

## **DOM CASMURRO AND THE UFOS: A CANONICAL TEXT AS PULP FICTION**

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**RESUMO:** A tendência de reescrever obras canônicas como “mash-ups” — termo utilizado para descrever a remixagem de música, vídeo-clips e filme na internet — de literatura de massa alcançou o Brasil. Em 2010, publicaram-se quatro romances que adicionam o sobrenatural e o grotesco a obras de Machado de Assis, José de Alencar e Bernardo Guimarães. Zumbis, vampiros, bruxas e seres extraterrestres tornam-se parte da ação, ou, como no caso de *Dom Casmurro e os discos voadores*, foco principal deste trabalho, personagens no enredo. A influência avassaladora do cinema e da televisão sobre as gerações mais novas cobra o seu tributo. Escritores devem decidir se aderem ou não aos recursos da mídia audiovisual, a fim de atrair leitores, nutridos neles desde a infância. Argumentamos que tais decisões seriam a causa da proliferação de híbridos de alta cultura e cultura popular, de textos canônicos associados a ficção científica, terror gótico ou outros gêneros de maior impacto junto ao público. As vendas de tais romances foram significativas, embora não atingissem os níveis de *bestsellers* de obras similares nos Estados Unidos. É indiscutível, porém, que a atmosfera de suspense e fantasia, acrescida do efeito serio-cômico criado pela justaposição de arte elevada e literatura de massa representa passo importante na popularização dos clássicos. O fato de que os quatro livros foram escritos por demanda de editores apoia nosso argumento de que fatores sociais e econômicos estão envolvidos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Mash-ups*. Ficção científica. Machado de Assis. Lúcio Manfredi.

**ABSTRACT:** The trend of rewriting canonical works of fiction as “mash-ups” — a term used to describe the remixing of music, video-clips and films in the internet — of mass literature genres has reached Brazil. In 2010, four novels were published which added the supernatural and the grotesque to works by Machado de Assis, José de Alencar and Bernardo Guimarães. Zombies, vampires, witches and extraterrestrial beings become part of the action, or in the case of *Dom Casmurro e os discos voadores*, the main focus of this discussion, characters in the plot. The overpowering influence of cinema and television over the younger generations has taken its toll. Authorial decisions must be made whether or not to adhere to the resources of audiovisual media, in order to attract readers who have been nurtured in them from infancy. We argue that such decisions would have been the cause of the proliferation of hybrids of high and low culture, of canonical texts coupled to science-fiction, Gothic terror or other genres, which have a stronger impact on the grand public. Sales rates have been significant, though not at best-selling levels, similar to those in the U.S. It is indisputable, however, that the atmosphere of suspense and wonder created by the insertion of genres of popular culture, plus the inevitable seriocomic effects created by the juxtaposition of high and low art have been a sure step toward the popularization of the classics. The fact that the four books were written in answer to publishers’ demands lends support to our argument that social and economic factors are involved.

**KEYWORDS:** “Mash-ups”. Science fiction. Machado de Assis. Lúcio Manfredi.

## 1. Introduction

The trend of rewriting canonical works of fiction as combinations of mass literature genres — science-fiction, Gothic terror, or other so-called lesser genres, — which have a stronger impact on the grand public, has reached Brazil. In 2010, four novels were published which added the supernatural and the grotesque to works by Machado de Assis, José de Alencar and Bernardo Guimarães. Mutants, vampires, witches and extraterrestrial beings become part of the action, or in the case of *Dom Casmurro e os discos voadores* (*Dom Casmurro and the UFOS*), the focus of this discussion, the main characters in the plot.

Divulgação



Those were the first four novels published by Lua de Papel/Leya, as part of the series **Clássicos Fantásticos (Fantastic Classics)**, with the objective of rewriting celebrated canonic works by adding elements of fantasy and/or science fiction to the plot. The stories were recreated by Lúcio Manfredi, Jovane Nunes, Angélica Lopes and Natalia Klein, all of them scriptwriters of highly popular TV dramas and Comic Series broadcast by Rede Globo (*Globe Network*) or simply Globo, the fourth-largest public TV commercial network in the world.

The overpowering influence of cinema and television over the younger generations of writers has taken its toll. Authorial decisions must be made whether or not to adhere to the resources of audiovisual media, in order to attract readers who have been nurtured in them from infancy. Hence our argument that social and economic factors are at the root of the proliferation of hybrids of high and low culture, in Brazil as everywhere else.

