REREADING DOM CASMURRO — AESTHETIC HYBRIDITY IN CAPITU

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Abstract: Although perhaps best known for Lavoura Arcaica (2001), an adaptation of Raduan Nassar's 1975 novel, the majority of Luiz Fernando Carvalho's professional activity has been in television, where, in addition to critically acclaimed telenovelas, he has directed adaptations of works by Eça de Queirós, Ariano Suassuna, Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector, and Graciliano Ramos. Carvalho's audiovisual oeuvre has distinguished him as one of the most creative directors working in Brazil today and as the first full-fledged Brazilian television auteur. In 2008 Carvalho completed Capitu, an adaptation of Machado de Assis's masterpiece, Dom Casmurro (1899). This paper analyzes Carvalho's unique rereading of Machado's novel and the aesthetic hybridity that characterizes Capitu.

Keywords: Dom Casmurro; television; Capitu; adaptation.

Relendo Dom Casmurro – hibridismo estético em Capitu

Resumo: Talvez mais conhecido como o diretor do filme Lavoura Arcaica (2001), uma adaptação do romance homônimo de Raduan Nassar, Luiz Fernando Carvalho desenvolveu a maior parte de sua atividade profissional na televisão, onde, além de telenovelas de grande êxito, fez adaptações de obras de Eça de Queirós, Ariano Suassuna, Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector e Graciliano Ramos. A obra audiovisual de Carvalho o distingue como um dos diretores mais criativos em atividade no Brasil e como o primeiro auteur da televisão brasileira. Em 2008, Carvalho completou Capitu, adaptação de Dom Casmurro (1899), umas das obras-primas de Machado de Assis. Este artigo analisa a criativa releitura que Carvalho faz do romance de Machado e o hibridismo estético que caracteriza Capitu.

Palavras-chave: Dom Casmurro, televisão, Capitu, adaptação.

From its origins in 1950 to the present, Brazilian television has a long tradition of adapting literary texts to the small screen. In the introduction to Literatura em Televisão Hélio Guimarães highlights this commercially artistic practice by emphasizing the historical importance of Brazilian television in the dissemination of both international and
Brazilian literature. Moreover, Guimarães references Antônio Candido's "Literatura e Subdesenvolvimento," implicitly pointing to literature's privileged position in Brazilian society as a cultural good that is created, consumed by, and circulated largely among the country's upper middle class and elite. In its search for the acquisition of the largest possible audience, Brazilian television recognizes and capitalizes on existent socio-economic obstacles, which serve as bridges connecting large audiences to literary works through their transformation into highly popular telenovelas, miniseries, microseries, and specials.

Indeed, according to Candido, a large number of Brazilians experience a process in which established cultural fields such as literature are passed over due to social, political, and economic questions, resulting in a technologically urbanized folkloric tradition as being their primary cultural source. Candido's argument that a disproportionate number of Brazilians' cultural competence is the result of their contact with television, is especially enlightening when placed in the context of television director Luiz Fernando Carvalho's Projeto Quadrante and what ethical and educational obligations the director understands artists as having vis-à-vis their respective audiences.

In early 2006, shortly after the completion of his critically acclaimed and commercially successful microseries, Hoje é Dia de Maria (2005), Carvalho began working on what he called the Projeto Quadrante. Conceived as a four-work special, the project's first two microseries were A Pedra do Reino, (2007), an adaptation of Ariano Suassuna's epic novel Romance d'A Pedra do Reino e o Príncipe do Sangue do Vai e Volta (1971), and Capitu (2008), an adaptation of Machado de Assis's 1899 masterpiece Dom

1 GUIMARÃES, Literatura em Televisão: uma história das adaptações de textos literários para programas de TV, p. 1-3.

2 This article frequently refers to three different television genres — the telenovela, the miniseries, and the microseries. A telenovela is a fictional narrative that generally includes 150 to 220 chapters each produced and shot shortly before airing. As a result, telenovelas are dynamic and flexible in their nature, capable of having their narratives altered depending on audience reception. A miniseries on the other hand, while also a fictional narrative, includes anywhere from 9 to 55 episodes which are all shot prior to airing the first one. A microseries is a shorter version of a miniseries and covers anywhere from 4 to 8 episodes. Contemporary Brazilian miniseries and microseries are most often adaptations of canonical literary texts.

