventional intertextualities with English ironists within Machado's mature narratives. In critical-literary terms, although Machado was compared favorably to certain English ironists, such as Sterne, and thus received some recognition in the English-speaking world, nevertheless, his narratives were ultimately overshadowed by the centrality of his English literary models within their original culture. In effect, Machado's mature narratives have not yet established a stable position among English-speaking readers or within the canon of world literature. One of the issues of the current debate *vis-à-vis* Machado's work is related to their place within European and hemispheric literatures, particularly in comparing them to the narratives of Borges and other transnational writers; in addition to Sterne, critics have compared his work to that of Voltaire, Flaubert and Dostoyevsky, among others. For example, in "Machado de Assis' Reception and the Transformation of the Modern European Novel", Fitz compares Machado's to Flaubert's work. By contrast, Borges' mature short

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<sup>86</sup> About the place of the two writers *vis-à-vis* the canon of world literature see Perrot in "The Place of Machado de Assis in the Present", Moreira in "O lugar de Machado de Assis na república mundial das letras", Dubatti in "Jorge Luis Borges en el canon occidental", and Carilla in "La difusión internacional de Borges".

narratives initially surprised English-speaking critics, who were then not familiar with Latin American narratives, and particularly Argentinean writers. In 1967, for instance, critic Francisco Vera went as far as suggesting that “Argentina has no national literature” (quoted in Carilla 79). Other English-speaking critics, nonetheless, recognized the lack of knowledge with respect to Latin American writers in general: for instance, Huberman in the introduction to *Fifty Great Essays* 1964 (quoted in Carilla 79). However, Borges’ work has advanced to international recognition and maintained quite a stable position in that canon.

Machado and Borges are viewed also in historical terms as examples of unconventional and culturally dislocated writers within Euro-American geographies, cultures and literatures and as precocious modern writers, in relation to Latin American new narratives. Some argue that Machado also anticipated certain narrative innovations, such as the modern interplay between narration and the expectations of conventional readers, his mistrust of language and the use of perspective to convey irony. Borges anticipated and contributed to major trends in Euro-American literatures, criticism and philosophy, such as structuralism and post-structuralism. In geographical terms, Machado and Borges came from marginalized places within the English-speaking horizon of expectations (Brazil and Argentina), as well as from cultures virtually unknown by critics and readers within these contexts and these times, the early 1960s.

During the 1990s following his death in 1986, Borges was transformed by readers, critics, writers and intellectuals into a best-selling writer in the canon of world literature, as well as, according to critics, almost into a “pop-star” (Toro 53).<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of differences in the critical reception of their works, I judge that Machado’s and Borges’ narratives found the requisite positive critical and academic reception in the English-speaking

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<sup>87</sup> Borges’ work has been related to and used by artists such as the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard and others. Looking back on his life, we see that the author had been regularly invited to a number of places (from Brazil to Japan) and universities around the world (from Cambridge to Crete) in order to receive international literary prizes and commendations.

world to elevate their standing and to enhance later critical and readers' perceptions of them in Europe and also in Anglo and Latin America.

As acknowledged in the last section, the critical reception of Machado's narratives reached a decisive stage in the English-speaking world with Caldwell's study *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis* (1960). The most important critical studies of Machado's narratives, nonetheless, were produced in Brazil, particularly after the 1960s; these works in Portuguese essentially left Machado outside of the main developments in Latin American literary and critical studies not only in North America, but also in broader Euro-American cultural contexts. Additionally, Machado was overlooked by North American critics of the so-called Latin American "Boom" of the 1960s, along with "the relative 'disappearance' of Brazil" more generally in this context (Fitz, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 17). Consequently, Machado was disregarded by publishers and potential readers in the English-speaking world. According to Fitz in "The Reception of Machado de Assis in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s" (33), only recently have Machado's narratives been discovered and praised by English-speaking critics such as Susan Sontag, Harold Bloom and Michael Wood.<sup>88</sup> In the 1980s following up on Caldwell's 1960 study, critical studies appeared that challenged the approach of some English-speaking critics, particularly those of the English critic John Gledson. In contrast to the majority of the reception of Machado's work in the English-speaking world, Gledson's work does not focus exclusively on the English intertextualities within Machado's narratives or Machado's place within broader cultural and literary traditions. His studies (for instance, *Machado de Assis: Ficção e história* 1986) have been published in Brazil and praised by important Brazilian critics of Machado's work (such as Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz), particularly with respect to their deeper socio-historical

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<sup>88</sup> Fitz himself has critically considered and analyzed Machado's place within the canon of world literature, and even in relation to Latin American literatures. For example, Fitz ("The Reception of Machado de Assis in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s") has studied the evolution of the critical reception of Machado's work within North-American cultural contexts.

analyses of unreliable narrators in Machado's mature narratives, initially identified by North American critic Caldwell (Schwarz, *Seqüências brasileiras* 107).

The unreliable narrators in Machado's work are often associated with his cross-cultural irony: they are a resource used by ironists to assume and criticize the point of view of others, and thus to criticize society. Sterne, for instance, parodies various discourses in his *Tristram Shandy*, with the aim of satirizing "human pretensions, not just personally but culturally, as in the forms of academic, philosophical and theological reason" (Bell 109). Machado was also interested in satirizing human pretensions, but his characters were rooted in Brazilian reality, with all the contradictions of that society. The unreliability of Machado's narrators is central, primarily because his major works, especially *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and *Dom Casmurro*, are constructed from the point of view of the target of the critique. This target also allows for discoveries such as Caldwell's in relation to gender issues.<sup>89</sup>

In contrast to the critical reception of Machado's narratives by European and North American critics, it is difficult to map or even highlight definitive turning points in the critical reception of Borges' short stories because of their variety and quantity. According to Arturo Echavarría (Toro, *El Siglo De Borges* 18), Borges' work has been critically studied and modified throughout the last century, in critical studies that ranged from stylistic, semiotic and language-oriented studies to postmodern and postcolonial approaches. More importantly, much like the significant later critical reception of Machado's work in Brazil and also in the English-speaking world, Borges' narratives started to be assessed by English-speaking critics in relation to socio-cultural, historical and geographical parameters, particularly by Daniel Balderston (28-9).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> The same argument can be made with respect to the preliminary findings in regard to racial issues in Machado's work (see Flynn, Calvo-González and de Souza).

<sup>90</sup> Echavarría (Toro, *El siglo de Borges* 20) also mentions early works by Jaime Alazraki (*La prosa narrativa de Jorge Luis Borges* 1968) and later works by Sarlo (1993) with the same critical stances.



A closer examination of the development of the English-speaking critical reception of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies will help to contextualize the development of subsequent Brazilian and Argentinean criticism after the 1960s. This will also help us to analyze and understand later Latin American cultural-literary re-appropriations of Machado's and Borges' narratives.

### **3.5 Developing Reception in the English-Speaking World**

As I have previously argued, English-speaking critics assessed Machado's and Borges' mature narratives in relation to their intertextualities with English ironists. I further argued that their unique adaptations of this critical strategy resulted in the asymmetrical critical reception between the two writers. Machado's cross-cultural ironies were overshadowed by the devices of his major English predecessors, while Borges' cross-cultural ironies were seen as natural evolutions of certain English ironic traditions for a broader readership. This was the argument advanced by the American writer Updike, who saw in Borges an eccentric, original potential contributor to further development of these ironic narratives.

Moreover, Machado's mature narratives were also related by English-speaking critics to their own critical dialogues within Machado's time and place—and to contemporary readers and their unique social values and literary expectations. By contrast, Borges' short narratives were read as if they were detached from any relation with their original context, in spite of the fact that Borges' cultural ironies were also constructed in relation to the values and expectations of his own cosmopolitan and contemporary Argentinean critics and readers.

Gledson's works from the 1980s onwards focused on Machado's use of irony and unreliable narrators in relation to Brazilian society, whereas assessments of Borges' cross-cultural ironies by Anglo-American critics were instrumental in de-nationalizing (or

internationalizing) Borges' narratives. They furthered the perceived distance between the writer and his own socio-cultural contexts denounced by contemporary local critics while the cross-cultural reception of Borges' unconventional irony opened his narratives to a broader readership in different cultures, including broader hemispheric contexts.

As a result, important revisionist critical reception of Borges' mature narratives developed—and is still developing—in the English-speaking world. The fact that Borges' cross-cultural ironies found resonance in different cultural and literary contexts and with different readers within these contexts corroborates the writer's own view vis-à-vis the reading process,<sup>91</sup> and corresponds to the transcultural implied reader within his narratives: the cosmopolitan and knowledgeable Euro-American reader (initially represented by early twentieth-century elites of Buenos Aires).

A comparison of the critical reception of English-speaking critics with that of local (Brazilian and Argentinean) critics, enables a more effective contextualization of Latin American writers' reappropriations and developments of these authors' narratives and devices after the 1960s (as I will do in chapter 4). This comparison is relevant particularly with respect to the multiple re-interpretations of Machado's and Borges' ironic discourses. In this context, the question remains as to how this critical reception in Anglo-European and American contexts affected the construction and the development of a Latin American identity through literature.

In the English-speaking reception, critics compared Machado and Borges to more conventional English-speaking writers, establishing a place for the writers' narratives within the canon of world literature and finding intertextual connections between the works of these writers and of writers in broader literary contexts; thereby, these critics eschewed the limitations of narrower comparisons between Machado and Borges to other writers in their

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<sup>91</sup> For Borges, for example, there are as many canonical writers as there are readers willing to respectfully read "classic" books (quoted in Schwartz 275).

original national societies and cultures or even within the region of what was being constructed as Latin America. The critical placement of Machado's narratives within the canon of world literature, particularly in relation to his English models, would thus place them under the shadow of major English writers, such as Shakespeare, creating a perhaps unbridgeable gap between Machado and a potential wider readership within Euro-American cultural contexts.

The commercial success of these writers in the English-speaking world occurred from the 1960s onwards. This reception developed in parallel to the evolution of the literary and commercial phenomenon of the Latin American Boom. Particular assessments of Machado's and Borges' narratives by English-speaking critics therefore affected broader interpretations of their works by critics in other cultures, including within Brazil and Argentina, and also in the larger region of what was coming to be understood at the time as Latin America. Consequently, Latin American critics and writers, particularly the ones working from North American institutions (Carlos Fuentes and José Donoso, among others), would begin relating the evolution of the new Latin American narratives to Borges' literary project, and also to Machado's early narrative achievements.

The next chapter will focus on consequent reappropriations of Machado's and Borges' narratives and devices by Latin American critics, readers and writers. My purpose will be to compare the role of English ironic intertextualities within Machado's and Borges' works in relation to the reception of critics and readers across North and Latin America.

