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Camões' Veil and Machado's Sleeves

O cendal de Camões e as mangas de Machado

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ABSTRACT

Dom Casmurro's narrator, Bento Santiago, tells of requiring his wife Capitu to stop wearing sleeveless dresses when she goes to dances. Her compliance involves using semi-transparent sleeves, which he compares to the diaphanous veil used by Venus in Luís de Camões's *Os lusíadas*. As is the case with many of Machado de Assis' literary allusions, the reference contains surreptitious clues. On the one hand, by evoking the contriving femininity of Venus it supports the narrator's accusation of infidelity against his wife. But on the other hand, the allusion suggests that Santiago's account, as a whole, is like a semi-transparent veil, encouraging the reader to look for deeper meanings that may not agree with the narrator's intentions.

KEYWORDS: Machado de Assis; Dom Casmurro; allusion; narrator; ambiguity

RESUMO

O narrador de Dom Casmurro, Bento Santiago, conta ter exigido que sua esposa Capitu deixasse de mostrar os braços nus quando ia a bailes. Ela obedece, vestindo mangas de tecido semitransparente, que ele compara com o cendal usado por Vênus n'*Os lusíadas* de Luís de Camões. Como é o caso com muitas alusões literárias em Machado de Assis, a referência contém pistas furtivas. Por um lado, ao evocar a feminilidade estratégica de Vênus ela apoia a acusação de infidelidade contra a esposa do narrador. Mas pelo outro, a alusão sugere que o relato de Santiago, como um todo, é parecido a um véu semitransparente, que anima no leitor uma leitura mais profunda que talvez não esteja de acordo com as intenções do locutor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Machado de Assis; Dom Casmurro; alusão; narrador; ambiguidade

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According to Bento Santiago, narrator of Machado de Assis's *Dom Casmurro* (1899), "Os braços merecem um período" (Assis, 1985). This essay dedicates a bit more than a sentence to the topic, specifically in reference to Capitu's arms and a brief mention of Luís de Camões's description of the "cendal" (diaphanous veil) of Venus in the second canto of *Os lusíadas.*

The first thing that can be said about literary allusions in Machado is that they are very often more than mere adornments showing a narrator or author's cultural sophistication. In fact, they may be subtle clues suggesting a path for the reader to follow. In *Dom Casmurro*, it is important to understand who is providing these hints. On the one hand, if the allusive clue is being proffered by the narrator, Bento Santiago, it will normally be understood as part of an elaborate impeachment of Capitu, calculated to affirm in convincing manner that the man's wife betrayed him. On the other hand, the reader may occasionally need to listen to a more subtle voice, that of the implied author (the actual person who wrote the text in the capacity of "official scribe," whose perspective or world view is part the novel's message) (Booth, 1983, p. 71-76). The implied author normally presents an entirely different perspective from that of the narrator, and may also offer hints through the narrator's allusions, presumably suggesting messages of which the narrator would be unaware, and which may contradict the speaker's intentions.

Marcelo Diego aptly describes the doubly directed possibilities of the novel's allusions in the following terms:

> Assim, habitam o discurso do Dom Casmurro uma corrente e uma contracorrente: a sua narração quer demonstrar a culpa de Capitu; contudo, certas insistências e certos lapsos do narrador parecem querer revelar culpas do próprio Bento Santiago. As alusões literárias, ao fazerem pousar uma segunda mão sobre a mão que segura a pena – ao introduzirem uma segunda voz no discurso e, assim, desestabilizá-lo –, são particularmente propícias para que ocorram atos-falhos, para que o inconsciente do narrador aflore em seu discurso. (Diego, 2019, p. 753).

What Diego calls "narração [que] quer demonstrar a culpa de Capitu" corresponds to what I am calling the hints or messages of the narrator. What he calls the "segunda mão" that sometimes sits over the narrator's pen, and that introduces a destabilizing voice to the discourse – that is what I am calling the "implied author." The first occasionally gives way to the second, creating, what Diego calls a "contracorrente."

Two recent studies of allusions in *Dom Casmurro* illustrate the difference between allusive hints or messages of the narrator, versus those of the implied author.

