THE ELEGY OF DOM CASMURRO

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Dom Casmurro is Machado de Assis's most controversial novel. It was published in 1900 and in an English translation for the first time in 1953.[1] In *Dom Casmurro*, Machado de Assis perfects the hybrid quality of his works, which benefit from a combination of his deep knowledge of European literature and his experience of the political, social and gender transformation sweeping through Brazil with the end of slavery (1888), the proclamation of the republic (1889) and the Belle Époque.

Machado de Assis's position between these two worlds is one facet of the originality and modernity of his works and above all of *Dom Casmurro*. In *Dom Casmurro*, he reveals his fascination for a theme that is very dear to European literature – jealousy – most notably represented in Shakespeare's *Othello,* which Bento the narrator refers to directly in chapters 62 "A Touch of Iago" ("Uma ponta de Iago"), 72 "Uma reforma dramática" ("A Dramatic Reform") and 135 "Otelo" ("Othello"). According to Caldwell, *Dom Casmurro* can be considered one of the best modern reincarnations of *Othello*.[2] The story is told through the eyes of Bento Santiago, the supposedly betrayed husband. Bento does not become a priest as his mother wanted because he wants to marry, and he ends up marrying his enchanting childhood sweetheart and neighbor, Capitu. Capitu is therefore a sort of social climbing Desdemona of suburban Rio de Janeiro, whereas Othello's incarnation in nineteenth-century Brazil is as a decadent superstitious Catholic paterfamilias. The aged narrator represents the decadent land and slave owning elite in the passage from the monarchy to

the republic; he has lost most of his wealth and has to make his living as a lawyer and from the remaining family assets.

Bento is writing a memoir for the purpose of justifying his jealousy towards his deceased wife. The evidence of the betrayal that he gathers is very flimsy and could easily be interpreted as paranoia. In fact, we can summarize a substantial part of the history of *Dom Casmurro*'s criticism as "the fiction of the tribunal",[3] which has essentially focused on the relationship between the narrator and his heroine, Capitu, and more recently, as we shall see later, on the triangular – or even quadrangular – story of friendship, love and homosocial affection between Capitu, Bento, Escobar and Sancha. This article will also explore this triangular relationship, by proposing a reading of Bento's accounts of his life with his wife Capitu as an elegy, or perhaps a double elegy. The self-reflexive narrator interweaves the bitter and sad lament for the death of his heroine with that of his best friend Escobar. The relationship between the narrator and Capitu is the main purpose and the one which occupies the most space in the narrative, but it is not the only one. Capitu, who is the most complex character of the novel – alongside the narrator himself – is in the foreground of the narrative, but in the middle distance he lets us glimpse the relationship between him and a male hero, his best friend Escobar, shedding light on the changes in the social, sexual and gender relations of the end of the nineteenth century in Brazil. As Chalhoub and Schwarz both state, Machado de Assis's novel portrays this period of transition in Brazilian society, in which the relationship between the patriarch and his dependents – be they "agregados", slaves, women or children – is being redefined, due to the change of political regime, the end of slavery, industrialization, and also, according to Miskolci, the new model of family and the transformation of gender relations and sexuality.[4]

I will argue more precisely that *Dom Casmurro* can be considered as an elegiac romance and that Machado de Assis has chosen a woman as the heroine of his novel because of the central role that women occupied in the patriarchal urban family at the end of the nineteenth century in Brazil and by extension because of her role as mediator of male homosocial desire and partnership in the control of women. The elegiac romance appeared first in the early fiction of Joseph Conrad and was subsequently developed by a number of major writers influenced by Conrad, including Nabokov and Fitzgerald.[5] This paper will present the main characteristics of the elegiac romance and compare *Dom Casmurro* to *Lord Jim* in order to highlight what makes the relationship between narrator and hero(es) in *Dom Casmurro* unique.

The elegiac romance

Bruffee states that novels, such as *Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness, The Great Gatsby, The Good Soldier, Doktor Faustus*, and *Pale Fire*, share formal and thematic characteristics that must be taken into account when defining them as works of art.[6] He coined the term "elegiac romance" to define them: a new narrative form that allowed the tradition of the heroic quest romance to survive in the fiction of the twentieth century.

Bruffee prefers to call these works "romance" rather than "novel" because the hero embarks on the kind of quest similar to that found in the romances of chivalry. They are elegiac because the narrators tell us the story after the death of the hero, as in a pastoral elegy. We will address the question of the history and evolution of the heroic quest romance at greater length to obtain a better understanding of the links that bind the mediaeval period to the twentieth century and examine the cultural and historical background that is the driving force behind these changes.

In its first phase, that is, in the age of chivalry, the focal point of interest is entirely on the journey of the hero: that of Gwain and Parzival, for example. Little or no attention is paid to the squire. Similarly, no doubts are expressed about the conventions of feudal life or the aristocratic values that the knight represents. With Cervantes, however, the genre underwent a radical change, since both the knight Don Quixote and the squire Sancho Pança are given a voice in the narrative. In the second stage of the heroic quest romance, the narrative allows the sensibility of the squire to be conveyed – in this case, that of Sancho Pança himself. No matter how much he lacks the means to form a judgment of Don Quixote, it is still through Sancho Pança that the reader can grasp the hero. In addition to this, the tone is not serious as in a chivalric romance. It is rather primarily ironic, because the reader is never sure if he/she should share the values of the hero or those of the squire.[7]

The heroic quest romance underwent a further radical change in English romantic poetry. Bruffee's position is supported in an article by Harold Bloom, who argues that in the romantic period the heroic quest became internalized.[8] This quest is interpreted as a constant concern of the poet with himself. As an example, Bruffee cites Canto III of Byron's narrative poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", in which the presence of two characters is openly maintained. As he points out, the squire turns into the "I" of the poem. Although the social background of each historical era may be different, the critic of hegemonic values in different epochs seeks to obtain a close understanding of them. In other words, in the same way that Sancho Pança criticizes the feudal values that Don Quixote represents, the "I" of the poem will reject the aristocratic political hegemony, although not with the irony of Cervantes' squire. The tone is now serious and there is no doubt that the readers of the poem are expected to

share the values of this new type of squire. In the third phase, according to Bruffee: "the thematic and structural pendulum swings almost completely away from the knight's quest toward the everyday experience, needs and interests of the squire".[9] The "I" of the poem absorbs the traditional consciousness and emotional state of the hero in his everyday emotional needs, individuality, and consciousness, and is nothing less than "the inner counterpart of the great political upheavals of the times, the common person seeking freedom".[10]

The elegiac novel of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries inherited this interaction between two complementary psychic worlds – that of the narrator and that of the hero – while concentrating on the complexity of the consciousness of the former. In the fourth phase, like the third, the quest becomes internal insofar as the narrator seeks to attain self-knowledge. The character that the narrator portrays as a hero seems at the outset to be what is of main interest in the story, but in reality the key feature is the effect the hero has on the narrator himself. The search for self-knowledge through the construction of a narrative is the underlying reason for the narrator's obsession with the hero.

However different they may seem on the surface, novels such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Lord Jim* share the same underlying driving force: they are the outcome of the need for the narrators to overcome the feeling of loss caused by the death of their heroes. For this reason they are heroic and elegiac at the same time. They explore the interaction between the narrator and the hero in the recent and distant past. The fact that the hero is already dead is unlike what occurs in chivalric romance, while being more similar to the pastoral elegy. The loss of the hero is irredeemable. As a result, the narrator begins to construct the hero, who is a product of his/her fantasy; we as readers

do not have access to the hero except through the narrator, who inevitably becomes his mediating force. Even when he is given voice, what the hero says is meticulously selected and edited by the narrator. For example, Marlowe guides his listeners as follows:

> I am telling you so much about my own instinctive feelings and bemused reflections because there remains so little to be told of him. *He existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you.* I've led him out by the hand; I have paraded him before you. Were my commonplace fears unjust? I won't say – not even now. You may be able to tell better, since the proverb has it that the onlookers see most of the game.[11]

The narrative structure of the elegiac romance is a reconstruction in the narrative present of the relationship that was established between these two complementary characters in the past, blending factual reality with invention. The problem that the narrator faces is that although the hero is dead, his influence remains alive in his mind. By dying, the hero takes the past of the narrator with him. The narrator embarks on an imaginary journey as a means of exorcizing his ghosts and recovering his past, and this will result in an autobiographical account. By telling his story, the narrator manages, or at least makes an attempt, to obtain a degree of control over his underlying concern, which is the driving force behind the narrative. When compared with other narratives about heroes, it can be said that the narrator of the elegiac romance is much more than a mere observer: he undergoes change insofar as he gives an account of the hero and is

the victim of his relationship with him/her. The elegiac romance is thus an autobiography of the narrator disguised as the biography of the hero.