Tales of magic worlds, and their inhabitants, have been lately explored by a succession of authors, instantaneously raised to the category of best-sellers, immediately adapted to film and in the sequence transformed into artifacts of mass culture — cartoons, comics, pulp fiction, remixing of popular songs, as well as T shirts, jackets, video games, character dolls or whatever shape the cultural industry may come up with. That is the case of J.K. Rowling's incredibly successful creation, her Harry Potter series, whose sales have reached the astonishing number of 1 billion copies since its first publication in 1997.

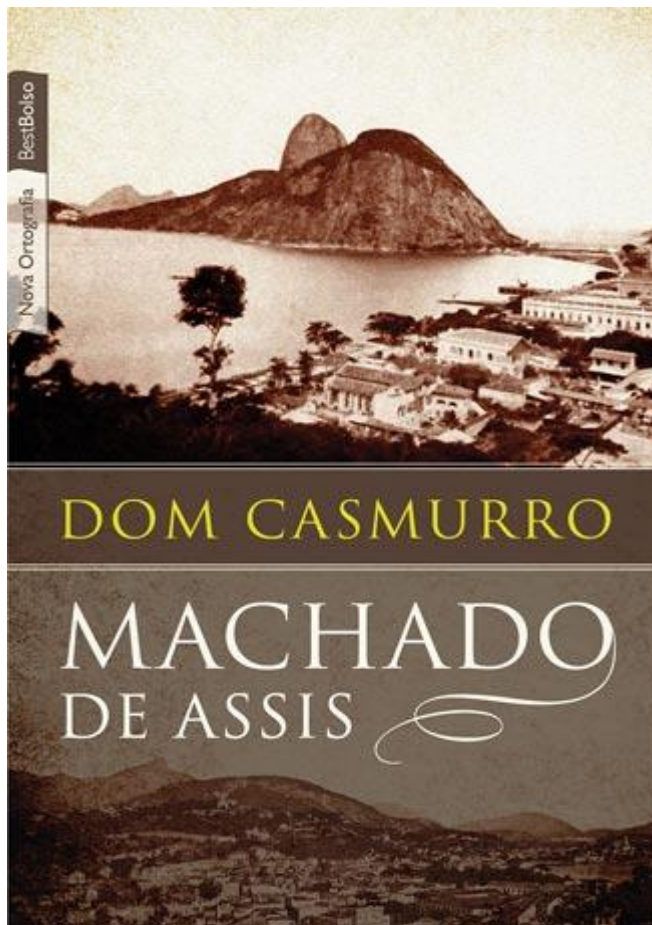
As early as 1957, Roland Barthes examined the whole paraphernalia of mass culture artifacts in France, in his book *Mythologies*. Considering that language is not a transparent vehicle of communication, but a means of repression used by bourgeois elites to submit the lower classes, Barthes made both an ideological critique of the so-called mass culture and a semiological analysis of that language. In his view, mass-produced cultural artifacts are meant to be consumed by the popular classes as marks of ideal standards of living to be reached at all costs, bringing about new profits for capitalist production. Works like *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by the American Grahame-Smith, would certainly be included by Barthes in his mythologies.

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2000), “authored” by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, is the exemplary model of the trend. Faced with the task of writing a

book that would respond, in his publisher's words, to "the movement of creative infraction of young people who rather than mere consumers have the necessary technology to transform it," Seth Grahame-Smith transformed Jane Austen's heroines into ruthless zombie hunters. Fulfilling his task took him no longer than six weeks, but he, nevertheless, hit the jackpot as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* sold a million copies in a few days, and Quirk, a rather obscure publishing enterprise at the time came into the limelight. *Abraham Lincoln: vampire hunter*, the author's second blockbuster (2010) was made into film in 2012.

"What would our classics be like if they had been written today?" That was the question that triggered the similar editorial project in Brazil, the **Fantastic Classics** series, which involved four writers with great experience in scripts for TV dramas and humor series. The series was reviewed with mild enthusiasm as "amusingly bizarre adventures, examples of sinister irony and of the wonder of nineteenth-century characters faced with twenty-first-century technological fantasies." The whole idea of the Brazilian publishers was also to rewrite cult texts by introducing elements of fantasy and/or science fiction, but with a difference: the resulting texts should aim at an organic construction, in which the added fantastic elements were derived from relevant aspects in the original canonic text. Those will be elements to be focused in the analysis of the process of recreation used by Manfredi, simultaneously with references to Machado's novel.