In 2012, Paul Dixon published a study of another Camonian allusion in the novel, referring to the famous combing moment or "penteado," when Bentinho is captivated by Capitu's "olhos de ressaca" and when the narrator refers to the girl as a nymph, even using the name "Tétis." Pointing out that Camões' epic poem is the most accessible text where that name appears, Dixon shows how the narrator thereby compares himself to the mythical figure Adamastor in the Portuguese poem (Dixon, 2012). The comparison, of course, is built on the idea that both Bento and Adamastor have been betrayed by a female and are therefore condemned to recount that treachery. The hint, then, belongs to the narrator and helps to build his case against his former wife. A study by Marta de Senna from 2005 refers to a moment when Bentinho fantasizes about the emperor D. Pedro II's personally interceding with his mother to free him from the obligation to become a priest (Senna, 2005). To characterize the strength

of his fantasy, the narrator says that even the imagination of Ariosto is not more powerful than that of children or lovers. Ariosto, of course, is the author of the epic poem *Orlando furioso*. Because the protagonist of that poem goes mad once he finds that he has lost his lover, the underlying message is ironic. Rather than supporting the validity of an accusation, it seems to place such an affirmation in doubt; if mad, the accuser is unreliable. Here, then, is an allusion whose clue belongs to the implied author, in that it appears to go against the narrator's agenda.

The novel's narrator, then, uses allusions that have strategic subtexts, which may either confirm or contradict his accusatory rhetoric. I will try to show that his reference to the diaphanous veil of Camões' Venus may point in both directions. That being the case, this study contributes to a developing awareness of the highly complicated nature of the novel's narrative voice.

A COMPLICATED VOICE

The problematic nature of Bento Santiago, first-person narrator of *Dom Casmurro*, is widely acknowledged to be one of the primary factors responsible for the impressive richness of Machado's seventh novel. The fact that commentators recognize the equivocal nature of that narrator, while not agreeing among themselves about the function of his complicated voice, seems to reinforce a sense of that richness.

A well-known essay by Silviano Santiago, "Retórica da verossimilhança," seems to announce a shift in readers' attention from the facts of the novel (whether or not Capitu betrayed her husband) to the voice of Capitu's accuser. Santiago derides as ingenuous a reading that is primarily interested "em buscar a verdade sobre Capiu, ou a impossibilidade de se ter a verdade sobre Capitu", and proposes a more critically solid focus: "a única verdade a ser buscada é a de Dom Casmurro" (Santiago, 2000, p. 30). In reality, it is difficult if not impossible to separate the narrator's truth from that of his one-time sweetheart and wife. However, Santiago's essay is correct in identifying a shift in critical perspective, one that was actually well underway when he was writing – the increased attention to the complicated assertions of Capitu's accuser.

A significant strain of criticism has read the narrator's account "against the grain," finding in the perverse psychology of the narrator suggestions of Capitu's innocence and of his own unjust and unjustified condemnation. Helen Caldwell's *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis* (1960) gets credit for having initiated this way of understanding the narrator. John Gledson's *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis: A Dissenting Interpretation of* Dom Casmurro (1984) continues in a similar vein, placing emphasis on the historical, political, and social circumstances that would have conditioned Bento's erroneous accusations. Roberto Schwarz, in an essay entitled "A poesia envenenada de Dom Casmurro" (1997), brings out the seductive aspect of the narrator as an eloquent and sophisticated man of the social elite, in the novel's elaboration of a subversive discourse: ". . . está fora de dúvida que Bento escreve e arranja a sua história com a finalidade de condenar a mulher. Não está nela, mas no marido, o enigma cuja decifração importa" (Schwarz, 1997, p. 16). The displacement of critical attention from Capitu to Bento Santiago is evident in this statement.

Another significant approach to the narrator is one that asserts the ambiguity of the narrator's account. Rather than accepting his story at face value or taking sides against him, it maintains that readers

should accept the undecidable nature of the representation. As early as 1965, Keith Ellis proposes this approach to the novel: "It would seem that, in *Dom Casmurro*, Machado has discredited the effectiveness of either the provable guilt or provable innocence of Capitu and has indelibly branded this aspect of the novel with the mark of ambiguity" (Ellis, 1965, p. 438). Several other analysts have maintained the undecidability of the question. One of the most notable critics in that mode is Abel Barros Baptista, who has called into question the interpretive stances of Helen Caldwell, Roberto Schwarz and John Gledson (p. 367-380), while asking the rhetorical question, "se Machado deixou a decisão ao leitor ou se inviabilizou qualquer decisão do leitor ou, ainda, se muito simplesmente retirou legitimidade à questão da culpa ou inocência de Capitu" (Baptista, 1998, p. 370).