Lord Jim: the double

According to Bruffee, the origins of the elegiac romance at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries can be found in the work of the Polish novelist who had settled in England, Joseph Conrad – notably in his novels *Lord Jim* and *The Heart of Darkness*. The form became established in these works after the novelist had faced difficulties in constructing the narrative of some of his previous works, such as *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, "The Lagoon", and "Karain: a Memory".[12] *Lord Jim*, rather than *The Heart of Darkness*, is examined in this article because its date of publication coincides with the turn of the century, thus symbolizing the formation of a new paradigm in fiction at the beginning of the twentieth century, and because 1900 was the year in which *Dom Casmurro* was also published.

Lord Jim was originally planned as a story of approximately 20,000 words to be published in three or four instalments in *Blackwood's Magazine* and reprinted in an anthology of three adventure stories. The publication in serialized form began in October 1899, but, contrary to Conrad's initial intention, it ended up being extended to fourteen instalments and was only completed in November 1900. After several revisions, it was finally published as a single work in the extended form that we know today. The first book edition came out in 1900.

However, as Conrad wrote to his editor in July 1900, the novel had not lost the character of a short story because it was confined to a single situation from the beginning to the end. [13]

> Another matter, if it not too late already, has occurred to me. Would it not be better seeing the form of the novel (personal narrative from a third party as it were) to dispense with the word **Chapter** throughout the book, leaving only the Roman numerals. After all, these divisions (some of them very short) are not chapters in the usual sense each carrying the action a step further or embodying a complete episode. *I meant them only as pauses – rests for the reader's attention while he is following the development of **one** situation, only **one** really from beginning to end.* I fear however that it may be now too late to make the alteration.[14]

In its transition from a story (the remnants of a twenty-eight page manuscript entitled "Tuan Jim: a sketch") to a full-length novel, Conrad added depth to the character of Jim. As Ian Watt points out, the central section (Chapters 5 to 20) is essentially an expansion in narrative form of the opening of "Tuan Jim: a sketch". In other words, rather than giving a generalized impression of how Jim was viewed by the European characters of the ports and the captains of ships, Marlow provides his audience with a long series of graphic eye-witness accounts and interviews with people who knew Jim or who could clear up points about Jim's personality and activities.

Lord Jim is a novel about the art of narrating a story, but particularly about the difficulties that Marlow faced in attempting to understand and narrate the story of Jim. Jim is a young and promising sailor, who dreams about becoming a hero of the high seas. On board the *Patna*, a ship which takes Muslims as passengers to Mecca, Jim finally has the chance to become a hero when the hull of the ship is breached after it

collides with an underwater object and it springs a large leak. However, Jim abandons the ship with the captain and two members of the crew. Although no shipwreck occurred, Jim begins to be haunted by feelings of remorse. He is later stripped of his navigation command certificate, like the captain and two other crew members, being the only one of the four with the courage to attend the Court of Inquiry. Following this, he is unable to hold a job for any length of time because, as soon as he is faced with any reminder of his past, he takes flight

Marlow first sets eyes on Jim during the inquiry into the *Patna* incident and at once identifies with the first mate, who comes to be like his double: "He was a youngster of the sort you like to see about you; of the sort you like to imagine yourself to have been; of the sort whose appearance claims the fellowship of these illusions you had thought gone out, extinct".[15]

Marlow is much older than Jim and is a ship's captain, who is tired of his profession and discontented with life in general. Throughout the narrative, he has mixed feelings towards Jim, which fluctuate between admiration, curiosity, and slight repulsion. However, although the hero is the cause of conflicting emotions, Marlow remains loyal to his friend: he helps Jim to find a new position whenever he gives up his job in an attempt to flee from his past. He wants at all costs to understand Jim's spiritual being and find an explanation for his actions by seeking to reconstruct his history. It is Marlow who introduces Jim to the German botanist Stein, who in turn helps Jim become the administrator of a commercial venture in a remote spot called Patusan, where, in the second part of the novel, Jim seeks refuge from civilization and the phantoms of his past. It is here that he wins the love of Jewel and is transformed into the leader and idol of the local people, and, finally, in what is virtually an act of suicide,

takes no steps to avoid Doramin, who murders him in an act of revenge for being the indirect cause of the death of his son.

Marlow is not the narrator at the beginning of the novel. In the first chapters an omniscient narrator tells the story of Jim's childhood and early years, as well as his romantic dream of becoming a hero like the protagonists of the sea adventure stories that he has read. Marlow only takes over the narrative when he arrives on the scene at the judicial inquiry about the *Patna*. From then onwards, what we read is the account by Marlow given to a group of listeners after dinner. The end of the novel is presented in yet another way: it takes the shape of a letter written by Marlow to the most attentive of his listeners.

The gist of the narrative is conveyed to the reader through Marlow, who has complete control over the story, even when he reconstructs the section on the judicial testimony and eye-witness accounts of Jim given by third parties. When the narrative is handed over to Marlow, time sequences are constantly jumbled. Past, present, and future are juxtaposed in a single paragraph, which allows Marlow to manipulate the narrative flow and thus highlight certain aspects of the story. At the same time, he delays revealing (or even conceals) information from the reader concerning facts about the fate of the *Patna* and the death of Jim that are important for constructing the plot.

In Bruffee's view, this narrative superstructure, which involves having an omniscient narrator superimposed on the dramatized narrator – whom the critic calls the frame narrator –[16] was later abandoned by the followers of Conrad, even his friend Ford Madox Ford in *The Good Soldier*. Bruffee believes that in the novels of Ford Madox Ford, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Vladimir Nabokov and Thomas Mann: "the occasion of the narrator's tale is represented as entirely a function of the narrator's emotional need, the

need, as Dowell [narrator of *The Good Soldier*] puts it, to get the sight out his head, to disencumber himself of the memory of his hero and its influence on his present life by telling the story".[17]

This account of the evolution of the elegiac form can throw light on a controversial issue that arises among critics of *Dom Casmurro*: whether or not there is a voice – usually identified with that of the implied author – that is superimposed on the account of Bento Santiago and provides us, the readers, with grounds for distrusting the narrator. Before examining *Dom Casmurro*, however, account should be taken of what Bruffee regards as the three key elements of elegiac romance to emerge from *Lord Jim* (and *Heart of Darkness*), and which are also present in *Dom Casmurro*, as will be shown later.

The first is the ambiguity of the relationship between the narrator and the hero, which raises doubts about the credibility of Marlow. His interpretation of Jim can be tendentious because at times he arouses sympathy for Jim and at other times invites us to judge him. As Albert Guerard wrote, on the one hand, Jim "needs a judge, witness and advocate in the solitude of his battle with himself".[18] On the other, Marlow "speaks of the fellowship of the craft, of being his very young brother's keeper, of loyalty to 'one of us', of mere curiosity, of a moral need to explore and test a standard of conduct. But Marlow [...] acknowledges a more intimate or more selfish alliance".[19]

The second key feature is the continuous introspection of the narrator who reflects on the past and reinterprets it while telling the story. This means that the emphasis on action is kept to a minimum and thus the rhythm of the narrative slows. What is most important for Marlow is to discover both the effects of the past on the life of his hero and how the past affects him, too, in the fictional present. It is all these

various moments of introspection combined, that lead us to conclude that the narrator is not simply seeking to explain Jim's offence, but also attempting to satisfy a personal need, as he makes clear in Chapter 5:

> *Was it for my own sake that I wished to find some shadow of an excuse for that young fellow whom I had never seen before*, but whose appearance alone added a touch of personal concern to the thoughts suggested by the knowledge of his weakness – made it a thing of mystery and terror – like a hint of a destructive fate ready for us all whose youth – in its day – had resembled his youth? *I fear that such was the secret motive of my prying.*[20]

The investigation that the narrator undertakes to discover the influence of the past on the present compels him to occupy a situation that is constantly shifting. In Bruffee's view, what he really wishes to do in the story is to exhume the past that lies buried within himself and look at it without blinking so that he can proceed with his own life.