## 2. The canonic *Dom Casmurro*



*Dom Casmurro*, the original adapted text, or hipotext in Gérard Genette's terminology, is the third novel in the trilogy formed by *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* (1881), *Quincas Borba* (1891) and *Dom Casmurro* (1899), the experimental works written by Machado de Assis at the height of his career as a prose writer. The British scholar and literary critic John Gledson, who has researched Machado's work at length, is an enthusiast of the Brazilian writer's work.

Machado de Assis is an anomaly among the great novelists of the 19th century: a Brazilian but with no tropical lushness and grandiloquence to conform to 'Latin American' stereotypes of his day [...] a realist but one who constructed his greatest novels including *Dom Casmurro*, in the willfully digressive style of the antirealist Laurence Stern.

The indisputable place held by Machado de Assis not only in Brazilian literature but in 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin-American fiction as well, was largely evidenced by national and international events – seminars, conferences and exhibits of his work held in his honor to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death. Among them, Gledson highlights the initiative of the Brown University Library in 2008, with a display of early criticism of Machado's works, in an attempt to “help the audience gain a glimpse of Machado, the man and the writer, as a source of inspiration for a growing corpus of literary criticism.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis — referred to as Machado de Assis in literary studies and criticism — is that rare phenomenon, a unanimity in Brazilian letters, praised equally by critics and scholars of diverse critical currents. A few discordant voices may be heard in the evaluation of his poetry, but he stands alone as the paradigm itself of prose writing to both Brazilian and international critics.

Machado's *Dom Casmurro*, certainly the best known of his novels, owes its title to the nickname given the protagonist-narrator, Bento Santiago, who explains its meaning to the reader:

Não consultes dicionários. *Casmurro* não está aqui no sentido que eles lhe dão, mas no que lhe pôs o vulgo de homem calado e metido consigo. *Dom* veio por ironia, para atribuir-me fumos de fidalgo.  
<sup>2</sup>(ASSIS, 1997, p. 33)

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<sup>1</sup>From John Gledson's introduction to ASSIS, M. *Dom Casmurro*. Transl. John Gledson. New York: Oxford Un. Press, 1997.

<sup>2</sup>“Do not look up the dictionary. *Casmurro* is not used here in the sense given in dictionaries, but in the popular usage of a moody man who keeps much to himself. *Dom* was meant to be ironic, to ascribe me aristocratic ideas.” All translations from Portuguese into English have been made by the author.

The adjective *casmurro* fits the character's somber behavior and isolation — he lives alone in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro —, where he starts writing the story of his life as a means to fight the ennui of his days. The date is 1890, but the narrative goes back to the 1850's as he remembers his teens and his love for Capitu, his nextdoor neighbor. The two youths have been friends from childhood and are slow in realizing that their friendship has turned into love. That's true of Bentinho, at least.

To complicate matters, Bentinho is meant for priesthood — after a previous miscarriage, his mother had promised to dedicate her son to God, if he were born alive and healthy. The lovers manage to countervent Bentinho's entry into the Seminary and are happily married. But the young husband's insane jealousy and growing suspicion that his beautiful Capitu, “with her eyes of an oblique and sly gipsy”, has cheated him with his best friend, Escobar, turns him into Dom Casmurro. Machado de Assis offers no answer to the question whether Capitu's guilt is real or merely a product of Bentinho's irrational jealousy and fertile imagination, and the ensuing debate has been the relish of readers, critics and researchers for one hundred and fifteen years. There is enough evidence for both arguments: Capitu may be either a wronged virtuous wife, whose sole fault lies in her rather mysterious beauty, or a devouring temptress.

Mainly on account of the digressive nature of his reconstruction of past memories, the narrator. Bento Santiago, known as Dom Casmurro in his old age, recurrently reminds his readers that they are reading a book and not living other people's lives vicariously. By addressing his readers directly, Bento Santiago, the narrator, establishes the distance between himself and Bento Santiago, the character who lives the recollected experiences. Recurrent also are the allusions to the act of writing the narrative. The systematic intrusions of the narrator put into relief its artificial nature of creating fiction: “Agora que já expliquei o título, passo a escrever o livro.