## **4. Transnational Readings: The Impact of the Anglo-American Reception on Latin America**

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the critical reception of Machado's and Borges' works in Brazilian and Argentinean literary circles parallels the reception among critics writing about the Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s. The aim is to illustrate the role of irony in transforming these two writers into the precursors of Latin American new narratives as they were defined in the second half of the twentieth century, both in cultural-aesthetic and in institutional-publishing terms.

In evaluating aesthetic parallels between the works of Machado and Borges and Latin American narratives of the 1960s, we find that they and the Boom writers not only rejected French-related cultural norms associated with realism, but they also broke the conventional patterns of literary relations in Euro-American cultures. As documented earlier, Machado's and Borges' narratives were translated into English and published in cultural contexts well beyond Brazil and Argentina; their reception in those contexts broadened gradually from the initial academic and literary circles. In this final chapter, I will analyze critical relations between these writers and later developments in the Latin American new narratives, through their reception. The focus will be on the complex hemispheric critical reception network of Machado's and Borges' own cross-cultural adaptations of English models. This reception network consists of North American academic and literary critics, juxtaposed with critical assessments of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies by Latin American writers and critics; through this process a more comprehensive Latin American identity through culture, specifically through literature, was constructed.

In the 1960s, the cultural and literary context of the U.S. was particularly attentive to Latin American writers and literatures; this was the outcome of the recently created Latin American studies programs within universities, largely a result of two decades of U.S.

government funding to create specific area studies specializations. According to Deborah Cohn “[t]he surge in attention to Latin America in the 1960s also rippled through the U.S. academy. Following World War II, government and philanthropic support for area studies programs flourished [...] when the Cuban Revolution took place, few universities had Latin American Studies programs—a situation that changed dramatically over the next few years” (95). Using government funding, academics in the U.S. created a new field called Latin American Studies, which they dominated during the second half of the twentieth century. Their interest was drawn not only by geographic and cultural proximity, but by other historical and political factors. As Cohn observed: “During the 1960s and 1970s, fears about the Cold War in general and anxieties about revolutionary fervor in Cuba and throughout Spanish America were high in the United States. They resulted in the Alliance for Progress, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban missile crisis, U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, strict enforcement of the McCarran-Walter Acts immigration blacklist, and numerous other phenomena that fostered anti-Americanism in Latin America, especially in intellectual circles” (2).

In the second half of the twentieth century, in the aftermath of World War II when European powers were weakened, dozens of colonies across the globe struggled to become independent nation-states. Latin America was unique in that all the nation-states were formally or politically independent yet they remained economically dependent; this was the case for Cuba during the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s. When considering the subsequent policies of the United States with respect to other hemispheric countries, Cohn situates the diffusion of Latin American literature in the U.S. “within the context of the Cold War, when Spanish American writers’ literary projects and political aspirations simultaneously clashed with and fed into the agendas of U.S. Cold War nationalism” (2). As Cohn suggests, North American institutions were supportive of Latin American critics and writers in political or

professional exile from dictatorships, which were often supported by the U.S. Government, clandestinely. Clearly, the cultural context for the reception of Machado's and Borges' works in North America was indeed complex. In this context, a widespread desire to understand Latin American cultures ignited the beginning of the Boom of Latin American literature in translation.

Through the examination of Machado's and Borges' fictional works and the subsequent reception of them by local and English-speaking critics, this thesis has assessed multiple levels of ironic dialogues established by and about the two authors. In this chapter, I use two lenses to focus on major developments in the Latin American critical reception of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies after its reception in the English-speaking world. First, I will focus on developments in the critical reception by Brazilian and Argentinean critics, as those developments differ from the reception by critics focusing on the Latin American Boom of the 1960s. In Brazil and Argentina, the English-speaking reception of the two authors performed different roles, leading to innovative interpretations of Machado's and Borges' narratives in relation to their original society; in the 1990s, this occurred with Roberto Schwarz, in the case of Machado, and Beatriz Sarlo, in the case of Borges.

Second, I will turn to the reception by Latin American critics associated with the Boom. These critics identified Machado and Borges as precursors of a broader Latin American narrative and cultural tradition under construction in the second half of the twentieth century. In the process of locating Machado and Borges as precursors, the Boom critics tended to overlook locality in favor of transnationalism: instead of Brazilian and Argentinean, these authors were conceived retroactively as Latin American writers. In this context, the critical reception of Machado's and Borges' fiction in the English-speaking world has a central place for two reasons: first, it partially informed the Boom critics'

assessments as they were read in the same historical context and usually within the same academic institutions; second, it informed these critics' assessments primarily by reconstructing Machado and Borges as transnational, i.e., Latin American writers.

In focusing on the Brazilian and Argentinean, and subsequently on the Latin American reception after the English-speaking reception, the aim is to understand the role played by Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies in the creation of Latin America as a geoliterary space, as well as of a Latin American identity through culture, as was the project of writers such as Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez.

#### **4.1 Machado's Reception in Brazil after the North-American Reception**

The critical reception of Machado's mature narratives in the English-speaking world has performed important roles within Brazilian cultural and literary contexts since the 1960s. The hypotexts of English ironists within Machado's work resulted in the identification of him as a transnational, yet unconventional writer in relation to the canon of world literature. As explained in Chapter 3, although Machado had enjoyed a central place within Brazilian literature since the nineteenth century, North American critics of the twentieth century—such as Grossman, Caldwell and Fitz—played an essential role in the critical reception of Machado's mature narratives in broader cross-cultural contexts. These Anglo-American academics and critics translated Machado's work into English, and simultaneously culturally adapted them to English-speaking audiences: they did so by highlighting hypotexts of recognizable English ironic models in his narratives. From these positive assessments of the English hypotexts in Machado's work, the subsequent Brazilian reception of Machado's narratives undertook new developments.

Earlier local contemporary critics had two primary views of Machado's work: first, they were seen as mere imitations; second, they were viewed as simply a continuation of English traditions, as English-speaking critics in the 1960s tended to conceive of his

narratives. Somewhat belatedly, the evident hypotext of English ironists in Machado's narratives began to be understood along new critical paths when they were studied and analyzed by Brazilian critics not only for the parallels they produced between Machado's narratives and those of his models, but also for Machado's specific adaptation of these English writers in relation to Brazilian society.

Following the 1960s North American reception, the critical reception within Brazil focused on Machado's cross-cultural ironies with respect to their relations with Brazilian social prejudices and cultural and literary expectations of Machado's time. In their reception, English-speaking critics highlighted Machado's debt to the unreliable narrators of eighteenth-century English ironists, with respect to his formal self-awareness of his own readers, largely elites, who typically did not question the veracity of the storyteller. Later Brazilian critics of the mid-twentieth century emphasized the role of those narrators mainly in relation to specific socio-historical contexts of nineteenth-century Brazil, i.e., class, race, gender, and other identity traits. For example in 1952, North American critic West described the translated *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* by stating that “[s]uperficially it is a formal exercise imitating the technique Sterne perfected in ‘Tristram Shandy’ [...] but Machado had a psychological insight of his own, and incisive wit, and, surprisingly, an aristocratic toughness of mind that saved him from any imitation” (71). In Brazil, the same hypotext was transformed—after the English-speaking reception—into a device to highlight Machado's irony toward his own original society: what was perceived earlier by Brazilian critics as a weakness of Machado's narratives, the “humorismo inglês” [English humor], was now seen by critics such as Schwarz as exactly what “formaliza e expõe em suas conseqüências dinamismos decisivos da realidade brasileira” [formalizes and exposes in its consequences the decisive dynamism of Brazilian reality] (Assis, *Obra completa* 189).



As analyzed in Chapter 2 in a discussion of the reception of his work in the nineteenth century, Machado's narratives were regularly praised for their sense of humor, tone and the way they posed critical problems with respect to genre constraints. For instance, in 1881 Abreu posed the question: "As *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* serão um romance?" [Are the *Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* a novel?] (U. Machado *Roteiro da consagração* 129). In the same year commenting on the same book, Duarte pointed to what he considered Machado's well-tempered humor (133). Other early twentieth-century Brazilian critics also focused on the same literary stylistic problems, with a few but notable exceptions.<sup>92</sup> Only after the 1960s, particularly following Candido's critical studies on Brazilian literature in general, and on Machado's work in particular, did Machado begin to be critically regarded within Brazil not only as a great and resourceful writer within the nation's literary canon, but primarily as a social ironist.

The reception by Brazilian critics of the second half of the twentieth-century thus started to reconstruct and reinvent Machado as an ironic critic of his socio-historical surroundings. In this context, the English-speaking reception played an important role. Reconstructing Machado's implied readers, English-speaking critics of the second half of the twentieth century emphasized unique patterns of communication inscribed in his narratives that were different from those highlighted by nineteenth-century Brazilian critics. In sum, English-speaking critics saw in Machado's English hypotexts an invitation to engage in the author's narrative and to produce meaning vis-à-vis the ironic traditions related to his models. Unlike their nineteenth-century Brazilian counterparts, these English-speaking critics did not view these models as being necessarily superior to Machado's hypertext.

Brazilian critics from the 1960s, and particularly from the 1990s, dramatically shifted their focus; thereafter they analyzed Machado's narratives from a socio-historical

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<sup>92</sup> For example, Astrojildo Pereira in his 1959 *Machado de Assis: Ensaio e apontamentos avulsos* was one of the first to point out the critical relations of Machado's narratives with Brazilian socio-historical issues.

perspective, simultaneously engaging with his English hypotexts. Roberto Schwarz's *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo* [A master on the periphery of capitalism] (1990) was the first Brazilian work to find a balance between Machado's narrative innovations, and his own socio-historical and geographical constraint (Gledson *Novo Machado* 239). Gledson summarized this balance between literary and cultural irony in Machado's work by focusing on the inseparability of Sterne's stylistic innovations (269) from Machado's appropriation, i.e., the use of the narrator's point of view as a member of the upper classes of nineteenth-century Brazil (270). For Gledson, Schwarz's interpretation established that the unreliable narrator of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* intrinsically represents the unreliability of the whole Brazilian elite of the nineteenth century (270), and that the use of this device was Machado's "toque de gênio" [touch of genius] (269). In Schwarz's own words: "[d]igamos enfim que Machado não inventou a técnica do narrador volúvel, de que entretanto se apropriou com discernimento propriamente genial, a que se prende a complexidade dos romances da segunda fase. Uma intuição decisiva lhe disse que o humorismo autocomplacente de Sterne se podia adaptar ao universo da dominação de classe brasileira, que ficava transposto de maneira elegante, impiedosa, rica em referências cardeais" [let us say that Machado did not come up with the technique of the unreliable narrator, which he appropriated with his own wit, and which is tied to the complexity of the novels of his second phase. A decisive intuition told him that the self-complacent humor of Sterne could be adapted to the universe of class dominance in Brazil, that remained thus transposed in an elegant and ruthless way, and with crucial references] (214).

