

Reason and madness in literature: a study on “O Alienista” (The Alienist), of Machado de Assis

Abstract

This paper consists on a study about madness in literature, analyzing the short story “O Alienista” by Machado de Assis. For this purpose, a bibliographical research was performed on the topic by reading books, monographs and scientific papers that approached the subject. This paper is divided into two parts: at the first a historical preamble on the possible proximities and distances between literature and madness is made, taking as its starting point the creative act. In the following, aspects of the narrative are analyzed, in particular the figure of the protagonist “Simão Bacamarte”, character who represents the scientific principles about which Machado de Assis’s criticism is made. The conclusions indicate that Machado’s works presents itself as questioning the socio-political appearances of his time and producing a bold critique of science and alienism based on the positivist ideals.

Key-words: Literature; Madness; The Alienist; Machado de Assis; Social Psychology.