A SEMI-TRANSPARENT FABRIC

When it comes to *Dom Casmurro*'s allusion to the diaphanous veil of Venus, what are the facts, what are the implications, and in what direction do they point? The reference belongs to chapter CV, in which Santiago describes the domestic dynamics of his recent marriage. He says that they stayed home most evenings, appreciating the beach and the ocean from the window of their house; that Capitu was receptive to his lessons on history and astronomy; that she learned to play the piano, and enjoyed singing until she understood that her voice was not very good. But she still loved to dance:

> De dançar gostava, e enfeitava-se com amor quando ia a um baile; os braços é que... Os braços merecem um período.
>
> Eram belos, e na primeira noite que os levou nus a um baile, não creio que houvesse iguais na cidade, nem os seus, leitora, que eram então de menina, se eram nascidos, mas provavelmente estariam ainda no mármore, donde vieram, ou nas mãos do divino escultor. Eram os mais belos da noite, a ponto que me encheram de desvanecimento. Conversava mal com as outras pessoas, só para vê-los, por mais que eles se entrelaçassem aos das casacas alheias. Já não foi assim no segundo baile; nesse, quando vi que os homens não se fartavam de olhar para eles, de os buscar, quase de os pedir, e que roçavam por eles as mangas pretas, fiquei vexado e aborrecido. Ao terceiro não fui, e aqui tive o apoio de Escobar, a quem confiei candidamente os meus tédios; concordou logo comigo.
>
> — Sanchinha também não vai, ou irá de mangas compridas; o contrário parece-me indecente.
>
> — Não é? Mas não diga o motivo; hão de chamar-nos seminaristas. Capitu já me chamou assim. Nem por isso deixei de contar a Capitu a aprovação de Escobar. Ela sorriu e respondeu que os braços de Sanchinha eram mal feitos, mas cedeu depressa, e não foi ao baile; a outros foi, mas levou-os meio vestidos de escumilha ou não sei que, que nem cobria nem descobria inteiramente, como o cendal de Camões. (cap. CV).

Capitu loves to go to dances and gets attention when she does. The reader might wonder if her priority is the dance or the attention. Bento here shows a reflected pleasure in his companion's attractiveness. His pride at the heed given to her bare arms at dances reveals some of the mentality of a man who treats his wife as his personal trophy. But the passage also reveals the first seeds of jealousy. Demonstrating the code of honor so typical of his moment and cultural context, the narrator shows zeal in protecting his reputation, and projects that zeal upon his wife. He refuses to accompany her naked arms to the next dance and obtains Capitu's assent in also staying away. He presumably asks or demands that she cover her arms and receives thereafter a form of quasi-obedience. At subsequent

dances, Capitu agrees to wear sleeves, but chooses a semi-transparent fabric that still manages to show the treasures underneath. The involvement of Bento's best friend, Escobar, is interesting. The friend has made similar demands on his wife, Sancha. When Bento uses that fact to support his own requirement, Capitu responds that Sancha wears sleeves because her arms are not attractive, showing a lack of acquiescence to the logic of her husband's demands. By including Escobar in a private argument with his wife, Bento is also introducing the triangular association that will become the centerpiece of the novel's domestic conflict.

And now, about the reference to Camões. For the first time, Vasco da Gama and his crew, heroes of *Os lusíadas*, are exploring a maritime route from Europe to India. Without knowing it, he has become an instrument in a conflict between classical deities. On the one hand, Bacchus opposes the advancement of the Portuguese, while on the other, Venus supports their efforts. In Canto II, Gama narrowly escapes a shipwreck that would have been caused by the machinations of Bacchus and his allies. The disaster is avoided by the intervention of nymphs sent by Venus. Unaware of the intervention of these pagan deities, Gama falls to his knees and gives thanks to the Christian God. Offended by the lack of support from higher powers, Venus determines to ascend to the throne of Jupiter, chief of the gods:

> Dentre as Ninfas se vai, que saudosas
> Ficaram desta súbita partida.
> Já penetra as Estrelas luminosas,
> Já na terceira Esfera recebida
> Avante passa, e lá no sexto Céu,
> Para onde estava o Padre, se moveu.
>
> E como ia afrontada do caminho,
> Tão formosa no gesto se mostrava,
> Que as Estrelas e o Céu e o Ar vizinho,
> E tudo quanto a via namorava.
> Dos olhos, onde faz seu filho o ninho,
> Uns espíritos vivos inspirava,
> Com que os Pólos gelados acendia,
> E tornava do Fogo a esfera fria.
>
> E por mais namorar o soberano
> Padre, de quem foi sempre amada e eriça,
> Se lhe apresenta assim como ao Troiano,
> Na selva Idea, Diana já se apresentara. na água clara,
> Nunca os famintos galgos o mataram,
> Que primeiro desejos o acabaram.
>
> Os crespos fios d'ouro se esparziam
> Pelo colo, que a neve escurecia;
> Andando, as lácteas tetas lhe tremiam,

Com quem Amor brincava, e não se via;
Da alva petrina flamas lhe saíam,
Onde o Menino as almas acendia;
Pelas lisas colunas lhe trepavam
Desejos, que como hera se enrolavam.

