

***Cuentos de la selva* of Horacio Quiroga: a Regionalism Adapted for Children Readers**

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Abstract

*This article, through comparison and textual analysis methodologies, tries to show that the regionalist style which *Cuentos de la selva* develops is not the traditional regionalism, but is conditioned by the fact that it is addressed to a child reader. Therefore, it shows different characteristics compared to other regionalist works of its time, showing a very interesting balance between verisimilitude and fiction.*

Key Words: Horacio Quiroga, *Cuentos de la selva*, regionalism, children's literature

1. Introduction

Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937) is, as we know, an important Uruguayan short story writer and undoubtedly one of the first cultivators of the Latin American regionalist narrative. He exerted great influence on later writers, such as Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar and Jorge Luis Borges, etc. *Cuentos de la selva* is one of his most important works, which is composed of eight short stories in which the protagonists are animals. According to Fraser-Molina, "Quiroga himself subtitled this collection "For children", showing, for the first time in the literature of the la Plata river, an awareness of the existence of a child audience with their own characteristics, interests and needs" (Fraser-Molina, 1993, p.6)¹.

By analyzing the existing bibliography of this author, we can draw the conclusion that the studies on this work mainly focus on its literary genre and structure. So far, there is still no systematic interpretation of his particular use of regionalism.

As this work is intended for children, Quiroga incorporated many elements of children's literature in his production and those changes are evidenced in the language, in the description of landscape, in the characters and in how the stories are developed. In this way, it is revealed how Quiroga combines marvelous characterization with a realistic style, which identifies *Cuentos de la selva* as a particular one within the framework of the regionalist narrative.

2. The Latin American regionalism

At the end of the nineteenth century, faced with the impact of European modernizing culture, a group of Latin American writers with an awakened national conscience began to search for cultural identity elements. They started to use local materials to construct their narrative texts, and, in this way, to seek cultural independence and to show their unique social and geographical elements. Thus, they formed a distinctive regionalist style, which later would be an important branch of Latin American literature.

In this article I will only take into account the characteristics of the so-called "traditional regionalism"². As defined by Videla de Rivero, "regional literature is [...] that which arises in a certain geographical, historical or folkloric region and which reflects the reality in a certain human way" (Videla de Rivero, 1984, p.18). The regionalist movement is orientated more towards the social and specific problems of the Spanish-American sphere, predominantly rural environments in a natural setting. According to Zapata Ruiz, "the characterizations of the environments and the panoramas, the landscape details account for a given environment, allowing us to subtract existing geographical and topographic features in certain regions" (Zapata Ruiz, 2007, p.105).

Besides the landscape, it also pays attention to showing the customs of the regions of the continent, using the typical language of the area. Friedlhelm Schmidt-Welle summarized the characteristics of regionalist literature as follows:

¹ All the quotes are originally in Spanish and for this article I have them translated into English.

² There are many definitions of regionalism because this trend spans a long period of time. For this article I will limit myself to talking about the first stage of regionalism, that is, from its emergence until the first three decades of the twentieth century. It is called "traditional regionalism".

[...] the description of agrarian regions and life in the countryside, the representation of archetypal figures, an influence of positivist or even racist ideas, the desire to represent the autochthonous, and the use of traditional stylistic resources of realism and naturalism. (Schmidt-Welle, 2012, p.119-120)

Specifically, regarding the short story, unlike the Americanists of the Romantic period, the regionalists focus their objective on the description of places rather than on individuals. The language, the landscape, the custom of the characters become an integral part of the plot, as the regionalist writer is interested in them. The characters in their works are usually victims of the continent's brutal, inhospitable and grandiose nature. The writers are fluent in the dialect and have a deep understanding of the regionalist vocabulary. The dialogues are characterized by fidelity to local speech.

Horacio Quiroga is one of the most highly regarded representatives of the regionalist style. He incorporated the autochthonous into these short stories and his tendency towards landscape description focuses primarily on the jungle. As José Miguel Oviedo states:

Quiroga is the father of regionalism, he is the first to find in the vast open and exotic spaces that still had to be conquered in America a resonance that transcends what was, in principle, regional (or local); that is, he had an intuition of the great American drama as something other than the European, whose nature had already been domesticated throughout the centuries. (Oviedo, 2001,p. 226)

3. The regionalism presented in *Cuentos de la selva*: adaptation to a child receptor

The regionalism which is presented in *Cuentos de la selva* is very special: it has similarities to the traditional style but there are also many elements that differ from the usual characteristics of this trend. Generally, regionalist writers seek to describe the local landscape and customs according to their real-life experience, and therefore their works are evidently realistic. However, in this short story collection, we find the presence of the marvelous. As Ana Alcolea affirms: "Quiroga gives voice to man, animals, nature itself, and thus breaks with the usual realistic perspective, from which everything is seen through human eyes." (Alcolea, 2008, p.26).

