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BIBLICAL FRAME OF DOM CASMURRO, BY MACHADO DE ASSIS

Paulo Sérgio de Proença

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Abstract: This proposal seeks to identify biblical motivations in the composition of *Dom Casmurro*, a novel that promotes doubt, disquiet, and the relativization of truth. The critical reception of the work for a long time was concerned - and still is - of the lack of definition about the betrayal and silence about the biblical writings. And that is what this work is concerned with, from the verification of the role of biblical intertextuality in the novel, in particular, considering that Machado de Assis uses it generously in his work. The work has an exploratory nature in terms of objectives and will use bibliographic research to collect data and information on the critical fortune accumulated about the Brazilian author. Results indicate that the Bible, present more as a literary than a religious source, is indispensable for the understanding of Machado's writings in general and the novel in particular, serving to relativize the truth on which the Christian tradition is based.

Keywords: Machado de Assis, *Dom Casmurro*, Bible.

INTRODUCTION

Dom Casmurro, one of Machado de Assis' best known and most discussed novels, is full of biblical references, which are not mere props for erudition. On the contrary, they concern the formulation of structural links in the book, whose narrator is an ex-seminarian. Perhaps this is why the references to the Bible are recurrent, especially to the prophet Ezekiel, which is the main biblical source that the author uses to compose the work. More than images, characters, places or episodes, the prophet's book provides elements that form the structural frame of the novel, especially with

1. The description gave rise to further developments in the Jewish mystical tradition, which, through qualified asceticism, seeks to see the glory of God, especially the image of the vehicle in which God is (Ezek 1.15-24); also prominent is shekinah, the Hebrew term for the designation of glory. Jonas Machado (2009) says about it: "Mercavah [...] a Hebrew word meaning 'chariot,' alluding to a visionary experience of God's glory in a kind of 'throne-chariot' [...] was very early connected with Ezekiel's visions [...] The term is generally linked to a kind of mysticism that has in the vision of Ezekiel 1 a primary source as its most important text, but which received development in later Jewish mystical literature, especially in apocalyptic".

regard to the relationship between Bentinho and Capitu. There is also incorporation of other biblical books and episodes, such as Isaac's sacrifice, Anne's consecration of her son Samuel, and the Song of Songs. Initially, elements borrowed from Ezekiel will be pointed out; later, other evocations, without the commitment to exhaustion, will be added.

ELEMENTS INSPIRED BY EZEKIEL

They are of diverse nature, from criteria for naming characters to creating dramatic knots. Here are some of these links that unequivocally connect the novel to the biblical book, which is an important source for the composition of the novel.

THE NAME EZEKIEL

A first evidence resides in the name. The names of Machadian characters are often motivated, as seems to be the case with Ezekiel. In the novel, Bento Santiago's son receives this name, which also makes up Escobar's baptismal name. Thus, Ezequiel operates the convergence of two central characters of the narrative, establishing links that are intertextual between the novel and the biblical book. The name means strength of God.

THE GLORY OF GOD

The glory of God receives emphasis in the book of the prophet. The first chapter makes mention of it¹. The prophet feels small before the vision: "When I saw this, I fell on my face and heard the voice of one who spoke" (Ezek. 1:28). But the glory of God comes out of the Temple and the city: "The glory of the LORD came up from the middle of the city and stood on the mountain which is on the east side of

the city. Then the Spirit of God lifted me up and carried me in His vision to Chaldea, to those of the captivity [...] (Ezek. 11:23-24)". This abandonment is due to the people's sin: idolatry. At the end of the book, the glory of the Lord returns to his sanctuary (Ezek. 43:2, 4, 7). Glory is the name of Benny's mother. The character relates to the maintenance of the values of religion, cherished by her, being a devout guardian of the traditions that guarantee the family clan the maintenance of the glory they enjoy. The social status of the family is, in a way, glorious and, in the social arrangement, sacralized by religion. Religious piety is an important element in the novel. So much so that Dona Gloria promises to consecrate her son to God.