Antes disso, porém, digamos os motivos que me põem a pena na mão”<sup>3</sup>(ASSIS, 1997, p. 34).

The references to the construction of the text contrast with the primary realism of its subject matter: a typical Brazilian family in their walk of life, living off the wealth acquired in the exploration of the land by slave labor. It is mainly the narrator’s discourse that puts into relief the combination of overt realist descriptions of the setting, the subtlety underlying every sentence in the novel, and outright poetry.

Um coqueiro, vendo-me inquieto e adivinhando a causa, murmurou de cima de si que não era feio que os meninos de quinze anos andassem nos cantos com as meninas de quatorze, ao contrário, os adolescentes daquela idade não tinham outro ofício, nem os cantos outra utilidade. Era um coqueiro velho, e eu cria nos coqueiros velhos, mais ainda que nos velhos livros. Pássaros, borboletas, uma cigarra que ensaiava o estio, toda a gente viva do ar era da mesma opinião<sup>4</sup>. (ASSIS, 1997, p. 50)

It is indeed a great responsibility to adaptor recreate such perfection, but there have been attempts that preceded Manfredo’s, such as *Amor de Capitu*, by the well known Brazilian writer Fernando Sabino. His intention of rewriting the text is explicitly stated on the cover of the book, right beside its title: RECRIAÇÃO LITERÁRIA (Literary Recreation). Thus there is no question of authorship, as Machado is not indicated as co-author. Machado’s portrait, however, openly exhibited on the cover of the book’s third edition, calls the attention of even the most absent-minded of readers to

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<sup>3</sup>“Now that I have explained the title, I shall start writing the book. Before that, however, let’s disclose the motives that have put the pen in my hand.”

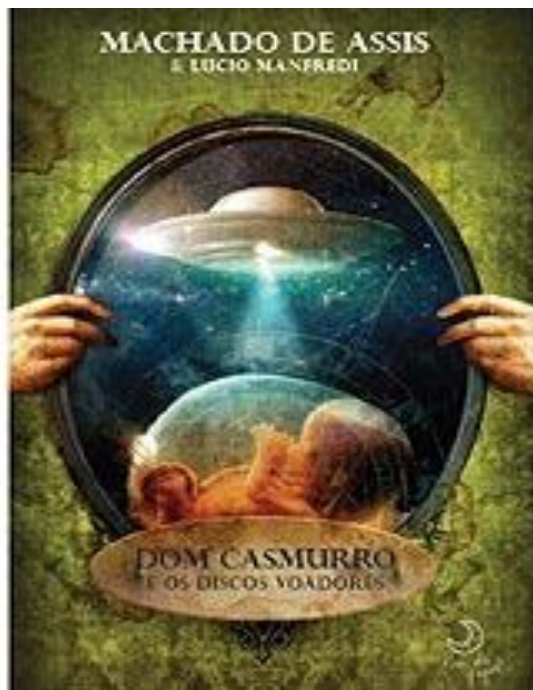
<sup>4</sup>“A palm tree, seeing me troubled and divining the cause murmured from its top that there was nothing wrong with fifteen-year old boys getting into corners with girls of fourteen; on the contrary, youths of that age have no other function, nor corners a different purpose. It was an old palm-tree, and I believed in old palm-trees even more than in old books. Birds, butterflies, a cricket announcing summer, all the living things of the air were of the same opinion.”



the authorship of the hipotext. The title clearly indicates the basic change of narrative point-of-view, from Bentinho's to Capitu's voice.

The intentions of the XXIst century writer, Lúcio Manfredi, were stated in his interviews to Paula Dune, for the *Folha de São Paulo* bookstore, and to Hector Lima's series of interviews with the writers in the Fantastic Classics project, to be posted in his blog Goma de Mascar. To both interviewers Manfredi affirmed his profound respect for Machado de Assis – the writer every Brazilian ought to read – and his wish to write a version of *Dom Casmurro* that would preserve the novel's essential elements, although in a new fantastic context. It is understandable, therefore, that he should have chosen to use the stock-in-trade of science fiction, the genre he had practiced before, in his adaptation: flying saucers, extraterrestrial beings, robots, and alien planets. It is his belief that his version of *Dom Casmurro* is in no way a heresy to be decried by purists.