3 CANDIDO, Literatura e subdesenvolvimento, p. 142.
Casmurro. The other two still uncompleted adaptations were to be Milton Hatoum's Dois Irmãos (2000) and Sérgio Faraco's collection of short stories Dançar Tango em Porto Alegre (1998). According to Memória Globo, the Projeto Quadrante has four primary objectives: 1) adapting national literary works from different regions of the country's expansive territory; 2) shooting and producing those works in the geographical region in which their narratives take place; 3) Identifying and training new professionals; and 4) Creating an educational exchange.

 Broadly speaking, each of the four objectives in its own way attempts to respond to the centralization of production, both industrial and cultural, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, to differing degrees, each objective evokes television's unique existence as an educational tool in addition to its commercially creative aspirations. On more than one occasion, Carvalho has provided his thoughts about what he understands as television's obligatory pedagogical role in Brazilian society. The most explicit example appears in his 2008 essay "Educação Pelos Sentidos." In the essay, which reads like a manifesto, Carvalho positions himself and his work against that which he views as mere entertainment. Instead, he argues in favor of a communicative, pedagogical model that productively conflates ethics and aesthetics. Capitu exemplifies Carvalho's conceptualization of an ethical aesthetics insofar as the five-part microseries'...

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4 Interestingly, in a 2006 interview, while still shooting A Pedra do Reino, Carvalho revealed that the second installment of the project was originally supposed to be João Paulo Cuenca's Corpo Presente, also set in Rio (Sertão é "semente"). Although there is no clear documentation of this, it seems that TV Globo shelved the adaptation of Cuenca's work in favor of producing Capitu as a celebration of the centennial of Machado de Assis's death. For his part, Cuenca was one of the screenwriters, along with Carvalho, Cecília Giannetti, and Michel Melamed, for Afinal, o que querem as mulheres?. CARVALHO, "Sertão é 'semente' de A Pedra do Reino".

5 Following the completion of Capitu, in 2009 reports surfaced that the Projeto Quadrante had been suspended indefinitely ("Projeto Quadrante suspenso na Globo"). Then in August of 2010 the Furlaneto of the Folha de São Paulo reported the project to be back on with the pending production of Dois Irmãos (FURLANETO, "Dois Irmãos vai retomar projeto literário na Globo."). In October of 2011 the website natelinha reported the project to be on hold once again due to the relatively high production costs needed for Dois Irmãos ("Custos altos fazem Globo desistir de Dois Irmãos."). Finally, in March of 2013, with TV Globo's rights to Hatoum's work set to expire for the second time, Cristina Padiglione of the newspaper Estadão confirmed the production of an eight episode microseries (PADIGLIONE, "Globo retoma planos para 'Dois Irmãos'").

6 "A Pedra do Reino". Memória Globo.

defamiliarized, hybrid aesthetic attempts to actualize and reemphasize Dom Casmurro's continued relevance and modernity, while simultaneously deconstructing young Brazilian's perceived reluctance toward one of the country's most important literary works.

**Adaptations – Close Reading Aproximações**

Every adaptation is a "reading" or interpretation of an already existing work. In relation to a filmic reading of a literary text, Ismail Xavier calls attention to the automatic difference that results from the interpretative process arguing that

livro e filme estão distanciados no tempo: escritor e cineasta não têm exatamente a mesma sensibilidade e perspectiva, sendo, portanto, de esperar que a adaptação dialogue não só com o texto de origem, mas com o seu próprio contexto, inclusive atualizando a pauta do livro, mesmo quando o objetivo é a identificação com os valores nele expressos.⁸

Readings, as Xavier astutely points out, are informed by their author's socio-historical and socio-economic contexts. There is also a structural element to the interpretative process. That is, when one adapts a text from one medium to another, there are differences that automatically occur across the distinct artistic vehicles. For example, a play takes place on a stage, itself normally limited to the confines of a closed-space theater, in front of a live audience. Consequently, it falls to each individual spectator to follow the narrative as he or she sees fit. That is, a spectator could potentially choose to focus his or her attention exclusively on a specific character, independent of whether that character is central to the narrative at a given moment. A filmed television program on the other hand does not allow such arbitrary viewing freedom insofar as the camera and editing direct the spectator's attention to what the director wants him or her to see. Additionally, whereas a play may or may not have an intermission, an hour-long program on Brazilian television

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⁸ XAVIER, Do texto ao filme: A trama, a cena e a construção do olhar no cinema, p. 62.
will have five commercials totaling roughly fifteen minutes of advertising, disrupting the narrative flow.

