

**The *CAPITU* serial:**  
**Television adaptation and film antecedents<sup>1</sup>**  
**Renato Luiz Pucci Jr.<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract**

The serial *Capitu* (Globo network, 2008), directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, is examined in order to detect deviations from the historical pattern of Brazilian television fiction. The adaptation of Dom Casmurro, the Machado de Assis' novel, the departure from classical television, the possible hypertextual relationship with film versions of Dom Casmurro and the relationship with postmodernist films are investigated by means of comparative analysis. Some related television programs are mentioned in support of the hypothesis that Brazilian television has reached a new stage in narrative trends and use of audiovisual language.

**Keywords:** Brazilian television, serial fiction, adaptation, *Capitu*, postmodernism

**Introduction**

This text's objective is to point out elements which corroborate the hypothesis that Brazilian television has reached a new phase of fictional achievements, in narrative and stylistic terms. To attain this objective, the *Capitu* serial (Globo network, directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, 2008) will be examined to determine the extent of its ruptures with the audiovisual language patterns, with possible repercussion on the communicational level. Following this, it will be necessary to relate the serial with other televised productions which taken together have altered the Brazilian television scene.

Historiography has shown that in the eyes of Brazilian intellectuals, since the first half of the 1960s television ceased to be considered culturally respectable and was transformed into a target for accusations of being artistically lowbrow and of deteriorating the viewers' intellectual level (Freire Filho, 2008. P. 81-96). This local position drew support along theoretical lines from the international sphere, starting with the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, contrary to any occurrence of the so-called cultural industry. Similar positions received a new impulse when, in the beginning of the 1970s, Raymond Williams described television programming as a homogeneous, hypnotic flow (2003, p. 89-96). It is not a question here of drawing up a balance sheet of this type of generic opposition to television. One only recalls that this situation led to the observation that, contrary to students of other fields, those who dealt with television seemed to have as their only objective the repudiation of their subject (Thompson, 2003, p. 04).

However, the perspective has been reversed in recent decades based on media

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<sup>1</sup> This article originated from the text selected by the Television Studies Working Group and presented in the XX Encounter of Compós, at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, from June 14 to 17, 2011. I am grateful for the suggestions of the participants in the Working Group, and especially grateful to Prof. Arlindo Machado, who gave an account of the text. The research received the support of the National Research Council (CNPq) by means of a productivity grant, and had the participation of Larissa Sales Nowitschenko, a candidate for a Scientific Initiation degree.

<sup>2</sup> Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Anhembi Morumbi, Doctor in Communication Sciences from the Communication and Arts School of the University of São Paulo (USP). E-mail: [renato.pucci@gmail.com](mailto:renato.pucci@gmail.com).

studies, among which those of Martin-Barbero (2006) and Kellner (2001) are not the least relevant examples. The critical academic perception has been nuanced with the consideration of products that are far beyond the stereotypes of televised garbage (Machado, 2001), and the concept of quality no longer has the meaning of something unattainable in the media and begins to be explored in connection with other value scales (Borges; Reia-Baptista, 2008).

Contrary to the idea of a homogeneous production, the perspective over more than sixty years since television's implementation in Brazil allows us to identify periods of transformation with respect to fictional production. The following examples can be cited:

- a) in the first half of the 1960s, with the use of videotape, immediate repercussions occur in the programs' narrative construction, no longer subject to the improvisation and to the urgency of live TV;
- b) at the end of the 1960s, the hegemony of the telenovelas of that period, generally adaptations of classics of nineteenth century literature or melodramas with historical backgrounds, is replaced by narratives with settings similar to the viewers' everyday lives;<sup>3</sup>
- c) around the middle of the 1980s, there was a series of attempts in the direction of taking TV creation to other fictional levels (1985, especially, was the year of *Roque Santeiro*, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Armação Ilimitada*, respectively a telenovela, serial and series that made their mark and opened new paths for television production).
- d) This work's premise is that since the middle of the first decade of the XXI century the Brazilian fictional TV production is again in a process of narrative and stylistic restructuring, with the occurrence of products which differ to a greater or lesser degree from what was done in earlier periods. The hypothesis is based not on the idea of self-generated progress, but rather on the observation that the amplification of the exchanges with other audiovisual media, especially the movies, has provided solutions little utilized previously in television.

Among the possible forms of approach to televised fiction, the option has been made here for analysis of a program which presents promising signs that it will become a milestone in Brazilian television: *Capitu* (Globo network, 2008), a serial directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho. Since it deals with an adaptation of a literary work, the Machado de Assis' novel *Dom Casmurro*, the narrative and visual language elements which could have been worked out in a differentiated way are expected to be visible. Adapting is in this case the transforming of a verbal text into an audiovisual product, therefore with distinct languages and narrative resources; for this reason, its study can yield positive results on researching the establishment of a complex narrative system such as that of televised fiction.

It is not a question of analyzing the entire serial, which would be exhaustive and useless. Some scenes more propitious for attaining the objectives of this paper were chosen for the analysis.