MACHADO DE ASSIS & LUCIO MANFREDI  
DOM CASMURRO EOS DISCOS VOADORES



The blatant coupling of the names MACHADO DE ASSIS & LÚCIO MANFREDI as co-authors of *Dom Casmurro e os discos voadores*, on the cover of the book, poses a theoretical problem: how can the text be classified? If as an adaptation of the classic, then only Manfredi's name should identify its authorship. Moreover, the mere fact that Machado de Assis "flirted with the fantastic in his short fiction", as Manfredi aptly pointed out, does not allow us to consider him a **science fiction writer**, in times that preceded the creation of the genre. As a first solution, it is possible to consider the text a hybrid, even though the term does not identify the members of the hybridization. The matter requires further study.

Lucio Manfredi, the author of *Dom Casmurro and the UFOS*, writes *bona fide* science fiction, and has had tales published in three collections, entitled *Como era gostosa minha alienígena* (*How Sweet Was my Alien Girl*), *Dez contos de terror* (*Ten Horror Tales*) and *Galeria do sobrenatural* (*Gallery of the Supernatural*). The titles reveal a comingling of genres similar to that in his rewritings of canonic works.

Manfredi had some trumps in his recreation of a canonic work of literature: the knowledge of the original work by the public, if not directly acquired from the text, certainly by means of its intermediatic adaptations. The novel had already been successfully translated into film, — *Dom* (2003) directed by Moacyr Góes, — and into the short TV series *Capitu* (2008), directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, for Globo TV. Carvalho places the action in the theatre, and gives his Dom Casmurro a clownish bizarre appearance in the role of an out-of-the-scene narrator, who keeps the audience on a par with the developments on the stage, and with the outside action. Dom Casmurro's bizarre appearance is a facilitator for the comprehension of the character's

bipartite nature, as the aged narrator who recalls past experiences, and as Capitu's handsome suitor in the stage performance

### 3. The Fantastic in *Dom Casmurro and the UFOS*

#### WARNING – AVISO

**Esta é uma obra de ficção baseada na obra original escrita por Machado de Assis e publicada em 1899.**

**Toda semelhança é proposital e as diferenças também. Aqui você encontra uma nova versão do clássico, com todos os exemplos do imaginário que povoam nossa literatura.<sup>5</sup>**

The first part of the warning on the flyleaf is straight concrete information about Machado's original work. It is not the case, however, of "Every similarity is purposeful as so are the differences" which reverses the reader's expectations of the common warning that every similarity would be "mere coincidence". Reversal of ground rules — either of the factual world **outside the text** or of the world **inside the text** as recreated by the narrative — is the basic characteristic of the Fantastic, in Eric Rabkin's conception. It will be helpful in our commentaries about Manfredi's text.

*Dom Casmurro and the UFOS* basically retains Machado's characters and romantic plot: the story of Capitu's and Bentinho's adolescent love, their marriage, and the young husband's ineradicable suspicion that his wife cheats him with the couple's best friend, Escobar. The revelation of the great secret — Capitu and Escobar are actually extraterrestrial beings (the Aquepalos) that live among humans to protect them against their enemies (the Anunaques), bent on destroying mankind — does not allay Bentinho's jealousy and revulsion. He is unable to accept that Capitu had been entirely "programmed" to fit and respond to what he desired in a woman. Nor is he mollified to

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<sup>5</sup>"This is a work of fiction based on the original work written by Machado de Assis, and published in 1899. Every similarity is purposeful as so are the differences. Here you will find a new version of the classic, with every element of the imaginary existing in our literature."

learn that her “emotional circuits” had been equally programmed to love no one but him from “the very first moment they met” (MANFREDI, 2010, p. 245). The Aquepalos are ruled by a superior relentless force, the *Legislatura*, and Bentinho decries being told what to feel.

The fate of Manfredi’s characters parallels the denouement of Machado’s novel, in which only Dom Casmurro is left alive in late nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, that is, in “the world outside the text as that text recreates it” (RABKIN, 1976, p. 120).