C'um delgado sendal as partes cobre,
De quem vergonha é natural reparo,
Porém nem tudo esconde, nem descobre,
O véu, dos roxos lírios pouco avaro;
Mas, para que o desejo acenda o dobre,
Lhe põe diante aquele objeto raro.
Já se sentem no Céu, por toda a parte,
Ciúmes em Vulcano, amor em Marte.

E mostrando no angélico semblante
Co'o riso uma tristeza misturada,
Como dama que foi do incauto amante
Em brincos amorosos mal tratada,
Que se aqueixa e se ri num mesmo instante,
E se torna entre alegre magoada,
Desta arte a Deusa, a quem nenhuma iguala,
Mais mimosa que triste ao Padre fala:

Sempre eu cuidei, ó Padre poderoso,
Que, para as cousas que eu do peito amasse,
Te achasse brando, afábil e amoroso,
Posto que a algum contrário lhe pesasse;
Mas, pois que contra mim te vejo iroso,
Sem que to merecesse, nem te errasse,
Faça-se como Baco determina;
Assentarei enfim que fui mofina.

Este povo que é meu, por quem derramo
As lágrimas que em vão caídas vejo,
Que assaz de mal lhe quero, pois que o amo,
Sendo tu tanto contra meu desejo!
Por ele a ti rogando choro e bramo,
E contra minha dita enfim pelejo.
Ora pois, porque o amo é mal tratado,
Quero-lhe querer mal, será guardado.

Mas moura enfim nas mãos das brutas gentes,
Que pois eu fui..." E nisto, de mimosa,
O rosto banha em lágrimas ardentes,
Como co'o orvalho fica a fresca rosa.
Calada um pouco, como se entre os dentes
Se lhe impedira a fala piedosa,
Torna a segui-la; e indo por diante,
Lhe atalha o poderoso e grão Tonante.

E destas brandas mostras comovido,
Que moveram de um tigre o peito duro,
Co'o vulto alegre, qual do Céu subido,
Torna sereno e claro o ar escuro,
As lágrimas lhe alimpa, e acendido
Na face a beija, e abraça o colo puro;
De modo que dali, se só se achara,
Outro novo Cupido se gerara. (Camões, 1973, canto 2: 33-42).

Venus' behavior here is a classic demonstration of how men are prone to see woman as contrivers. Despite a power differential, Venus may nevertheless use her feminine resources to obtain what she wants. First, she seems to understand that her influence lies in her personal presence, so she moves for a meeting with Jupiter. She knows how beautiful she is, and the power of her attractiveness is borne out by the effects she has on the environment through which she travels. She takes care to show off her hair, "crespos fios de ouro", and even her breasts. However, to avoid appearing blatant and immodest, and in fact "pera que o desejo acenda e dobre," the godess covers her "partes" with a "delgado sendal," which "nem tudo esconde nem descobre." This veil of semi-transparency seems to reflect a sophisticated understanding of eroticism, where desire often becomes more urgent when its object is exposed only partially, thus allowing space for the imagination to operate more actively.

Venus smiles, but with a note of sadness like a mistreated lover, combining a cheerful countenance with a complaint. She expresses surprise at his opposition to the people she loves – that the god supports Bacchus rather than her. How can Jupiter allow them to die rather than protecting them, which is her most ardent wish? Having said this, "O rosto banha em lágrimas ardentes." She knows that a woman's tears can have influence over a man and is highly effective in using this understanding. Jupiter dries her tears, kisses her cheek, and in so doing feels sexual desire for her.

In classical mythology the relationship between Venus and Jupiter is understood to be one of the original models of the lovers' triangle. Jupiter is married to Hera, but he has a wandering eye, which has a special preference for Venus.