The analysis of specific products was long neglected in studies of the media, a

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<sup>3</sup> The word "telenovela" is usually translated as "soap opera", but it indicates a different kind of program. The most important difference is that Brazilian telenovelas rarely last more than a year.

phenomenon which was already attributed to the above-mentioned idea of flow, proposed by Williams to designate television programming (Thompson, 2003, p. 06-10). If everything that is transmitted consisted of a homogeneous flow, including making unfeasible the distinction between the program shown and the advertising intervals which are inserted in it, why take the trouble to analyze specific programs? This obstacle with a theoretical basis has been rejected by researchers. There have been many advances, although as Machado and Vélez (2007) pointed out, it is necessary to increase the use of analytic methodology.

Obviously, a single program by itself does not establish a new television style. The connection between *Capitu* and other contemporary programs is what might corroborate the hypothesis. Luiz Fernando Carvalho's serial could possibly be the most visible point of this new phase.

One last observation before beginning the analysis work: adaptation is a collective process when the new media is complex, as is the case of television. In other words, it is not the exclusive product of the efforts or of the geniality of one individual, but rather a teamwork activity, which includes the scriptwriter, director, editor, composer, actors, etc. (Hutcheon, 2006, *loc.*1609).<sup>4</sup> For simplification purposes, systematic reference will be made to Luiz Fernando Carvalho in relation to *Capitu*, which does not mean that the exclusive authorship of the serial is attributed to him, no matter how important his role might have been. In other words, the perspective adopted here is not principally the authorial one, even though the recent production that carries the name of the director (at least since the feature film *Lavoura Arcaica*, through the serials *Hoje é Dia da Maria* and *A Pedra do Reino*) presents characteristics which differentiate it from the customary products of Brazilian television.

### Structure and narration

It is possible to infer the existence of expectations, being a matter of the adaptation of one of the most celebrated works of Brazilian literature, the reading of which is often included as a requirement in university entrance examinations. The portion of the public that was already familiar with *Dom Casmurro* probably saw the serial from a very different perspective from that of those who were not familiar with the novel. For the former, the question of being faithful or not to the original can have been relevant, which is a problem which haunts a good part of those who, whether ordinary people or specialists, turn to adaptations.

On the other hand, it is also not difficult to imagine that the adepts of a pessimistic or apocalyptic view of television and, more specifically, of Brazilian television, are sure *a priori* that it was a matter of one more undue takeover of high-level culture by mass culture, with disastrous results.

Adapting Machado de Assis for the movies or television is always a daring undertaking, with or without satisfactory results. *Capitu* is not an exception to the rule, as shown by the Machadian minimization of the action in exchange for insistent narrative intrusions, among other aspects. A typically Machadian element is the multiplication of the novels' chapters interrupting the plot line with the narrator's

<sup>4</sup> In Kindle, locating is done through the numbering of *locations*, each one relating to a short passage of the text, so that what corresponds to a page includes a sequence of around 15 *locations*.

comments. In *Dom Casmurro*, there are 148 chapters in around 150 to 200 pages, depending on the edition. The easy solution for adaptation to a serial with few chapters, five in this case, would be to eliminate the novel's fragmentation by means of a linear drama, without interpolations of the narration. Luiz Fernando Carvalho's option was different: dividing the five daily chapters in an introduction and 86 micro-chapters, each one with the title corresponding to the chapters of the book: "*Um Plano*" (A Plan), "*No Passeio Público*" (In the Promenade), "*Um Seminarista!*" (A Seminarist), "*Explicação*" (Explanation), "*Os Braços*" (The Arms), for example. Despite the elimination of passages of the book, such as the vision of the dead boy's body (chapter LXXXV), and the synthesis of some parts or the even greater fragmentation of others, the serial follows the novel's general structure, a characteristic which could have pleased that portion of the critics more accustomed to the standard of faithfulness. By way of comparison, it is sufficient to recall that the feature films *Capitu* (Paulo Cesar Saraceni, 1968) and *Dom* (Moacyr Góes, 2003), both adaptations of *Dom Casmurro*, have continuous narration, that is, they are not subdivided into parts with titles, in addition to other divergences which will be commented on below.

Another element which presents noticeable affinity with the Machadian text is the narration. Obviously, one cannot lose sight of the differences: the narration of televised fiction, as is the case with movie fiction, is more complex than literary narration. It is enough to say that, besides the word, in television and in the movies there are narrative instances which are expressed by means of other channels in addition to the oral one, such as the sound track and the visual image. Nevertheless, something of Machado de Assis' novel was preserved in the serial. The first-person point of view of *Dom Casmurro*, in an enunciation of Bento Santiago himself, many years after the narrated events, corresponds in the serial to Bento the Narrator, already well along in age, who acts as a character in the story. His act of narration is visualized and heard throughout the serial, turning to face the camera, to question the viewers. This is an ingenious solution for the transposition of the first-person point of view of the novel, a problem whose solution Paulo Cesar Saraceni did not risk in *Capitu*, the movie version of the 1960s, in which the narrator's voice is not heard, much less his image seen while he narrates. In any event, the serial also appears to be in this aspect more in accordance with the novel's narrative structure than the movie with the same name which, as a matter of fact, announced from the beginning its distance with respect to the original on opening with the honeymoon of Bentinho and Capitu, chapter CI of the novel.