The third key feature of the elegiac romance that Bruffee detects in *Lord Jim*, is the rhetorical manipulation of the reader by the narrator. Marlow portrays a fascinating character similar to the heroes of the sea yarns in the books read by Jim (and by the readers of *Lord Jim*), which are imbued with Western cultural traditions. Bruffee thinks that the reader reacts in a conventional way to these traditions and sees Jim as in fact a hero. This is not the only "trick" employed by the narrator to distract the attention of the reader. Bruffee states that Marlow also persuades the reader that his own interests and he himself are of no less importance for the narrative. In this way, Marlow draws the attention of the reader from himself to the figure of the hero when (according to Bruffee)

what he is doing the whole time, in fact, is to "saturate his description of his hero with his own personality, his own values, and above all his own deepest emotional problems".[21]

The presence in *Lord Jim* of the three features discussed above, or, in other words, the ambiguity of fellowship, the introspection of the narrator, and the rhetorical manipulation of the reader, mean that the reader of the novel remains in a state of conflict. At first this takes place between the reader and the narrator, but it also occurs between the reader and the omniscient narrator (at the beginning of the novel), and the reader with him/herself, with his/her own values and literary imagination. This presence takes a very different form from that of the linear reading of heroic novels and the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century, which has a direct bearing on *Lord Jim*. As Guerard states, the novel subjects its readers to a profound experience and requires their full involvement while also encouraging them to read the book a second time. The readers "go through the labyrinth of evidence without the usual guide of an omniscient narrator", and, as we see, find themselves alone with a manipulative narrator. The novel places us within a psycho-moral drama where there is no final solution. We read the end of the book without knowing whether Marlow has explained Jim's offence or if he has become reconciled to the past and freed himself from Jim's influence. It was probably not one of Conrad's main concerns to solve one or either of these mysteries. By making the pendulum swing between the narrator and the hero, the author is more concerned with establishing an interaction between the two and their respective mental outlooks. This is achieved with a degree of profundity that a modernist novel would attribute to mental processes, introspection, and inner experience.

The Title: *Dom Casmurro* and not *Capitu*

"Não consultes dicionários" (chap. 1) ("Don't consult your dictionaries" [6]), Dom Casmurro warns us in the first chapter of the book that he intends to write and for which he chooses as a provisional title the nickname that his neighbors gave him. The meaning of "casmurro", he continues, "não está no sentido que eles lhe dão, mas no que lhe pôs o vulgo de homem calado e metido consigo" ("*Casmurro* is not used here in the meaning they give for it, but in the sense in which the man in the street uses it, of a morose, tight-lipped man withdrawn within himself" [6]). In the dictionaries that readers are discouraged from using, "casmurro" means stubborn, headstrong and pig-headed. In this article we should, perhaps, once more question the Machadian narrator, as several literary critics of the novel have done, and consider it to be the first instance of what Marta de Senna calls a "strategy of deceit", which is predominant throughout the novel: "the device is what I call the strategy of deceit, by which I mean the narrator's ability to build, on every other page, a kind of *trompe l'oeil* that conditions the reader's eyes to see what is not there, and not to see what really is there to be seen".[22]

Yet if we try to see Dom Casmurro through the eyes of his neighbors, we find that he is a man who in the recent past and in the narrative present, lives "só, com um criado" (chap. 2) ("alone, with one servant" [6]), in a house where the architecture and decor seek in an artificial way to recreate the old times of the child and teenager. Moreover, since he used to spend days and nights on end writing, he cannot be regarded by his living neighbours as anything but a man of "hábitos reclusos e calados" (chap. 1) ("taciturn, reclusive-like habits" [5]).

This does not mean that the two definitions are mutually exclusive. They apply to the same person but at three different stages of his life. He is the narrator Dom Casmurro, Bentinho and Bento Santiago, all at once. The dictionary meaning does not bring together the features of the narrator, at least for those who see him from the outside and are still alive when the writing begins. Moreover, it fails to define the child/teenager Bentinho, who we know was much more naive than his childhood playmate Capitolina and his best friend and also former seminarian Escobar. The cunning of Capitu and Escobar and the naivety of Bentinho are heightened not only by gender but also by the fact that they belong to different social classes: Capitu is a social climber and Escobar a self-made man.[23]

Out of the three facets of the same man (Bentinho, Bento and Dom Casmurro), it is Bento who is the stubborn and pig-headed one. The obsession that gripped him during his adult life distanced Dom Casmurro from Bentinho, and it was therefore fateful for his destiny and those of Capitu and their son Ezequiel. However, it is not Bento who sits down to write the narrative. He is as much a character as Capitu and Escobar, and both will be returned to in the novel. In reality, it is the reconstruction of the interaction between Bento, Capitu and Escobar at different stages of the narrator's life which concerns the memoirs of Dom Casmurro – as occurs, it should be said, in the elegiac romance.

Machado de Assis has been criticized for writing only histories of white men and women and this also is true for *Dom Casmurro,* the first novel he published after the change of the regime from monarchy (1821–1889) to republic (1889).[24] The plot explores the social destiny of free women – represented by the heroine, Capitu, and Escobar's wife, Sancha – but also of free men – represented by Bento himself, Escobar

and the "agregado" José Dias. It runs from the 1840s to 1890s and provides the reader with a panorama of the period as the narrator tells us his personal story. The Second Reign (1831–1889) particularly stands out, especially the government of Dom Pedro II, which lasted forty-nine years (1840–1889). With the social and economic crisis, the abolitionist movements, the War of Paraguay and the many internal conflicts, such as the Farroupilha Revolution, the ideals of the Empire began to crumble. In 1857, a key year for the plot as it is when young Bento finds out that he is in love with Capitu, the Second Reign experienced its apogee through the work of the political conciliation of the Emperor. The image of the Emperor as a symbol of power is constantly reflected in the novel, firstly in specific scenes, such as when Bento and José Dias witness an imperial procession as they are wandering through the streets of Rio de Janeiro in 1857 (chap. 29), and the scene in which Bento remembers Capitu's interest in historical facts, more precisely in finding out what the "Maioridade" was (chap. 31) ("Majority" [61]): that the coronation of Dom Pedro II was carried out in 1841 when he was of fifteen. Secondly, Bento embodies the symbolism of a declining but yet powerful regime and Emperor through his violent and failed attempt to maintain his position of control. The novel captures the figure of the patriarch in full exercise of his power, which is, nevertheless, at stake.

Although only intended to be provisional, the title *Dom Casmurro*, as the narrator states in the first chapter, is not referred to again in the narrative. In the course of reading the novel, we accept it as the definitive version when we have finished reading chapter 145, without asking if it was the most suitable for the book. Machado de Assis could have chosen to call it *Dona Capitu* or *The Gypsy Capitu* or simply *Capitu*, as in Luiz Fernando Carvalho's televised adaptation, broadcast by TV Globo in 2008. In

this way, the author would have given prominence to the heroine of the novel, in the same way that Cervantes and Conrad highlighted the significance of their heroes by giving their work the same name as the protagonist. On the one hand, *Don Quixote* and *Lord Jim* are echoed in the title chosen by Machado, owing to the "fumos de fidalgo" (chap. 1) ("aristocratic airs" [6]) of this kind of treatment. As Bruffee argues, the title of an elegiac romance very often draws attention to:

> the ostensible hero of the narrator's tale, but at the same time qualifies that attention so as to cast doubt even before the tale begins on the ostensible hero's legitimacy both as **a** hero and as **the** hero, that is, both on his genuineness and integrity and on his role as the true central figure in the work: "Lord" Jim, "the great" Gatsby, all the "king's" men, "Doctor" Faustus, the last "tycoon". The title of an elegiac romance often reveals right away, perhaps, sooner than we really expect it, the narrator's point of view. In doing so, the title of an elegiac romance itself may be the first gesture in the complex rhetoric of the narrator's view.[25]

On the other hand, we are set apart from them because the title already denounces what the elegiac romance initially seeks to conceal: that the interests of the narrator are of central concern. As pointed out by Bosi, in *Dom Casmurro,* "Machado trimbrou em resconstituiu, aprofundar e tonalizar a história interna da voz narrativa" (Machado succeeded in reinstating the internal story of the narrative voice, giving it depth and tone).

