



Memorial de Aires

Machado de Assis

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"Memorial de Aires" (1908) é o último romance de Machado de Assis, e o segundo atribuído ao último dos seus autores ficcionais, o conselheiro Aires, diplomata aposentado que já aparecera no romance anterior, "Esaú e Jacó" (1904). Aqui, encontramos o diário do conselheiro nos anos de 1888 e 1889, curso de anotações em que Aires segue e comenta sobretudo a vida do velho casal Aguiar e as peripécias da peculiar relação com a bela viúva Fidélia e o jovem Tristão. Ainda digressivo e irónico, vive mais da escrita do que do enredo, magistralmente tecido sem tensões nem conflitos. Prevalece a melancolia sobre a galhofa, mas sempre num tom de serenidade e com uma agudeza que fazem de Memorial de Aires um dos mais belos testemunhos da velhice da literatura em língua portuguesa. Esta edição pretende reanimar um romance e um autor de enorme qualidade e importância para as literaturas de língua portuguesa, fazendo-o com a qualidade e fidelidade a que os Livros Cotovia habituaram os seus leitores.

Memorial de Aires Details

Date : Published February 15th 2006 by Luso-Brazilian Books (first published 1908)

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Guilherme says

Machado de Assis terminou sua vida como escritor com uma obra prima. O "Memorial de Aires" possui uma série de elementos que lembram suas melhores obras (dos romances como Dom Casmurro, Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas e Quincas Borba), como a narrativa digressiva, metalinguística com um narrador distanciado dos fatos narrados. Contudo, o velho conselheiro de Aires, o narrador da obra, escreve um diário em um estilo que, diferente de Brás Cubas, em suas memórias póstumas, ou Bento, em Dom Casmurro, está em busca de observações medidas, longe da acidez tradicional do narrador machadiano.

O acontecimento principal da narrativa (o conhecimento e relacionamento entre Tristão e a viúva Fidélia Noronha) é comentado com distância e medida, raramente com teor irônico, mas sim com um confessional. Assim, é claro, o conselheiro se aproxima a Brás Cubas e Bento, já que também está em um ambiente privado em que pode revelar sua verdadeira intimidade e persona, porém, em Memorial de Aires, esta experiência é elevada ao máximo.

Além disso, o caso dos apaixonados ainda se mistura com relações familiares postiças: Tristão e Fidélia são apadrinhados pelo casal Aguiar que não conseguiu ter filhos, e assim, se aproximam apaixonadamente aos filhos postiços, tentando-os fazê-los de fato filhos e compensar sua velhice, especialmente a velha D. Carmo. As relações sociais são passadas rapidamente, mas é possível vislumbrar excelentes passagens que comentam os fatos históricos e sociais do final do século XIX, como a libertação dos escravos.

Amanda Alexandre says

Definitely the less impressive of Machado's works. None of the things I like about him is present in this novel: no humor, no acute critique, no spirited characters, no language playings... None of it. I couldn't care much for the characters. Feels like Machado burned all of his best in previous works and there was nothing left to make up for this.

Laura says

Amargo e sarcástico observador dos costumes e da condição humana, Machado de Assis produziu muitas obras-primas na literatura brasileira. Em Memorial de Aires (1908), o narrador, Conselheiro Aires, conta o episódio da vida de um casal e a aventura amorosa de outros personagens.

Lachlan says

This novel, presented as the diary of a retired diplomat, is set in Rio de Janeiro in 1888-1889. Aires, now a widower, considers himself 'old' at 60 and limits himself to observing the people in his social circle, the moneyed classes of Rio. He focuses on Tristão and Fidélia, godchildren of the Aguiars, a couple whom he visits almost daily. These two fall in love, marry and leave for Portugal, where Tristão has been elected a deputy -- in his absence, amazingly. The plot is simple and moves very slowly: the similarity between the lovers' names and those of famous opera characters reminded me of 19th-century opera: low on plot, high on

psychological delving. Unfortunately, the diplomat's observations never dig very deep and I grew bored with conversations that consisted of lists of friends' virtues. The translator's title relates to a wager concluded by the diplomat with his sister that he would marry Fidélia, but our 'hero' is clearly not up to any wooing activities and the wager disappears from view. The book is dated and at times doesn't really rise above soap-opera gossip.