In the 2005 "A Brazilian Breakthrough", Schwarz asserts that for an English-speaking readership the narrator of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* is an important achievement by a writer in a peripheral context: "Technically, we have a pastiche of whimsical narratives of the eighteenth century [...] Machado, however, adapted with outstanding artistic intelligence

eighteenth-century explorations of human spontaneity to his nineteenth-century exploration of the irresponsibility and self-indulgence granted to Brazilian elites by their ownership of slaves, and its attendant set of more or less enforced relations of personal subjection” (102-3). For Schwarz, this seemingly contradictory combination of European models and Brazilian reality was directly connected to ideals of progress in nineteenth-century Brazil: “Time can become so uneven, when it is stretched far across space, that artistic forms which are already dead in the first may still be alive in the second” (92). In this asymmetrical context, it would be easy to rearrange ideas as well as literary models. The question would be “how [do] modern forms fare in regions that do not exhibit the social conditions in which they originated and in some sense presume”? (2) Schwarz proposes that Machado found in the unconventional eighteenth-century English ironists a vehicle for his critique of “Patron–client relations, with their peculiar set of intricacies and issues linked to personal fidelity, moral indebtedness and humiliation” (99). In summary, Machado’s value is now located in what I have termed cross-cultural irony: “Machado’s unreliable narrator has a distinctly nineteenth-century class substance, and as a device this is its secret. Brás Cubas is a social type, as partial and as situated as his characters, whose world he inhabits” (104).

Schwarz, Gledson and other critics, such as Silviano Santiago, are considered by current scholars as heirs of Caldwell’s perspective. For example, Abel Barros Baptista named Caldwell’s perspective “o paradigma do pé atrás” [the “on your guard”/or “at a suitable distance” paradigm] (quoted in Gledson, *Novo Machado* 280). For Baptista, it was only after Caldwell’s study that the role of Machado’s narrators was critically examined by critics; they were particularly drawn to Caldwell’s attempt to absolve the character Capitu from the indictment of Bento Santiago (the narrator of *Dom Casmurro*), wherein she establishes the groundwork for this Brazilian socio-historical perspective. According to Baptista, critics such as Schwarz established in Machado’s work certain authorial intentions with respect to social

criticism, in the same way that Caldwell examined the narrative in order to interpret some of the deeper ironies of Machado's novel (285).

Therefore, the English-speaking critical perspective, represented here primarily by Caldwell, and the evolving Brazilian one, represented primarily by Candido in the 1960s, eventually converged into a more complex and relevant critical paradigm in the studies of scholars such as Schwarz in the 1990s. For this reason, I have argued for the relevance of Anglo-American critical readings for the development of the subsequent reception of Machado's work by Brazilian critics. The patterns of communication inscribed in Machado's mature narratives benefited from the viewpoint of cosmopolitan readers within broader cultural contexts, at a suitable distance (or "com o pé atrás"); such readers could more clearly see through his ironies and could appreciate the interplay between Machado's implied and real readers of his own time. These transnational implied readers renewed Machado's cross-cultural ironies for the delayed emergence of implied readers in later Brazilian cultural contexts. This network of reception enabled Brazilian critics to add socio-historical and geographical perspectives to their analysis of Machado's cultural adaptations of these specific ironic traditions.

Brazilian critics, especially after the internationalization of Machado's work, interpreted his cross-cultural ironies by proposing dialectical relations between the English-speaking reception and local studies on Brazilian society. In effect, later Brazilian critics read Machado's narratives in order to re-invent the author as a genuine, yet ironic Brazilian writer, and a literary master closely related to his peripheral socio-cultural context of the nineteenth century; thus locally, his reputation was no longer related exclusively to English ironic literary models. In his 2010 "Former Colonies: Local or Universal?" Schwarz asserts that Machado's importance has been contradictorily assessed by critics in different contexts: "For one party, the secret of his literary value depends upon the proximity, resemblance, and

difference regarding the classics of the canon. For the other, the value results from his faithfulness—let's say his productive faithfulness—to the challenges of the local tradition and the local society" (100).

To confirm Schwarz's view on this critical division between local and international reception, reassessments of Machado's narratives in the English-speaking world have still focused on two essential issues: first, the "misplacement" of Machado in certain literary traditions; and second, as a "miraculous" precursor of modern narratives, particularly of Latin American new narratives of the twentieth century. The most widely circulated and arguably exemplary case is Bloom's 2002 *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, in which Machado is placed within the canon of world literature, again defined by his own English ironic precursors: "Machado de Assis is a great ironist, in the mode of his favorite novel, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*" (675).

From Bloom's perspective, Machado shares with Borges the fact that both are identified as Latin American successors of Sterne. Other English-speaking critics reinforce Bloom's perspective: most of them have primarily argued for Machado's importance within wider Euro-American literary traditions, a position that had led them to undertake broader comparisons to construct a defensible place in the canon of world literature for this unconventional nineteenth-century Brazilian writer. Before Bloom, Fitz in his 1998 "Machado de Assis, Borges e Clarice: A evolução da nova narrativa latino-americana" argues for Machado's role as a modern writer and as a precursor of the Latin American new narratives of the twentieth-century. That role is anticipated by other North-American critics, such as Dixon in his 1989 "The Modernity of Machado de Assis", and MacAdam in his 1987 *Textual Confrontations: Comparative Readings in Latin American Literatures*: for these critics, Machado is not only a precocious modern writer, but also the inventor of the "modern Latin American narrative" (MacAdam *Textual Confrontations* 22).

In *Por um novo Machado de Assis*, Gledson, the English critic writing mostly for English-speaking readers, questioned these placements of Machado among early developments in Latin American narratives; he suggested that Machado's narratives proposed developments in nineteenth-century realist traditions (280), rather than any non-realistic or fantastic traditions (such as those related to later developments in Latin American narratives of the Boom). Above all, Gledson is interested in what the writer wants to communicate to readers, particularly in the case of Machado's novel, in which "a ironia é tão generalizada que transforma as verdadeiras intenções em assunto para debate" [irony is so widespread that it transforms the (writer's) real intentions into a subject for discussion] (280). For Gledson, *Dom Casmurro* would be better understood, and more widely appreciated, if it were read as a realist novel in social terms, i.e., in the sense that it implies an overt critique of Machado's contemporary society and its class structures, in contrast to the assessments proposed by critics such as MacAdam, i.e., that of the novel as a precursor of Latin America's magical realism.

What was especially innovative in Brazilian reception of the 1990s was to identify the true literary transformation introduced by Machado during his literary career. Schwarz emphasizes that Machado was the first Brazilian writer to transfer the narrative point of view away from the victims of social injustice, which had been a realist convention, to the elite class which normalized those unjust social relations. According to Schwarz, "[t]he replacement he hit upon was unexpected and extraordinary. Instead of a narrator siding with the weak, whose pleas led nowhere, he contrived one who not only sides with social injustice and its beneficiaries, but brazenly relishes being of their party" ("A Brazilian Breakthrough" 102). By framing this viewpoint in irony, the social critique that was invisible to many during Machado's lifetime became obvious to critics after the English-speaking reception that focused on the unreliable narrator.

The repercussive effects of the English-speaking reception on Brazilian and Argentinean and Latin American writers and critics were uneven with respect to Machado and Borges; Machado's role as precursor is not as clear among Brazilian and Latin American writers and critics as that of Borges among Argentinean and Latin American writers and critics. Brazilian modernist writers of the 1920s deliberately understated Machado's relevance within Brazilian literary tradition, choosing other models and precursors in order to define their ideal of an authentic Brazilian literature.<sup>93</sup> Up until the second half of the twentieth century, Machado was still considered by some Brazilian critics as an imitator of English ironists: "Para geração modernista, dos anos 1920 e 30, ele [Machado] soava 'colonizado' na expressão de Mário de Andrade, ou 'alguém com as costas voltadas para o Brasil', na de Monteiro Lobato" [To the modernist generation, of the 1920s and 30s, he (Machado) sounded 'colonized' to use Mário de Andrade's expression, or 'someone who turned his back on Brazil' to use Monteiro Lobato's expression] (Piza 15). My view is that the major link forged between Machado's narratives and twentieth-century developments in Latin American narratives is due to the early English-speaking reception of his works that defined them as central to certain literary canons, rather than to any relation between Brazilian criticism and other Latin American writers and critics.

Similarly, a closer examination of the impact of the reception of Borges' narratives by English-speaking critics on the Argentinean reception after the 1960s, particularly in the 1990s, will shed light on the relevance of English ironic intertextualities for later hemispheric critical reassessments and creative re-appropriations of Borges' narratives.

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<sup>93</sup> The term "modernist" in Brazil is related to European artistic avant-garde of the early twentieth-century, in contrast to the use of the same term in Spanish-speaking countries; there, "modernismo" is related to symbolist and aestheticist writers of the end of the nineteenth century such as Rubén Darío reacting particularly against European Realism and Naturalism.

## 4.2 Borges' Reception in Argentina after the North-American Reception

In contrast to the Brazilian critical reception that followed Machado's readings in the English-speaking world, there were no evident paradigmatic changes in Argentinean criticism with respect to Borges' work after the Anglo-American critical reception. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Borges' short narratives were responsible for a division among critics in Argentina dating from the publication of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* in the 1940s. North American critics, such as Updike and Barth, further fuelled this critical division. These English-speaking critics and writers, mostly assessing Borges in English translation, interpretively adapted his narratives for Anglo-American readers, primarily focusing on Borges' intertextualities with English ironists. In these cultural adaptations, Borges' cross-cultural ironies were taken out of the original context: evident hypotexts of English ironists within Borges' narratives became signs of the lack of socio-cultural and historical specificity, making it possible for critics in general to focus on metafictional ironies within Borges' work, rather than ironies aimed at his original society and culture. Accordingly, critics considered Borges as a writer detached from issues of nationality and even history—both positively and negatively. For example, European critics looked at this disconnection as a positive sign of cosmopolitanism, whereas certain Latin American critics looked at it as a negative sign of elitism or worse.