Other particularities of the image of the Narrator of *Capitu* and some of their consequences will be seen below.

### **On the train of the Central Railroad Line**

Possibly both the adepts of faithfulness to the literary original as well as the pessimists and the holders of an apocalyptic interpretation found that the first minutes of the serial confirmed their worst premonitions. A brief comparative analysis of the novel's opening lines with the first three micro-chapters of the serial will introduce a little of the spirit of the adaptation, preparing for later comments.

*Dom Casmurro* opens with the chapter entitled "*Do Título*" (The Title) which begins as follows:

*One of these nights, coming from downtown to the Engenho Novo District, I*

*encountered on the train of the Central Railroad Line a fellow from the district here, whom I know by sight and who was wearing a hat. (Assis, chap.I, loc.35349).*

These two lines could be transposed to the audiovisual in infinite ways, some more appropriate than others according to any parameters for evaluation. For the adepts of literary faithfulness, it would be plausible to record the scene with one of the steam engines still operating in the country, possibly showing the row of houses in a historical city to account for the Rio de Janeiro suburb. There would not be a perfect historical connection; nevertheless at least the setting would have the appearance of something old, from a past closer to 1899, the year of *Dom Casmurro's* publication. This is probably one more case of what has been called *classic television*, a standardized narrative derived from the classical film matrix: causal linkage, even though the factors are far from each other; space-time consistency; narration directed to the protagonist; importance of the visual motives; two or more narrative axes (Thompson, 2003, p. 19-35). From this system the conditions arise for the establishment of naturalism, that is, of "appearing real", of the adjustment of the narrative to that which common sense considers real (not to be confused with realism, a concept which involves other intentions, not that of simply *appearing* real). It was done exhaustively in this way throughout decades of televised fiction, from the telenovelas of the 1960s to *Marquesa de Santos* (Manchete network, 1984), *Desejo* (Globo network, 1990) and *A Casa das Sete Mulheres* (Globo network, 2003), just to mention examples of serials of that time.

The solution encountered by Luiz Fernando Carvalho for adapting a novel whose story takes place in the XIX century could hardly be more provocative. After the sequence of the initial credits, with the title "Capitu" on the screen, the sound of "Voodoo Child" by Jimmy Hendrix is heard, while fragments of old prints and maps appear, overlaying each other and disappearing successively, by means of the same resource of animation utilized in the credits sequence. They are remnants of archaic drawings of the city of Rio de Janeiro, with Guanabara Bay, sailboats, Sugar Loaf, all in the faded hue of old paper under the title "*Mappa do Município*", also falling to pieces, and clippings of maps of Rio de Janeiro from other periods.<sup>5</sup> The succession of fragmented images is very rapid, barely allowing the viewer's glance to pick up one or another place name: Campo Grande, Jacarepaguá, Guaratiba, Piedade, etc. Between them a red-colored line advances further at each moment, sinuously, indicating the route of the railroad line which runs from the central region ("downtown"), seen in the drawings, to a certain suburb of Rio de Janeiro: more to the center of the screen and with a slight close-up in the framing, there appears the name of the destination of the narrator of Machado de Assis: Engenho Novo, a district in the north zone of the former capital of the country.

Still with Hendrix's music, there follows a bird's-eye view, that is, from a very high point, possibly from a helicopter, of a metropolis at nightfall. We see an immense line of automobile lights in the jammed-up traffic, skyscrapers at dusk and, in the trajectory of a camera in rectilinear movement, a railroad line. For those familiar with the original story, it can be easily guessed that the scene concerns the city of Rio de

<sup>5</sup> The word "mappa" is shown here with the archaic spelling used in the XIX century.

Janeiro, possibly the way to the Engenho Novo district, a centenary route which is transfigured in images of the contemporary metropolis. Then a train appears and moves in the direction of the camera. A cut and it is framed laterally, still a high-angle shot, so that its exterior covered by graffiti is visible. It could be a matter of an adaptation which takes place entirely nowadays, the case of above-mentioned *Dom*, the most recent film version of *Dom Casmurro*, in which the plot involving Bentinho and Capitu is brought to the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the XXI century. However, the next cut puts the parameters of the past back in *Capitu*: black and white images arise, with the texture typical of old films, probably from the silent movie period. It is the exit from a railroad tunnel, seen from the front of a moving train. Another cut and there follow scenes of the arrival at a station, trains alongside, people on the platform, old-style clothes, also in images of movies from distant times.