Walter says

Achei Memorial de Aires um romance bastante leve em todos os sentidos. Em obras anteriores nos era apresentado mais do autor tanto no quesito do enredo como da ironia e crítica. Neste narrativa Machado, na minha opinião, Machado foi simplesmente correto e simpático. Limitou-se a contar-nos uma estoriazinha sem muitas reviravoltas e momentos cúspide capazes de nos tirar o fôlego. Sem falar daqueles clássicos momento de reflexão machadianos que, se existem, foram pouquíssimos. Talvez, em outro momento, teria gostado mais de Memorial de Aires, mas, por enquanto, achei-o pouco.

Dottie says

Just beginning this third book by Brazilian author Joaquim Maria Machado De Assis.

This was the best yet! This is told by a character who has been in each of the three Machado De Assis books which I've read and is his "memorial" -- which is essentially his journal or diary and he has edited it out or it was supposedly edited down with plans to have another book follow it but Machado De Assis died before writing another book. This was such a unique read -- yes, I've read other things in the form of a diary but somehow this was as though the reader is standing at the side of a stage and the page turns and the scenes shift and characters come and go while the "director" narrates or wanders off into little asides or more lengthy ones.

In each of these books there are bits of background of events which are happening in Brazil while the story of the books plays out intertwined with the historical timeline. I'm not sure I'd recommend these and yet, I've become rather fond of the voice of this author and will read whatever others of his I can get my hands on in the future.

Jeannine says

Early in the book we are introduced to Aires, an older widower recently returned to Brazil in the 1880s after his career as a diplomat has ended. He sees the lovely widow Fidália at the cemetery grieving piously over the loss of her husband. Moved by her image, he asks his sister for more details of the woman's story. He is soon emotionally bound in a wager with her over whether she will ever remarry. In order to get closer to Fidália, Aires is befriended by an older childless couple who are bound to the widow and Tristão, a young successful politician. Aires eventually learns that he has become a foreigner in his own country as he is unable to understand the people or politics of the land. The Wager is a sad and introspective book filled with little action and great depth.

Antonio says

Leia algum dos grandes romances de Machado de Assis. O mais brilhante é Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas. Para estilo, é o que se deve emular. O coloquialismo melodioso e fluente de Machado. É um grande divertimento esse livro. Eu recomendaria ainda para os que tem dificuldade de manejar a lingua O Memorial de Aires. É o livro mais bem escrito em português que há.

Anya says

This is a seriously great book, and I say that knowing full well I'll have to read it again at some point, as there's just too much to unpack here. I haven't read other works by de Assis, and I don't doubt that he has written better than this, but as a short work that observes very calmly and naturally the differences between generations you could not ask for me. Don't be tricked by the way they attempt to market it - it isn't about an old man's 'obsessions'; rather, it's a very subtle psychological study of old age and its relationship to youth. Really beautiful book, and I know I'll be returning to it again at some point.

Jonfaith says

In fact if it really was a tear, it was so fleeting that by the time I was aware of it no longer existed. All is transient in this world If my eyes were not so bad I'd set about composing another Ecclesiastes, a modern version, even though after that book nothing can be considered modern. He said that there was nothing new under the sun, and if there wasn't then, there wasn't before and never will be again. Everything is contradictory as well as confused.

The Wager is comprised of the journal entries of a widower, a retired diplomat returning to Brazil from a career spent in the capitols of Europe. His entries contrast with what he purports to say publicly. This creates an interesting tension. The title arrives in a challenge between he and his sister about the fate of a young widow. One should not harbor images of Dangerous Liaisons as this is something placid. It isn't epistolary like de Laclos, though similar passing comments are extended to peasants, in this case newly freed slaves. There is a remarkable poise to this work. The diarist remains rather self critical, especially in regards to how matters should be represented. I admired that. He complains and admits to being petulant, he ascribes such to being afforded a childhood, free from having to carry things.