Capitu and Ezequiel, the son rejected by Dom Casmurro, inhabit Abzu<sup>6</sup>, in the world of Sirius. A postcard sent by the young man – who had been to see his father some time before – entreats the embittered old man to remember him and his mother: “I am leaving for Abzu tomorrow. Think of us when you look up at the sky. Sig. E.” (p. 254).

Escobar is shot to death by José Dias, the *agregado*, a peculiar figure in the social structure of Brazil’s immobile conservative society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – an impoverished person, male or female, theoretically free, but dependent on the generosity and whims of a rich benefactor – who has turned into an android in the service of the Anunaques.

Both the Aquepalos, the good guys in the plot, and the Anunaques are ruled and judged by the *Legislatura*, “the collective conscience that resides in the folds of the space-time continuum” (MANFREDI, 2010, p. 230). Escobar and Capitu are hybrids, the products of crossbreeding between humans and Aquepalos, as part of a program in course since the XIV<sup>th</sup>-century. Capituzinha and Ezequiel, their children by their respective consorts, belong to the twenty-first generation of hybrids.

Dom Casmurro, the teller of the tale, remains unchanged at the conclusion of both novels. In Machado's chapter 148, the last one in the book, "And well, what about the rest?", the narrator grieves that his first love and his best friend, both so dear to his heart, should have joined together to betray him. In Manfredi's similarly entitled chapter, Dom Casmurro is in a quandary: either his fantastic story is true, but **definitely not** the product of a sick mind, or, on the contrary, he must admit he had exchanged the only love in his life for "an error and an illusion of colossal proportions" (2010, p. 257).

Manfredi complicates matters further by adding a surprising epilogue to his Fantastic Classic. The narrator reappears as a supposedly mentally-deranged science fiction writer and literary critic, an authority on Machado de Assis, named Felipe Cadique, who is committed to a psychiatric hospital, in the year 2012. In his deliriums, he struggles to convince someone — either a doctor, a nurse or another patient — to warn the Legislatura that the Anunaques have broken the truce and are threatening to destroy mankind. Cadique had identified with Bentinho and believed he was living in the world of the novel: "Mas na visão remixada por sua esquizofrenia, o mundo do livro incluía alienígenas, e Capitu convertera-se em uma figura só parcialmente humana"<sup>7</sup> (2010, p. 259). He is in the care of doctor Simão Bacamarte, a compassionate man, who, we are told, dislikes rainy days because the gills on his shoulders become particularly painful (2010, p. 260).

Manfredi makes use of the minor characters in the plot to build the maintains of his fantastic world. Uncle Cosme, one of the three widowed persons in the household, is passionately in love with the stars, their constellations and their history. He is the first one (in chapter 2) to mention the name *Sirius*, as well as the strange *thing* he had seen through his eye-glass on the eve of the Padua family's arrival. He introduces the

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<sup>7</sup> "But in the version remixad by his schizophrenia, the world of the book included aliens, and Capitu had changed into an only partially human creature."

atmosphere of mystery, of the unexplainable and fearful. The *thing* proves to be the flying saucer, the *locus* of the final events (chapters 102 to 116) that end with Bentinho's refusal to accept Capitu's "treachery", and her disappearance.

José Dias, the *agregado*, who has the crucial function of triggering events in Machado's plot, becomes an android, devoid of feelings, that plays an equally important role in the outcome of its fantastic version. His slow but carefully measured walk, "a complete syllogism, the premise before the consequence, the consequence before the conclusion," (MACHADO 1997, p. 38), in the original text, becomes a strangely mechanical walk, accompanied by a metallic voice. When Escobar touches a spot in the creature's neck, his chest opens to reveal a panel with various unknown objects instead of heart and lungs. As Bentinho stares in horror and disbelief, José Dias touches his neck again, his chest closes and he regains his former dignified attitude. "The technical term is android", Capitu explains.

Cousin Justina exceeds her old disagreeable self, sure to come up with sharp unpleasant commentaries that embarrass Bentinho. When the crisis reaches its climax, Escobar lying dead on the ground, José Dias ready to shoot Capitu and a furious battle raging between the two spaceships, the Aquepalian saucer and the cup-shaped Anunaquian, cousin Justina emerges from a coalescing white mist. Bentinho's first impulse is to sit on the ground and laugh uproariously. But he is overwhelmed by the sight of the apparition's distorted features, a mask of inhuman fury, "the fury of the gods": "Sempre desconfiara que prima Justina não era inteiramente humana. Agora descobria que ela era um avatar da Legislatura"<sup>8</sup> (MANFREDI, 2010, p. 241).