Does this difference in the title exclude *Dom Casmurro* from Bruffee's list of elegiac romances? I believe not, at least from my own standpoint, and think it will be

worth discussing later. I would like to stress here that my reading is bound up with more recent interpretations of *Dom Casmurro*, which focus on the egocentricity of the narrator and his irony with regard to himself (foreshadowed in the title of the novel) and examine the triangular affair in the light of sexuality, gender relations and the model of family in force at the end of the nineteenth century. It is no longer solely concerned with the conviction or acquittal of Capitu nor with the strict relationship between the narrator and his heroine. We will also discuss in more detail the fact that the death of the heroine rather than of a male hero is in the foreground of the narrative, contrary to most elegiac romances.

Bento's betrayal

We can understand the significance that the fellowship acquires in *Dom Casmurro* if we concentrate on the three features of the elegiac romance discussed in greater detail in the section on *Lord Jim*. These are 1) the ambiguity of the fellowship, 2) the rhetorical manipulation of the reader, and 3) the introspection of the narrator.

The ambiguity of the fellowship is what must be discussed in more detail because, in the first place, it is not the same type of fellowship as in *Lord Jim*. Like *Lord Jim*, *Dom Casmurro* tells the story of narrator's obsession with the – heroic – figure of a friend who has already died: his "primeira amiga" (chap. 148) ("my heart first love" [240]), as he calls Capitu in the last chapter of the book.[26] His search is also conducted at an inner level, or, put another way, in attempting to recreate an interaction between the heroine and himself, he indulges in an epistemological and psychological kind of self-assertion. The narrator reveals in chapter 2, much earlier than Marlow (who is not the narrator at the beginning of *Lord Jim*), that "o meu fim evidente" ("my

purpose") in writing the book "era atar as duas pontas da vida, e restaurar na velhice a adolescência" ("was to tie together the two ends of my life, to restore adolescence in old age" [7]), something he has failed to achieve with the house that he had built in Engenho Novo. As the narrative progresses, the presence of Capitu and the enigma surrounding her personality become more and more imposing. However, Dom Casmurro does not cease to tell his story while at the same time making an appraisal of the heroine. In fact, his and Capitu's lives are as closely bound up in the narrative as the two sides of the wall that divides the houses of the two families.

In one respect Marlow and Dom Casmurro are the same: both of them reach the end of their stories without deciphering the mystery of their heroes. In the case of Jim, this is even after several accounts about him have been given by third parties who have met him on various occasions. Marlow does not manage to penetrate the mind of his hero (but is only able to speculate about it) and fails to find a justification for Jim's offence. However, in Machado's novel, the question is even more complex. At the beginning, Dom Casmurro was in a more advantageous situation than Marlow with regard to Jim. The reason for this is that he was married to Capitu and was thus on intimate terms with her, sharing the same house and presumably the same bedroom. Despite this, the narrator reaches the end of his account without succeeding in deciphering the mystery of Capitu's "olhos de ressaca" ("eyes like the tide" [61]).

At the turn of the nineteenth century, women (let it be said here, homosexuals as well) were depicted as figures of disorder who occupied a border zone between patriarchal order and sexual anarchy.[27] Femmes fatales, such as Nana of Zola and Salome of Oscar Wilde, are characterized as mysterious, enigmatic and a stimulant of desire in men that causes illness or even death. An important element of seduction is

their eyes, which is explored by Machado de Assis not only in *Dom Casmurro* but also in his short fiction. In "A cartomante", Rita uses her beauty and "olhos cálidos" (warm and savvy eyes) to seduce and lead Camilo to his downfall[28]. Camilo of "Miss Dollar" fears to come across "um par de olhos verdes" (a pair of green eyes)[29]. The powerful eyes of Lucinda in "Sem olhos" lead her victim to his death by a single glance[30]. In "Uns braços", the story revolves around the erotic atmosphere created by the language of the Dona Severina's eyes.[31] In *Dom Casmurro,* the narrator confesses to be unable to to convey an image "sem quebra da dignidade do estilo" ("without breaking the dignity of my style" [62]) to convey her her eyes:

> Olhos de ressaca? Vá, de ressaca. É o que me dá ideia daquela feição nova. Traziam não sei que fluido misterioso e enérgico, uma força que arrastava para dentro, como a vaga que se retira da praia, nos dias de ressaca. Para não ser arrastado, agarrei-me às outras partes vizinhas, às orelhas, aos braços, aos cabelos espalhados pelos ombros; mas tão depressa buscava as pupilas, a onda que saía delas vinha crescendo, cava e escura, ameaçando envolver-me, puxar-me e tragar-me. (chap. 32)

> ("Eyes like the tide? Yes, like the tide. That's what they were. They had some mysterious and force-giving fluid that drew everything up into them, like a wave that moves back from the shore when the under-tow is heavy. In order not to be swept under, I grasped at other, neighbouring parts, her ears, her arms, at her hair that was spread over her shoulders; but as soon as I sought of her eyes again,

the wave that came from them kept growing, cavernous, dark, threatening to engulf me, to pull me, drag me into itself." [62-63])

According to Bosi, Machado de Assis uses in *Dom Casmurro* the metaphor of the eyes like the tide and tautology in the process of individualization of the heroine. With regard to the use of tautology, he writes that:

> É significatico que, na configuração de Capitu, o narrador recorra à tautologia, desistindo de dar à namorada uma definição estreita e quadrada: "Capitu era Capitu, isto é, uma criatura mui particular, mais mulher do que eu era homem. Se ainda o não disse, aí fica. Se disse, fica também. Há conceitos que se devem incutir na alma do leitor, à força de repetição."[32] O singular em estado puro – Capitu era Capitu – casa-se com o universal feminino (mulher), e daí nasce este "mui particular", intensivo, que leva ao extremo possível a recusa à classificacação.[33]
>
> (It is significant that in the shaping of Capitu the narrator turns to tautology, as giving his girlfriend a narrow, square definition: "Capitu was Capitu – that is, a very special creature, more woman than I was man. If I have not said this before, there it is. If I have, there it is, anyway. There are concepts that must be impressed on the soul of the reader by the force of repetition." The singular in the pure state – Capitu was Capitu – marries with the feminine universal (woman), and from there arises this "very particular", intensive, which leads to the extreme possible the refusal of classification.)

As in *Lord Jim*, one of the narrative devices of rhetorical manipulation of the reader is the characterization of their heroes through the use of male or female tropes of the literature of the time. The narrator's inability to decipher Capitu's nature goes hand in hand with her depiction as a femme fatale, playing therefore with the reader's literary imagination. This is not a innovation of *Dom Casmurro*, as Machado often employs two prominent female tropes of the time in his short stories and novels, which are the fragile female and the femme fatale.[34] A testimony of Capitu's reading as a femme fatale was the predominant critical reception of the novel until the mid-twentieth century. Critics such as Veríssimo (1903), Pujol (1934) and Miguel-Pereira (1936) accuse Capitu of adultery, based on Bento's assumption of Capitu's manipulative nature:

Veríssimo: "Foi ela, como diziam as nossas avós, quem o desasnou, e, encantadora Eva, quem ensinou a malícia a esse novo Adão." [35] (It was her, as our grandmothers said, who instructed him, and lovely Eve, who taught malice to this new Adam.)

Pujol: "Ardilosa e pérfida, acautelada e fingida, Capitu soube ocultar aos olhos do marido a sua ligação criminosa com Escobar. A verdade aparece a Bentinho esgarçada, a espaços, pelos fios tenuíssimos de coisas mínimas, que ele compara umas às outras, nas suas noites de insônia."[36] (Crafty and perfidious, guarded and feigned, Capitu was able to conceal from her husband's eyes her criminal connection with Escobar. The truth appears to Bentinho bit by bit, frayed by the tiny threads of minimal things that he compares to one another in his nights of insomnia.)