The next cut, continuing the editing with the previous scene, shifts to the passing of a train through a station, from the point of view of whoever is in the locomotive engineer's place, but now with the image in color, contemporary buildings, and an airplane crossing the sky at nightfall. The sequence will still continue for a few seconds, always alternating the two types of images seen until now. It is not rare that openings of movies and of televised fiction present violations of the classic narrative's norms of verisimilitude, returning to normal immediately afterwards according to what is expected from a conventional product. This is not the case in *Capitu*, since what was observed in this opening, the ostensive collision between old and current elements is a characteristic which will be developed in countless forms throughout the serial. Here are some examples:

- a) In the streets, the characters of the old Rio de Janeiro pass alongside yellow taxis, traffic lights, walls with graffiti, in short, a profusion of current elements (micro-chapter "*Chamado*" – Call);
- b) The conversation between Bento and Escobar about their wives' economical virtues occurs in a panoramic elevator, with Guanabara Bay and the Rio-Niterói Bridge (inaugurated in 1974) in the background (micro-chapter "*Dez Libras Esterlinas*" – Ten Pounds Sterling);<sup>6</sup>
- c) At the dance, Bentinho and Capitu utilize earphones to listen to the music (micro-chapter "*Os Braços*" – The Arms);
- d) At the beach, bathers are seen with bathing suits worn nowadays (micro-chapter "*Amigos Próximos*" – Close Friends).

In these and in countless other cases, the main characters wear XIX century clothes, in sharp contrast with the environment in which they are found, without giving the least sign of observing the paradoxical aspect of this situation. The result is an extreme ambiguity of the *diegesis* composed in part of what is supposed to have been the universe of Machado de Assis and of elements coming from the period in which the

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<sup>6</sup> This passage, with its shocking visual character, is contained only in the DVD version. There are other differences between what was shown on TV and what is contained in the serial's DVD. Entire scenes were added to the DVD version, surely taking advantage of the fact that in this media the problem of the program's duration is not as decisive as in the televised version, which has limits due to the TV channel's program grid. In the sound track, there are also occasional, albeit drastic, alterations.

serial was created.<sup>7</sup> While it was never abolished, the historical faithfulness in *Capitu* is systematically put aside, in an anti-illusionist proceeding which was unusual in classical television.

On approaching the station, the train's speed is reduced and the volume of the sound track is diminished in order to give way to the masculine voice over announcing the initial text of *Dom Casmurro*, reproduced above. There is no important difference in the transcription (just the ellipsis of the subject of the last sentence: "I"),<sup>8</sup> but the voice is loaded with what in the written word is only guessed or deduced in a rereading of the book: the tired tone of the narrator, the aged Bento Santiago. Over the black and white images of the arrival at the station, a sepia-colored haze is formed in the upper left corner over which there appears, as if handwritten, the text which is enounced orally: "I encountered on the train of the Central Railroad Line a fellow from the district here, whom I know by sight and who was wearing a hat." An arrow is drawn joining the last word of the sentence with the image of the hat worn by a man walking toward the platform (FIG. 1).



FIG. 1 – *Capitu*

The narration insists on the exposition of the duplication adopted from the beginning, making elements with contradictory appearances collide. On one hand, the great redundancy of information, considered an essential characteristic of television, is established; on the other hand, it shows the explicit intrusion of narrative levels even above that of Bento himself. In other words, one of the media's most typical points, redundancy, the cause of infinite attacks by critics and theoreticians, continually enters into collision with a violation of the naturalist pattern of televised fiction, the wide-open intrusion of a narrative level.

### Opera and movies

Bento and the poet are on the train, dressed in nineteenth century clothes, the

<sup>7</sup> Diegesis is a word of Greek origin that means narration. It is utilized to indicate the world *represented* in the work of fiction. Accordingly, diegetic space is the space represented, that is, the world in which the characters live, as opposed to the extradiegetic space in which narrators typical of audiovisual fiction could be, apparently outside the space and time of the story they are narrating (obviously this is not the case of the Narrator of *Capitu*, the aged Bento himself, who passes through the diegesis).

<sup>8</sup> In Portuguese (contrary to English), the subject of a sentence is frequently omitted because the verb ending indicates

former with a top hat, the latter also with an old hat, both in old-fashioned morning suits. Alongside, ordinary people dressed in the style of the early XXI century. If the flagrant anachronism were not enough, there is also an accentuated alteration of the image close to the edges of the screen, not just in distant objects that might be out of focus, but as if the image were passing through a filter to distort it. Explanations which would make this treatment of the image seem natural can be imagined, that is, which explain it in accordance with some justification with a psychological basis; nevertheless, its combination with the abundant anti-naturalist elements in the serial shows that it is a question of a consistent composition in the sense of eliminating the “appears real” of customary TV fiction, today with decreasing hegemony. In the book the passage follows in which the poet reads his poem while Bento takes a nap, the reason for the former’s indignation:

He greeted me, sat down at my foot, talked about the Moon and the ministers, and ended up reciting verses to me. The trip was short, and it could be that the verses were not entirely bad. It happened, however, as I was tired, that I shut my eyes three or four times; that was enough for him to interrupt the reading and put the verses in his pocket. (Assis, chap. I, *loc.* 35371).