The song Silent Boatmen by Parliament arrived on my shuffle yesterday while I was driving home. This unexpected statement fell into accord with the whispered core of The Wager. I must warn thee, the conclusion isn't for the meek.

Laura says

Title: Memorial de Ayres

Author: Machado de Assis

Release Date: October 23, 2017 [EBook #55797]

Language: Portuguese

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Opening lines:

1888

9 de Janeiro.

Ora bem, faz hoje um anno que voltei definitivamente da Europa. O que me lembrou esta data foi, estando a beber café, o pregão de um vendedor de vassouras e espanadores: «Vae vassouras! vae espanadores!» Costumo ouvir-o outras manhãs, mas desta vez trouxe-me á memória o dia do desembarque, quando cheguei apozentado á minha terra, ao meu Cattete, á minha lingua. Era o mesmo que ouvi ha um anno, em 1887, e talvez fosse a mesma boca.

Clarice says

O último romance de Machado de Assis é inadvertidamente lido como se representasse o “canto do cisne” do escritor, que morreu no mesmo ano em que o livro foi publicado. A leve e doce ironia presente em *Memorial de Aires* é vista como a perda do vigor de Machado de Assis, numa leitura determinista de sua obra. É neste último romance, porém, que encontramos o princípio da ironia agindo na própria ironia: quanto mais leve, mais radical ela é.

A ironia primeira está no título do romance, que cria uma expectativa acerca da vida de Aires. Mas como Machado não copia fórmulas, ele não poderia utilizar o estilo de diário como uma construção contínua de eventos da vida do próprio Aires. Assim, Machado de Assis nos apresenta um diário que é uma justaposição irônica de eventos da vida dos outros também, sem entregar ao leitor o tom confessional usualmente associado aos diários. Pelas mãos de Machado, o diário é elevado à categoria de romance irônico, dramático, tragicômico.

Maira Moura says

"Ungrateful" may be a severe word. Fidélia and Tristão, in spite of their love and care for the couple Aguiar, did leave them for life in Europe. This is the second time Tristão leaves them. If I'm not mistaken, Fidélia

come from latin 'fidelis', which means 'loyal' - what lies as irony, something common in Machado's narrative. The tension between youth and maturity reveals itself slightly in Aires' journal - that is, concerning the way it ends, the greatest construction in the novel.

Steven says

"There is nothing like the passion of love to give originality to what is commonplace and novelty to what is dying of old age. (146)

The Wager or *Memorial de Aires* is de Assis's final work, completed several months before he died. It is written in diary form, containing the daily accounts, reflections, and memories of a retired, ageing, and solitary diplomat named Aires. Not much happens in the way of plot; the story begins with a wager between Aires and his sister Rita that a beautiful widow whom they observe in a cemetery will or will not remarry; the rest of the novel traces the wager's outcome. There is a kind of circularity to the story, which does not move far from its starting point—not much changes, physically, in the end—yet its beauty resides in the little changes that do occur, and these will be perceived and felt by those who appreciate subtlety. It was an emotional ending for me, which was partly due to the story itself, but mostly because this was—and truly felt like—Machado's last statement. It is not to be missed, especially if you love the man (as you should).

"...the young have the right to live and to love, and to leave the dead and the aged behind them with no regrets. (165)

Gláucia Renata says

Último romance do autor, o livro tem traços autobiográficos. Escrito poucos anos após a morte de sua amada esposa e companheira, conta a história de um casal de idosos, suas alegrias e a grande tristeza de não terem tido filhos. Como Machado e Carolina.

Howard says

If the back of the book is to be believed *The Wager* is by the greatest Brazilian author; and is of timeless quality of themes of broken dreams, love and obsession.

The story is told by Aires in the form of a diary around 1888. He is a returning retired diplomat from Portugal to Rio. He tells us of a childless aged couple who have finally had the return of 'adopted' children now grown up: Fidelia an attractive youthful widow and later Tristao, a dashing politician and family friend. The wager in question is between Aires and Rita, his sister, that Fidelia, though still too attached to her dead husband, will remarry (Aires perhaps hopes it'll be him). Though there are a couple of other characters guess who ends up getting hitched.