Borges' narratives posed numerous critical problems for his contemporary and local critics, who narrowly focused on issues of literary originality and style. An example of this is Sábato's less than positive review after the publication of Borges' first collection of short stories, in the 1940s. However, the European cultural hypotexts within Borges' work were just one of these issues. More specifically, Borges' seemingly distant and playful narratives were seen as results of his own appropriation of English ironic models. For some local critics in the 1940s, but especially for a politically active younger generation—such as José



Hernández Arregui 1913-1974—Borges was seen as a non-committed writer and his works as art for art's sake. Stabb pointed out that writers such as Hernández Arregui, for instance, “hardly discuss literary matters but simply consider Borges an outcast because in their view he had contributed to an ‘international’ literature or because he symbolizes the cosmopolitan taste of a small circle of Buenos Aires intellectuals” (*Borges Revisited* 11). Borges’ short stories were thus considered, particularly from the 1940s until the 1970s, more related to the Buenos Aires elite of the early twentieth century, and thus to European readers, than to Argentinean (rarely Latin American) society in general. For some local critics, Borges was considered a transnational writer in a negative sense, even before the internationalization of his works following the French and the later North American critical reception of them.

Borges’ comments in the popular press, especially during the 1970s, reinforced interpretations made by those who criticized him for being disconnected from his socio-historic context; some viewed him as being politically right-wing, since he went as far as defending the dictatorship during the Dirty War (1976-1983) and associating the U.S. policy, which had supported the dictatorship in Argentina, to democracy.<sup>94</sup> The Cuban critic Fernández Retamar, for instance, stated that Borges “[h]abía prodigado declaraciones inconcebibles, y hecho nacer en nosotros una dolorosa, triste cólera” [had been effusive in his unbelievable statements, and implanted a painful, sad anger in us] (257). Borges’ political opinions and his unwillingness to engage in discussion about repression by the dictatorship generated a largely shared negative image among many Argentineans who did not necessarily read his work, and among Latin American critics such as Fernández Retamar, who knew and

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<sup>94</sup> The Dirty War, or *La Guerra Sucia*, refers to the military junta that took power from 1976-1983 and introduced a change in military ideology related to the influence of the U.S.’s National Security Doctrine, during the Cold War, over Latin American institutions: under this new ideology “[s]uspected subversives were kidnapped— sometimes under cover of night, sometimes in broad daylight— taken to secret prisons, tortured, and often killed or exiled. Information obtained during interrogation sessions led to another wave of arrests. A by-product of this process was fear, which paralyzed society and stifled protest” (Kohut and Vilella xxxix-xl).

understood his fiction, rejecting it as harmful in political terms, especially given the historical context.

In contrast to the evolving local reception, the French and the North American reception focused on qualitatively different issues: literary theories and philosophy, literary continuity and adaptation or intertextualities in a more general sense. According to Alazraki, “la perspectiva de la crítica europea y norteamericana [...] ve a Borges como ‘un maestro moderno’ y lo define, en las palabras de John Barth, como uno de ‘los viejos maestros de la narrativa del siglo XX’” [the perspective of European and North American criticism (...) sees Borges as ‘a modern master’ and defines him, in John Barth’s words, as one of ‘the old masters of twentieth-century narrative’] (12). In the critical reception of his narratives in broader Euro-American cultural contexts, Borges was re-invented as a transnational writer in a more positive light. His narratives were straightforwardly translated and adapted into various languages and cultures, included as part of narrative developments in central literary traditions (such as the ironic tradition of the writers De Quincey, Chesterton and Stevenson) and, finally, read and discussed in different literary and philosophical contexts and by a wider community of readers.

The hypotexts of English ironists within Borges’ work were transformed from a sign of socio-historical ignorance for Argentinean critics of the 1940s onwards, to a sign of belonging to certain Anglo-American narrative developments. In the process, the main contribution of the English-speaking critical reception was to adapt Borges’ narratives and to promote them to wider audiences, making possible displaced and delayed reappropriations of his works in different cultures, particularly in broader Latin American contexts of the 1960s.

Around Borges’ short narratives a complex and multi-layered set of critical assessments began to emerge from the 1960s; these attested to their relevant role in broader cultural contexts. In their enthusiasm, Borges was virtually transformed by Anglo-American

critics into a writer who was central to English literary traditions. Moreover, his narratives became popular and widely circulated along with other classics of world literature in English translation (Toro 53). Within Argentinean cultural contexts, critics still considered Borges an important and relevant writer, although a product of a cosmopolitan Buenos Aires society of the beginning of the twentieth century. The negative Argentinean reception supported Fernández Retamar's 1973 assessment; he severely criticized "Borges for his European orientation and lack of sympathy for the lower classes"—Stabb, *Borges Revisited* 112); nevertheless, in broader Latin American cultural contexts, Borges' narratives, along with his role as a transnational writer, had a different impact.

Beginning in the 1960s, rather than a change in the Argentinean critical reception of Borges' narratives, there was a change in the role played by Borges himself within more central cultural and literary contexts: Borges' cross-cultural ironies functioned in relation with Anglo-American adaptations and appropriations of them, as well as in relation with other Latin American writers' approaches to European literary traditions. Borges' ironic distancing from his literary models became an exemplary attitude for writers outside more culturally central literary traditions. In this way, Borges himself became a model for transnational writers in two different senses: as part of later developments of given Euro-American traditions; and as an ironical and dislocated reader of culturally central literary traditions and writers.<sup>95</sup>

In considering parallel developments in the English-speaking world and in Argentina, the main repercussion of the critical reception by Anglo-American critics was a matter of establishing Borges as part of the canon of world literature. Argentinean critics tended to consider these cultural appropriations by North American critics as part of Borges' own

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<sup>95</sup> Borges's narratives at the same time proposed new paths for writers such as Updike and Barth, and also challenged cosmopolitan writers and critics within eccentric cultural contexts, such as Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal, among others.

literary project, in the sense that the author himself was a cosmopolitan writer who perceived himself as part of wider Euro-American cultural traditions.

In the 1990s, Beatriz Sarlo initiated a new analytical trend with her emphasis on the local dimensions of Borges' cross-cultural narratives; Sarlo's was a reaction against the complete alienation by some critics of his narratives from their original contexts.<sup>96</sup> This development recalls Brazilian critic Schwarz's proposal with respect to Machado's narrative: to consider his cross-cultural ironies in both aesthetic and socio-historical terms. In *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (1993), Sarlo began to emphasize Borges' "links with river Plata cultural traditions and with nineteenth-century Argentina", in order to reintegrate the writer into his original context (2). This book originated with a series of lectures Sarlo gave at the University of Cambridge in 1992; it is relevant that she conceived this project for an English-speaking audience within a Latin American studies program. Sarlo confirms my claims about the English-speaking reception of Borges' work with the observation that his "reputation in the world has cleansed him of nationality" (2). Sarlo explains this phenomenon by highlighting Borges' themes that were considered "universal" by Western culture, and by the translatability of his work into English, i.e., the easy cultural and linguistic adaptation of his short stories.

Nonetheless, in her book, Sarlo boldly states that "there is no writer in Argentine literature more Argentine than Borges" (3). Much like Schwarz in relation to Machado, Sarlo poses a central question that I associate with the interpretation of Borges' cross-cultural irony: "How was it possible to write literature in Argentina, a marginal country, with an immigrant population, living in a port city, Buenos Aires?" (4). The answer would also echo that of Schwarz in relation to Machado's narratives: Borges' original socio-historical contexts allowed him, at one and the same time, to reinvent "an Argentine literary tradition" and to

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<sup>96</sup> From 1990s until more recently, studies connecting Borges to Argentina become more popular. Examples are Barili (1999), Fuente (2005), O'Ryan (2010) and Pío Del Corro (2011).

relate to Euro-American traditions with an “ironic distance” (5): “Borges reinvents a cultural past and reconstitutes an Argentine literary tradition at the same time as he is reading foreign literature” (5). According to Sarlo, Borges “is someone who constructs his originality through quotations, copies and re-writings of other texts” (5). For me, Machado’s literary project and his relation to literary models can also be summarized by this same statement. Accordingly, it was the very Argentinean society of the turn to the twentieth century that permitted Borges’ ambiguous and, in a sense, disrespectful cosmopolitan attitude in social and literary terms, primarily as a reader. It also permitted his adaptations of European literary models, as demonstrated in Chapter 1. For Sarlo, “in Borges’ cosmopolitanism is a condition that allows him to invent a strategy for Argentine literature” (5).

Further, Sarlo considers that the “marginal situation” of Argentina, and I can compare it to Machado’s Brazilian context, is “the source of our true originality” (28). Reading Borges’ “El escritor argentino y la tradición”, she proposes that his originality “is not based on local colour [...] but in the open acceptance of influences” (28). Describing Borges’ literary project through his narratives, particularly considering “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*” (discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis), Sarlo states: “if no originality is attached to the text, but only to the writing or reading of a text, the inferiority of the margins vanishes and the peripheral writer is entitled to the same claims as his or her European predecessors or contemporaries” (33). Although perceptive of “something artificial and distant” in Borges’ relation to both European and Argentinean cultures (36), Sarlo proposes that his work had a decolonizing potential: “this is the freedom of Latin Americans [...] which is upheld by the awareness of something missing” (36). Borges’ conception of literary tradition, according to Sarlo, was constituted of “versions and perversions” of literary models (42). Through this idiosyncratic approach, in particular with respect to his adaptation of English ironists (3), Borges created a national literature; reorganized local and international literary traditions

with his unconventional choice of models; and obliquely conducted a dialogue through contemporary literary theories with his fictions.

Corroborating what I perceive as developments among Argentinean critics of the 1990s such as Sarlo, critics in different cultural contexts also began to emphasize Borges' relations with other cultural and literary traditions, as well as with his own original socio-cultural contexts.<sup>97</sup> Contemporaneous to Sarlo's publication, Daniel Balderston, a North American critic writing for an English-speaking audience, effectively pursued socio-cultural, geographical and historical intertextualities in Borges' short narratives in his book *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges* (1993). In it, Balderston argues that "the interest of the stories is considerably heightened by attention to the historical and political elements" (5). In this reassessment period, developments in the critical reception by North American critics have occurred in parallel to developments in the critical reception by Argentinean critics: first, there was an increase in the perceived distance between Borges' narratives and their original contexts; and, second, there were attempts to reestablish the connections of Borges' narratives to Argentinean socio-cultural and historical traditions.

These are two parallel, and apparently contradictory, developments in the reception of Borges' narratives in multiple contexts: as a transnational writer, his works can easily be related to those from different traditions; and, his works can be read also from a national perspective, as a result of his original Argentinean socio-historical context. I argue that Borges' very connection to the cosmopolitan Argentinean society of the early twentieth-century resulted in readings that place his works beyond Argentina. For my purposes, it is this unconventional position as, ambiguously, a national and transnational writer in dialogue with multiple cultures, which identifies Borges as the primary precursor who established the

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<sup>97</sup> More recently, Mateos in the 2010 book *Borges y los argentinos* has compiled articles, poems and short stories that are directly related to Argentina.

critical framework for the literary innovation that came to be identified in the 1960s Boom as the new Latin American narrative.