In order to explain the uniqueness of this work, it is of vital importance to point out the role of the reader. According to Molina and Burlot, "regarding literary structure, every text is a specific social situation, in which its semiotic condition requires the Exchange of intersubjective rules known to both the author-sender and the reader-receiver" (Molina & Burlot, 2018, p.9). That is, just at the moment of starting a new work, the writer must keep in mind his hypothetical reader because he/she is going to play a decisive role in many aspects of the narrative.

Specifically, referring to Quiroga, we can see, for example, when the Uruguayan includes features typical of the jungle, he always makes a great effort to explain them to the reader, since he takes it for granted that they are not familiar with this space. He tries to bring the reality of the jungle closer to those who aren't included in it. This is also an important feature of regionalist literature. For example, at the beginning of "The Passage of the Yabebiri River"³, Quiroga explains to the readers the name of this river: "en el río de Yabebirí, que está en Misiones, hay muchas rayas, porque 'Yabebirí' quiere decir precisamente 'Río-de-las-rayas'" (Quiroga, 1954,p.65).

Moreover, as has been commented, the readers are special because the stories are intended for children. According to Dora Pastoriza de Echebarne, "when analyzing the children's story, there are three fundamental conditions that are: adaptation to age, command of the language and the property of the plot" (Pastoriza de Echebarne, 1962,p.30). For this reason, both language and argument must go together in order to reach an optimal reception from this type of reader.

Moreover, according to the theory of Bruno Bettelheim pointed out in *Psychoanalysis of fairy tales* (1975), the marvelous is very important for the reception of child readers:

As a psychoanalyst, Bettelheim comments that the lack of "magic" or fantasy and that premature exposure to reality can cause problems for a child, which will be prohibited in his adolescence, when he has the need to look for substitutes for that necessary escape from reality. (Lurie, 1990, p.39-40)

Therefore, instead of trying to imitate a real word, *Cuentos de la selva* uses marvelous elements and creates a fictional world of its own. Meanwhile, some of the characteristics of regionalism still remain and in this way, he achieves a narrative with a balance between reality and fiction.

³All the titles in English are cited from Quiroga, Horacio (2018). *Jungle Tales: A New Translation of "Cuentos de la selva"* (J. Knebel, Trans.). Independently Published (1918).

Having made these observations, hereunder I am going to explain some of the elements that determine this special style.

3. Features of the discourse of *Cuentos de la selva*

4.1 Use of the language

The language has always been an important factor in the independence of Latin American literature, distinguishing it from the rest of the world's fiction. In the "literature of transculturation" defined by Ángel Rama, the language, as the carrier of culture, is the first element to bear witness to "transculturation".

According to Ángel Rama, "in the case of writers from regionalism, placed in a transculturation moment, the lexicon, prosody and morphosyntax of the regional language, appeared as the favorite field to prolong the concepts of originality and representativeness" (Rama, 1982, p.50). Special examples of this statement can be discovered in *Cuentos de la selva*.

In this sense, the critic Ana Alcolea summarizes four characteristics of the language of this book:

- 1) The use of vulgarism: the "coatis" and not "coatis".
- 2) The construction of consciously long sentences, which seek to reflect the oral language over the written one, and in which subordination and coordination are introduced.
- 3) The abundance of polysyndeton, also as a sought-after feature of orality.
- 4) Ellipsis that causes syntactic coherence problems. (Alcolea, 2008, p.28)

Point one has also been indicated by the critic Fraser-Molina, stating that "another indication of 'criollismo' is the incorrect use of the plural 'coatis' and not 'coaties'. The townspeople and countrymen pluralize all nouns ending in vowels (accented or not) adding only 's'" (Fraser-Molina, 1993, p. 150). The same happens with the word "Surubi"⁴: "hay surubís que tienen hasta dos metros de largo" (Quiroga, 1954, p.40). ("The War of the Alligators")

Point two and point three deal with latent orality in *Cuentos de la selva*. The polysyndeton of "y (and)", "ni (nor)" and "pero (but)" are present in oral Spanish. It can be exemplified by this fragment of "The War of the Alligators": "no va a quedar ni uno solo vivo- ni grandes, ni chicos, ni gordos, ni flacos, ni jóvenes ni viejos- como ese viejísimo que veo allí, y que no tiene sino dos dientes en los costados de la boca" (Quiroga, 1954, p.42).