Like Xavier, the inherent difference(s) resulting from an adaptation is why Robert Stam argues against fidelity discourse—the idea that a filmic or televisual adaptation of a particular work must remain faithful to its source or hypotext.\(^9\) For Stam, such a notion is problematic in that it points to a number of preconceived prejudices and hostilities, some of which include, the anteriority of the source-text; dichotomous thinking; iconophobia; logophilia, or the valorization of the verbal; the myth of facility of the image; class prejudice; and parasitism.\(^10\) These prejudices and hostilities, argues Stam, function to place the adapted work in an inferior position relative to the source-text.\(^11\) Like Xavier, Stam's overarching argument regarding adaptations is that "source-novel hypotexts are transformed by a complex series of operations" such as "selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, popularization, reaccentuation, transculturation."\(^12\) In this sense, the resulting televisual or filmic adaptation, or what Stam calls the hypertext, is best analyzed not in the subjective terms of how well it extracts the source-text's assumed essence, but how it is itself a new, unique, and "automatically" different work.\(^13\) Notably, both Xavier and Stam's arguments regarding audiovisual adaptations point to the importance of the director's creative, hermeneutic reading of the source-text, thereby creating an entirely new work.

\(^9\)STAM, Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation, p. 3-8. For the definitions of hypertext and hypotext Stam refers to Gérard Genette's five types of Transtextuality—1) intertextuality, or the co-presence of two texts; 2) paratextuality, or the relation within the totality of a literary work between the text proper and its paratext—that is, titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, dedications, Illustrations; 3) metatextuality, or the critical relation between one text and another; 4) architextuality, or the generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles or subtitles of a text; and finally, 5) hypertextuality, or relation between one text, a "hypertext," to an anterior text or "hypotext," which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends (STAM, cit., p. 26-31). Thus, a hypotext is the source-text, whereas the hypertext is the text that results from an adaptation.

\(^10\)Idem, p.3-8.

\(^11\)Idem, p.8.

\(^12\)Idem, p. 45.

\(^13\)Idem, p. 45-47.
Cognizant of the creative process necessitated by the move from one medium to the next and the resulting difference between the two, Carvalho conceives of his works as creative readings of the plays or literary texts in question. Carvalho, who has adapted works by such canonical authors as Ariano Suassuna, Raduan Nassar, Eça de Queiros, Clarice Lispector, and Graciliano Ramos, explicitly refuses to use the term adaptation. He says, "Recuso completamente. Eu sempre agi como se estivesse em diálogo com aquilo".14 While the term adaptation implies a modification of something from a specific context or structure so as to make it a better fit for a different context or structure, Carvalho prefers the term aproximação. Instead of adaptation's implied transposition of the text from one medium to the next, Carvalho prefers a synergistic interaction between the director and the text. The implication here is a dialogic approximation (aproximação) between the creator and his or her object. One might also understand aproximação as a close reading.

Carvalho himself declares that his adaptations are an attempt to "entrar no livro como um leitor e extrair uma resposta criativa a essa leitura".15 In his reading of Dom Casmurro, Carvalho constructs a creative response that manages to be both literally reverent and figuratively irreverent to the source-text. The result is creative audiovisual essay, which reflects how Carvalho interprets and interacts with Machado's novels and what in it interests him most.

Capitu – An Aesthetically Hybrid, Audiovisual Rereading of Dom Casmurro

Starting on December 9, 2008, Capitu aired on TV Globo at 11pm over five consecutive nights. Part of the Projeto Quadrante and of TV Globo's celebration marking the centennial of Machado's death, Capitu's characteristic aesthetic hybridity is representative of Carvalho's broader artistic reaction against everyday Brazilian television fare. Like Hoje é Dia de Maria and A Pedra do Reino, Capitu is reflective of the director's overarching desire to ponder Brazilian culture and to defamiliarize Brazilian television.

14 CARVALHO, Luiz Fernando Carvalho: Sobre o filme Lavoura Arcaica, p. 34.
15 CARVALHO, "Entrevistas: Luiz Fernando Carvalho".
However, unlike these earlier two microseries, in Capitu Carvalho moves away from theatrical, fantastic depictions of a folkloric regionalism toward a theatrical, or operatic pop depiction of global urbanism. In doing so, Carvalho situates Capitu, and by extension his reading of Dom Casmurro, within the broader context of contemporary globalized pop-culture.