In parallel, some developments in the English-speaking reception of Borges' narratives, especially after the 1990s, focused on earlier views of Borges as a transnational writer, almost set apart from his society, a writer who formed part of certain English ironic traditions. As in the case of Machado, Bloom is the main example of such a critic. First, in the 1994 work *The Western Canon*, Borges was placed among writers whom Bloom considers the founders of twentieth century Hispanic narratives, along with Pablo Neruda and Alejandro Carpentier, adding that “[o]f all the Latin American authors in this century, he is the most universal” (471). Furthermore, Bloom here compared Borges' narratives to De Quincey's essays (472), with recognizable hypotexts of writers such as Shakespeare and Walt Whitman in Borges' fictions; further, he related Borges to other major writers of world literature in English translation, such as Kafka and Beckett (471). Second, in the 2002 *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, just after Machado's entry in the same book, Bloom again considered Borges' narratives to be “universal”. In this reference, he identifies De Quincey as the main precursor and influence for “young Borges”. Bloom also included Borges in the literary traditions of Rabelais, Cervantes and Lawrence Sterne (683), and, thus, of Machado (675).

A closer examination of the reception of Machado's and Borges' works as Latin America writers will aid in differentiating local from transnational reception. Moreover, it will help clarify the role of the English-speaking reception in situating Machado and Borges as possible precursors of the Latin American literary Boom of the 1960s.

### **4.3 From the Local to the Transnational Reception in Latin America**

As stated in the introduction, there are two main critical debates concerning Machado. One tends to focus on his role, along with Borges, as a precursor of the Latin American new

narratives of the twentieth century. The other tends to situate Machado's work within English ironic traditions. North American critics, such as Fitz in 1998, related both Borges and Machado to the Latin American Boom of the 1960s. In fact, for critics outside of Brazil and Argentina, the main associative strategy in comparing these two writers primarily pointed to broader, non-specific Latin American cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, the 1960s critical reception in the English-speaking world permitted multiple transcultural adaptations of their narratives, basically by placing these two writers within the canon of world literature. The central role of Borges pointed out by critics and writers of the Latin American Boom (such as Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal), and the eccentric, yet relevant, role of Machado in the same cultural contexts (pointed out by critics such as Rodríguez Monegal and Fitz) reiterated those English-speaking critical strategies: Machado is a minor writer within the canon of world literature. By contrast, Borges is a central writer in the canon of world literature, acclaimed for renovating certain Spanish literary expressions and devices for the twentieth century.

Machado occupies a secondary level within Latin American literary traditions for one major reason: Latin American writers and critics tend to disregard the role of Brazilian narrative traditions in general within the developments of modern narratives in these cultural contexts. In effect, as Brazilian critic Candido pointed out in 1981, when talking about the new Latin American narratives of the 1960s one thinks of "una unidad coherente [...] frente a la cual, en un segundo momento, se recuerda que existe una unidad simple que habla portugués y que es preciso incluir para completar el panorama" [one coherent unit (...) in facing which, in a second moment, one remembers that there is a simple unit that speaks Portuguese and that one needs to include to complete the picture] (Rama 166). Even Latin American writers who mention Machado as precursor of the new narrative of the twentieth century do not precisely establish Machado's influence on their works, or share any relevant



parallels with the Brazilian writer. In *Geografía de la novela*, for instance, Carlos Fuentes, one of the major figures of the Latin American Boom of the 1960s, compared Machado to Borges in the sense that both created imaginative narratives that broke certain patterns within their culture: “Borges fue el primer narrador de lengua española en las Américas (Machado de Asís ya lo había logrado, milagrosamente, en la lengua portuguesa del Brasil) que verdaderamente nos liberó del naturalismo y que redefinió lo real en términos literarios, es decir, imaginativos” [Borges was the first Spanish-speaking narrator who truly freed us from Naturalism, and redefined reality in literary terms, that is, in imaginative terms (Machado de Assis had already achieved it, miraculously in Brazilian Portuguese)] (59).

Beyond that positive comment, Fuentes’ recognition of Machado’s role is too brief to be considered noteworthy. Moreover, there are no relevant critical or academic works comparing Fuentes to Machado, for instance, or tracing Machado’s connection to other Latin American writers of the 1960s and 1970s in a more critical or comprehensive manner. In trying to relate Machado to later developments in Latin-American narratives, Fuentes argues that Machado belongs to a narrative tradition related to Cervantes (and, consequently, to Sterne). For Fuentes, Machado’s narratives presented Cervantine intertextualities and the Brazilian author became part of this tradition at a time when other Latin American writers were more interested in European Realist aesthetics (quoted in Moreira 103). Nevertheless, by pointing to a connection with more recognizable narrative traditions within broader Latin American literary contexts, Fuentes is arguably reinforcing critical approaches that highlight a part of Machado’s cross-cultural ironies, in an endeavor to situate them within more central traditions and within the canon of world literature.

Starting in the 1960s, the reception of Machado’s narratives was usually compared to that of Borges’ short stories within Anglo-American cultural contexts in the sense that critics such as Updike and Rodríguez Monegal associated Borges with certain English ironic

traditions, and also with later developments in Latin American narratives of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, by contrast to the later reception of Machado's work by Brazilian critics, the subsequent reception of Borges' narratives in Argentina reinforced English-speaking perspectives. Local critics considered Borges not only a model of a transnational writer, but primarily stressed the perceived distance between Borges' cross-cultural ironies and their original socio-cultural contexts as first established by North American critics. As demonstrated earlier, Borges' narratives were considered by Argentinean and Latin American critics of the 1960s and 1970s as products of the Buenos Aires literary elites of the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century—and, in a narrow sense, they were. Nonetheless, Bloom and other North American critics, as I have demonstrated, proceeded to relate Machado and Borges to important writers within the canon of world literature, through specific English traditions.

After the 1960s, particularly in Borges' case, Latin American critics related to the Boom followed a similar path to that described by English-speaking critics such as Bloom. Obviously, these critics related Borges' narratives not only to Anglo-American literary traditions, but also to early developments in Latin American narratives and traditions. By contrast to local Argentinean critics, who tried to obscure the overshadowing dominance of Borges' narratives and, indeed, of the actual author and his increasingly unpopular political and aesthetic opinions in Argentina, Latin American critics connected to the Boom of the 1960s resolutely included Borges as part of broader Latin American literary traditions.

Carlos Fuentes was the first critic to relate Borges to the new Latin American narratives of the 1960s (Toro 70). For Fuentes, “[e]l autor de *Ficciones* alcanzó una suprema síntesis narrativa en la cual la imaginación literaria se apropia de todas las tradiciones culturales a fin de darnos un retrato más completo de lo que somos, gracias a la memoria actualizada de todo lo que hemos sido” [the author of *Ficciones* achieved a supreme narrative

synthesis in which literary imagination appropriates all cultural traditions in order to render a complete picture of what we are, thanks to the updated memory of what we were] (*Valiente mundo nuevo* 21). Fuentes pointed out Borges' adaptations of European narrative traditions, in order to develop the model of a transnational writer within Latin American cultural contexts (and Latin Americans equal "we" in Fuentes' statement), rather than to analyze Borges as an early-twentieth-century Argentinean writer: "[Borges] Nos recuerda que nuestra cultura es más ancha que cualquier definición reductivista de la misma—literaria o política" [(Borges) reminds us that our culture is wider than any reductionist definition of it—literary or political] (21).

In *Geografía de la novela*, Fuentes introduces two Borges: "Borges el escritor Argentino, Borges el escritor Latinoamericano" (47). To distinguish Borges as this new Latin American version of the author, and not as exclusively Argentinean, Fuentes lists other writers, to conclude that Borges was the first writer who really freed Latin America "del naturalismo y que re-definió lo real en términos literarios" [of naturalism, and who re-defined reality in literary terms] (*Valiente mundo nuevo* 21). For Fuentes, Ibero-American nation-states would be replaced by a sub-continental, i.e., Latin American, awareness in tension with English-speaking North America, and, in his view, artists in general had an important role in this revolution (13). Fuentes, in a sense, followed other cosmopolitan critics and readers in non-Argentinean cultures in that he also interpreted Borges' narratives with respect to new ways of understanding their different contexts and devices, while appreciating Borges' ironic attitude toward his literary models. By contrast to some developments in the critical reception within Argentina or even in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century (by critics such as Sábato and Fernández Retamar), Borges' cultural adaptations of European models are not seen by Latin American critics such as Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal, among others, as mere modes of elitism or Europeanism, or simply as an uncritical copy.

In *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, Fuentes stresses the parochialism and seclusion of Latin American culture before Borges in particular (that is, before the 1940s), in its dependency on European and U.S. models; in his analysis, he highlights the role of Borges, first as an Argentinean, and second as a Latin American writer, in the development of a distinctive voice in Spanish America: “De allí la necedad de los que acusan a Borges de ser ‘extranjerizante’ o ‘europeísta’: ¿Puede haber algo más argentino que esta necesidad de llenar verbalmente los vacíos [...]? Pero al hacerlo, Borges además, enfrenta la totalidad de la lengua castellana con su carencia y, por allí, con su relatividad” [There lies the stupidity of those who accuse Borges of being ‘a foreigner’ or ‘Europeanist’: could there be anything more Argentinean than the necessity to verbally fill the empty spaces (...)? But, to do that, Borges moreover confronts the totality of the Spanish language with its lack and, in this way, with its relativity] (26). For Fuentes, language is constitutive of Latin America, and “Latinoamérica carece de language” [Latin America lacks a language]. In Fuentes’ view, Borges’ fiction, in his cosmopolitanism and cultural and syntactic adaptation of European models, constitutes a Latin American language in literature (26).

Indisputably, the critical reception of Borges’ narratives in the English-speaking world played a defining role in subsequent critical and creative reappropriations and reassessments of Borges’ short narratives by Boom critics. The patterns of communication established by Borges in his short stories were directed to his cosmopolitan readers in early twentieth century Argentina, but they also found resonance in readers and critics in transnational contexts. This was evident in Europe and North America, and also among Latin American critics and writers, especially those who were studying, teaching, writing and producing in (and for) Europe or North America. For the critic Deborah Cohn, writers and critics associated with the Latin American Boom were “at once transnational and cosmopolitan: most of the authors lived in Europe and spent time in the United States [...]

and they established close and mutually influential relationships not just among themselves but also with writers from the United States and Europe” (6). These transnational readers—English-speaking critics who were in dialogue with transnational Latin American writers and critics—renewed Borges’ cross-cultural ironies as part of specific narrative traditions related to their own cultural expectations: English ironic traditions, in the case of Anglo-American critics; and Latin American new narratives (and Spanish ironic traditions related to Cervantes), for writers and critics related to the Boom of the 1960s.