It should be noted that in almost all the short stories, animals are able to speak just like men. The language that Quiroga designed for them is not arbitrary but corresponds to their real character. In his works, the speech of animals is characterized by using short sentences, approaching everyday reality. A prominent example is the dialogue presented in "The Plucked Parrot", in which the parrot speaks in a very disorderly way:

-Buen día, tigre! -le dijo- ¡La pata, Pedrito!
 Y el tigre, con esa voz terriblemente ronca que tiene, le respondió:
 -¡Bu-en dí-a!
 -¡Buen día, tigre! -repetió el loro-. ¡Rica, papa!...; ¡rica, papa!...¡rica, papa!... (Quiroga, 1954, p.27)

From this quote, it can be seen that the speech of the parrot and the tiger has an obviously oral character, with very short sentences and without chaining. This is an important feature of *Cuentos de la selva*.

Point four is exemplified by Alcolea with the following example: "...y cuando hacía mal tiempo construía en cinco minutos una ramada con hojas de palmera, y allí pasaba sentado y fumando, muy contento en medio del bosque" (Quiroga, 1954, p.11). Here the direct object of the verb "pass" has been omitted.

In addition to these four characteristics, it is also possible to refer to others. In this collection of short stories you can see the particular use of the Spanish of the region. In some countries like Argentina and Uruguay, the second person pronoun "vos" instead of "tú", and a the verb forms are also different from those used in Spain. This specific use of the Spanish of the Río de la Plata is, for example, presented in the dialogue between the parrot and the tiger in "The Plucked Parrot": "-¡Tomá!-rugió el tigre-. Andá a tomar té con leche..." (Quiroga, 1954, p.28)

Furthermore, elements of indigenous language are incorporated in *Cuentos de la selva*. The combination with rural dialects is especially appreciated to achieve the purpose of creating a realistic atmosphere.

⁴ We capitalize this word as it appears in the original text because it is the proper name of the character, besides being the species of animal to which it belongs.

At the lexicological level, the words that come from Guaraní are mainly the names of local animals such as “tatú” (various species of armadillos), “Surubí”, “yarára” (poisonous snake), “tucán”, “yacaré” y “coati”. Other words like “uras”, “yuyo”, “choclo” and “charca” are derived from Quechua.

At the semantic level, Quiroga included Guaraní on the basis of Spanish. For example, in “The Passage of the Yabebiri River” Quiroga explains the language of stingrays in parentheses: “ellas dijeron “ni nunca” porque así lo dicen los que hablan guaraní, como en Misiones” (Quiroga, 1954,p.68). This fusion between different languages is favorable for the visualization of indigenous culture and the preservation of local characteristics.

Likewise, many oral expressions are used, such as “dicho y hecho (said and done, “The Passage of the Yabebiri River””, “sin ton ni son (without reason, “The Plucked Parrot””, “en balde (in vain)”, “qué hay (what happened, “The War of the Alligators”)” and “la boca se le hizo agua (his mouth watered, “The Blind Fawn”)”. In the dialogues there are also many examples of onomatopoeia; for instance the “¡Tan-tan!” that imitates the sound when the door is knocked, the “chas-chas” of the sound that the steam wheel makes and the “trac” of the blow that the coaticito receives.

-¡Tan-tan! -pegaron con las patas.

-¿Quién es? -respondió el almacenero.

-Somos los flamencos. ¿Tiene medias coloradas, blancas y negras?

-No, no hay- contestó el almacenero-. ¿Están locos? En ninguna parte van a encontrar medias así. (Quiroga, 1954,p.20)

Besides being linguistic resources, the use of this onomatopoeia (and its reiterations) is also closely related to children’s literature. The phonetic transcriptions vividly present to readers the environment where the stories take place and thus they can achieve a better understanding of them.