THE EXPRESSION "SON OF MAN"

The expression "son of man" is repeated almost a hundred times throughout Ezekiel. It is the way God addresses the prophet. In Dom Casmurro it appears in the mouth of José Dias, when there was already suspicion about the paternity of the boy. Chapter 116 is entitled "Son of man"; in it José Dias calls Capitu's son "our 'little prophet,'" asking: "How's it going, son of man?"; "Tell me, son of man, where are your toys?"; "Do you want to eat candy, son of man?". In José Dias' mouth, "son of man" amplifies the tension of distrust, projecting indefiniteness about the boy's paternity, albeit in a skewed way. The expression Son of man serves to emphasize humanity, according to Isaiah 51:12: "I, even I, am he who comforts you; who then are you, that you must fear man, who is mortal, or the son of man, who is but grass? In the book of Daniel, however, the expression has a modified meaning. Dan. 7:13 tells of a vision in which "one like the Son of Man", who has received authority to reign, comes

down from heaven. It is possible that Daniel triggered an apocalyptic tradition that ends up in the New Testament. The expression came to designate a figure who would be in charge of leading the cosmic struggle against evil. The Gospels use it to refer to Jesus. He would be the Son of Man. Jesus himself uses it, but in the third person (Mt 8.6; 9.20; Mk 2.10,28; Lk 22.69). In the pen of Machado's narrator, the first sense of pointing to the dimension of humanity contained in it is indicated, and the game of questions and uncertainties that ensue is triggered².

INFIDELITY (IDOLATRY AND PROSTITUTION)

Infidelity, associated with idolatry and prostitution, is a central theme of the biblical book. Ezekiel, prophet of exile, worked in Babylon, to where many Jews were deported, on the occasion of the fall of Jerusalem, when the city was invaded in 587-6 B.C.E. The theological interpretation of this historical event attributed the cause of the disaster to the people's infidelity (idolatry): if there was something wrong, it was certainly not God's fault. The capital sin for monotheism is the worship of other gods; this is what happened, as can be seen in this excerpt (Ez 14.2-4):

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, a stumbling block to their iniquity, which they have always before them. Therefore speak to them and say to them: Thus saith the LORD God, Whosoever man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols within his heart, and hath such a stumblingblock for his iniquity, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD, when he cometh, will answer him according to the multitude of his idols.

A theme used by ancient biblical literature to describe the phenomenon was taken from

2. As part of the biblical intertextuality, Jose Dias says, parodying the Gospel of John, in chapter XCIX "The son is the face of the father," "Woman, behold your son! Son, behold your mother!" (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1,032).

civil life: the husband-wife relationship³; marriage came to symbolize the relationship between God and his people⁴. *Ezekiel* recounts, in raw terms, this mismatch between the people's behavior and the care that God had offered them:

So you were adorned with gold and silver; your garment was of fine linen, silk and embroidery; you were nourished with fine flour, honey and oil; you were exceedingly beautiful, and you became a queen. But you trusted in your beauty, and because of your fame you indulged in lewdness, and offered yourself to every one that passed by, that you might be his. You took your dresses and made high places adorned with many colors, in which you played the harlot. Thou hast taken thy jewels of adornment, which I have given thee of My gold and silver, and hast made figures of men, and hast played the harlot with them.⁵ (Ez 16.13-17).

Dom Casmurro shows something similar. Capitu was poor; married to Bento Santiago she was covered with jewels and clothes; in chapter 102 "In Heaven", when they got married and arrived at the "bride's nest", Pedro's first epistle is mentioned⁶. At the end of the chapter, Bento Santiago says that his wife "would always have the finest lace in this world".

THE EXILE

Marital infidelity is the cause of the failure of marriage, at least according to the narrator. And, therefore, there must be punishment. As in *Ezekiel*, the punishment is exile. The sanction is fatal: it can only be Capitu's fault⁷. The prophet *Ezekiel* confirms the theological interpretation of the prophetic tradition for which the exile was the result of deserved punishment because of the unfaithfulness (idolatry) of the people. This can be seen in *Ezekiel* 39:23: "The nations will know that the house of Israel, because of their iniquity, have been carried away into exile, because they acted treacherously against me, and I hid my face from them and delivered them into the hands of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. This sanction occurs, almost identically, in *Dom Casmurro*. Chapter 141 ("The Solution") narrates the exile to which Capitu was subjected. According to Petit (2005, p. 150), "Switzerland, land of Protestantism, is the ideal place to welcome the perjured woman".