Despite the microseries' title, which is a symbolic, perhaps even simplistic inversion of the protagonist's roles, at the narrative level Capitu can be described as a literal adaptation of Dom Casmurro. This is because the microseries includes the novel's written text verbatim and closely adheres to its plot. To be clear, Capitu does not incorporate all of Dom Casmurro's written text form. Instead, it includes a selection made by Carvalho and his co-author Euclides Marinho. Nonetheless, the text it does include — that is, all of the spoken or written text that appears on screen in Capitu — was taken directly from Dom Casmurro. In addition to leaving Machado's words as he wrote them, Capitu maintains Dom Casmurro's ironic, ambiguous, and psychologically reflective tone. Despite the microseries' literal connection to the source-text, Carvalho uses it as a point-of-departure for exploring and dialoguing with the contemporary world. Thus, whereas Dom Casmurro is a realist narrative set in the socio-historical context of late 19th century Rio de Janeiro, Carvalho's post-modern reading of Machado's masterpiece maintains no definitive ties to a realistically represented time or place.

One important reason behind the post-modern treatment of Dom Casmurro is to appeal to younger viewers, who might consider Machado's obligatory work to be overly difficult and disconnected from contemporary Brazilian culture. Nonetheless, rather than massacre a richly nuanced novel, Carvalho's "popularization" or "actualization" of Dom Casmurro does not sacrifice the playfulness and irony that characterize Machado's best fiction. In fact, similar to Bento Santiago's ambiguous narration, the microseries is itself structurally ironic insofar as it embodies the novel's realist narrative while, at the same time, contradictorily calling attention to certain aspects of it through its audiovisual construction.

16 "Papéis Avulsos." Capitu.
In his polemical study regarding the generally unchallenged classification of Machado's later works as being realist novels, Gustavo Bernardo astutely highlights how *Capitu* calls the spectators' attention to the fact that what they are watching is not a depiction of a reality, but a work of art. Bernardo argues that Carvalho's frequent revealing of the microseries' construction is similar to the way in which Machado ensures *Dom Casmurro*’s reader remembers that he or she is engaged in the act of reading an artificially constructed work of fiction.\(^{17}\)

For his part, Carvalho achieves this largely by dissonantly actualizing Machado's novel through the mixing of visual characteristics reminiscent of 19\(^{th}\) century Rio de Janeiro with blatantly anachronistic elements. For example, in the microseries' opening scene Dom Casmurro rides on a modern day train through contemporary Rio. Later, both he and his wife, Capitu, listen to an Mp3 player while dancing at an elegant 19\(^{th}\) century ball. At other moments, in addition to a short clip from Orson Welles' film *Othello*, Dom Casmurro can be seen talking on a cell phone, while Capitu and Ezequiel stroll through modern-day downtown Rio de Janeiro. Additionally, an incongruous, jarring compilation of a wide range of music from artists including The Sex Pistols, Verdi, Pink Floyd, Brahms, Jimi Hendrix, Caetano Veloso, Black Sabbath, and Beirut, among others, contrast with and undermine the theatrical caricature of Dom Casmurro as he narrates an operatic setting (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5).

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\(^{17}\) BERNARDO, Machado de La Mancha contra o gigante do realismo, p. 38-39.
In *Capitu* Dom Casmurro's narration unfolds through the perspective of three different timeframes—1) the present; 2) the past; and 3) the convergence of the two. As is the case with the novel, in the microseries Dom Casmurro narrates in the present tense as he attempts to "atar as duas pontas da vida, e restaurar na velhice a adolescência" (*Dom Casmurro* 19). Flashbacks to Bentinho's youth and his adult years married to Capitu, compose the temporal structure of the past. As an audiovisual response to Machado's first-person narrator, Carvalho, creates a third time frame, which is dialogic spatio-temporal structure, placing the present Dom Casmurro in direct physical contact with the memories he narrates (Figures 6 and 7).

Nonetheless, the anachronistic audiovisual juxtapositions function to eliminate any realistic spatio-temporal expectations the spectator might have.

Independent of the spatio-temporal structure used, nearly the entire story takes place within the confines of the Automobile Club located in downtown Rio de Janeiro. Primarily filmed inside the beautiful, yet seemingly abandoned 19th century building Carvalho uses Rio de Janeiro as the work's narrative setting and cultural springboard, while at the same time neglecting stereotypical, edenic, and realistic visual constructions of the city. Moreover, the re-appropriation of the space further reinforces the defamiliarization already in play through use of anachronistic music, props, and images. The Automobile
Club, then, becomes an anti-naturalist platform upon which Carvalho is able to experiment with his interest in theater and opera as a creative point-of-departure for the adaptation.