According to the theory of Dora Pastoriza de Echebarne, a language related to everyday life should be used in order to achieve a better understanding. Likewise, certain stylistic resources such as comparison, repetition and the diminutive are applied to make the texts more interesting and amplify the expression of affectivity. (Pastoriza de Etchebarne, 1962, p.30)

By analyzing the *Cuentos de la selva*, evidence of these resources can be found. First of all, the comparisons stand out: fish as big as a house are also killed by dynamite (Quiroga, 1954, p.65); the tiger’s hide is “itself so large as to serve as a carpet for a room” (12); the stingrays are “rushing like an arrow to shore” (67). The diminutive is present in almost all the short stories and its use is linked semantically to the animals and plants of the region, such as “el ratoncito Pérez”, “los yuyitos” (“The Giant Tortoise”), “el coaticito” (“The Story of Two Coati Pups and Two Man Pups”), “los bichitos” (“The Flamingo’s Stockings”) and “el yacarecito” (“The War of the Alligators”).

4.1 The landscape

In *Cuentos de la selva*, the author focus more on animals than on the landscape. In most of the short stories, the jungle environment is used to contextualize the story but the author doesn’t pay enough attention to the detailed description of the landscape. This aspect presents to us an evident difference in comparison with the traditional regionalist works. As is noted on previous pages, detailed landscape descriptions are always found in such narratives. However, in *Cuentos de la selva* Quiroga dedicates very few words to nature. But this doesn’t detract from the credibility of these stories, nor does it diminish the presence of the autochthonous.

However, in some cases, you can also find some phrases that use the stylistic resource of the metaphor for nature. As is exemplified as follows: “y volaba lejos, hasta que vio debajo de él, muy abajo, el río Paraná, que parecía una lejana y ancha cinta blanca” (Quiroga, 1954,p.26).

In addition to the metaphor, the author also uses both the poetic language and personifications in the description of nature:

“El monte bramó de nuevo”.

“El monte entero tembló con un sordo rugido” (Quiroga, 1954,p.69,72).

As for the trees, as the most basic element of the jungle environment, the writer doesn’t use them explicitly on too many occasions. He uses the flora elements as a complete scene, the same with the environment in which Quiroga lived. But without showing it excessively, the characteristics of the South American jungle are appreciated. In “The War of the Alligators”, Quiroga writes the following: “enseguida se pusieron a hacer el dique. Fueron todos al bosque y echaron abajo más de diez mil árboles, sobre todo lapachos y quebrachos, porque tienen la madera más dura” (Quiroga,

1954,p.35). In this quote, “lapachos” and “quebrachos” are trees native only to Latin America.

Likewise, this work incorporates many real locations, such as the aforementioned Yabebirí river, the jungle of Misiones, the Paraná river and Paraguay. When the narrator says it’s far away, he compares with Misiones, in order to achieve a better understanding for the readers: : “se fue a vivir al monte, lejos, más lejos que Misiones todavía. Hacía allí mucho calor y eso le hacía bien” (Quiroga, 1954,p.11).

Moreover, in “The Giant Tortoise”, there are constant references to Buenos Aires, and Quiroga uses it to represent human civilization: “estoy solo en el bosque, la fiebre va a volver de nuevo, y voy a morir aquí, porque solamente en Buenos Aires hay remedios para curarme. Pero nunca podré ir, y voy a morir aquí” (Quiroga, 1954,p.14).

4.1 Characters

In *Cuentos de la selva* there are two types of characters: animals and men. The usual tendency for the personification of animals, which maintain human behavior, should be noted. As pointed out by Zapata Ruiz, “we find in the stories marvelous animals that intervene among men, and animals that in some aspects are like men: they speak, they are cunning, tender, supportive” (Zapata Ruiz, 2007,p.75).

Animals are also important elements to give the local color to *Cuentos de la selva*. In addition to common jungle animals such as the tiger, the snake, the deer, the turtle and the bee, Quiroga mentions five specific animals of the area: the Surubí (a type of fresh water fish native to South America), the stingray (a type of fish), the anteater, the coati (American plantigrade mammalian animal) and the alligator (a kind of crocodile).

Additionally, these animals, among which flamingos are also added, who is the protagonists in the story. The mention of these local animals contains elements typical of Latin American regions and reflects that the writer uses the materials around him for his literary creation.