Bento's allusion to Camões' diaphanous veil, which on the surface seems to belong to a trivial anecdote about a husband's protective jealousy and a wife's unenthusiastic compliance to her husband's demands, in reality is a supercharged reinforcement for his accusation against Capitu. In comparing his spouse to Venus, he suggests that she may be strategic in using her physical attractiveness to obtain whatever she desires. He insinuates that she may exert feminine power over men in more psychological

ways as well. And perhaps most importantly, the narrator suggests that she may be inclined to invite the desire of someone already married to another woman. None of these assertions is inconsistent with accusations made elsewhere in the narration. This would appear, then, to be a clear example of an allusion that surreptitiously guides the reader in the direction of the narrator's agenda.

SEEING THROUGH THE ACCUSATION

However, Santiago's narration is not merely a condemnation of Capitu. At times, it does indeed come across as what Schwarz calls "poesia envenenada," a discourse that, between the lines, suggests factors that contradict the narrator's explicit accusations. The message here belongs to the implied author rather than to the narrator.

In this connection, I would like to mention the psychological principle of projection. According to the *Dictionary* of the American Psychological Association (2024), projection is a defense mechanism in which individuals disturbed about their own behaviors or attitudes project those same characteristics upon other persons. I see no reason why projection needs to involve priority of one behavior over another. Person A may be disturbed by their own behavior, and therefore project a perception of that behavior upon Person B. Or Person A may be inclined to notice a particular behavior in Person B, because that same troubling behavior is also characteristic of Person A. A notable example from the novel is the revelation that the narrator who is building an accusation of infidelity against his wife is also beset by an adulterous impulse in his interaction with Sancha, Escobar's wife (chap. CXVIII).

Bento affirms that Capitu uses her beauty as a tool to get what she wants. The "cendal" allusion is just one of several instances making that point. But as Schwarz concludes, the narrator also presents himself as one of the "beautiful" people, because of his solid status as an educated, property-holding member of the upper class, and with his sentimental literary eloquence, a lyricism that has been able to "encantar várias gerações" of readers (Schwarz, 1997, p. 11). Just as Camões Venus uses her beauty to win over the powerful, Schwarz maintains that Santiago uses a kind of literary version of the same impulse to achieve his persuasive purposes.

Bento affirms that Capitu behaves strategically, manipulating elements around her to achieve her ends. One example is when the adolescent lovers exchange promises at a backyard well (chap. XLVIII). Bentinho promises that he will never marry anyone besides Capitu. This is a promise of exclusivity, but technically not a pledge of marriage. Capitu asks for and gets a better version of the promise: that he will marry her no matter what. Another example of the young woman's strategic behavior, one quite similar to the example of Camões's Venus, involves a dispute where Bentinho objects to Capitu having paid attention to another young man, the "peralta da vizinhança" who passes in front of them while they are talking. Capitu responds to his fit of jealousy first by accusing him of being unfair to her, and then by crying. These tears win over the young man. She wipes them away with her fingers, which he kisses. In the end, he promises not to be jealous (chap. LXXVI).

As a narrator, Bento is likewise strategic. For example, when he declares that "a amizade de Escobar fez-se grande e fecunda" (chap. XCV), he is not merely saying that their friendship grew and became fruitful. He will suggest that he himself may be infertile, having failed during five years to get his wife pregnant (chap. CIX). Therefore, associating Escobar with fecundity is a wily suggestion that he could be the father of the child, Ezequiel.

An even more impressive example of the narrator's manipulative comportment involves reference to Capitu's "olhos de ressaca." On the occasion of the combing, Bentinho feels a powerful, perhaps even dangerous attraction emanating from the girl's eyes, but he does not respond to them as "undertow eyes." This metaphor only occurs to him at the time of the narrative enunciation, when he pleads, "Retórica dos namorados, dá-me uma comparação exata e poética para dizer o que foram aqueles olhos de Capitu. Não me acode imagem capaz de dizer, sem quebra da dignidade do estilo, o que eles foram e me fizeram. Olhos de ressaca? Vá, de ressaca" (chap. XXXII). At the time when Santiago writes of Capitu's eyes, he knows that his "rival" Escobar has died from drowning in an undertow. Given his accusatory aims, it is highly strategic for him to have described her eyes at that youthful moment as "undertow eyes", even though he did not think of them as such during the original encounter. Retrospectively, he gives the impression that Capitu's adolescent eyes were dangerous undertows. As a strategic narrator, he is preparing readers to associate her powerfully alluring eyes with the means whereby Escobar is overwhelmed by the ocean's natural forces. The chronological manipulation gives more persuasive power to the narrator's strong impression of Capitu's eyes when she views Escobar's body in his open casket (chap. CXXIII), and, though it is a completely artificial construct, it gives a sense of natural consequence to the suspicion of Capitu's infidelity.