THE PHYSICAL SEDUCTION

Another component of this game of presumed infidelity lies in the physical aspect as an element of sensual seduction. In *Ezekiel*,

3. *Ezekiel* (23) speaks of two sister harlots; Oollah the elder (Samaria) and Oolibah the younger (Jerusalem). Interesting is also the case of *Hosea* (chapter 1). He marries a prostitute, who represents the sins of the people, associated with idolatry; hence the mention of infidelity.

4. This was appropriated by Christianity, too; in the New Testament, the relationship between God and the Church is described in terms of marriage; this conjugal alliance, although spiritualized, interfered in the history of the interpretation of the Song of Songs, which comes to be understood in an allegorical way.

5. The poem "Brazilian Tragedy", by Manuel Bandeira, presents similarities with such a love affair. Misael, "a 63-year-old Treasury employee," met Maria Elvira, "a prostitute, with syphilis, dermatitis on her fingers, a pawned wedding ring and her teeth in misery. The boyfriend, then, "installed her in a house in Estácio, paid doctor, dentist, manicure [...] Gave her everything she wanted". Maria Elvira got a good mouth" and always found new boyfriends. Misael, who "did not want a scandal" moved out of the house, living like this for three years, until the tragedy was consummated: "Misael, deprived of senses and intelligence, killed her with six shots" (Bandeira, 1974, p. 108-109). The lover's loving care for the beloved makes her attractive to the eyes of other lovers, gives her competence for the seduction of other lovers.

6. "Let women be subject to their husbands [...] Let not their adornment be the adornment of flowing hair or gold lace, but the man who is hidden in the heart [...] In the same way, you husbands, cohabit with them, treating them with honor, as the weaker vessels, and heirs with you of the grace of life [...]". This passage reinforces female submission, conditioned even to economic inferiority, an important thematic isotopic of the book.

7. From a structural point of view, the role of Bento Santiago is the same as that of God (arising from severe patriarchalism). He sanctions his wife unapologetically, as a sovereign judge, without giving her a chance to defend herself.

the people are accused of allowing themselves to be seduced by the physical characteristics of the Egyptians, in the process of infidelity-prostitution (Ezekiel 16.25-26): "At every corner of the way you have built your altar, and profaned your beauty, and opened your legs to all who pass by, and multiplied your whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the children of Egypt, thy neighbors with great limbs, and hast multiplied thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger." This tone is repeated, even more cruelly, in chapter 23, where something other than the size of the Egyptians' limbs is mentioned (Ez 23.19-21):

Yet she multiplied her lewdness, remembering the days of her youth, when she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. She was inflamed by her lovers, whose members were like the members of an ass, and whose flow is like the flow of horses. Thus, you brought to mind the lust of your youth, when those of Egypt groped your breasts, the breasts of your youth.

In milder terms, there is an insinuation in this sense in Dom Casmurro. For example, Escobar's physical description is interesting. His eyes were "very sweet" (according to José Dias), which was assumed by the narrator, forty years later: "Really, he had an interesting face, the thin and brooding mouth, the curved and slender nose" (chapter 81). A little further on, from chapter 118 onwards, there is evidence of a repressed sexuality in Bentinho that is gradually being freed. Bento feels Escobar's arms, as if they were Sancha's: "This confession costs me, but I cannot suppress it; it was to croak the truth. Not only did I feel them with this idea, but I felt something else, I found them thicker and stronger than mine, and I envied them; In addition, they knew how to swim." Escobar's arms were thicker and stronger; perhaps because they were athletic, as they knew how to swim. It must be noted that the physical appearance was attractive, to the point of impressing Bento himself. It was

more of an argument, for the narrator, which reinforces the conviction of alleged adultery and links with Ezekiel.