Miguel Pereira: "[Bentinho] era um emotivo, um tímido, dominado pelas impressões. Mas Capitu, felina, ondulante, cheia de manhas e recursos, já era, desde então, mulher até a ponta dos dedos." [37] ([Bentinho] was emotional, shy, dominated by impressions. But Capitu, feline, undulating, full of tricks and resources, has ever since been a woman right up to her fingertips.)

The restrictions placed upon women by society mean that seduction is her only way of gaining independence:

> Mais triste é a sorte das mulheres – para elas as opções ou oportunidades são mais estreitas, sem perspectiva. Se não lhes cai do céu a madrinha opulenta, nem as requesta o noivo rico, aguarda-as o casamento, na melhor das hipóteses, com o bacharel sem futuro, o funcionário sem recursos ou o empregado vexado com a ameaça de desemprego. Fora daí, como ganhar o pão?[38]
>
> (The saddest thing is the luck of women – for them the options or opportunities are narrower, there is no perspective. If the rich godmother does not fall out of heaven, or the wealthy groom rejects them, marriage is at best awaited with a bachelor without a future, with by a civil servant who is beset by the threat of unemployment. How else can they make a living?).

Chasteen establishes that Machado often portrays his women as "strong and resourceful figures, especially when compared with his feckless and spoiled men".[39] The femme fragile highlights the status of dependency and the manipulability of the women, and the femme fatale presents strong, rational women that subvert traditional

gender roles. These early critics fall prey to Machado de Assis's rhetorical manipulation and endorse the status quo: the submission of women and children to the patriarchal family structure in a society which is less and less dependent on slave labor. Indeed, these early critics are led by Bento into seeing Capitu as a threat to marriage and the hierarchical structure of the family.

However, by comparing Capitu to other female characters – Virgília of *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* and Sofia of *Quincas Borba* – Bosi comes to the conclusion that the heroine of *Dom Casmurro* is far more complex and dense, and that the veracity of her expressions remains until today a challenge to the reader's speculation: "É verossímel que a filha de Pádua lute para obter um lugar melhor no regime paternalista do tempo, cujas peças-chave encadeadas eram o matrimônio e o patrimônio; no entanto, a primeira natureza nela transborda do leito cavado pelos interesses, como a vida transborda, quando pode, da compustura social que a limita e represa."[40] (It is plausible that the daughter of Padua is fighting to obtain a better place in the paternalistic regime of the time, whose key pieces were matrimony and patrimony; nevertheless, her first nature overpowers the well rooted interests, as life overflows, when it can, from the social structure that limits and dam it.)

In the course of reading of the novel, we follow the progressive complication of the relationship between the heroine and narrator, for whom the advantage of being married to his heroine does not provide better insight into her character. The relationship between the heroine and the narrator is that of a married couple.[41] To put it more clearly, the nature of the initial ties of friendship between the narrator and the heroine changes throughout the novel to suit the particular aspects of the historical and social background depicted in the novel and the specific features of the plot. In the case

of the Brazilian novel, the heroine is the childhood friend and neighbor of the narrator. In puberty, the friendship and innocent playfulness of the two children turn into love. The ties of friendship are transfigured in this way by the swearing of vows of love, which are sealed by the inscription on the wall shared by the two houses and later renewed when the couple are married at a church altar.

We do not doubt that Bentinho was passionately in love with Capitu. It is her feelings that are ambiguous; at least that is how the narrator wishes us to see them. His curiosity to understand something that is indecipherable in her dates from the time of their childhood.

In the same way as Jim, she is the product of the imagination and discourse of the narrator, who meanwhile seeks to make up for his failings in fantasies and preparing his own absolution. At the time when they both lived in Matacavalos, Bentinho used to admire how cunning Capitolina was. Much as he may be trying to gather arguments that can be used to condemn the heroine and remove the slightest possibility that the reader might forgive her, he cannot leave unnoticed in his writing the tender feelings that the memory of the heroine in her childhood and youth arouses in him. It is for this reason that, as has already been noted by Roberto Schwarz, a feeling of lyricism prevails in the part of the narrative about the house of Matacavalos:

> Pois bem, como entender que a elegância da prosa dos primeiros capítulos, suprema sem nenhum exagero, seja a obra e o passatempo dessa figura nociva e patética das páginas finais? Respostas à parte, a pergunta decorre da composição do livro. Sob pena de ingenuidade, esta obriga à distância em relação ao que é

> dito, ou melhor, incita a dar palavra a correções e adendos que a situação narrativa imprime ao memorialismo lírico do primeiro plano. [42]
>
> [Well then, how can the elegance of the prose in the opening chapters, which is unquestionably of the first rank, be explained as the work and plaything of the obnoxious and pathetic figure of the final pages? An answer to this question can be partly derived from the composition of the book. At the risk of being naive, this distances the reader from what is being said or, to be more precise, encourages the addition of words to the corrections and addenda that are printed in the narrative situation in the foreground of the lyrical memoirs.]

The ties of friendship between the two families are sealed by the marriage arranged for the happiness of the two youngsters. If we employ the terminology of Bruffee, which brings us back to the origins of the heroic quest romance, there was in *Dom Casmurro*, as described earlier, a shift in the nature of the bond between the narrator and heroine.

The historical and social background should not be overlooked, since it places the heroine in an adverse situation that is twofold: she does not have a voice in the narrative, and when she was still alive her wishes and freedom were constantly being thwarted. This is because her responsibilities were confined to playing a role that was defined within a patriarchal society, looking after the household and bringing up her only child. Even a small protective gesture of Bento's with regard to his wife is not something genuine; I refer here to the covering of Capitu's arms by a fine veil in the dances later in the novel. It is a conservative and overprotective attitude that is prompted by jealousy of the natural endowments of the woman and the physical inferiority that Bento feels, for example, in comparison to Escobar. The exile of Capitu

and Ezequiel to Switzerland, where Bento sends them after their separation, represents the final break of the fellowship between the heroine and the narrator, which I interpret here as a betrayal of Capitu by Bentinho. This reverses the line of interpretation that is usually followed and which is the most controversial area in critical essays on the novel. If, on the one hand, the betrayal of Bentinho by Capitu can never be confirmed, on the other we can nonetheless be sure that, in the world of the elegiac romance, no narrator has ever gone so far in his ambiguous feelings for his heroine.

Following this line of thought, the separation of the couple, which is caused by the morbid jealousy of the husband, constitutes a break of the (conjugal) ties. We can no longer speak of "the fellowship of the craft" or the protection "of his very young brother", as in the case of Marlow for Jim. The nature of the bond is less changeable in *Lord Jim.* In Conrad's novel there is no break in the pact of the fellowship. The narrator remains loyal to the hero from beginning to end. He attempts to help Jim on various occasions by arranging a number of consecutive jobs for him. Furthermore, he was not responsible for the conflict which finally led to Jim's death. Marlow was hundreds of miles away and had already said his last farewell to Jim. In this respect, Marlow acts as a passive observer. This is not the case in *Dom Casmurro*: Bento sends Capitu into exile and is indirectly responsible for her lonely death, as well as that of their son. Thus, Bento betrays Capitu (and not the other way around), if we reread the novel through the lens of a heroic quest romance.

A double elegy?

Dom Casmurro makes plain at the beginning and end of the book that his purpose is to link the two extremes of his life and all that is lacking is he, himself.[43] In view of this,

why has criticism put so much effort into (re)reading the novel in search of clues that can confirm the infidelity of Capitu or clear her of the charge of adultery? As mentioned above, Abel Barros Baptista describes this trend in the critical history of *Dom Casmurro* focused on the relationship between the narrator and his heroine as "the fiction of the tribunal". Why are we not led to see what is there before us – Bento Santiago's authoritarianism, envy, personal weakness, selfishness, scorn for religion and indifference toward his son – and see what is not there, i.e. the adultery of Capitu?