In the corresponding scene of the serial, as in many others, the voice over is heard enunciating exactly what the narrator of Machado de Assis’ book says. This differed from the option taken by Paulo Cesar Saraceni who, in the feature film *Capitu* (1968), abolished the narrator’s voice (except for some moments at the beginning of the movie). In this connection, the serial would follow more closely the original narrative structure, although its opening, described above, indicates an inextricable conjunction of elements from the novel and of anachronous components and intrusions which apparently would be irrelevant to what occurs in it. Indeed, the passage analyzed continues to combine faithfulness and unfaithfulness in a deliberate way. Bento falls asleep as in the novel, but an image is inserted, in the character’s dream, without there being any mention of it in the original: a short scene of the moment in which Bento and Capitu are photographed after their wedding (a scene which will be shown in the 4<sup>th</sup> daily chapter of the serial). In the book, the character simply takes a nap; in the serial he dozes off and dreams of one of the happy moments of his existence, when everything appeared to

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what the subject is.



point to the carrying out of the prophecy which gives its name to the most propitious chapters of the book: “*Tu Serás Feliz, Bentinho*” (You Will Be Happy, Bentinho). It is shown, therefore, that if up to this point the words heard in the serial are in accordance with those which are read in the book, in visual terms the liberty taken with respect to the original is much greater.

This small difference between the book and the adaptation, the inserted dream, is not the only one in the segment analyzed. Obviously, the sound track which is heard, now a symphonic passage by Gustav Mahler, introduces an atmosphere which can, at the most, be suggested in the book. There follows the passage in which the poet becomes indignant with the sleepy listener who disrespects the poem. In the book, the poet ends the train trip peeved; the next day, he says ugly things about Bento and uses an epithet for him which gives the book its name. In *Capitu*, he gets off the train already shouting “*Dom Casmurro!*” (“Mr. Moody!”).

They are still small liberties taken with the original, from which the serial has already moved away with the emergence of the anachronisms. The scene continues with the poet in the station, and the train on which Bento rides goes ahead. It is then that for the first time the Narrator of the serial is shown, corresponding to the one who narrates the story in the book. Bento ceases to be just a character; he turns toward the camera, recognizing its existence or at least of an extradiegetic viewer, and says, “Life can be as much an opera as a sea voyage or a battle”. Then a structural change with respect to the novel will occur. Machado’s text passes from the first chapter, “*Do Título*” (The Title), to “*Do Livro*” (The Book), the chapter in which the narrator explains why he decided to write. In *Capitu*, these two passages are interpolated by the micro-chapter “*Ópera*”. This is the title of chapter IX of the novel, in which Bento listens to the cosmology of Marcolini, the old Italian tenor who sees the world as an operatic spectacle. In the serial, this passage does not exist, as well as others which were eliminated in the adaptation. Even so, there remains Bento’s reply to Marcolini, enunciated by the Narrator, saying that life can be an opera, a sea voyage or a battle.<sup>9</sup> In the serial, the

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<sup>9</sup> In the DVD extras, “*Papéis Avulsos*” menu, the scene between Bento and the former tenor appears, with the long explanation of the operatic cosmology. The scene takes place on the train, while in Machado de Assis the

micro-chapter “*Ópera*” is made up of the scene between Bento and his friends, who invite him to go to the theater, the explanation for the book’s title and the fanciful photography session of the poet of the train (with *paparazzi* and digital cameras). “*Ópera*” is the first micro-chapter named in the serial, immediately after the opening sequence analyzed above. The result of this anticipation with respect to the position of the chapter in *Dom Casmurro* is that it brings the operatic referential to the first scene of the narrative.

“*Ópera*” opens to the sound of the overture of *O Guarani*, the opera by the Brazilian composer Carlos Gomes, with sumptuous red curtains opening and revealing, at the highest point, the Narrator illuminated by a spotlight, as if he were a singer on a stage. The tone given to the serial is already clear in this small passage; *Capitu* is a product in which operatic elements overlap, as if to attain in the audiovisual composition the former tenor’s cosmology. Obviously, this operatic aspect does not exist literally in *Dom Casmurro*, except in the tenor Marcolini’s allegory, which the serial expands to the point of becoming a *diegesis*. Until the end of the last chapter in the serial, due to the grandiloquent gestures, one can have the impression that on opening their mouths, the characters will sing arias and duets, which never happens. In turn, the sound track, in a nineteenth century or anachronous style, fulfills a narrative role similar to that of the music in an opera, commenting on the action, creating the setting, accentuating the audience’s emotion, functions which the movies appropriated while still in their beginnings by means of the piano in the projection room. It happens that in *Capitu*, the sound track is somewhat over, in a hyper-dose of lyrical character that would exist in a true opera, producing a parody-like characteristic which will be analyzed below.

### **Eyes with an undertow**

In one of the most notable passages of the novel, in chapter XXXII, the narrator Bento talks about Capitu’s eyes. He begins reporting the conversation of the two youths about the urgency of the lodger José Dias interfering with Dona Glória’s promise that

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conversation occurs in Bento’s house. Cut from the final edition of the televised product, the scene does not even belong to the extended plot of the DVD version.

her son will be a priest. In the middle of the dialog, the youth asks to see his friend's eyes. The narrator says that he had recalled the definition that José Dias gave them: "gypsy's eyes, oblique and sly". Capitu lets herself be stared at and examined. Then the effect of seeing oneself being carried away by those eyes occurs:

[Capitu] imagined that it was a pretext for looking at them more closely, with my long, constant eyes, penetrating in them, and I attributed to this that they would begin to be enlarged, enlarged and somber (Assis, chap. XXXII, *loc.* 36947).