THE CHILDHOOD

Childhood is the period of innocence, of abandonment, of God's help, according to the prophet. The mature age is that of forgetting the childhood period. Assailed by forgetfulness, the people violate the covenant sealed with a handshake: "For he despised the oath, breaking the covenant made with a handshake, and practiced all these things; therefore he will not escape" (Ezekiel 17:18). A similar pact was sealed between Capitu and Bentinho, described in chapter LI, "Between light and dusk", with a handshake and all. Purity is in the narrator's feeling (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 985):

We swore again that we would marry each other, and it wasn't just the handshake that sealed the contract, as in the backyard, it was the conjunction of our loving mouths... [...] Oh! my sweet companion from childhood, I was pure, and pure I stayed, and pure I entered St. Joseph's class, looking for the priestly investiture, and before that, the vocation. But the vocation was you, the investiture was you.

Capitu once forgot a childhood song. Petit (2005, p. 155) indicates that even this can be read in Ezekiel. The episode is narrated in chapter 110, "Rasgos da infantil", in which Bento asks Capitu to play the tune of childhood on the piano; she says she couldn't remember, either the song or the words. The words are narrated in chapter XVIII, "A plan" (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 950): "Cry, girl, cry / Cry, because you don't have / Vintém".

Capitu's forgetfulness is symptomatic, at least according to the narrator's intentions; with this, he insinuates that marriage has been a springboard for the much-desired social ascension. The contrast between her poor childhood and her marriage to a rich man

would be unfavorable for Capitu. Hence the oblivion of poor childhood.

THE NEW HOUSE AND THE NEW TEMPLE

The new house, built by Bento Santiago, may be related to the new temple of the biblical book, which is purified, in the end, with the return to it of the glory of God. The prophet gives indications that the pattern was to be measured; reproduction had to be accompanied by a new disposition of fidelity:

Thou therefore, son of man, show the house of Israel this temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and measure the model [...] let them know the plan of this house and its arrangement, its exits, its entrances and all its forms; all its statutes, all its provisions and all its laws; write this in their presence so that they may observe all their institutions and all their statutes and observe them. (Ez 43.10-11).

The model is not just spatial, but spiritual. In any case, this new temple is linked to the reproduction of the house promoted by Bentinho. The paintings that were in Bento's house were reproduced. There were paintings on the temple wall, also linked to idolatry: "I went in and saw; behold, every form of creeping thing, and of abominable beast, and of all the idols of the house of Israel, painted on the wall all around. Seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel [...] they were standing before the paintings, each with his censor in his hand" (Ezekiel 8:7-12). It must be noted that, in the new house, after Capitu's exile, it is Bento Santiago who desecrates it, from a religious point of view, since it is there that he receives women.

The paintings reproduced in the house of Bento Santiago are linked to Roman history, marked by passionate and bloody struggles for the conquest of power. There are four heroes: Caesar, Augustus, Nero and Massinissa. Caesar was a Roman general, statesman and

dictator (101-44 BC). He wrote commentary on the Gallic War; he had temples, altars and effigy minted on coin. His death episode is well known, as it was the result of betrayal, in which two friends teamed up to kill him. Dom Casmurro also feels victimized by the betrayal of two friends, as he confessed in the last chapter: "my first friend and my greatest friend, both so tender and so dear too [...]" (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1072).

Augusto, indicative of a sacred power, it was a title bestowed by the Roman Senate on Octavius, Caesar's grandnephew; after eliminating rivals Marco Antonio and Lepidus, with whom he formed a triumvirate, he managed to establish a period of relative peace and prosperity, with the cultivation of culture and the arts, especially literature and architecture. Bento Santiago, in addition to having a new house built, with figures in the classic style, has this similarity. According to Costa (1995, p. 20), "Augusto, who longed for a son to succeed him, did not get it and suffered a lot trying to find someone; Dom Casmurro who had a son, rejected him, pushed him away and wished for his death, even with Escobar dead."

Nero was orphaned at a very early age like Bentinho. He went down in history as a murderer and a suicide, instincts that assaulted the Machadian narrator.