Developments in the reception of Machado’s and Borges’ cross-cultural narratives in the English-speaking world incorporated creative repercussions of their own innovative narrative and literary projects. Machado focused on his readers: the limited few who were first, educated, and second, receptive to the originality of his English intertextualities and the social criticism of the social class to which these readers belonged. By contrast, Borges wrote for a more widely cosmopolitan and educated Buenos Aires reader, and by extension, to European readers: an implied reader who would have cultural and literary expectations, and who would be challenged by Borges’ literary innovations, rather than by his social critiques. Consequently, the asymmetrical reception of Machado’s and Borges’ works in the English-speaking world would follow the very patterns of ironic communication established by their narratives. While Machado became a miscategorized eccentric writer taken out of context, Borges was seen as a subversive writer within the canon of world literature. While assessments of Machado’s narratives in the English-speaking world advanced the renewal of later Brazilian criticism and narrative traditions, the assessments of Borges’ short narratives in the same cultural contexts pointed directly to broader Euro-American literary and critical traditions, especially to Latin American new narratives of the 1960s, rather than to specific Argentinean contexts.

A closer scrutiny of the critical reassessments and creative reappropriations of Machado's and Borges' narratives by Latin American critics related to the literary Boom of the 1960s and 1970s will contribute to an explanation of the role of their cross-cultural ironies in the developments of Latin America as a new geoliterary space to problematize the dichotomy between local and universal. In sum, Machado's and Borges' innovative narrative projects and literary trajectories were reinvented by transnational critics with respect to renewed Latin American cultural contexts of the second half of the twentieth century.

#### **4.4 Machado's and Borges' Irony in the Construction of a Latin American Literature**

Latin American critics and writers related to the literary Boom of the 1960s can be considered transnational authors in more than one sense, as defined by the critic Frassinelli in the Introduction to this thesis (29). These writers' work not only crossed and broke open national boundaries; but it also "named the tensions between formations such as globalization and the nation-states" in an era before the term globalization was coined. Critics such as Rodríguez Monegal, and writers such as Fuentes, Donoso and García Márquez were producing within and outside Latin America, and they were being massively read in the English-speaking world. These critics and writers were also linked to Machado and Borges by a geographical fact: all of them can be related to Latin America as well as to their own national traditions; however, Boom and post-Boom critics tend to emphasize the former rather than the latter. On the one hand, these authors claimed to be part of wider narrative traditions that included Spanish-American countries such as Chile, Mexico, Peru and Colombia, among others; on the other, most of them were living in Europe or North America, while their works appeared in European presses and literary journals, initially in Spain and France, and in translation within the English-speaking world. Consequently, their connections

to Latin America were in part mediated by the interpretations produced by English-speaking critics.

In *Valiente mundo nuevo: Épica, utopía y mito en la novela hispanoamericana* [Valiant New World: Epic, Utopia and Myth in the Latin American Novel] (1990), Fuentes discusses the term “Latin America” as a construct of nineteenth-century French intellectuals, in order to propose a name that would more accurately describe the region: “somos un continente multiracial y policultural. De allí que a lo largo de este libro no emplee la denominación ‘América Latina’ [...] sino la descripción más completa, Indo-Afro-América, o por razones de brevedad, Iberoamérica o aun, por razones literarias cuando me refiero a la unidad y continuidad lingüísticas, Hispanoamérica” [we are a multiracial and multicultural continent. That is why I did not use the denomination Latin America throughout this book (...) otherwise, I used the more accurate term, Indo-Afro-America, or, to shorten it, Ibero-America or even, for literary reasons when referring to cultural unity and continuity, Hispano America] (10).<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, the Mexican critic used the term “Latinoamérica” [Latin America] in his earlier works, such as 1969 *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, and in subsequent works, such as his 1993 *Geografía de la novela*. In *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, Fuentes used the term to make claims about suitable Latin American characters (11) and about the traditional novel of the region (12, 14). As demonstrated earlier, he also defined Borges as “el primer gran narrador plenamente urbano de América Latina” [the first great urban Latin American narrator] (25)—using a Spanish expression closer to the English version, including the capitalized letters: América Latina. In *Geografía de la novela*, he referred to Latin America when talking about the new novel, and Hispano America when referring to literary tradition; in this practice, he references at least a partial literary tradition

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<sup>98</sup> In the US, the English term “Hispanic” is historically more associated with the Eastern states and with those who identify with this established sub-culture of the US, as evidenced in its use by the US Census Bureau beginning in 1970 and in many institutions such as libraries, cultural centers and museums. That is why I translated Fuentes’ “Hispanoamérica” as “Hispano America” and not “Hispanic America”: to differentiate Fuentes’ meaning from the implications of the term “Hispanic” associated with its usage in the U.S.

related to Spanish language, i.e., he uses Latin America to describe the geographic region, and Hispano America to describe its culture. This flexibility in the usage of the term reveals a struggle between self-definition by Latin American critics, and definitions imposed predominantly by U.S. critics. Critics in transnational contexts were negotiating not only a name for the region, but defining a framework for the area.

Transnational Latin American writers of the 1960s were responsible for (re)creating their particular national traditions, or at least giving visibility to their original literary contexts for broader Euro-American cultural contexts, usually via North American universities (Donoso, Fuentes, Rodríguez Monegal). At the same time, they were responsible for creating a broader conception of Latin American, or at least Spanish American literature at a suitable distance. In effect, these transnational critics had mostly accessed other Latin American writers outside of their own local cultural contexts through academic institutions in the English-speaking world. For example, in the second half of the twentieth century, transnational critics in other Euro-American contexts included Machado's and Borges' narratives into the canon of world literature, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3.

Latin American writers and critics chiefly considered the developments in narrative traditions after the 1960s as a matter of reassessing and rebalancing their own literatures in intertextual relations with broader Euro-American cultural and literary traditions. In *Valiente mundo nuevo*, for instance, Fuentes wrote about Ibero-American new narratives of the twentieth century as a matter of connection and "continuidad cultural" [cultural continuity] between diverse futures and pasts: new narratives were produced as Latin American writers (re)invented their own cultural and literary traditions in relation to local and global contexts (15-16). For him, earlier Latin American writers tended to pursue either a universal or a local parameter, in which the universal represented a Eurocentric notion of literary developments, and the local was connected to history, tradition and specific communities (*La nueva novela*



*hispanoamericana* 23). Latin American new narratives, according to Fuentes in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, proposed possible syntheses between these two dichotomous poles, introducing ambiguity as their main original contribution: “la certeza heroica se convierte en ambigüedad crítica, la fatalidad natural en acción contradictoria, el idealismo romántico en dialéctica irónica” [heroic certainty becomes critical ambiguity, natural fatality becomes contradictory action, romantic idealism becomes ironic dialectic] (15). In Fuentes’ own words, his own utopian challenge for new Latin American narratives could be expressed as: “Imaginar el pasado. Recordar el futuro” [Imagine the past. Remember the future]. For Fuentes, the Latin American literary Boom was the result of creating continuity between a constantly reimagined past (creating what until that point was a non-existent sense of community, locality, nation), and a utopian future (dialoguing with different cultural contexts so as to critically engage and deconstruct Eurocentric notions of universality). Fuentes termed these syntheses proposed by Latin American writers of the twentieth century, such as himself among others, “multi-relatos” [multi-narratives] (25).

As a critic, but also as one of the writers most closely identified with the Latin American Boom, Fuentes saw his own and other Latin American new narratives as producing intertextual relations between history and utopia, resulting in an ambiguous local-universal (Latin American-European) multi-narrative, for which the main literary model was Borges. Critics not directly related to the Boom, such as Rodríguez Monegal, looked for different models within early narrative developments in Latin America, and also tried to explain them in other and more analytical terms. In *El Boom de la novela latinoamericana* Rodríguez Monegal, for instance, pointed to multiple possible origins for the Boom, highlighting the literary over the publishing phenomenon (11). Although for Rodríguez Monegal, “el boom empieza realmente en América Latina” [the Boom really starts in Latin America] (13), he, the Yale professor, did not fail to mention the relevance of North American Good Neighbor

policies after the First World War. For him, those policies “de alguna manera han preparado el camino para el *boom*” [in some sense, have paved the way for the *Boom*] (31). Rodríguez Monegal mentions “concursos y premios organizados por editoriales, fundaciones o revistas norteamericanas que durante tres décadas llaman esporádicamente la atención del lector norteamericano sobre la narrativa hispanoamericana” [contests and prizes organized by North American publishers, foundations or journals, that, for three decades, have drawn the attention of the North American reader to Spanish American literature] (31). Moreover, Rodríguez Monegal highlights the parallel boom in translation of Latin American writers in the 1960s, when Borges was first translated into English, as well as when Machado had a major part of his books in translation published in the English-speaking world. From his perspective, “las traducciones [...] han generado una considerable actividad crítica en varios países, y principalmente en los Estados Unidos” [translations generated a considerable critical activity in various countries, and mainly in the United States] (33).

In fact, the mediation of U.S. critics was placed by other Latin American critics and writers at the center of the Boom. Chilean writer José Donoso commented on the origins of the word “boom” itself to highlight this mediation and its consequences: “*boom*, en inglés, es un vocabulo que nada tiene de neutro. Al contrario, está cargado de conotaciones, casi todas peyorativas o sospechosas” [*boom*, in English, is a word that is not neutral. Quite the opposite: this word is charged with connotations, almost all of them pejorative and suspicious] (12). For him, the phenomenon transcended the realm of literature to be introduced into the world of marketing. Moreover, Donoso noticed that before the English-speaking criticism, there was only sparse mention of a Latin American literature: “Antes de 1960 era muy raro oír hablar de la ‘novela hispanoamericana contemporánea’ a gente no especializada: existían novelas uruguayas y ecuatorianas, mexicanas y venezolanas” [Before the 1960s it was rare to hear non-specialized people talking about the ‘contemporary Hispano-American novel’: there

were Uruguayan and Ecuadorian, Mexican and Venezuelan novels] (18). Thus, the geoliterary term, Latin America, replaced locality in the discourse of Latin American critics related to the Boom. Donoso also adds a point that I think is relevant to my argument that Borges became increasingly important to this transnational context through the assessments of critics in the English-speaking world: for the Chilean critic, “Borges era gusto de una élite cultural y social muy cerrada, y los que entonces eran jóvenes generalmente no lo compartían: la conciencia del valor de Borges es muy tardía—además de sobrevenir, como tantas cosas en nuestro mundo, después de su ‘descubrimiento’ y triunfo en el extranjero” [Borges was a taste of a very closed cultural and social elite, not common to people who were then young: the awareness of Borges’ greatness would come later—and also it came, as a lot of things in our world, after his being ‘discovered’ by foreigners] (24). For Donoso, the identification of Borges as “father” to the Latin American boom was a mistake, one only supported by the “foreign” recognition of the writer: Donoso states that Borges was not known, for instance, in Chile before the 1960s (24).