In a number of interviews leading up to the premiere of *Capitu* Carvalho frequently argued that Machado rejected realism in favor of defining life as "uma ópera bufa com alguns entremeios de música séria". Although this phrase actually belongs to Luís Batista, a character from *Resurreição* (1872), it is an explicit representation of both Carvalho's reading of Machado's work and the heightened importance the director gives to opera as a resource for the creation of his anti-realist microseries. Indeed, by the end of the fourth minute of the first episode, Dom Casmurro seemingly echoes Carvalho's position when he breaks the fourth wall to inform the spectator that "a vida tanto podia ser uma ópera como uma viagem de mar ou uma batalha". Upon completing this phrase, taken from chapter IX, "A Ópera," in *Dom Casmurro*, there is a cut to one of the many title pages that signal a move to a new chapter from the source-text. Announced by a deep, masculine voice as it is shown on the screen, the title page reinforces the presence of the idea of opera through both the spoken and written word. The subsequent cut from the title page is to the interior of the Automobile Club. Emphasizing the grandeur of the space, from an extremely low-angle the camera rotates to reveal red curtains characteristic of an operatic stage. As the curtains open to the sound of classical music, the stage lights turn on and a spotlight captures a distant Dom Casmurro standing on the stage (Figure 8).

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18 "Oficinas". *Capitu*.

19 Found in chapter XX, titled "Uma Voz Misteriosa," the passage reads: "Não desconheço - disse Luís Batista quando concluiu a sua expansão amorosa -, não desconheço que uma aventura destas, em véspera de noivado, produz igual efeito ao de uma ária de Offenbach no meio de uma melodia de Weber. Mas, meu caro amigo, é lei da natureza humana que cada um trate do que lhe dá mais gosto. A vida é uma ópera bufa com intervalos de música séria. O senhor está num intervalo; delicie-se com o seu Weber até que se levante o pano para recomeçar o seu Offenbach. Estou certo de que virá cancanear comigo, e afirmo-lhe que achará bom parceiro. Dizendo isto, Luís Batista engoliu o resto, já frio, do café que tinha na xícara, acendeu de novo o charuto, e recostou-se na cadeira. Félix teve tempo de reassociar a atitude tranquila que as últimas palavras de Batista lhe haviam alterado" (ASSIS, *Resurreição*, p. 326-327).

20 *Capitu* DVD.
At this point Dom Casmurro reinitiates the voice-over narration from the opening scene – "a vida tanto podia ser uma ópera como uma viagem de mar ou uma batalha"\textsuperscript{21} – finishing his explanation of how the novel received its name. Thus, in referencing what comes only eight chapters later in Machado's novel, the director inserts the opera scene not to explicate the narrative, but to establish its centrality to Carvalho's version of Dom Casmurro, the arc of his life, and how he understands the past he writes and narrates.

The theatrical space and its staging and the specific references to opera, along with the aforementioned anachronistic audiovisual insertions, are instances of the blatant artificiality that permeate Carvalho's post-modern reading of Machado's novel. During a scene in which Dom Casmurro recounts an afternoon shortly after his marriage to Capitu all of the elements mentioned thus far fluidly interact with one another. The result is an anachronistic dialogue between the novel and its 19\textsuperscript{th} century setting and 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} century popular culture, ranging from silent film to alternative rock music. The vehicle through or the stage upon which this dialogue plays out is Carvalho's artistically engaged version of 21\textsuperscript{st} century Brazilian television. In this scene Dom Casmurro narrates verbatim from the chapter "De Casada" ("The Married Woman"), informing the spectator of his Capitu's desire to get out of the house. During this brief scene images of Dom Casmurro

\textsuperscript{21} Idem.
looking back in time are juxtaposed with images of the newlywed couple as they go out for ride. Here, Carvalho eclectically joins *mise-en-scène*, music, cinematography, and literature as a means to extrapolate beyond the space's physical and temporal limitations, ultimately deconstructing the spectator's expectations. Moreover, when together this diverse array of aesthetic elements functions to supplant their own individuality, ultimately resulting in an osmotic transformation that combines them into a singular audiovisual product challenges both the physical limits of the narrative's spatial setting and the metaphysical limits of its temporal setting.