The Anunaquian spaceship is destroyed but both the attackers and the attacked are sentenced to a hundred and forty-two years of inactivity on earth, pending a final

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<sup>8</sup> "I had always suspected Cousin Justina was not entirely human. I realized then she was an avatar of Legislatura".

decision of the Legislatura. Its representative, cousin Justina, disappears after her harsh sentence, taking José Dias with her.

And what about the romantic couple in the story? Bentinho shrinks from the idea of having been a mere pawn in the Arquepalian breeding scheme: “Não passo de um reprodutor. Um animal selecionado e tratado para melhorar a qualidade do rebanho”.<sup>9</sup> Unheeding of Capitu’s tears, “bleeding with internal and external wounds,” he turns his back on her deliberately, “on her deep eyes like the sea surf,” on her siren song that had no other purpose than “making me keep up with the beat”<sup>10</sup>

Back in the “real world”, Bentinho finds an empty house, but for his servants. On making enquiries about Escobar and his family, however, he is told by a neighbor they had left that very morning. He had talked to them himself. The return to the **inside reality** of the text draws the reader away from the idea of fantastic alternative worlds, except for Ezequiel’s card and, further on, the surprising epilogue. Those are so many reversals which make a text that more fantastic, in Rabkin’s conception.

#### 4. Some considerations about genres of the fantastic in the XXIst century

The initial proposal of the Fantastic Classics series was to add elements of science fiction and/or fantasy to canonic works, in order to update them. Science fiction is a genre that does make use of the fantastic, and an immense variety of texts have been categorized as SF. The question remains, however, whether the label can be applied to the hybrid products of mass culture under consideration.

Eric Rabkin points out that the term science fiction<sup>11</sup> “has been forced into many different kinds of service”: from the voyage to Laputa in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) and

<sup>9</sup> “I am nothing more than a stud, selected for the improvement of the herd”.

<sup>10</sup> A popular saying meaning “doing what one is told to do” that shatters the solemnity of the moment.

<sup>11</sup> The term was coined by Hugo Gernsback in 1926, to denote the all-male technological adventure stories he was writing and editing (RABKIN, 1977, p. 119)

the *Icaromenippus* of Lucian of Samosata (b.120 A.D.) to the “Star Trek” series. His next observation is particularly apt to put into relief the particular problems of the genre: “And there are other works [...] that slip in and out of the genre with hardly anyone’s noticing” (1977, p. 118-119).

Attempts have been made to define the apparently endless combinations of technology and genres of popular appeal that spring up nowadays, in order to satisfy a growing public, with a variety of demands: **slipstream**= [science fiction](#)+[fantasy](#)+[mainstream literary fiction](#); **steampunk**=[science fiction](#) + [steam-powered](#) machinery + a 19<sup>th</sup> century setting.

Lúcio Manfredi does not think any of the labels can be applied exclusively to his *Dom Casmurro and the UFOS* in spite of its 19<sup>th</sup> century setting and the remixing of genres. The main focus of his work continues to be the relationship between Bentinho and Capitu. Keeping an open mind, he affirms, provides a richer and rewarding enjoyment of the text.

Difficulties in genre definition have evidently increased in the society of mass communication of the second millennium in which the visual media holds such a central place and thought is harnessed to image. We live the culture of the videoclip and bow to the demands of marketing for instantaneous results: rapid renovation, ephemeral success, immediate sensation, pure stimulation” (SÁ, 2010, p. 16). In this scenario literature must search for alternatives in order to survive. The writer is divided between the need to entertain, in order to get closer to the public (entertainment is the deep irrefutable goal of the world of the media), and the temptation of experimenting (and thus choose to remain out of it) (SÁ, 2010, p. 19). In this particular sense, *Dom Casmurro and the UFOS* is doubly successful as an entertaining and well written text.



Lúcio Manfredi admits he had some difficulty in his attempt to maintain the unique tone of Machado's narrative, established by the peculiarities of its unreliable narrator — who can be ironically detached, deeply sarcastic or, else, emotionally unbalanced — plus, simultaneously introducing his own perspective. He actually succeeded in making his character-narrator coherent in his own right and his text pleasant to read.

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