In reassessing the Latin American Boom, later critics not directly related to the phenomenon pointed out some characteristics that will help us to better define the levels in which it evolved in the 1960s. Brett Levinson, for instance, summarizes these later developments in the analyses of the Latin American Boom in four main inter-related categories: as “*vida y obra*” [life and works]; as a literary vanguard; as an elitist movement; and as a model of thought (345). First, the Boom introduced critics to writers from different cultural contexts, and the *vida y obra* approach explored these differences by creating a contextual map of works and authors. After that, more serious critical studies undertook the interpretation of the Boom as a vanguard movement, in which the main formal innovations would be based on parodies and pastiches of European narrative models. This view is also related to the third category, which connects Boom writers to local elites in Latin America

because they were considered the guardians of culture, rather than to the popular sectors they often tried to represent in their works; this was one of the harsher critiques. Finally, the Boom was seen as a source for revising Latin American cultural identities and thought: the main consequences were several notions of what had been introduced earlier but acquired new dimensions, i.e., Ortiz's notion of transculturation and transnationalism informed primarily by fictional works. Levinson adds to these four categories the idea of literature as an institution: literary circulation in the modern market-place as a possible outcome of transnational theories devised by the critical reception of Latin American writers.<sup>99</sup> Lucille Kerr corroborates this position in arguing in favor of a field of criticism related to a revision of Latin American literary history: for her as well, the Boom has to be studied as a publishing and commercial phenomenon (75).

Borges' and Machado's works are also related to the "synthesis" identified with the critical response related to the Latin American Boom, especially in cultural-aesthetic terms, but also in institutional-publishing terms. Fuentes himself, when talking about precursors of the modern and cosmopolitan Latin American new narratives points to Borges as the primary model, and, in addition, relates Borges to Machado. Fuentes does not carry this comparison further in critical terms: he only mentions Machado as part of what for him are the recurring re-invented Latin American cultural traditions. Donoso, albeit in a negative key, sees Borges being situated as a precursor through the mediation of English-speaking critics; this same argument can be made in the case of Machado. Nevertheless, both critics see this place of Borges as a result of the reception of his narratives in the English-speaking world, more specifically within North American academic institutions—the same contexts within which Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal are writing. For Fuentes, in contrast to Donoso, Borges seems to be central since part of his own personal literary project (and view of Latin

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<sup>99</sup> Levinson concludes that "there can be no local that is not recognized by the universal, no literariness without publication or publicity, no nation without global circulation" (349).

American new narratives) is directly related to Borges' ironic attitude toward diverse literatures: the Latin America Boom would not have existed without "la prosa borgiana" [the Borgesian prose] (Fuentes, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* 26).

I propose that Machado and Borges can also be related as precursors of the Latin American Boom in the aesthetic sense, since both writers broke neo-colonial cultural norms, as well as conventional patterns of relating to Euro-American cultural and literary traditions. Both realized in the adaptation of European models new forms of being original: they did not merely imitate these models, but adapted their narratives and devices to unique socio-historical contexts, as demonstrated in Chapter 1. These appropriations of European models are what I termed Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies: the adaptation of particular devices used by earlier writers in other major cultural traditions for later different literary contexts, opening new interpretive paths for local as well as English-speaking critics, and also for Latin American writers (outside Brazil and Argentina), as well as for writers in other so-called peripheral cultures.

In their lifetimes, Machado's and Borges' intertextualities with European models led to one of the most common local critiques of their works, which can be related to another category of the critical reception of the Latin American Boom: as stated earlier, these writers were viewed as part of local elites respectively in late nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro and early twentieth-century Buenos Aires. Machado was curiously (dis)regarded by contemporary critics as an "English Mulatto" (Hanna 66): he was considered to be a writer who, in spite of his racial or social origins and position in what was still a slave-based society, turned his attention to erudite and misplaced English ironic literary traditions rather than to his own socio-historical surroundings. Borges was considered by contemporary critics as a pedantic imitator of English writers, part of the Buenos Aires elite of his time, who was arguably more aware of intellectual developments in Europe than of the dramatic changes taking place in his

own country, often associated with nationalism. In publishing terms, nonetheless, Machado's and Borges' narratives found their places within their own national and also broader cultural contexts, particularly in English translation.

Nevertheless, the most important comparisons of Machado and Borges and then between them and the Latin American Boom are those connected to reception that relate their works to transnationalism. I use the term transnationalism here in two senses: first, as detachment from the local, as contemporary critics of Machado and Borges charged, although they did not use the term; and second, as a form of constructing multiple attachments to different socio-cultural contexts and communities, with an emphasis on the tensions between those contexts. North American and Latin American critics alike considered Machado and Borges as national writers, albeit superficially; however, they proceeded to identify them as writers who transcended those national boundaries. Thus, they situated them in broader cultural contexts, such as the canon of world literature, or alternatively as precursors of a new geoliterary space that was under construction. That project was born within Latin America, although heavily influenced by North America, through its Good Neighbor policy and those associated with the Cold War (Cohn 4). Critics who were part of the Latin American Boom, such as Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal, related Machado's and Borges' revolutionary personal literary projects to Latin American new narratives. In my view, Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies can also be critically related to Latin American identities and thought, i.e., their narratives were constructed under the assumption that it was important to define a national literature beyond stereotypes of nationality. Each of these writers, in his own manner and with diverse resources, created new paths in the construction of their unique Brazilian or Argentinean literary and critical expressions in relation to broader developments in Euro-American cultural contexts across Anglo and Latin America.

Instead of viewing Machado and Borges only as the earlier identified national writers, critics related to the Boom upheld Machado and Borges as transnational models, as I have defined in this thesis, to support their personal on-going construction of a distinctive Latin American identity. From a contemporary perspective, nonetheless, I have argued that this role of Machado and Borges as transnational writers, particularly their resulting role as Latin American precursors, was constructed in a complex set of critical relations between North America and Latin America, i.e., from their own initial adaptations of English ironists; to the initial reception by local critics; to the revisionist reception by English-speaking critics, especially in North America; to later critical reassessments by local critics, and parallel developments in Latin America as a whole.

In this chapter, I have focused on parallel developments in the critical reception of Machado's and Borges' narratives within Anglo and Latin America. My aim was to reassess the roles of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies in later developments of Brazilian and Argentinean criticism, but most importantly in Latin American new narratives of the second half of the twentieth century. In my analysis, Machado and Borges are related to the Latin American Boom of the 1960s in both cultural-aesthetic and institutional-publishing terms. In summary, this chapter has identified the complex hemispheric network of the critical and creative reception of Machado's and Borges' own creative adaptations of English ironists.

## **Conclusion: From a National to a Latin American Irony**

In the canon of world literature, Latin American writers are nearly absent apart from two names: Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis and Jorge Luis Borges. While today both are considered representatives of their nations' greatest literary traditions (Brazil and Argentina, respectively), their importance beyond their nations is attributed to two reasons: they were considered universal writers because they were closely connected to Western traditions, and they were retrospectively recognized as precursors of the Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s. I have defined the Boom as the international recognition of Latin American writers in English translation during the second half of the twentieth century.

The majority of critical comparisons of Machado's and Borges' narratives connect them to the Latin American new narratives of the Boom, and many critics mention their ironic aspects; however, there is no systematic study of the reception of this irony over time and across different communities, and when irony has been studied in their work, these writers have been considered separately and often out of their own cultural and social contexts. There are also critical studies of Machado's and Borges' relations with their contemporary and local actual readers.

My own comparative analysis of Machado and Borges proposes an approach that focuses on these three issues: their roles as precursors of the Latin American Boom of the 1960s, their relations with English-speaking ironists and critics, and their relations with their original socio-cultural historical and geographical contexts. The central question this thesis poses is: how have English ironic intertextualities within Machado's and Borges' narratives affected the reception of their work within different communities of readers? This thesis has demonstrated the centrality of what I named Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies, a device favored by Latin American critics and writers related to the Boom for the re-assessment and reappropriation of their narratives.



Rather than reconfirming the place of Machado and Borges as precursors of the Latin American Boom however, my comparative analyses explain how their adaptations of English ironists emerged as models for a Latin American literary identity. Machado and Borges constructed models of cross-cultural irony that were part of their narrative projects, their literary trajectories and their particular projects for a national literature in late nineteenth-century Brazil and early twentieth-century Argentina. Their mature narratives presented polyphonic layers adapted from English ironists, which allowed for diverse and evolving readings in different literary contexts, leading to the development of the broader tradition of what came to be known as Latin American literature.

**Intertextualities.** Initially, the more complex forms of intertextualities with English ironists established by Machado's and Borges' mature works were harshly criticized by local critics such as Romero and Sábato, but they were later revealed and re-examined by transnational critics such as Caldwell and Updike. The present study has demonstrated how later Argentinean and Brazilian critics reread these intertextualities in the light of the English critical reception and understood that they were constructed and adapted in relation to their original socio-historical contexts: these later critics observed that Machado and Borges were not just uncritically copying, but culturally adapting the devices of their literary models, particularly their irony, in order to make those devices relevant to their readers.

**Ironic Adaptations.** In order to identify the ways they adapted irony, I first established that irony is not only a rhetorical, but also a critical device that mediates the relations between writers and readers, particularly writers as readers: it serves as a form of literary continuity and transformation, challenging common sense and the horizon of expectations of the readers. Irony is found in diverse instances of Machado's and Borges' literary production: from the choice of their literary models, to their own readings and adaptations of English ironists, to their own innovative narratives; these are consequently

read, interpreted and appropriated by critics and writers in diverse contexts. In Genette's terms, irony is located in the hypotext itself, in the choice of the hypotext, in the hypertext and finally in the reception of their works. The main outcome of the comparative analysis undertaken by this thesis has been to establish how irony mediates the reception of Machado and Borges as precursors of Latin American new narratives. As I proposed in Chapter 1, I proceeded to establish that Machado and Borges found in irony and in the adaptation of ironic models a way out of the otherwise hegemonic stasis of European traditions in their local cultures and societies. In this sense, I argue that they were both decolonizing their literary history and their readership.