Narratively speaking, the first shot of the "De Casada" scene is of Dom Casmurro and Capitu, both of whom are supposed to be walking outside (Figure 9).

![Figure 9](http://machadodeassis.net/revista/numero13/rev_num13_artigo03.pdf)

However, insofar as they are obviously within the confines of the closed space of the Automobile Club, this is not clear to the spectator. Although the interplay between lighting, decoration, cameras movements, and framing multiplies the physical space into a seemingly much bigger fictional universe, this fictional universe is only as big as the spectator's imagination will allow it to be. In what might seem contradictory, the narrative milieu includes less so to spark the spectator's imagination: "O cenário é minimalista. Cada espaço ganha vida apenas com o essencial. Não há paredes ou excesso de elementos como..."
na linguagem naturalista, é um cenário aberto à imaginação dos espectadores".  

Carvalho further activates the spectator's participation through editing, whereby he juxtaposes the images of the couple walking with the following shot of Dom Casmurro both speaking and typing his story. Here, Machado's written word is inversely transposed onto the screen as if Dom Casmurro were reading what he is writing (Figure 10).

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 10**

The contrast of the dark, tight, distorted framing of Dom Casmurro typing with the relatively bright and more open framing of the previous shot of the couple suggests two distinct spaces: the space in which Dom Casmurro writes and the space of the memories he is writing. Thus, Carvalho combines literature, both spoken and written, cinematography, with distinct *mise-en-scènes* to manipulate the physical space of the Automobile Club and to suggest narrative spaces that are distinct both visually and temporally.

In the subsequent shots, Carvalho heightens the defamiliarized narrative spaces by adding an even more explicitly theatrical element, archival footage, and music to the already existing parts. After Dom Casmurro theatrically punctuates the first part of his monologue, the camera pulls back to reveal him standing on a type of stage directly behind the footlights (Figure 11).

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22 "Oficinas". *Capitu*. 

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http://machadodeassis.net/revista/numero13/rev_num13_artigo03.pdf
As constituted, the space evokes the operatic stage from the opening scene, while also suggesting a level of performance ongoing in Dom Casmurro's narration. However, the out-of-focus image of Dom Casmurro distorts the performative aspect. In fact, the lens that exclusively captures Dom Casmurro is distorted by placing a small retina filled with water directly in front of it. The 'Dom Casmurro Lens', as Carvalho referred to it, was meant to visually treat specific scenes where the protagonist's fragile psychological state and nebulous memories were central to the narrative. In this particular scene of Dom Casmurro performing before an imagined audience, Carvalho, then, employs the presence of the stage and the theatrical reading, captured by the special, distorted filter, to create an ambience of doubt. The artificiality intrinsic to such a performance leads the spectator to question the reliability of the performer. Moreover, it is the director's way of hinting to the spectator that he or she should be cautious of Dom Casmurro's broader account as it pertains to his wife's fidelity.

Immediately following the image of Dom Casmurro on the stage, there is a visual insertion of black and white archival footage of a bustling, turn-of-the-century urban center. An explicit reference to the cinematic, the archival footage represents a rupture of the

23 "Capitu". Memória Globo.
physical narrative space of the Automobile Club. Moreover, the footage's 19th century milieu remits the spectator to a period of time more akin to that in which Machado sets his narrative. Finally, the documentary nature of the footage juxtaposed with the previous images of the theatrical space reinforces the artificiality of the narrative space in which Dom Casmurro writes and remembers. At the level of the narrative, then, the real/artificial dichotomy set up by such an audiovisual construction further undermines Dom Casmurro's questioning of his wife's infidelity. That is, it further establishes an ambience of doubt.

Whereas the archival footage insertions visually extend the narrative beyond the enclosed theatrical space, while still corresponding to the 19th century setting in which the novel takes place; the subsequent inclusion of Janis Joplin's "Mercedes-Benz" aurally extends the narrative beyond the immediate and concrete, in a blatantly anachronistic manner. The addition of Joplin's 1970 hit to the dissonant use of the other elements emphasizes Carvalho's disorienting audiovisual treatment of the novel's narrative. As such, Carvalho's Capitu literally incorporates the original text both through the spoken and written word, while, at the same time, radicalizing the figurative audiovisual treatment through an unlikely combination of aesthetic elements, transcending spatio-temporal and narrative expectations.