The first study to cast doubts on the veracity of the narrator was published as early as 1900. José Veríssimo suspected that Bento's views about Capitu might be biased: "Dom Casmurro a descreve, aliás, com amor e com ódio, o que pode torná-lo suspeito. Ele procura cuidadosamente esconder estes sentimentos, sem talvez conseguí-lo de todo. Ao cabo das suas memórias sente-se-lhe uma emoção que ele se empenha em refugar." [44] (Dom Casmurro describes her with love and hate, which can make him suspect. He tries to hide these feelings very carefully, perhaps without all-round success. At the end of his memoirs one feels a thrill that he attempts to reject.)

Key critical studies throughout the twentieth century, such as those referred to above by Lúcia Miguel-Pereira (1949) and Augusto Meyer (1986), were, however, unanimous in their condemnation of Capitu. It was only with Helen Caldwell that the heroine finally found an advocate who defended her from the accusation of adultery. For Caldwell, Bento acts simultaneously as Othello and Iago in order to plot the condemnation of his wife. She compares the narrative to a court of law, in which Capitu is put in the dock and the narrator is Bento's own lawyer. The implied author would have left clues throughout the book, causing the reader to be wary of Bento's account.

And as Gledson and Santiago argue, the reader glimpses the malfunctioning of contemporary Brazilian society through the troubled figure of Bento Santiago.

Gledson draws attention to the non-reliability of the narrator of *Dom Casmurro*. In Gledson's view, Bento's whole narrative is an attempt to persuade the reader of Capitu's infidelity by reconstructing impressions of the past that are unsubstantiated and lack concrete evidence. The interest of the narrator is to make his version of the facts override everything else. This means that as the narrative progresses, the novel is revealed to be a study of Bento's pathological obsession and not of Capitu's adultery.

Schwarz, on the other hand, puts the blame on the reader for having accepted Capitu's conviction for more than sixty years: the reader is sympathetic to Bento's attitude, because he shares with the narrator Bento's point of view and the concerns of his social group. Capitu's conviction and the ruin of Bento's family life were undesirable but, nevertheless, inevitable.[45] For Antonio Candido, "dentro do universo machadiano, não importa muito que a convicção de Bento seja falsa ou verdadeira, porque a consequência é exatamente a mesma nos dois casos: imaginária ou real, ela destrói a sua casa e sua vida" (within the universe of Machado de Assis, it does not matter much that Bento's conviction is false or true, because the consequence is exactly the same in both cases: imaginary or real, it destroys his home and his life).[46]

As mentioned above, some studies have expanded the focus to the examination of the triangular relationship between Capitu, Bento and Escobar. Italo Mariconi, who pioneered the reading of the novel as a queer narrative, explores the sexual connotations in episodes of clear affection between Bento and Escobar. For Mariconi, some lines of the novel make it explicit "certas ambiguidades e sofrimentos que marcam o desejo homossexual masculino no paradigma vitoriano heteronormativo" (certain ambiguities

and sufferings that characterize masculine homosexual desire in the paradigm of Victorian heteronormativity).[47] For Richard Miskolci, it is a homosocial relationship to which the problem of class inequality, as Boicinhas points out, is added. Machado depicts through the ambiguity of Bento's feelings for Escobar – desire, rivalry, homosexuality and camaraderie between two seminary friends – the problematic and complex relations between men prevailing in the late nineteenth century. Based on the studies of Foucault and Ortega, for Miskolci the friendship between Bento and Escobar is socially controlled and peripheral to the relationship with the woman within the nuclear monogamist family. Capitu – as well as Sancha, for whom Bentinho maintains a small erotic fantasy in chapter 118 – is the mediator between relations between men, who attempt to affirm their masculinity "contra o feminino encarnado e projetado apenas em mulheres, em suma, representado socialmente naquela que medeia sua relação fundada em um desejo homossocial masculino" (against the feminine ideal, embodied in women and projected by them, in sum, socially represented in that which mediates their relationship founded on a masculine homosocial desire)[48]. Miskolci employs the geometric figure of the triangle to the examination of the novel's social, gender and sexual hierarchies, which are crystallized in the love triangle: "encontraremos não apenas a centralidade da relação Bento–Escobar, mas, sobretudo, o fato de que o vértice do triângulo, o ponto mais distante da base, também é o mais revelador" (we find not only the centrality of the Bento–Escobar relationship, but above all, the fact that the apex of the triangle, which is farthest from the base, is also the most revealing").[49]

This line of interpretation corroborates the hypothesis that the nature of the fellowship in *Dom Casmurro* is more complex because is twofold. He gives centrality

to Capitu in the narrative, due to the role of women in social relationships among men, but also because Machado de Assis may have been conditioned by the literary models and female tropes in force in his time, as discussed earlier in this article. However, the "male knight" does not disappear from the narrative: he rather loses his role as hero to a more complex female character. In fact, his death is felt much sooner than that of Capitu and is, according to Miskolci, what turns Bento Santiago's life inside out: it fills him with suspicions which are directed against Capitu and makes him question his masculinity.[50]

One of the textual proofs that the knight loses centrality in the narrative is the way in which Machado de Assis depicts Escobar. I would not go so far as to say that he is a flat character, but in a few chapters, particularly chapters 56 and 71, Machado states directly the character's key attributes – physical and psychological features, mannerisms and habits – by making us see him through not only Bento but also the eyes of different characters, in a way very similar to the characterization of Dona Glória, José Dias, Prima Justina and Tio Cosme. Even his nervous twitches and flaws are described in detail:

> Eis aqui outro seminarista. Chamava-se Ezequiel de Sousa Escobar. Era um rapaz esbelto, olhos claros, um pouco fugitivos, como as mãos, como os pés, como a fala, como tudo. (…) Não fitava de rosto, não falava claro nem seguido; as mãos não apertavam as outras, nem se deixavam apertar delas, porque os dedos, sendo delgados e curtos, quando a gente cuidava tê-los entre os seus, já não tinha nada. O mesmo digo dos pés, que tão depressa estavam aqui como lá. (…) O sorriso era instantâneo, mas também ria folgado e largo. Uma cousa não

> seria tão fugitiva como o resto, a reflexão; íamos dar com ele, muita vez, olhos enfiados em si, cogitando. (chap 56)
>
> ("Here was another seminarist. His name was Ezekiel de Souza Escobar. He was a slender boy, with clear, bright eyes that shifted constantly about, like his hands, like his feet, like his speech, like everything about him. (…) He did not look you in the eye, he did not speak plainly nor in logical sequence. His hands did not take hold of yours nor allow yours to take hold of them because his fingers were thin and short, and when you thought you had them between your own, you no longer had anything. The same was true of his feet, which were no sooner here than they were there. (…) His smile was instantaneous, but he also had a great, merry laugh. One thing about him was not so fleeting and inconstant – his reflectiveness. Many times we would come upon him, withdrawn within himself, thinking." [105])

Machado de Assis does not construct ambiguity through the description of the character, as he does for Capitu. He is a self-made man, as described by Boucinhas.[51] However, Machado encapsulates the possibility of eroticizing (or even queering) male homosocial relationships in a few specific scenes, such as the one in which Bento touches the arms of Escobar – which has been extensively examined by Mariconi and Miskolci – and one earlier from their time in the seminary. Bento is enthusiastic about Escobar's mathematical abilities and gives him a hug in public. The gesture is reprimanded as an excessive and deviant from the modest and moderate normative behavior expected of priests:

Fiquei tão entusiasmado com a facilidade mental do meu amigo, que não pude deixar de abraçá-lo. Era no pátio; outros seminaristas notaram a nossa efusão; um padre que estava com eles não gostou.

- A modéstia - disse-nos - não consente esses gestos excessivos; podem estimar-se com moderação.

Escobar observou-me que os outros e o padre falavam de inveja e propôs-me viver separados. Interrompi-o dizendo que não; se era inveja, tanto pior para eles.

- Quebremos-lhe a castanha na boca!

- Mas...

- Fiquemos ainda mais amigos que até aqui.

Escobar apertou-me a mão às escondidas, com tal força que ainda me doem os dedos. É ilusão, decerto, se não é efeito das longas horas que tenho estado a escrever sem parar. Suspendamos a pena por alguns instantes... (chap. 94)

("I was so enthusiastic over the mental ability of my friend that I could not help giving him a hug. It was in the patio; other seminarists noticed our effusiveness; a padre who was with them did not like it.