**Reception.** This thesis compared the changing critical reception of Machado's and Borges' mature narratives in different cultural contexts. The result highlighted the different levels of irony established by their fictional works: first, with their particular socio-cultural context by choosing the less regarded literary models of English ironists over French models; second, with the models themselves, in their appropriations and cultural adaptations of their devices, such as irony, but also unreliable narrators and metafictionality; and finally, with readers in multiple contexts, because of the resulting readings: their narratives allow for ambiguity and multiple, even contradictory, interpretations. Machado's and Borges' relations with their own societies and cultures were analyzed in order to assess their selective affinities with English ironists as a challenge to the overwhelming presence of French cultural models within their original national contexts. Finally, I observed tensions between European and local cultures within their narrative projects, particularly the ones associated with what I have shown to be their unconventional literary models, and with their own socio-historical contexts.

**Satirical and Metafictional Irony.** Machado and Borges underwent important changes in their fictional projects, from the choice of neo-colonial literary models and

cultural references within Brazil and Argentina to models which were also neo-colonial, but, more importantly for my purpose, unusual. In effect, these writers adapted the narratives of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English ironists to their distinct socio-historical contexts, inviting their readers to question prevailing social prejudices and cultural expectations. Machado's irony (following that of his models, Sterne and Swift, among others) is considered more satirical: it is usually aimed at his own society as shown by my Chapter 1 analyses of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* and "Teoria do medalhão". Borges' irony, by contrast, is considered more metatextual (following that of his models, De Quincey, Chesterton, etc.): it largely confronted the intellectual and literary expectations in his original cosmopolitan society; however, it also found resonance in transnational contexts, as illustrated in my readings of "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", also in Chapter 1.

**Implied Reader.** In terms of reception, Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies required a new type of transcultural implied reader: by pointing to models that were not conventional literary or critical references for their contemporary Brazil or Argentina, their narratives required a transcultural adaptation of the reading process. Initial criticism in Brazil and Argentina only proved the necessity of another type of reader: local critics highlighted the newness of Machado's and Borges' narratives by pointing to their unusual English hypotexts, signaling the eccentricity of these writers within their own national literatures. This was studied in detail in Chapter 2.

**Converging Readings.** The passage of time would be essential for an appreciative critical reception of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies. From the early local and primarily negative reception to critical revisions in the English-speaking world, Machado's and Borges' narratives found a more productive "actualization of the potential meanings by the text" through transnational readers (Iser xii). Critics within displaced horizons of

expectation clearly had literary expectations that were more connected to the fictional production of these two writers, particularly with respect to their literary models. English-speaking critics in particular tended to focus on the English hypotext of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies, but in a positive key. The intertextualities with English ironists within Machado's and Borges' narratives would provide critics placed in broader Euro-American literary contexts with strategies to better approach them, as well as to introduce these narratives to a broader readership in their own cultures—particularly in English translation. Assessments of Machado's and Borges' narratives by English-speaking critics thus are at the center of their literary trajectories, for these particular readers incorporated them into the literary history of the English-speaking world and of broader cultural and literary Euro-American contexts. This was studied in detail in Chapter 3.

**Loss of Cultural Specificity.** These transnational critical adaptations of Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies, nonetheless, resulted in the loss of their cultural specificity and literary autonomy: both writers came to be understood typically in favor of their intertextualities with English ironists, rather than with respect to their close relations with their own original societies and cultures. After the reception of twentieth-century English-speaking critics (such as Caldwell and Updike), Machado and Borges became identified with broader literary traditions: they were linked to specific English ironic narratives of Sterne, Dickens and Stevenson; to the canon of world literature; and also to broader Latin American cultural and literary traditions. On the one hand, English-speaking critics, such as Updike, highlighted the hypotexts of English ironists within Machado's and Borges' narratives; on the other hand, these critics related the two writers not to specific Brazilian or Argentine, but significantly to broader Latin American literary contexts. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, that is how Updike compares Machado to Borges (236-8): as Latin American writers in creative dialogues with English narrative models and literary devices, and consequently as

literary models for late twentieth-century transnational writers mainly within North America, but also within Latin America.

**Transnational Readers/Precursors of the Boom/Irony.** As I have demonstrated, Dixon, writing for a Brazilian audience, was one of the first English-speaking scholars to situate Machado as “[a] milestone in Latin America”. Due to his and other critics’ views that Fuentes was wrong to place Borges as “the first great, fully urban Latin American narrator”, Fuentes, the Latin American writer and critic, subsequently revised his assessment of Machado to situate him in the ironic tradition of Cervantes, therefore including the Brazilian writer in broader Latin American contexts. Finally, I have shown that another Latin American, Rodríguez Monegal, was the first critic directly related to the Boom of the 1960s to place both Machado and Borges as part of the same Latin American narrative traditions.

As demonstrated in my analyses, Machado’s and Borges’ narratives were predominantly read, in North America, in relation to displaced cultural traditions by critics who were writing and producing within delayed horizons of expectations, with literary expectations divergent from that of the original contexts of these writers. Some, including Updike and Barth, considered Machado and Borges as eccentric transnational writers related to English ironic traditions; others, including Updike, Dixon and MacAdam, transformed Machado and Borges into regional writers, within broader Latin American narrative traditions.

Latin American critics followed Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal to assess Machado and Borges through the lens of the initial reception by North American critics; this view was unrelated to any Brazilian or Argentinean reception.

Thus the readings of English-speaking critics determined that the intertextualities with English ironists within Machado’s and Borges’ narratives would play an important role in the development of both criticism and narratives of the Boom of the second half of the twentieth

century. More importantly, Machado's and Borges' cross-cultural ironies would become central for Latin American critics and writers following the 1960s.

Machado and Borges, in their own ways and with different literary resources and personal narrative developments, had found a balance between their own and other cultural and literary traditions, expressed mainly in their cross-cultural ironies. A network of hemispheric interpretations of these ironies through multiple readings, and through diverse times and places, transformed their narratives from a challenge to local readers and critics, to a model for transnational writers in different cultural contexts.

**Topics for Further Investigation.** The focus of this study was the centrality of the English hypotext in the trajectory that led Machado's and Borges' narratives to the center of a Latin American identity in literature. Nevertheless, Machado's and Borges' literary trajectories also point to other European and American hypotexts in their narratives, potential topics for further study. In "Uma esquecida homenagem de Machado de Assis a Diderot", critic Jean-Michel Massa focused on Machado's relations with French and other European writers such as Diderot (68). Massa (quoted in Antunes and Motta 233) would go as far as to state that Machado was "um escritor francófono e francógrafo" [a Francophile and Francographic writer]: a bilingual author who in his youth also wrote poetry and essays in French (233). Moreover, according to Piza, Massa would be as important as Caldwell in pointing to Machado as a social ironist (15). In my view, the English element is more prominent, because of Machado's own allusions to ironists such as Sterne within his fiction, and also because of institutional and publishing terms: the English-speaking market is now much more relevant to the constitution of what is perceived as world literature than the French one.

Nonetheless, results of the critical reception of Machado's and Borges' narratives in other European cultural contexts could be compared to the English-speaking reception

analyzed in this thesis. For his part, Borges would be compared by French critics to writers such as Paul Valéry. In the preface to *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, French critic André Maurois, paraphrasing Borges in “Kafka y sus precursores” (1951), stated that Borges’ literary inventions “must be linked up with Poe, ‘who begat Baudelaire, who begat Mallarmé, who begat Valéry’, who begat Borges” (xiv). This comparison between Borges and Valéry proposed by Maurois, albeit apparently asymmetrical since it seems to point to Borges as a poet rather than a prose writer, appears in the preface to his first collection of short stories translated into English in 1962. Maurois’ point was that Borges’ literary devices as a prose writer, particularly his use of paradoxes, can be compared to that of other writers, and most importantly to that of Valéry. Moreover, much like Borges, Valéry was not only a poet, but also an essayist who wrote about literature, as well as about other philosophical topics; and Mallarmé was also a literary critic. Nonetheless, in France, the reception of Borges’ works took a route different to that of the English-speaking world, primarily for three reasons: first, his fiction was selected for examination by philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida, rather than creative writers (such as Updike in the U.S.), i.e., his work was perceived as more philosophical than literary; second, the very restrictions of the French market as discussed above, having no hegemony over the publishing world; and third, Borges’ supposedly translatability into English, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Moreover, there is no study linking Machado to Borges directly as writers, or even in relation to the horizon of expectations of early to mid-twentieth-century Argentina, and the role played by Machado’s narratives in it. Borges might have translated Machado’s short story “A cartomante” from the collection *Várias histórias* (1896) for the literary journal *Revista Multicolor de los Sábados* in 1934 (Helft); indeed, Machado’s mature novels had been translated to Spanish and published in Argentina at least since the 1940s (U. Machado *Dicionário* 339). Moreover, Besouchet and Freitas published *Literatura del Brasil* in 1944, a

book on Brazilian literature in Buenos Aires in the same decade of the first publication of Machado's fiction in Spanish translation. In this small book about Brazilian literature, one of the chapters is dedicated to Machado.

Another topic for possible future study is the question of Borges' prejudices and biases, especially compared to Machado's attitude toward racial issues. In this thesis, little mention was made of Borges' personal views on Brazilian peoples and cultures; his private conversations with Bioy Casares as recorded in 1963 suggest that he had little interest: "los argentinos vemos los brasileiros como macacos" [we Argentineans see Brazilians as backwards and/or half-breeds] (Bioy Casares 346); when compared to Colombians, who were for him "muy civilizados" [very civilized], Brazilians still had certain "superstición nacional" [national superstition] (405). He had similar views about African-Americans in the United States. Bioy Casares' 2010 book, an uncensored and private portrait of Borges, contrasts starkly to Borges' interviews, in which he presents himself as a public person; further, the book presents a less cosmopolitan and imaginative ideal author than the one that comes across in his fiction, his interviews and through some of his critics.

**In conclusion.** The intertextualities with English ironists within Machado's and Borges' works became critical strategies that allowed for multiple critical assessments in different cultural contexts, to such a degree that interpretations of their works enhanced their innovative narratives. More than eccentric writers in creative dialogue with central Euro-American cultural traditions, Machado and Borges should be considered as authors who, in creating new and revolutionary forms of cultural ironies, shaped by their original socio-historical contexts and particular literary experiences, and aimed at creating a proper national literature, and therefore went beyond their national neo-colonial or cosmopolitan restraints in late nineteenth-century Brazil and early twentieth-century Argentina. In effect, they became transnational writers through their own intertextualities, as well as through the reception and



adaptation of critics and writers within Anglo and Latin American cultural contexts, and beyond. Evolving from their national backgrounds, while being men of their times and countries, they both came to write for, and to transform, their specific transcultural implied readers. Machado's and Borges' narratives also created new forms of ironies as discursive and metacritical strategies and self-reflexive modes of intertextuality. As a result they have informed and are still informing not only Latin American writers, narratives and criticism, but also Euro-American writers and critics in broader cultural contexts.

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