The corresponding scene of the serial begins with the Narrator's shadow projected on sheets on a clothesline. This is already an extraordinary solution to the problem of how to represent the Narrator in a crucial scene. His shadow moves forward slowly, bent over, with a hand out in front. Capitu's room appears where the youths are conversing; the framing is composed from the Narrator's point of view, as if the cloth of the sheets hid him from the characters whose story he himself is narrating. As is the rule in the serial, the spatial relations have a logic of their own, which is not that which common sense attributes to the real world and which constitutes the naturalism of televised fiction: the Narrator peeks from between the sheets, which are far away, in the backyard, with Capitu's mother hanging them. The Narrator's voice recounts the memorable definition, described above, of Capitu's eyes. On Bentinho's request to see the girl's eyes, who was combing her hair in side view, she turns around in close-up, with diffuse light on her face. Capitu looks at Bentinho who, after another cut, appears open-mouthed, fascinated. Then there is a break in the time sequence, since what is immediately seen is not Capitu's image as she was in the scene, but rather the figuration of Bentinho's subjective experience: the girl looks directly toward the camera, in close-up or in extreme close-up. Time halted. To the sound of the soft symphonic sound track, Capitu's hair flutters over her face, the lighting is completed with a strong counter-lighting which creates an aura around her hair. Her look is seductive and aggressive as that of a *femme fatale* in *noir* movies, her hand passes softly and sensually over her own lips. After the new shot of Bentinho, who continues in a trance, there follow multiplied images of Capitu's face turning around on the screen, looking at the camera, pupils under fluttering locks of hair, moving her lips, iridescent reflections of the lens. The framing returns to Bentinho's stupefied face, Capitu's voice is heard asking what is

happening to the youth; when she is framed again, she already has a normal expression. The temporal coordinates of the plot are resumed.

In the book as in the serial, the narrator's speech follows which, in the style of the poets' evocations to their muses, requires a forceful expression to tell what he saw as a youth;

The rhetoric of those in love offers me an exact, poetic comparison to say what those eyes of Capitu were. No image comes to me capable of telling, without violation of the dignity of the style, what they were and what they did to me. Eyes with an undertow? Come on, with an undertow. (*ibidem*, chapt. XXXII, *loc.* 36952).

The movement of the ocean waves that break on the seashore and suck up objects and people is the celebrated metaphor for the attraction of those eyes for the then young protagonist. While he enunciates this speech, the Narrator is in close-up, with a dark background, looking ahead as if he were seeing again what had fascinated him decades ago. He pronounces with emotion the above sentences, the sheets' shadows oscillating on his face, rhythmic, delicate drumbeats in the sound track interpolated in the symphonic music.

The book continues further with new explanations: "They were bringing I don't know what mysterious, energetic fluid, a force which pulls everything inside it, like the wave which withdraws from the beach, in the days with undertow." (*ibidem*, cap. XXXII, *loc.* 36953). The literary metaphor continues with Bentinho's description of being pulled to the bottom of those eyes:

In order not to be pulled, I grabbed the other neighboring parts, the ears, the arms, the hair spread along the shoulders, but I looked so quickly for the pupils, the wave that was coming out of them was rising, deep and dark, threatening to engulf me, pull me and devour me (*ibidem*, chap. XXXII, *loc.* 36954).

Several lines are also concerned with the description of what was happening to Bentinho, talking about the torments of hell and the joy of the blessed. In turn, the serial moves directly from the scene which was just analyzed to Bentinho's request to comb Capitu's hair. The entire final speech of the narrator in the book regarding the force of the girl's eyes was replaced by the audiovisual solutions analyzed above.

If Robert Stam's (2000, *loc.* 1006-1011) interpretation of Gerard Genette's theory is correct, adaptations are products of hypertextual relations with the original text, such

as parody. They would also be derived from preexisting hypotexts which were transformed by operations of selection, amplification, achievement and production of reality (actualization). However, there is another possibility: the rejection of *schemas* utilized in the previous adaptation (Bordwell, 1997: 152-155). The director of the feature film *Capitu*, Paulo Cesar Saraceni, a Cinema Novo filmmaker and adept of the modern cinema, was satisfied with the tender eyes of actress Isabella (then, as a matter of fact, his wife) which could enchant, but without the movie presenting anything that would suggest the violence of the undertow. Luiz Fernando Carvalho chose to reject Saraceni's option for the representation of the character's eyes. In the serial, audiovisual resources are utilized to solve the problem of how to express the metaphor without relying exclusively on the dialog or, which would be a trivial solution, to cut to images of the sea hitting the coast.<sup>10</sup>

In *Dom*, the movie version which brought Bento and Capitu totally into the XXI century, the association of the undertow phenomenon with the character's eyes is tenuous, despite the fact that the actress who played Capitu, Maria Fernanda Cândido, was the same one who played the adult Capitu in the serial. According to the opening credits of *Dom*, the movie is only "inspired by *Dom Casmurro*", and therefore without any major commitment to the novel. There is the suspicion of the wife's betrayal with the friend, the doubtful paternity, a few direct mentions of the book and little else. This Capitu's eyes are really beautiful, seen in close-up both in the present as well as in the flashbacks of her childhood; it is said that they are "eyes with an undertow", a direct, explicit quote from Machado de Assis; however, there is nothing in the movie which would be the equivalent of the audiovisual treatment bestowed upon those eyes in the serial.