'Modesty,' he said to us, 'does not countenance these excessive gestures. You may show regard for each other, but with moderation.'

Escobar remarked to me that the others and the padre spoke out of envy and suggested that we keep apart. I interrupted him and said 'No,' if it was envy, so much the worse for them.

'We'll fix them!'

> ‘But…’
>
> ‘Let us be greater friends than ever.’
>
> Escobar furtively gripped my hand so hard that my fingers still tingle. This tingling is an illusion, surely, if it is not the effect of the long hours I have been writing without pause. Let us lay aside the pen for a few instants….” [166])

It would be perhaps less anachronistic and more accurate to interpret the effusive hug and the strong handshake on the sly as signals of “friendship or male love”, a pre-homosexual category of masculine sex and gender deviance that, according to Halperin, reveals itself as much in hierarchical relations (heroic warrior–subordinate pal or sidekick, patron–client) as in relations “between two men who occupy the same social rank, usually an elite one, and who can claim the same status in terms of age, masculinity, and social empowerment”.[52] Escobar and Bento are at first equals, since they are about the same age and are at this point in the narrative at the seminary and therefore being prepared for the same career. I would not go as far as to say that there is some hierarchy between them. It would be more precise to say that there is a small social, physical and intellectual asymmetry between the two men, much to Machado’s liking, who, as described by Bosi, prioritizes the treatment of the smallest social difference in his fiction.[53] Both traditions are “indissociably bound up with at least the potential for erotic signification”[54]. However, as Halperin writes further on:

> It is difficult for us moderns – with our heavily psychologistic model of the human personality, our notion of unconscious drives, our tendency to associate desire with sexuality, and our heightened sensitivity to anything that might seem

> to contravene the strict protocols of heterosexual masculinity – it is difficult for us to avoid reading into such passionate expressions of male love a suggestion of "homoeroticism" at very least, if not of "latent homosexuality", those being the formulations that often act as a cover for own perplexity about how to interpret same-sex emotions that do not quite square with canonical conceptions of sexual subjectivity.[55]

Along these lines, I think it is more accurate to define the relationship between Bento and Escobar as male friendship that is built on their common desire to leave the seminary and reject a future life as priests, as clearly stated in the dialogue below:

> - Escobar, você é meu amigo, eu sou seu amigo também; aqui no seminário você é a pessoa que mais me tem entrado no coração, e lá fora, a não ser a gente da família, não tenho propriamente um amigo.
> - Se eu disser a mesma cousa - retorquiu ele sorrindo - perde a graça; parece que estou repetindo. Mas a verdade é que não tenho aqui relações com ninguém, você é o primeiro e creio que já notaram; mas eu não me importo com isso.
> Comovido, senti que a voz se me precipitava da garganta.
> - Escobar, você é capaz de guardar um segredo?
> - Você que pergunta é porque duvida, e nesse caso...
> (…)
> - Escobar, eu não posso ser padre. (…)
> - Nem eu, Santiago.
> - Nem você?

- Segredo por segredo; também eu tenho o propósito de não acabar o curso; meu desejo é o comércio, mas não diga nada, absolutamente nada; fica só entre nós." (chap. 78)

("'Escobar, you are my friend; I am your friend too. Here, in the seminary, you are the person who has made his way into my heart; and outside, except for the members of my family, I do not, properly speaking, have a friend.'
'If I say the same thing,' he retorted with a smile, 'it will lose its charm; it will appear that I am repeating you. But the truth is, you are my only close friend here. And I believe it is noticed, but that makes no difference to me.'
I was greatly moved, and I felt my voice rushing from my throat, 'Escobar, can you keep a secret?'
'You ask? Then you must have doubts, and in that case…'
(…)
'Escobar, I cannot be a padre. (…)
'Nor I, Santiago.'
'You also?'
'Secret for secret. I don't intend to finish the course either. My love is commerce, but don't say anything – absolutely nothing, it is just between us'." [140-141])

It is a friendship that starts in the seminary, between two men who will later each become a paterfamilias, one representing the rising new bourgeois class, and the other the decaying elite of former land and slave owners. Escobar emulates the habits of

the patriarch: he marries, has a daughter, buys a house for the family in the upwardly mobile neighborhood of Flamengo and maintains extra-marital affairs, as Bento does.

Conclusion

The secret of the relationship between Escobar and Bento may still be an open question, although I believe, as I have demonstrated earlier, that they were simply friends, in pre-homosexual terms. The relationship between two men remains an important element of the elegiac romance, but the female character gains centrality in the plot and therefore more complexity as a character, which is lacking in Escobar, as demonstrated above. The triangular relationship is nevertheless central to the issue of the development and acclimatization of the genre, which takes gender on board to fit the specificities of the plot and of Brazilian society at the end of nineteenth century, more precisely the change in the gender of the hero and the underlying presence of a male friend in the middle distance.

In this brief and simplified summary of some of the ways in which *Dom Casmurro* has been read, we can see that the rhetorical manipulation of the reader – or, in other words, Bruffee's second element of elegiac romance – has already been fully discussed in critical studies of Machado. Going back to the comparison of the two novels, Machado's and Conrad's, I believe that the rhetorical manipulation of the reader in *Dom Casmurro* is more prevalent than in *Lord Jim.* This is because, in the first place, *Dom Casmurro* has to shift the focus away from himself, since his aims are made clear earlier in the novel than is the case with Marlow. Secondly, there is a shift from hero to heroine as the central element of the elegy. And thirdly, he must persuade himself and

the reader that it was necessary to break off the pact of the fellowship with his heroine in order to defend his honor as a betrayed husband before he can be redeemed. He could never succeed in gaining redemption without first justifying why he has broken off the original vows of the heroic quest romance. Thus his final hope lies with the readers: he wants to persuade them of the fact that Capitu has betrayed him and thus rid himself of the burden of having broken the heroic quest romance's oath of loyalty.

Before concluding, it remains to discuss the final distinctive feature of elegiac romance – the introspection of the narrator. This question has already been studied with regard to *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* in the critical tradition that links it to the Shandean form. This feature of the elegiac romance roughly corresponds to the first two components of the Shandean form that are outlined by Rouanet: the constant presence of the narrator and the digressive and fragmentary character of the plot.[56] In these two fictional forms, the effect on the narrative of the constant introspection of the narrator is that the action slows down. Digression and introspection are employed for different reasons, however. In the elegiac romance (and this applies to *Dom Casmurro*), Bruffee argues that, insofar as the narrator grows in stature, the narrative:

> tends to take on the quality of action, as the narrator talks about what he is doing, or trying to do, in telling the tale. And the narrator also manifests a growing interest in what might be called the irreducible substance of fiction. He becomes interested in the irrecoverable past and its effects on the present.[57]

Another consequence of the frequent intrusions of the narrator is that, in the words of Bruffee, whenever he finds himself in conflict with himself and reveals "his deepest

emotional problems", he either contradicts or betrays himself. Hence I believe that it is not the implicit author who adopts this role, as Caldwell argues. In Caldwell's opinion, the authorial voice is superimposed on Dom Casmurro's narrative. The implicit author gives signs to the reader at various stages of the narrative that Dom Casmurro is only telling his own version of the story. Like the followers of Joseph Conrad, Machado tones down the effect of the frame narrator (if he does not exclude it altogether): that is, the narrative superstructure where an omniscient narrator is superimposed on the dramatized narrator. Thus, in *Dom Casmurro,* both the heroic quest and the authorial voice are internalized. In psychoanalytical terms, the inner authorial voice is responsible for the lapses of the narrator. By this I mean the casual errors which he commits without taking account of the repercussions of what he has written on the minds of the more obtuse readers. Examples of this include the irony implied in the title of the book, the contradictions between the different definitions of the word "casmurro", the effigy of Massinissa, and other allusions and quotations that can be found in the novel, which tell us to be wary of the figure of the narrator.

The comparison of *Dom Casmurro* with *Lord Jim* made in this chapter may encourage a rereading of the Brazilian novel to distinguish its realistic aspects from its modernist aspects. While its plot may seem to belong to the nineteenth century, the form of elegiac romance that Machado employs, whether consciously or not, places him alongside or even ahead of Conrad.