Regarding this point, it would be interesting to note that two stories changed their titles, “La guerra de los yacarés” preliminarily titled “Los cocodrilos y la guerra”, and “La gama ciega”, whose first version is called “La girafa ciega”. From “cocodrilos” to “yacarés”, from “jirafa” to “gama”, Quiroga changed the protagonists of his short stories for autochthonous animals of the region.

Besides this communicative capacity, the animals also experience human feelings, for example, the gratitude that the protagonists show after receiving help from another person and the envy that the flamingos feel when they see the beautiful coral gauze that the vipers wear.

Animals also assume human cultural traits or costumes, such as the afternoon tea in “The Plucked Parrot”:

A las cuatro o cinco de la tarde, que era la hora en que tomaban el té en la casa, el loro entraba también en el comedor, y se subía con el pico y las patas por el mantel, a comer pan mojado en leche. Tenía locura por el té con leche. (Quiroga, 1954,p. 15-16)

In addition, in “The flamingo’s stockings”, Quiroga transfers the party to the animals of the jungle, describing with great vividness this fantasy cultural event. He describes the way in which the animals dress, which are suitably appareled to attend the ball.

Los yacarés, para adornarse bien, se habían puesto en el pescuezo un collar de bananas, y fumaban cigarros paraguayos. Los sapos se habían pegado escamas de pescado en todo el cuerpo [...] Las ranas se habían perfumado todo el cuerpo, y caminaban en dos pies. Además, cada una llevaba colgando como un farolito, una luciérnaga que se balanceaba. (Quiroga, 1954,p.19)

The practice of dancing as a community experience can also be highlighted in the same story: “bailen toda la noche, bailen sin parar un momento, bailen de costado, de pico, de cabeza, como ustedes quieran”(Quiroga, 1954, p.22). Head rocking, kicking, rotations, push-ups or other movements involve various parts of the body, reflecting a free and unbridled power.

With respect to the men, generally, it should be noted that none of their names appear in the stories. They are sometimes called “the man”, sometimes by their profession, such as “the hunter”, “the storekeeper” or “the officer”.

After analyzing the characters of humans, they can be classified into the following four types:

1. The men who destroy or attack nature: the man who kills fish in “The Passage of the Yabebiri River”; the officer who invades the habitat in “The War of the Alligators”.
2. Men as a “civilizing” vehicle for animals. We find cases of the domestication of animals: “The Plucked Parrot”,

“The Story of Two Coati Pups and Two Man Pups”.

3. Men who live in harmony with animals: “The Giant Tortoise”, “The Blind Fawn”, “The Passage of the Yabebiri River”, and “The War of the Alligators”
4. Stories in which men do not appear or appear as someone without significant function: “The flamingo’s stockings”⁵ and “The lazy bee”.

It can be affirmed that none of these men play the main role in the short stories but rather act as secondary characters to promote the development of the story.

In addition to this, these characters who belong to the human species have certain customs, which in the opinion of the critic Léa de Sousa, are evidences of his regionalist style:

[...]be it because of the mention of some customs—drinking “mate”, implicitly in “mate”; eat turtle meat; clean the shell with ash and sand; how delicious the stewed parrot is, etc. — [...] and its local culture — Ratón Pérez, Paraguayan cigars, etc. (de Sousa, 1985,p.125)

As for the character, it is necessary to highlight the role of the puppies and the babies, who generate a type of empathy with the readers, as the critic Fraser-Molina points out:

When reading animal stories, the child reader who, as mentioned, is animist, who is the process of defining his individuality and needs role models and who is controlled within the norms imposed by the elders (cleanliness, schedules, etc...), enjoys the text, identifies with its characters and lives that story as if he/she were one of its participants.(Fraser-Molina, 1993,p.72)

Animal stories are far removed from the real world and it is easy for children to identify with the protagonists, especially when they are puppies. These little animals think and act like children. Their adventures can influence their particular consciousness in a certain way. Their mistakes also serve as a lesson. By seeing the actions of animals and associating them with their qualities, children can intuitively know the results of their uncontrolled feelings as well as the benefits that the good ones bring them.

Specifically, in the short stories, the kids play a kinder role than men. For example, in “Stories of two coati puppies and two male puppies”, when the little coati gets caught in the trap, the children say: “¡Papá, no lo mates! ¡Es muy chiquito! ¡Dánoslo para nosotros!” (Quiroga, 1954,p.58) Meanwhile, the father is lifting him by the tail with one hand, behavior that is cruel to animals.