If the serial is the fruit of an effort in the sense of utilizing functional solutions of the movies in television, as on a certain occasion Luiz Fernando Carvalho declared to have been his proposal (1995, p. 113-118), they do not come from the Saraceni and Góes movies. The options of a modern nature adopted by the former, to produce

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<sup>10</sup> In the debate of the Compós Working Group, Prof. Arlindo Machado lamented the fact that the use of the subjective had not been extended to the rest of *Capitu*. It would have been another form of visual representation

controlled ambiguity, a typical characteristic of the modern European cinema of the 1960s, as in Fellini, Antonioni and Bergman, are replaced in the serial by a conformation at the same time playful and paradoxical.<sup>11</sup> For reasons which at this point should be clear, it can also be said that *Dom*'s classical narrative is definitely not the basis for the making of *Capitu*.

In order to identify movie antecedents of the serial, it will be necessary to go back to the obvious artificiality of *E la Nave Va* (1983) of Federico Fellini. This movie also possesses close relations with the opera world, since besides dealing with the funeral of one of its divas, with an entire entourage of singers and fans, there are operatic elements incorporated in the composition, of which the most notable is that the action would be interspersed with lyrical passages sung by the characters. The grandiose nature of the scenery, absolutely fake both in Fellini as well as in the serial, should also be highlighted.

One aspect more pertinent to this analysis is that of the character-narrator-chronicler of *E la Nave Va*, the journalist who presents the story to the moviegoers, in a form similar to that of the serial's Narrator. Both are figures that, dressed in the style of the earlier period in which the story takes place, look directly at the camera and address their audience. In *E la Nave Va*, it is a journalist who reports the events and comments on them, at times interacting with the characters; in *Capitu*, the Narrator does the same. Consequently, both the movie and the serial incur in what Carmen Peña-Ardid recalls on commenting on transpositions of literature to the cinema by means of the visualization of the intra-diegetic narrator:

In a strict sense, the movies' first-person account is only that in the sound track, since the marks of the enunciation mentioned – making reference – exist in language, but not in images. As outstanding scholars have said, the narrator-character who says "I" in the movie is transformed into "he" since the moment in which his oral account is replaced by images which show him acting. (1999: 146-147)<sup>12</sup>.

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of what the narrator of the book suggests.

<sup>11</sup> The stylistic line of art cinema, adopted by those directors, was the one adopted by Luiz Fernando Carvalho in his only full-length movie, *Lavoura Arcaica* (Archaic Farming), launched seven years before the serial. See Pucci Jr., 2005. For more details regarding art cinema, see Bordwell, 1985, p. 205-233).

<sup>12</sup> "En un sentido estricto, el relato en primera persona del cine solo lo es en la banda de sonido, dado que las marcas de dicha enunciación – los déicticos – existen en la lengua, pero no en las imágenes. Como han hecho notar distintos estudiosos, el personaje-narrador que dice 'yo' en el film se transforma en 'él' desde el momento

In other words, the audiovisual narrator-character is not the equivalent of the first-person narrator in novels and short stories. Nevertheless, it is a solution for trying to recreate the powerful effect of that type of literary enunciation. In the cases of *E la Nave Va* and *Capitu*, the narration of the respective characters is also marked by irony in a playful tone. In the case of *Capitu*, this irony transforms what could be just a simple adaptation into a parody of the Machado de Assis novel. This characteristic appears in countless passages of the serial. Only citing one example, the scene is mentioned in which the Narrator says that can he can still feel the strong heartbeat as on an occasion of his youth and withdraws from his breast a plastic heart, still pulsating, and shows it to the viewers. No one could suppose that in scenes like this there could have been the least concern with faithfulness to the original text.