The last figure is from Massinissa. He was king of eastern Numidia, an ally of Carthage in the wars against Rome. In the Second Punic War, Massinissa allied with the Romans, having asked for the hand of Sofonisba, daughter of a Carthaginian general. After the war, Carthage lost its maritime power and the Numidian kingdom was given to Massinissa. The moves of politics interfere in a love story, with a tragic ending. He, seeing that he could not be with his beloved, induces her to commit suicide. She voluntarily drank the poison he had sent her.

Costa (1995, p. 23) evaluates that the evocation of these four characters causes a relationship of parodic tension with the historical discourse: “The unstable, serious-comic duality of his moral and emotional profile, shakes, questions and calls into question an entire tradition of heroic values”. This interdiscursive relationship with History indicates a particular way of apprehending tradition in general, and can be expanded to include other sources, as Costa (1995, p. 40) points out in these considerations:

[...]Machado de Assis mimics, in a desacralizing way, a whole reference of Western culture, also reaching literature, especially with Shakespeare’s Othello. The appropriation of these discourses is not made with the intention of a verisimilitude that makes them recognizable by simple reduplication, but, on the contrary, the combination and transformations that these original texts undergo to that of such a deforming and aesthetic content that is totally new, singular and strange. to the “truths” of the intertexts concentrated in it. A parodic crossing of a series of external references, the narrator of the work is a complex sum of names and multiple heterogeneous marks that stand out in the actions of each of the stages of his life.

THE CITY OF TIRO

The prosperous maritime city of Tiro suggests thematic links with Escobar, because of the following elements: sea, commerce, beauty and splendor. From Ezekiel chapters 26 to 28 there are a series of prophecies against Tiro and its king. In 27:32, it is said that Tiro would be reduced to silence in the midst of the sea: “They will lift up lamentations over you in their mourning, they will lament over you, saying, ‘Who has been like Tiro, like her who is reduced to silence in the midst of the sea?’ The fall is associated with success unaccompanied by faithfulness to God: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you

were created until iniquity was found in you. In the multiplication of your trade, your inner self was filled with violence, and you sinned [...]” (28:15-16). Escobar was handsome, his vocation and profession was commerce, and he loved the sea. It was at sea that he died, defying danger. In chapter 118, “Sancha’s Hand”, everything comes to the mind when the narrator comes across the word “invincible”. The following dialogue takes place:

- The sea is challenging tomorrow, said Escobar’s voice next to me.
- Will you go into the sea tomorrow?
- I’ve been getting into bigger seas, much bigger seas. You can’t imagine what a good sea is at wild time. You have to swim well, like me, and have these lungs, he said, beating his chest, and these arms; feel.

The passage from Ez 28:15, quoted above, is related to Tyre. In Dom Casmurro, in chapter 146, it is taken up again, but with reference to the boy. In an ironic tone, the passage serves as inspiration for the composition of the epitaph of Ezekiel, the son, who died in the vicinity of Jerusalem:

Eleven months later, Ezekiel died of typhoid fever, and was buried near Jerusalem, where his two friends from the university raised him a tomb with this inscription, taken from the prophet Ezekiel, in Greek: “You were perfect in your ways. They sent me both the Greek and Latin texts, the drawing of the grave, the bill of costs and the rest of the money he was carrying; I would pay three times as much not to see him again. (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1071).

The chapter omits, at this point, the sequence “since the day you were created” from the biblical passage, for understandable reasons.

JEALOUSY

There is yet another link between Dom Casmurro and Ezekiel: jealousy, the main

passionate motivation of the novel's narrator. In Ezekiel, it is said that divine jealousy triggers the corresponding sanction⁸. God is jealous of other gods, his rivals, as a husband (Bento Santiago) is of supposed rivals (Escobar). Ezekiel (8.3) confirms this statement: "[...] the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me to Jerusalem in visions of God, to the entrance of the gate of the inner court, which looks toward the north, where the image of jealousy was placed, which causes God to be jealous." The consequences of this jealousy are, at first, punishment; later, however, it would be appeased, according to God's own promise: "So I will satisfy my fury in you, my jealousy will depart from you, I will quieten down and never be angry". (Ez 16.42).