Returning to the veil allusion, a careful reader will find a contradictory aspect, which would belong to the perspective of the implied author. By employing an allusive comparison to Venus in *Os lusíadas*, Santiago describes Capitu's use of semi-transparent sleeves as a contrivance to obey her husband in the letter of the law, without really complying in the spirit of the law, a strategy that allows her to continue displaying her feminine attraction and inviting an extra-marital gaze. It is not an immediately evident message; rather, it involves processing the phrase "cendal de Camões" to understand that it refers to Venus and to her power-play with Jupiter, and then to appreciate the epic episode's relevance to Capitu. And this is where the narrator's allusion begins to turn against itself. Because it is a communication with an evident, available surface that reveals a semantic treasure on a more profound level, we can hardly avoid the realization that this form of communication stands in an isomorphic relationship with the diaphanous fabric *per se*. Dom Casmurro's narration itself is a semi-transparent veil, or a set of revealing sleeves, in that it offers one kind of image on the surface, but practically obliges a search for deeper meanings underneath.

A VEILED NARRATION

I have already mentioned the narrator's reference to the fecundity of friendship with Escobar, and his retrospective assignment of the "undertow" metaphor to Capitu's childhood eyes. These are examples of the diaphanous fabric through which the text communicates.

The novel's allusions may therefore belong to this dubious veil of suggestions. One clear case is its reference to Shakespeare's *Othello*. Since Caldwell's book, the critics have regularly analyzed those allusions and I do not wish to become involved in the fine points of those arguments. I will simply state the obvious: Shakespeare's play (or any operatic version the narrator may wish to refer to) is relevant to the novel's conflict, superficially, in that it is about a wife's supposed infidelity to her husband. In that sense, it would seem to support the narrator's accusations. But the most facile reading of the original story reveals that Desdemona, the woman condemned and in fact executed for that crime by her

husband, was *innocent*. Bento's reaction to the culmination of the operatic version is shocking, because when the innocent woman dies at the hands of the furious moor, the narrator reports that there were "aplausos frenéticos do público" (chap. CXXXV). He then goes on to ask, in a perverse abuse of the allusion, "E era inocente, vinha eu dizendo rua abaixo: – que faria o público se ela deveras fosse culpada, tão culpada como Capitu?" (chap. CXXXV). The implied condemnation both of the narrator's bias and of his patriarchal culture is potent. The allusion shows how the surface and the underlying level of the novel's diaphanous veil of allusion can be at cross purposes.

Another example I hope will suffice to illustrate this dynamic in the novel. After five years in São Paulo, Bentinho returns home with his law diploma in hand, a qualified and prosperous man on his way to a respected career and a long-anticipated marriage to Capitu. He has a kind of aural hallucination, seeming to receive a message from a fairy: "Uma fada invisível desceu ali e me disse em voz igualmente macia e cálida: 'Tu serás feliz, Bentinho; tu vais ser feliz'". Santiago then identifies the fairy: "Há de ser prima das feiticeiras da Escócia: "Tu serás rei, Macbeth!" (chap. C). As Marcelo Diego points out, this quote from the witches of Shakespeare's Scottish play is hugely ironic, for although Macbeth does indeed become king, his ultimate fate is nothing but unhappy. He betrays a man to whom he owes loyalty and kills not only that man but also two innocent children. His decisions contribute to his wife's suicide and eventually bring about his own death. In the novel, the comparative reference suggests that the protagonist's misguided decision may also have dire consequences not only for himself but for others in his sphere of influence (Diego, 2019, p. 753). Once again, the allusion conforms to the trope of the diaphanous veil, where the surface shows one reality, but in its underlying dimension it reveals something more profound.

The reference to Camões' Venus and her semi-transparent veil, in *Dom Casmurro*, is one of several literary allusions that may point the reader in opposing directions. In this way, the allusions are consistent with a general critical agreement that Bento Santiago, the novel's narrator, is a highly complex and even contradictory character. While in general allusions give messages supporting or countering the narrator's condemnation of his wife, the mention of Venus and her veil seems unique in that it suggests Capitu's manipulation on the one hand but does not directly contradict that reading on the other. Rather, it seems to suggest a self-referential description of Santiago's strategic mode of narrating. It shows that Bento's discourse is itself a kind of diaphanous veil, which has an alluring superficial aspect, but hides more troubling assertions beneath its surface. In a metaliterary way, it guides the reader to a mode of reception that is attuned to disturbing realities that lie beneath a veneer of more accessible perceptions.

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