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[1]The novel was published by H. Garnier in Paris in 1899 and was on sale in Rio de Janeiro in 1900. The first translation into English is by Hellen Caldwell: *Dom Casmurro*

(London: W.H. Allen, 1953). All quotations in Portuguese were taken from the hypertext edition of *Dom Casmurro*, http://www.machadodeassis.net/hiperTx_romances/obras/domcasmurro.htm (accessed November 01, 2017) and their translation from Caldwell's translation. The chapter number follows the quotation in Portuguese.

[2] Helen Caldwell, *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: A Study of "Dom Casmurro"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960; *O Otelo brasileiro de Machado de Assis* (Cotia: Ateliê, 2002).

[3] Abel Barros Baptista, *Autobibliografias: solicitação do livro na ficção de Machado de Assis* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2003), 375. See also Paulo Franchetti, "No banco dos réus: notas sobre a fortuna crítica recente de *Dom Casmurro*", *Estudos Avançados* 65 (2009): 289-298, http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0103-40142009000100019 (accessed April 20, 2015).

[4] "Agregado" is a free and poor person who lives in the shadow of a patriarchal family in a dubious and uncomfortable position, as she or he is neither a relative nor a servant. Sidney Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis, historiador* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), Roberto Schwarz, *Duas Meninas* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997); Ricardo Miskolci, "O corte da sexualidade – a emergência do dispositivo de sexualidade no Brasil", *Anais da 26ª Reunião Brasileira de Antropologia* (2008), http://www.abant.org.br/conteudo/ANAIS/CD_Virtual_26_RBA/grupos_de_trabalho/trabalhos/GT%2028/richard%20miskolci.pdf (accessed November 02, 2017).

[5] Kenneth A. Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance*: *Cultural Change and Loss of the Hero in Modern Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[6] *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad (1900); *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad (1903); *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford (1915); *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925); *Doktor Faustus* by Thomas Mann (1947); and *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov (1962). This sub-heading summarizes the prologue "A Note on Defining Genres" and chapter 1: "Elegiac Romance: a Modern Tradition" from Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance*, 15-72.

[7] For more on the role of Sancho Pança, see Eric Auerbach's chapter on *Don Quixote* in Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[8] The title of the article referred to by Bruffee is "The Internalization of Quest Romance", in Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[9] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance*, 33.

[10] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance,* 36.

[11] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim,* 136, emphasis added.

[12] *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* and two short stories were first published in 1897.

[13] Emphasis added in italics. The other highlighted words in bold are in the original text.

[14] Conrad, *Lord Jim,* 305.

[15] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, 79.

[16] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance,* 96.

[17] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance*, 97.

[18] Albert J. Guerard, *Lord Jim*, in Conrad, *Lord Jim*, 404.

[19] Guerard, *Lord Jim*, 404.

[20] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, 35, emphasis added.

[21] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance*, 110.

[22] Marta de Senna, "Strategies of Deceit: *Dom Casmurro*", in João Cezar de Castro Rocha, *The Author as Plagiarist: the Case of Machado de Assis, Portuguese Literary and Culture Studies* 13/14 (2004/2005): 407.

[23] See, for example, Augusto Meyer, "Capitu", in *Textos Críticos* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1986), 222; and André Dutra Boucinhas, "O segredo de Escobar", *Piauí* 105 (2015), http://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/materia/o-segredo-de-escobar/ (accessed November 02, 2017).

[24] Emília Viotti da Costa, "O mito da democracia racial no Brasil", in *Da Monarquia à República: momentos decisivos* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985), 248-265.

[25] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance,* 49. *The Last Tycoon* is an unfinished posthumous novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald published in 1941. *All the King's Men* is a novel by the American

writer Robert Penn Warren published in 1946. Both are regarded as elegiac romances by Bruffee.

[26] Note that Machado de Assis uses the word "amiga": female friend in Portuguese, with a certain irony that can imply both a female friend and a female lover: "Primeira amiga" possibly refers to the lovers the narrator implies he has had in his adult life, both during and after his marriage.

[27] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (Virago Press Ltd, 1992).

[28] Machado de Assis, "A Cartomante", *Gazeta de Notícias*, November 28, 1884 and *Várias Histórias* (1896), http://machadodeassis.net/hiperTx_romances/obras/variashistorias.htm (accessed November 02, 2017).

[29] Machado de Assis, "Miss Dollar", in *Contos Fluminenses* (1870), http://machadodeassis.net/hiperTx_romances/obras/ContosFluminenses.htm (accessed November 02, 2017).

[30] Machado de Assis, "Sem Olhos", *Jornal das Famílias*, December 1876 to February 1877, http://machadodeassis.net/hiperTx_romances/obras/contosavulsos5.htm (accessed November 02, 2017).

[31] Machado de Assis, "Uns braços", *Gazeta de Notícias*, 5 November 1885, and *Várias Histórias* (1896).

[32] *Dom Casmurro*, chapter 31, page 59 in the translation.

[33] Bosi, *O enigma do olhar*, 30.

[34] Ingrid Stein, *Figuras femininas em Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1984), 112.

[35] José Veríssimo, *"*Um irmão de Brás Cubas: o *Dom Casmurro* do Sr. Machado de Assis", in *Estudos de literatura brasileira* (1903, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte: Edusp/Itatiaia, 1977), 28.

[36] Alfredo Pujol, *Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1934), 247-8.

[37] Lúcia Miguel-Pereira, *Machado de Assis. Estudo crítico e biográfico* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1936), 272, http://www.brasiliana.com.br/obras/machado-de-assis-estudo-critico-e-biografico/pagina/272 (accessed November 02, 2017).

[38] Raimundo Faoro, *Machado de Assis: a pirâmide e o trapézio* (São Paulo: Nacional, 1974), 317.

[39] John Charles Chasteen, "Introduction", in Machado de Assis, *The Alienist and other stories of nineteenth-century Brazil* (trans. John Charles Chasteen, Indianapolis: Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2013), xix.

[40] Bosi, *Enigma do olhar*, 27.

[41] See, for example, the article by Patricia Merivale on *A Book of Common Prayer* by Joan Didion, for an analysis of this work as elegiac novel in which both the narrator and the protagonist are women: "Through Greene-Land in Drag: Joan Didion's *A book of common prayer*", *Pacific Coast Philology* 15 (October, 1980): 45-52.

[42] Schwarz, Roberto, *Duas meninas* (São Paulo: Compania das Letras, 1997), 32. The English translation is my own.

[43] See chapters 2 and 144 of *Dom Casmurro.*

[44] José Veríssimo, "Novo livro do Sr. Machado de Assis", *Jornal do Commercio*, March 19, 1900.

[45] Roberto Schwarz, *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1990).

[46] Antonio Candido, "Esquema de Machado de Assis", *Vários escritos* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1970), 25.

[47] Italo Maricone, "Dom Casmurro: o claro enigma", *Matraga* 23 (2008): 87.

[48] Ricardo Miskolci, "O vértice do triângulo: Dom Casmurro e as relações de gênero e sexualidade no fin-de-siècle brasileiro", Estudos Feministas 17 (2009), 552.

[49] Miskolci, O vértice do triângulo, 557.

[50] Miskolci, O vértice do triângulo, 556.

[51] André Dutra Boucinhas, "O segredo de Escobar".

[52] David Halperin, *How to do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 118.

[53] Bosi, *O enigma do olhar*, 153-154.

[54] David Halperin, *How to do the History of Homosexuality*, 118.

[55] David Halperin, *How to do the History of Homosexuality*, 120.

[56] Sergio Paulo Rouanet, *Riso e melancolia: a forma shandiana em Sterne, Diderot, Xavier de Maistre, Almeida Garret e Machado de Assis* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007). See also José Guilherme Merquior, "Gênero e estilo nas *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*", *Colóquio/Letras* 8 (1972): 12-20; and Enylton José de Sá

Rego, *O calundu e a panaceia – Machado de Assis, a sátira menipeia e a tradição luciânica* (Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1989).

[57] Bruffee, *Elegiac Romance,* 74.