THE GRAVE OPENS

Ezekiel chapter 37 contains a prophecy about a valley of dry bones. Verse 12 says, "Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the LORD God, 'Behold, I will open the your grave, and I will bring you out of it, O my people, and bring you into the land of Israel.'" Echoes of this are to be found in chapter 132, "The debauchery and the coloring". Bento Santiago sees in the renegade son a parodic revival of his friend: "Escobar would come this way, from the seminary and the Flamengo to sit with me at table, to receive me on the stairs, to kiss me in the office in the morning, or to ask me at night for the usual blessing" (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1.060).

OTHER BIBLICAL MOTIVATIONS IN *DOM CASMURRO*

It is possible to recognize other motivations, not directly related to the prophet: the promise to send the son to the seminary and the freedom from sacrifice. Dona Glória, after having lost her first child, made a promise: if

she had another child, she would send him to the seminary, consecrating him to God. This dramatic element is not unknown to biblical literature. We can cite the case of Ana, Samuel's mother. Barren, she asks for a son, promising to return him to God: "And she made a vow, saying, 'Lord of hosts, if you will look kindly on the affliction of your maidservant [...] and give her a male child, to the Lord will you I will give it for all the days of your life.'" (1 Samuel 1:11). Ana was taken care of and had a son whom she named Samuel.

Chapter 9, central to the economy of narrative, has, at the end, subtle allusions. Regarding the division of the copyrights of the opera da vida, which the poet and the musician punctually receive, there is injustice or inadequate proportion. To justify it, a biblical passage serves as support: "Many are called, few are chosen. God receives in gold, Satan in paper." In the continuation of Bento's dialogue with the Italian tenor, music is used to complete the explanation of the theory of opera: "Everything is music, my friend. In the beginning was to do and from do to re, etc. This cup (and filled it again), this cup is a brief refrain. Can't you hear? Neither the stick nor the stone is hear, but everything fits in the same opera [...]" The sequence "In the beginning was to do and from do to re, etc" is modeled on the beginning of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the word [...] and the word was made flesh". The cup also has great biblical density, due to the passion narrative, in which Jesus asks the Father to remove the cup from death (Mt 26:3; Mk 14:36). This is the tone with which the chapter ends.

This next passage is in the mouth of Father Cabral, in another chapter, chapter XVI, "The Interim Administrator": "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord: He wounds and heals. In Jó (5:17-18), we have: "Blessed is the

8. The passion of jealousy, attributed to God, is a peculiar way of describing with human attributes the divinity, a phenomenon called anthropomorphism. Theological developments aside, the relationship that exists between God's jealousy and that of Benedict, in combination with the other points indicated, is of interest.

man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Lord. For he wounds, and heals; he strikes, and his hands will heal.” This is Eliphaz’ advice to Jó. The passage functions, both in the Bible and in the novel, as encouragement to overcome an unpleasant situation. Jó was suffering because he was apparently abandoned by God. Padua, Capitu’s father, because he had lost his position as acting administrator and, therefore, wanted to die. The effect of the advice, at least in the novel, is twofold. On the one hand, it calls for conformity with the facts, against which nothing can be done; on the other hand, it is a call for reordering, the order of things, as if the post of administrator, even in an interim capacity, were incompatible with Padua’s social situation. In this case, the biblical text sanctions the prevailing order, used even by the religious class for this purpose, since it is in the mouth of a priest. The quotation has a denser value, from a structural point of view: it is a narrative knot that anticipates Capitu’s punishment. But the cure is missing: or is the punishment the cure itself? The next chapter, “The Worms,” is intriguing because of its title. It is an expansion of the ideas of punishment and healing, now with reference to Achilles, who also wounded and healed. The experience would be repeated in Benedict’s life, in reverse form: he would be wounded; he would prescribe the cure.