Another example of how Capitu is simultaneously representative of a literal and figurative treatment of Machado's novel is the scene that introduces Escobar, Bentinho's friend from seminary, based on Dom Casmurro, chapter 56, "Um Seminarista." Starting at the point immediately prior to Dom Casmurro's first mention of Escobar's name, the passage in Machado's novel reads as such:

Era um encanto ir por ele; às vezes, inconscientemente, dobrava a folha como se estivesse lendo de verdade; creio que era quando os olhos me caíam na palavra do fim da página, e a mão, acostumada a ajudá-los, fazia o seu ofício...

Eis aqui outro seminarista. Chamava-se Ezequiel de Sousa Escobar era um rapaz esbelto, olhos claros, um pouco fugitivos, como as mãos,
Although Escobar is the primary focus of this particular chapter, Dom Casmurro's first mention of him occurs almost in passing, as if his childhood friend suddenly, while remembering another seminary student, popped into his memory—"eis aqui um outro seminarista." Of course, as is characteristic of Machado's unreliable first-person narrators, the reader would do well to be cautious of any seemingly random, or unconscious insertion. As he continues his introduction of Escobar, Dom Casmurro comments on his friend's physical characteristics, hinting at a slipperiness that might perhaps characterize Escobar's personality. In the last part of the chapter, Dom Casmurro comments how Escobar was able to gain his friendship and trust. Moreover, using a house as an analogy to describe his soul, Dom Casmurro alludes to how his identity was still in flux at the time when he first met Escobar as a boy. He says,

"A princípio, fui tímido, mas ele fez-se entrado na minha confiança. Aqueles modos fugitivos, cessavam quando ele queria, e o meio e o tempo os fizeram mais pousados. Escobar veio abrindo a alma toda, desde a porta da rua até o fundo do quintal. A alma da gente, como sabes, é uma casa assim disposta, não raro com janelas para todos os lados, muita luz e ar puro. Também as há fechadas e escuras, sem janelas ou com poucas e gradeadas, à semelhança de conventos e prisões. Outrossim, capelas e bazares, simples alpendres ou paços santuosos.

Não sei o que era a minha. Eu não era ainda casmurro, nem Dom casmurro; o receio é que me tolhia a franqueza, mas como as portas não tinham chaves nem fechaduras, bastava empurrá-las, e Escobar empurrou-as e entrou. Cá o achei dentro, cá ficou, até que..."

According to Dom Casmurro, Escobar did not just enter his "house," instead he pushed open the doors. Exactly what Dom Casmurro means by this is not entirely clear. That is, Machado's use of ambiguous prose in this passage opens itself up to an interpretation that concludes that there were, in the very least, homosexual undertones between Bentinho and Escobar.

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25 ASSIS, Dom Casmurro, p. 105 (Emphasis added).
26 Idem, p. 106.
Carvalho's reading of the passage, as manifested in the audiovisual construction of the scene, places such an interpretation at the forefront, while maintaining the novel's characteristic ambiguity. Immediately prior to the chapter in question, we see a montage of images of Bentinho leaving for the seminary with Capitu looking on sadly from her window. Archival shots of papal processions fragment the crosscut images of the young couple melancholically looking at one another (Figures 12, 13, and 14).

Figure 12  
Figure 13  
Figure 14

Taken from chapter 51, "Entre Luz e Fusco," Dom Casmurro solemnly declares in voice-over, "Oh! minha doce companheira da meninice, eu era puro, e puro fiquei, e puro
entrei na aula de S. José, a buscar de aparência a investidura sacerdotal, e antes dela a vocação. Mas a vocação eras tu, a investidura eras tu". It is at this point that Carvalho inverts what seems to be made clear in Dom Casmurro’s narration—that is, that the narrator is in this passage referring to his relationship with Capitu. To visually reinforce Capitu as the subject, the end of the narration is marked by another shot of her crying in the window (Figure 15).

![Figure 15](image)

However, the very next shot is that of the title page "Um Seminarista," which is also announced in voice-over (Figure 16).

![Figure 16](image)

The images of Capitu and the title page, as well as the distinct narrations placed in close proximity result in an audiovisual link between them. As such, by following a shot of Capitu with the pronounced title page, Carvalho creates a level of ambiguity where there

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27 *Idem*, p. 97.
seemingly is none. The effect is that the voice-over narrations end up sounding like, "a investidura eras tu..." "um seminarista." By placing the passage from chapter 51, "Entre Luz e Fusco," wherein Dom Casmurro informs the reader of his last encounter with Capitu and their shared kiss prior to him leaving for the seminary, directly before the "Um Seminarista" scene, Carvalho cuts out, at least as far as Dom Casmurro's narration is concerned, much of chapters 52 through 55, making it no longer fully clear that Dom Casmurro is in fact referring to Capitu. The verbal references to Bentinho's purity, when juxtaposed with the visual depiction of Escobar in the following scene reinforce the ambiguity created by Carvalho.