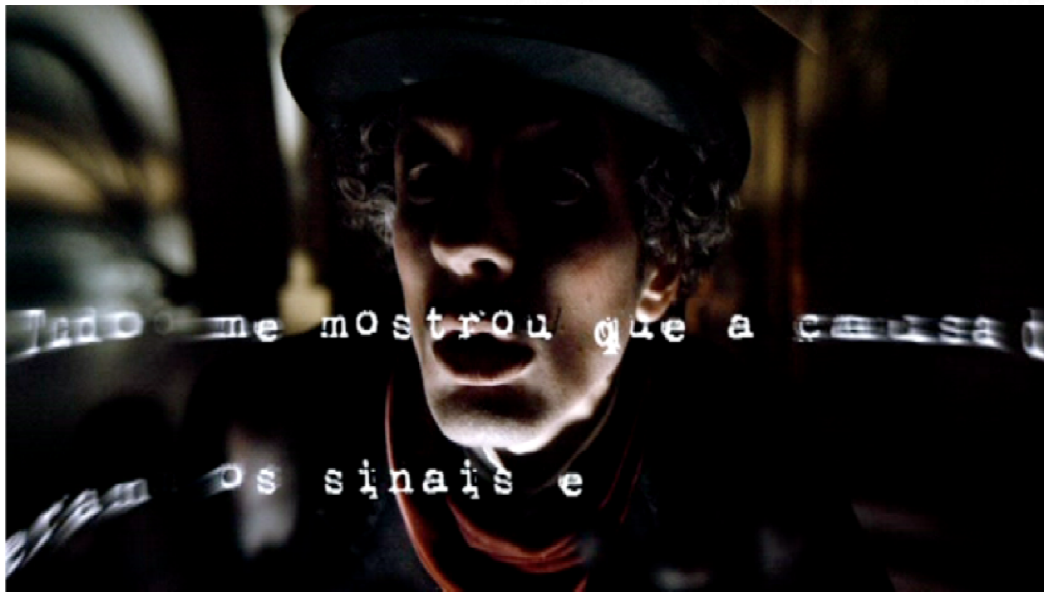
In the same way as in *E la Nave Va*, the combination of the fake setting, the contamination by the opera and the interventions of the respective narrator-characters causes the stories told to cease to be articulated in the field of classical naturalism in order to adhere to another artistic field, that of post-modernism.<sup>13</sup>

In a hypothesis which would deserve to be explored more deeply later, it would be possible to identify in *Capitu* some of Peter Greenway's electronic styles in the complex composition of superimposed images, especially in the figure of the Narrator (FIG. 02). Once more *Capitu* would not be associated with the tradition of the classical narrative cinema, with that of *art-cinema*, or with that of classical television, in which Greenway never got involved, but again with that of *post-modern* cinema, although with a level of sophistication and daring probably never seen yet in Brazilian television of post-modern extraction.

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*en que su relato verbal es sustituido por las imágenes que lo muestran actuando.*"

<sup>13</sup> For a comparative analysis of the *Capitu* serial and *E la Nave Va*, see Pucci Jr., 2011.

FIG. 02 – *Capitu*

### Final comments

In the 1970s, Globo Network reserved the 10 p.m. time for telenovelas in which narrative forms similar to those of *art-cinema* were experimented, for example in *O Rebu* (The Rumpus, 1974-1975) and *O Grito* (The Scream, 1975-1976). Since then modernism has been overshadowed in Brazilian televised fiction, with few significant occurrences, among which *A Pedra do Reino* (Globo network, 2007) by Luiz Fernando Carvalho himself, stands out. The first cases of post-modernism in Brazilian television appeared in the middle of the 1980s, starting with the above-mentioned series *Armação Ilimitada*.<sup>14</sup> Since then other occurrences of post-modern programs have been observed, always with the paradoxical combination of language experimentation with absorption of styles of other media, partial ruptures with classical television and a clear effort not to lose communication with the large public. These were the cases of *O Auto da Compadecida* (Globo network, 1999) and *A Invenção do Brasil* (Globo network, 2000), serials by Guel Arraes. In the last decade, new post-modern achievements appeared, even reaching the Sunday prime time program *Fantástico*, in *Dias de Glória* (Globo network, 2003) and *Copas de Mel* (Globo network, 2002 and 2006). Other titles could be mentioned, such as the notable, metalinguistic *Cena Aberta* (Globo network, 2003),



directed by Arraes, Jorge Furtado and Regina Casé, and *Alice* (HBO, 2009), directed by Karim Aïnouz, in addition to Luiz Fernando Carvalho's first serial, *Hoje é Dia da Maria* (Today is Maria's Day – Globo network, 2005). Each one of these products possesses stylistic connections with what was seen in *Capitu*, although only in the last case a really exceptional radicalism was attained, since in it the post-modern traces listed above, which occurred in passages of the other products, were transformed into something constitutive of the program in its entire extension.

Perhaps this seems very little in comparison with a group which reaches hundreds of fictional productions per year within the parameters of classical television. Certainly, a broad, in-depth evaluation should still be made in other research works, in order to have an adequate idea of the extent of productions which diverge from classical television. However, the titles mentioned, together with *Capitu*, perhaps are about to announce not only that we are in a period in which products that would previously be impossible in TV are made and disseminated, but also that the public is no longer so resistant to fictional programs which deviate from the still hegemonic pattern: none of the titles enumerated above obtained a blank in the Ibope audience ratings; some, like *Hoje é Dia da Maria*, reached a really wide audience. Even a superficial comparison with old apocalyptic expectations can be favorable to the historical process, which for some time now would be about to place Brazilian televised production in a phase in which its public could hardly be disqualified *a priori* with respect to the receptivity of modern and post-modern productions, even if they go beyond everything that it had already seen.

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