An interesting mention of Genesis occurs at the end of chapter 18, “A Plan”, longer than the average length of the others. It recounts Capitu’s furious reaction to Dona Glória’s plans, the plans to prevent Bentinho from going to the seminary, the assessment of the possibility of enlisting the help of José Dias; in short, the adolescent ruses hyperbolized by a disillusioned and stubborn man. The climax is the passage from Genesis, more precisely, the beginning: “I tell these details so

that the morning of my friend may be better understood; then will come the evening, and from morning and evening will become the first day, as in Genesis, where seven were made in succession” (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 952). The quoted biblical passage is cunningly adapted to the narrator’s intentions. Morning and afternoon must not only be understood as temporal references, but also as indices of a narrative progression: morning is followed by afternoon. This suggests that Capitu’s morning would project an afternoon necessarily framed in the narrated throws, which characterize the girl’s adolescence: “As you see, Capitu, at fourteen, already had daring ideas, much less than others that came after her; but they were only daring in themselves, in practice they were skillful, sinuous, deaf, and achieved the proposed end, not by leaps, but by jumps” (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 951). Adolescent ideas were less daring than those of maturity, which is the afternoon of existence. And this afternoon can only be a progressive amplification of the corresponding morning. That is why in the end the narrator would say that the fruit was inside the peel. Consider also the number seven, representing perfection; what she had started would have an end: the teenage warps would culminate in adultery.

Chapter 133, entitled “An Idea,” narrates events that occur on a Friday: “Friday being Friday, I believe, was by chance, but it may also have been purpose; I was brought up in the terror of that day; I heard ballads sung at home, coming from the country and the old metropolis, in which Friday was the day of omen” (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1061). In this chapter, in an elusive way, “death” is mentioned, by chance or on purpose. The unfolding of the chapter would be the impulse for suicide or homicide not committed, because Bento Santiago, like the young Bentinho, had ideas without legs and arms⁹.

9. It has already been noted that both the death of Brás Cubas and that of Jesus occurred on a Friday (ill-fated day).

In Chapter 36, “Ideas without Legs and Idea without Arms,” there are two quotes from the Song of Songs, in the same paragraph. Casmurro describes a frustrated intention to hug and kiss his girlfriend. The biblical book is referred to as a seduction manual, with indications, even, on how to use the lips and hands (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 971):

It was an occasion to grab her, pull her and kiss her... Idea alone! idea without arms! Mine were fallen and dead. I knew nothing of Scripture. If I did, it is likely that the spirit of Satan would make me give the mystical language of the Canticle a direct and natural meaning. Then I would obey the first verse, “Apply his lips, giving me the kiss of his mouth.” And for what concerns the arms, which he had inert, it would be enough to comply with verse 6 of chapter II: “His left hand is already under my head, and his right hand will embrace me later”. There you see the chronology of the gestures. All I had to do was execute it; but even if I knew the text, Capitu’s attitudes were now so withdrawn that I don’t know if I wouldn’t keep still.

Verses 1.2 and 2-6 cited in this excerpt from the Canticle, which appears again in chapter CI, “Heaven” (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1.034):

In the end, it could be that everything was a dream, nothing more natural to an ex-seminarian than to hear Latin and Scripture everywhere. The truth is that Capitu, who knew neither Scripture nor Latin, memorized some words, such as these, for example: “I sat down in the shadow of the one I had so longed for. As for Saint Peter’s, she told me the next day that she was all for everything, that I was the only income and the only ornament she would ever put on herself. To which I replied that my wife would always have the finest lace in the world.

It is now Ct 2.3, which serves to reinforce

not only the fulfillment of Capitu’s desire, but also, mainly, the social superiority of her husband and the strength of the patriarchal world, because of the complement of Peter’s First Epistle, quoted immediately before. Heaven’s gates were now the antechamber of conjugal enjoyment (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1034)¹⁰:

St. Peter, who has the keys of heaven, opened his doors for us, let us in, and after touching us with his staff, he recited some verses from his first epistle: “Wives, be subject to your husbands. Let not their adornment be the bristling of the hair or the golden lace, but the man who is hidden in the heart... In the same way, you husbands, dwell with them, treating them with honor, as with vases. weakest, and heirs with you of the grace of life.”

Although 1Pe 3.1 recommends submission and simplicity to women, the end of the Machadian chapter indicates that Capitu would always be adorned with the most beautiful and richest jewels, in reinforcement of submission. After all, who sustains commands.