Both the Little coati and the deer in “The Blind Fawn” are very mischievous, and are left in danger because they haven’t listened to their mother. Applying Bettelheim’s theory, in these stories children identify with the protagonist and experience the story. Through this process, they realize their latent problems in the unconscious and they will find the solution.

Moreover, readers can learn from these protagonists. Their stories are never intended to teach exemplary conduct with regards to what ought to be the correct behavior of society but rather narrate something external and the errors of the protagonist also serve as a warning for people.

4.2 Story elements and worldview

In this section I will address three fundamental aspects of the stories of *Cuentos de la selva*: the presence of the marvelous, the use of happy endings and the didactic purpose. All of them are essential components of the children’s story.

The marvelous within this work resides mainly in the ability to talk of the animals and when the protagonists encounter difficulties, magic doesn’t appear to come to the rescue but rather that they look for the solutions themselves. That is, the appearance of the marvelous in these tales is not excessive. It has a certain limit, which implies the search for verisimilitude instead of being carried away towards lands where fiction prevails.

This has its roots in the traditional fables of Aesop and is prevalent in Western literature such as the tales of Rudyard Kipling. As for Latin America, the use of the marvelous at the beginning of the twentieth century is not very frequent, which is why this work by Quiroga is novel. This greatly influences writers of later times such as Márquez, Borges and Rulfo. With their works came a much freer and more open use of the marvelous component.

We can begin with analyzing the endings, which are a characteristic of these stories, very different from the traditional regionalism. In this trend, they don’t usually end with a happy ending and sometimes even ends in a tragic way. For example, in the last parts of *Los de abajo* by Mariano Azuela, Demetrio (the protagonist) returns to his village but the forces of his rival arrive, and both he and his troops lose their lives in the battle.

⁵ In this story the man appears as the storekeeper, who is a character with no significant function.

La Vorágine by José Eustasio Rivera ends with the disappearance of Arturo Cova and Alicia. In the last sentence of the novel, the narrator says: “The jungle devoured them!” (Rivera, 1987,p.281) In addition, it should be noted that in another collection of short stories by Horacio Quiroga, *Cuentos de amor, de locura y de muerte*, the presence of death is also frequently found at the end of them. In “La gallina degollada”, the four idiot children, imitating their mother, slaughter their younger sister as if she were a chicken. Love stories also usually end with the death of the characters, as in “El almohadón de plumas”, where the protagonist Alicia dies because of her partner’s indifference. In “A la deriva” and “La miel silvestre”, the protagonists have not been able to overcome the danger of the jungle and die in the end.

However, according to the theory of children’s literature, considering the children as the reader, it is very important that a conciliatory outcome be fostered: “even accepting the painful or disturbing alternatives that occur in the course of the action, the end of the story must be synonymous with reconciliation, peace and justice, that is, total and lasting happiness” (Pastoriza de Etchebarne, 1962,p.43).

In short, the uniqueness of this work can be appreciated, in which Quiroga shows his utmost tenderness because the stories are written for children. For this reason, although the process can be bloody and difficult, the fight between good and evil always ends with the triumph of the heroes. The end of *Cuentos de la selva* always presents scenes of a harmonious coexistence between men and animals: “Vivieron en adelante muy contentos” (“The Plucked Parrot”) (Quiroga, 1954,p.31); “Los pescados volvieron también, los yacarés vivieron y viven todavía muy felices” (“The War of the Alligators”, p44); “El hombre se curó, y quedó tan agradecido a las rayas que le habían salvado la vida, que fue a vivir a la isla” (“The Passage of the Yabebiri River”, p77).

These closing formulas also closely resemble those in traditional fairy tales. According to Sanfilippo, “in the case of marvelous stories, the closing is usually an authentic formula with rhyme and metric structure, couplets or quartets, in which there are usually many repetitions and parallels, which can create a hypnotic rhythm.” (Sanfilippo, 2007,p.147). Therefore, this also can be considered a characteristic closely related to the children’s story. These phrases mark the end of the stories and take the children away from the wonderful world created by the narrator.