If in Machado's novel Dom Casmurro seemingly remembers Escobar in passing, in Carvalho's microseries he bursts forth from the narrator's memory as an apparently uncontrollable force. Whereas the focus of the narration in the novel falls entirely on Dom Casmurro, that is, he is consciously writing his memory of Escobar, in this scene in the microseries Carvalho delays the voice-over narration and in so doing places Escobar at center stage. In fact, the scene begins with red stage curtains opening to reveal a group of boys praying around a large table (Figure 17).

Figure 17
After a cut to a terrified Dom Casmurro, there is a shot of Escobar kneeling as if praying (Figure 18).

![Figure 18](image)

Then, to the sound of Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" (1970), Escobar seductively dances into the space where the other students congregate. His initial physical distance from the group combined with the heavy rock music and his erotic movements and gestures that take him into the space while defaming it by diabolically dancing on the dinner table, highlighting his position as an outsider, perhaps even a sinner (Figures 19, 20, and 21).

![Figure 19](image)  ![Figure 20](image)
By prioritizing the audiovisual, that is, by delaying the literal narration of Machado's text vis-à-vis the action taking place on the screen, Carvalho accentuates his interpretation of an existing homoerotic tension between Bentinho and Escobar. Through the hybridization of Machado's written word, editing, anachronistic music, dark lighting, Escobar's facial expressions and body movements, and Bentinho's seemingly overwhelmed reaction to them, Carvalho radicalizes the literal text, resulting in a figurative treatment that embodies the author's characteristic ambiguity while dialogically creating a new narrative possibility.

**Conclusion**

The aesthetic hybridity characteristic of Carvalho's reading of *Dom Casmurro*, is also evocative, as Ilana Feldman argues with regard to *Hoje é Dia de Maria* and *A Pedra do Reino*, of the Baroque:

Na *opera mundi* de Luiz Fernando Carvalho, tanto em *Hoje é dia de Maria* como, mais radicalmente, em *A Pedra do Reino*, a encenação contempla, incorpora e devora, almejando totalizar, todas as formas de
manifestação artística, que, ao gosto do barroco, cujo sentido literal é "acumulação", une e mistura cinema, teatro, poesia, pintura, circo, ópera, literatura, romance, odisséia, sátira, tragédia, picardias, cordel, maracatu, papangus e novelas de cavalaria. Do popular ao erudito, da artesania à tecnologia, da ancestralidade à busca da nacionalidade, a mão barroca e o "estilo régio" de Luiz Fernando Carvalho orquestram excessos, intensidades, contrastes, júbilos sem limite, jorros declamatórios e diversos registros e linguagens.28

Of course, in Feldman's "opera mundi" one could include Capitu, which is, more than any of Carvalho's works, operatic in both its formal and narrative nature. Feldman's designation of the works as being Baroque derives from the generally accepted understanding of the term as referring to a work of art characterized by excess, contrasts, and accumulation. To Feldman's characterization one can add Angela Ndalianis's specification of the keys to what she calls the Neo-Baroque logic: 1) a self-reflexive relationship to the illusion created; 2) playful engagement with a spectator that acknowledges the status of performance; and 3) a tendency towards virtuoso display and spectacle.29 Ndalianis argues that "the Neo-baroque combines the visual, the auditory and the textual in ways that parallel the dynamism of seventeenth-century Baroque form, but that dynamism is expressed in technologically and culturally different ways".30

In his rereading or aproximação of Machado's novel, Carvalho accumulates many of the elements mentioned by Feldman, as well as others she leaves out, so as to construct a self-reflexive relationship to the illusion created as well as to playfully engage with a spectator who cannot help but acknowledge the ongoing performance. Thus, through a complex audiovisual construction that melds Machado's prose with an excessive accumulation of distinct aesthetic elements, Carvalho creates a new work of art that is his reading of not only Dom Casmurro, but also of his understanding of and interests in erudite and popular cultural production.

29 NDALIANIS, "Neo-Baroque to Neo-Baroques?", p. 266.
Works cited:


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