The release of Bentinho’s commitment to the seminar is compared to the famous episode of Abraham’s sacrifice (Genesis 22), in chapter 80. The release from sacrifice is the solution presented by Escobar: choosing a substitute. At the crucial moment when Abraham would consummate the sacrifice of his son Isaac, God shows a ram, which would replace the boy. For the New Testament, especially for Paul, this evidences the patriarch’s faith and obedience.¹¹ *Dom Casmurro*, when applying the substitution resource, it preserves the victim with the advantage of not breaking the vow. Like Isaac, Benedict was an only child. Like Abraham, Dona Glória showed that she

10. The sequel to the chapter says that the Songs came: “Afterwards, we visited a part of that infinite place. Rest assured that I will not make any description, nor does the human language have suitable forms for such”. It seems that the Song of Songs is used by Machadian narrators as a metaphor for indicating sexual conjunction. In the quoted passage, there may be an allusion to 1 Corinthians 13, by the use of this phrase “not even the human language has suitable forms for this”. Chapter CI “In the sky” says that it was raining on the day of Bentinho’s wedding. It also rained at the funeral of Brás Cubas.

11. According to Romans 4 and Hebrews 11.8-19

feared God and did not spare her only son. The angel was Capitu. Biblical drama is revived by the Santiago family:

Like Abraham, my mother took her son to the Mount of Vision, and the wood for the burnt offering, the fire, and the knife. And she bound Isaac upon the bundle of wood, took up the cleaver, and lifted him aloft. At the moment of making him fall, he hears the voice of the angel who commands him from the Lord: "Do not harm your son; I knew that you fear God." Such would be my mother's secret hope.

Capitu was naturally the angel of Scripture. The truth is, my mother couldn't have her away from her now. [...] (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1015).

The Machadian narrator adds the theme of jealousy to that of wisdom, in the final chapter of the book, with reference to the book *Ecclesiastico*, by Jesus Ben Sirac. The narrator, avowedly jealous, evokes this book, in a passage that alludes to jealousy: "Do not be jealous of your wife, so that she does not try to deceive you with the malice she learns from you'. But I believe not, and you will agree with me; if you remember Capitu Menina well, you will recognize that one was inside the other, like the fruit inside the shell" (Assis, 2008, vol. 1, p. 1.072). The final argument, however, denies that jealousy is the cause of the tragedy; the narration ends with the argument built throughout the book: "if you remember Capitu Menina well, you will recognize that one was inside the other, like the fruit inside the shell". "But I don't think so" is an expression that calls into question the aforementioned biblical precept, because it indicates the husband's responsibility; the Machadian narrator shifts the responsibility of the tragedy to the woman, hence the need to write the book.

At the end of the book, the archaeologist son travels through biblical lands (Greece, Egypt, Jerusalem), experiencing his diaspora and dies there¹². The father wants leprosy on his son. Even this is biblically motivated, for leprosy is a disease that features fairly prominently in biblical writings.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The links pointed out between Dom Casmurro and Ezekiel are interesting and significant, as well as other biblical passages, whose main themes were captured by Machado and adapted to the narrative economy of the novel. The Bible functions, on an ideological level, as a support for the strength that the discourse of power has (Bento was a bachelor, a former seminarian, a rich landowner); his word was the truth. But in Machado, the result is a subversion of the biblical text; thus, the social order that uses it is also subverted.

The occurrences of the use of the Bible are representative of the prestige that the source had for the Brazilian writer. They figure very early in Machado's literary life and are present in all the genres highlighted here. In some cases, the Bible provides elements that form the structural frame of the novel.

The Bible was, for Machado, a privileged intertextual source, from which there were significant incorporations, made freely, without commitment to the Catholic theological-doctrinal tradition or to any other religious confession. The sensation remains that, at least in the Western world, a reasonable reading of literature does not do without a reasonable knowledge of the Bible.

12. The occupation is suggestive, mainly due to its etymological value; the old things, the first things, the beginning. And in the beginning is death, experienced in the center of the world, in the holy lands of Scripture.

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