I started off being annoyed by this book even before the 'start'. The introduction tells us 'that the story is

'virtually non-existent' and secondly the inattentive reader may miss the bet between Rita and Aires - the book's called "the wager" for goodness sake!

I have read Dom Casmurro and that's better by a long way. The Wager though interesting isn't captivating. Aires isn't obsessed by Fidelia, nobody particularly has dreams for the future and so Fidelia and Tristao end up loving each other - no news there. The diary format wasn't - Aires doesn't really tell us about his thoughts and given the diary is private no deep personal feelings come out. A Brazilian classic may be but it's dry, unemotional and indistinct. The only novel angle of the book is the abolition of the slave trade in Brazil. Quality perhaps but uninspiring.

Miguel says

Um romance escrito em forma de diário, escrito por um diplomata aposentado que vai anotando as peripécias sociais e românticas que se vão desenvolvendo no seu círculo de relações pessoais. Um enredo quase mínimo, sem grandes tensões ou conflitos, mas uma narrativa magistralmente tecida, e uma escrita perfeita, ponteada de humor e ternura. Tratando-se do último romance do autor, é um exercício impressivo sobre o envelhecimento vivido por dentro, ou seja por quem está a envelhecer.

Moureco says

belissimo o discorrer da pena de Machado de Assis.

Joe says

If I could give this book 3.5 stars, or maybe 3.75, I would. I bought it because it sounded interesting, and I was able to find the original Portuguese version as well, so I intend to try to read it in Portuguese next to learn the language a little. I found that it had a lot in common with some Murakami short stories I was reading at the same time. (What those similarities are I can't remember at this moment, but I will update this entry in the furute).

This was Machado de Assis' last book, and Ayres is apparently a character who has appeared in some of his earlier work. I'll be looking for those books when I get the chance.

Bob Newman says

If Merchant and Ivory could have "gone Brazilian"

Counselor Ayres, the character, was first found in Machado de Assis' previous novel, "Esau and Jacob" just as Quincas Borba appeared in "Epitaph of a Small Winner" before becoming the main character in another novel. The present volume is rather slow, perhaps "slight" is a fair word, and may leave action-oriented modern readers a little bored. The author shuns his usual catchy chapter titles in COUNSELOR AYRES' MEMORIAL, but he still uses his usual format of dividing the text into short sections because the novel is

written in the form of a diary. While Machado de Assis shows in his usual, subtle way, that love is the glue that can hold both individuals and society together, the progress of the novel is languid and the text lacks entirely the wit and irony of his earlier works. Yet I found beauty in the book and sensed the nostalgia for a slower time.

We read a gentle story of an older diplomat (retired) watching the relationships develop and change among four or five other people in the Rio de Janeiro upper class of 1888-89. An attractive widow dedicated to her dead husband whom she had married against the wishes of her family; the godson of a doting old couple, otherwise childless, who returns to Rio after many years in Europe; the old couple themselves who love both widow and godson equally as the children they never had; a sister, an uncle, a malicious gossip---these are the characters we find moving in slow motion through the pages of a diary that reveals, but only slightly, the state of society in Brazil at the time. Slavery was abolished, the Empire had just come to an end, but Machado de Assis wrote more of playing cards, oil painting, piano recitals, and attendance at very European tea parties. It is a novel of a class that ignored the times, a class entirely wrapped up in its own interrelationships.

If you like the films of Merchant and Ivory or perhaps of Indian director Satyajit Ray, if you have a taste for novels that unfold slowly, at their own pace, you may like *COUNSELOR AYRES' MEMORIAL* because great events and intricate plots are not everything. Personally, I liked this novel, but as I found myself getting a little impatient at times, (and I like those Merchant and Ivory films) I wonder if it would appeal to many in our more-rushed age, hence the three stars. If Jorge Amado's wonderfully-descriptive novels of 20th century Brazil recall the samba and sexual vitality, Afro-Brazilian religion, color, and violence, this novel is more evocative of the piano adagios heard from afar on long-forgotten, hot January afternoons in bougainvillea-filled gardens of the vanished Brazilian aristocracy, and of people too "cultivated" to ever reveal their feelings in public.