The didactic objective is also one of the important characteristics of children’s literature. It should be noted that the stories of the Uruguayan are very similar to a fable, which demonstrates the moral lesson through the animal characters. Through vivid and intriguing arguments, the narrator proposes educational meanings. Leonor Fleming, when presenting Quiroga’s short stories, affirms the existence of the latent morals: “its same impeccable narrative in which animals, from individual personalities in ingenious coincidence with their natural characters, star in actions that, most of the time, include an allegory or a moral example” (Fleming, 1991,p.57).

In “The lazy bee”, the protagonist, that is, the lazy bee is thrown out of the hive because of her laziness. After suffering cold, loneliness and a threat to her life, he has become diligent. At the end of the story, Quiroga evidences the implicit moral lesson with the words of the protagonist:

Trabajen, compañeras, pensando que el fin a que tienden nuestros esfuerzos –la felicidad de todos— es muy superior a la fatiga de cada uno. A esto los hombres llaman ideal, y tienen razón. No hay otra filosofía en la vida de un hombre y de una abeja. (Quiroga, 1954,p.87)

The narrator homologates the life of man and that of the bee. In this way, he emphasizes the importance of the work ethic. Besides this explicit moral, from the experience of the bee, another implicit moral can also be deduced: the support of the family is of the utmost importance.

Several stories talk about the coexistence between man and nature, which also contains a moral. By reading the stories, the children will find a model which helps those in need and shows gratitude for the support received from others. For example, in “The Blind Fawn”, the deer comes up with a way to thank the hunter:

Se puso a recorrer la orilla de las lagunas y bañados, buscando plumas de garzas para llevarle al cazador. [...] Estaba leyendo cuando oyó que le llamaban. Abrió la puerta, y vio a la gamita que le traía un atadito, un plumerito todo mojado de plumas de garza. [...] Ella se empeñaba siempre en llevarle plumas de garza, que valen mucho dinero. (Quiroga, 1954, p. 53-54)

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the use of different kinds of heron feathers as decoration on hats became popular. The delicate and beautiful ornaments were often sold at a very high price in the market. Therefore, it is a very special way to show appreciation on the part of the deer.

In “The Giant Tortoise”, the turtle uses up to his last efforts to bring the hunter to the city, since he saved his life and thanks to that the man is cured of a serious illness. In “The Passage of the Yabebiri River”, the stingrays prefer to die rather than let the tiger hurt their friend.

The importance of solidarity must also be added. In the same tale, to protect their friend, the wounded man, the stingrays rush to fight the tigers one after another, until the river is stained red with their blood. The same thing happens in “The War of the Alligators”: in order to prevent the ships from passing down the river, the alligators team up to build one dam after another.

Another of the stories, “Las medias del flamenco” uses revenge to convey the moral, according to Tejera: “the notions that have to do with the search for beauty framed in a truly brilliant game of cause and effect are revealed; this happens because the narrator seems to punish these fickle birds” (Tejera, 2015, p. 238).

At the end of this story, the vipers discover that what flamingos are wearing are not stockings but the hides of their companions, which are peeled by the hunters. This is the reason why they are so enraged that they not only take off their “stockings” but also bite their legs so that they will die because the vipers are poisonous.

The flamingos suffer great injuries, and their red legs have served as a witness to their errors ever since:

Pero los flamencos no murieron. Corrieron a echarse al agua, sintiendo un grandísimo dolor. Gritaban de dolor, y sus patas, que eran blancas, estaban entonces coloradas por el veneno de las víboras. Pasaron días y días, y siempre sentían terrible ardor en las patas, y las tenían siempre de color de sangre, porque estaban envenenadas. (Quiroga, 1954, p.24)

Through the story of the flamingos, the narrator shows us the implicit morality that one should accept for oneself instead of being influenced by others’ comments and that one should not act out of jealousy and vanity.

These values are very important for children’s growth, as stated by Fraser-Molina, “After reading the stories and the time passed, the child may forget the characters, but the values of the friendship and loyalty will accompany him/her in their maturation” (Fraser-Molina, 1993, p.31-39).tur

5. Conclusions

Summarizing all that has been mentioned above, one can draw the conclusion that *Cuentos de la selva* proposes a different view of traditional regionalism, since the tales are transformative and seek a balance between the usual realism of this regionalist trend and the introduction of certain fictitious elements, with the bringing forth of a marvelous world-view with a clear didactic desire. All these adaptations are due to the fact that they are intended for a child reader, and contain the type of characters, the language, the appearance of the landscape and the story itself.

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