

FOREWORD

This dossier brings together Alfredo Bosi's main essays on Machado de Assis and presents them in English for the first time.

Alfredo Bosi (1936-2021) began his academic journey in the 1950s at the University of São Paulo, where he studied Romance Languages. Italian thinkers, especially Benedetto Croce, profoundly influenced his intellectual development, whose ideas on aesthetics and intuition shaped Bosi's critical perspective throughout his career. A pivotal moment occurred during his graduate studies in Florence in the early 1960s, where Bosi encountered the tension between idealist and materialist approaches to literary criticism. This experience led him to develop a nuanced critical method that sought to strike a balance between historical conditioning and individual artistic expression.

Until this publication, English-speaking readers only had access to the essays compiled in *Brazil and the Dialectic of Colonization*, a seminal work in Brazilian literary criticism and historiography. Widely regarded as his most famous work, *Dialética da colonização*—first published in Brazil in 1992 and translated into English in 2015—offers a sweeping analysis of Brazilian cultural development through the lens of colonialism and its enduring legacy. Thus, one of the primary objectives of this dossier is to fill a gap by introducing the English-speaking public to an important part of the scholarship produced by one of Brazil's foremost literary critics and cultural historians of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The dossier is divided into two sections: essays examining Bosi's work and a selection of Bosi's own writings.

The first three essays introduce Bosi's work, providing valuable insights into his multifaceted career, critical methodology, and lasting impact on Brazilian literary studies.

The opening essay by Pedro Meira Monteiro reflects on Bosi's life and work, drawing on years of friendship and intellectual exchange. Meira Monteiro's account vividly portrays Bosi's intellectual curiosity and moral conviction, offering readers a glimpse of the individual behind the scholarly works.

Hélio de Seixas Guimarães traces the development of Bosi's critical approach to Machado de Assis over the span of four decades, illustrating how Bosi's interpretations evolved while consistently emphasizing the interplay between societal forces and individual psychology in Machado's fiction.

Marcus V. Mazzari's essay examines Bosi's comparative methodology, particularly in his analysis of Machado de Assis's *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. Mazzari underscores Bosi's ability to synthesize diverse critical perspectives to present his nuanced interpretation of this seminal Brazilian novel.

The second section is a testament to Bosi's lifelong interest in Machado de Assis, embodied in the six dense essays on Machado published between 1978 and 2010 and as previously noted, presented here in English for the first time. Reading the six essays, one can follow the development of a distinctive critical perspective that, over more than three decades, refined and deepened Bosi's interpretation of this eminent Brazilian writer.

"The Mask and the Breach" showcases Bosi's nuanced reading of Machado de Assis's short stories, emphasizing the tension between social determinism and individual agency in his characters.

"A Machadian Figure" offers a close reading of Counselor Aires, a character Bosi regards as emblematic of Machado's complex narrative technique and philosophical outlook. "The Enigma of the Look" presents Bosi's interpretation of Machado's narrative perspective, arguing for a "stylistics of distancing" that would allow for a mix of critique of and empathy for the characters.

"The Political Theater in the Chronicles of Machado de Assis" reflects on the chronicle, a genre in which, according to Bosi, the writer refrains from taking explicit political positions, instead merely observing politics and politicians as participants in a grand theater.

"Brás Cubas in Three Versions" exemplifies Bosi's comparative approach, through which he examines different critical interpretations of Machado's novel while offering his own synthesis that integrates formal, existential, and socio-historical perspectives.

"An Ideological Knot" demonstrates Bosi's ability to integrate close textual analysis with broader cultural and philosophical considerations by exploring the complex interplay of ideology and counter-ideology in Machado's work.

Collectively, these essays create a portrait of a scholar whose work exemplifies intellectual rigor, ethical commitment, and a deep appreciation for the intricacies of literary creation. Bosi's legacy challenges us to approach literature with both critical acumen and empathy, balancing close attention to the particularities of texts while also considering their broader cultural and historical significance.

As Brazilian literature continues to gain international recognition, Alfredo Bosi's work provides invaluable tools for a better understanding of the rich traditions and complex dynamics that have shaped Brazil's literary landscape.

Whether familiar with Bosi's work or encountering it for the first time, readers will find this dossier an opportunity to engage with one of Brazil's most important critical voices of the past half-century.

In an era of increasing fragmentation and specialization in literary studies, Bosi's integrative approach and commitment to the enduring value of literature stand as an inspiring model. His work reminds us that criticism at its best transcends mere academic exercise and embodies a vital engagement with the deepest questions of human experience and social reality.

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