

Echoes of the Border in Horacio Quiroga's Work

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By

Wilson Alves-Bezerra

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1.

FOUNDATIONS

*"We are, you and I, border
dwellers of a particular state,
abyssal and luminous, like hell"*¹

(Horacio Quiroga. Letter to Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, May 1936).

This work rests on the following primary assumption: the border is in Horacio Quiroga's literature. This border is manifested in the writing of short stories and can be grasped through the analysis of literary, linguistic, and discursive procedures.

Concerning literary procedures, this refers to a way of narrating that can be understood through the application and discussion of the categories of narrator, character, time, and space in Quiroga's narrative; by linguistic procedures, what is meant is the use of deixis and the handling of foreign languages or Spanish variants in Quiroga's literature; and, when dealing with discourse, what is meant is above all the ambiguous inscription of Quiroga's narrator in scientific discourse, yielding remarkable aesthetic results.

It is well-known that the border serves as the setting for some of his short stories, that the border can even be considered the theme of some of them, that the Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga was born in the city of Salto, close to Argentina's southern border, and that years later he went to live on the northeastern border, and all of this cannot be ignored. However, these biographical details do not form the basis of this study: the reflection I propose intends to follow a different path. Here, the term 'border' is not used in its literal, denotative sense, but as something that is constitutive of Quiroga's literature, as will be detailed in the following sections.

Before addressing the crucial question – What is a border? – let us take it by the edges, *comme il faut*. To say there is a border in Quiroga's work

¹ "Somos Ud. y yo fronterizos de un estado particular, abismal, luminoso, como el infierno" (All translation not indicated in the references are our own. The original texts in Spanish or Portuguese will be quoted in footnotes).

does not mean classifying him as a realist², regionalist³, objective⁴ writer, making use of a merely denotative, referential⁵ or uniform⁶ language. Far from it. Instead, it means uncovering through analysis what was already contingently in his writing, but was generally overlooked by critics: this is a writer whose work is fundamentally marked by tensions such as the crisis of the univocity/objectivity of the, narrator and of narrative time and space; the crisis of narrative as a bearer of singular meaning, be it a moralising, social, or political allegory; the unique handling of literary language and *Portuñol*. Furthermore, he is also an author whose work revisits conflicts rooted in 19th-century Argentine culture.

Horacio Quiroga's narrative demands a reading of formal procedures that goes beyond his usual share: that of merely reducing him as a

² "Poe was a romantic; Quiroga was a realist" (Zum Felde, *Proceso Intelectual del Uruguay*, 400).

³ "At first, the regionalist movement adopted an aggressively defensive posture and went looking for a drastic confrontation with the avant-garde. The clash between regionalists and vanguardists (or modernistas) opened with a text, 'Ante el tribunal' [Before the Tribunal], published by the leading regionalist, Horacio Quiroga, in 1931 (sic)" (Rama, "Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana", 10-1). Interestingly, the defence made in Quiroga's text does not allude to what could be considered as regionalism, limiting itself to an emphatic defence of the short story, and with it, of his personal life and writing project: "I maintained, honourable tribunal, the need in art to **return to life** whenever it momentarily loses its concept, whenever crushing theories have been built upon the delicate fabric of emotion" (Quiroga, "Ante el tribunal", 1930). It is precisely in this passage that Rama seems to see in this "return to life" a **search for reality and life** as opposed to flights of fancy" (Rama, "Medio siglo de narrativa latinoamericana", 139, our highlights). However, I would like to emphasize that in Rama's reading there seems to be a shift from *life to reality*, and from there to *realism / regionalism*. The series would be as follows: *life – reality – realism – regionalism* – "tremorous translation of life".

⁴ Cf. Rodríguez Monegal (1950; 1961; 1967; 1968; *passim*); see also Jozef (História da literatura hispano-americana, 149, our translation and highlights): "His sensibility, combined with the subjectivism of the modernists, his models from youth, was eventually dominated by objectivity, which would become the defining characteristic of his mature writings."

⁵ "Horacio Quiroga (...) had time (...) to discover the inhospitable jungle of Misiones (...), dedicating himself to craft an austere and precise style of short fiction that aimed to be a mere tremorous translation of life." (Rama, "Medio siglo de narrativa latinoamericana", 138-9, our highlights).

⁶ "The Uruguayan writer is concerned with conceiving a poetics of the short story, in numerous articles on the subject; hence, his narratives display many of those virtues desired in a true literary story: one such virtue is uniformity of language" (Bittencourt, "O conto latino-americano: confrontos de imaginários", 177, our highlights).

practitioner of the poetics of 19th-century narrative, of seeing in his work only the theme of tragic death, the exploitation of *peones* in Misiones, and technological fantasies from the turn of the century; of scrutinising his influences – for which it would be enough to read just the first of his decalogue’s commandments⁷ – and being satisfied with that, as if it was enough to explain his body of work; of placing him in the traditions of regionalist, *modernist*, or fantastic narrative; and finally, of psychologising his writing, explaining the deaths present in his work through the deaths in the author’s life, under the unavoidable risk of losing both author and work.

It should be clearly noted that if such readings have been made it is because both Quiroga’s work and – why not – his customary biographical narrative lend themselves to them: his work contains tragic deaths, and his life is marked by no shortage of them. His stories show the influence of Poe, Kipling, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and Maupassant. They address the exploitation of *peones misioneros* on Argentina’s northern border. There are tales of ghosts, vampires, and the dead coming back to life. There is also, however, from the perspective of this book, the understanding that it is both possible and highly productive to approach Quiroga’s narrative through the peculiarities of its form, moving beyond thematic typologies, or curves of narrative evolution or involution.

For this analysis, I proposed the category of the border⁸ as a means of articulating theme, form, and discourse, approaching Quiroga’s *oeuvre* without any totalizing intent, but instead seeking to live up to the singularity of his literary production.

On the origins

The Italian psychoanalyst Contardo Calligaris (“A Psicanálise e o Sujeito Colonial”, 11) begins a study on the discovery and colonisation of America by affirming the importance of establishing dates and events

⁷ “Believe in a master – Poe, Maupassant, Kipling, Chekov – as in God himself” [“Cree en un maestro – Poe, Maupassant, Kipling, Chejov – como en Dios mismo”] (Quiroga, Decálogo del perfecto cuentista, 1927, translation available on <https://lasesana.net/2012/08/26/horacio-quirogas-ten-rules-for-writing-a-perfect-short-story>).

⁸ The polysemy of the term *border* seems to authorise studies from the most diverse perspectives. In relation to Horacio Quiroga, his work has already been treated, from this perspective, by two authors: Andermann (2000) and Fleming (2001). In the third section of this chapter I am going to return to Fleming’s discussions to clarify the position of my work in relation to his perspective. As for Andermann, I share his perspective in relation to working with the discourse on the constitution of Argentine borders, as seen in the fourth section of the present chapter.

regarded as the founding milestone of an era as something constructed *a posteriori*; these mythical beginnings would thus correspond to the image that a given society wants to make of itself: “they are always based on the image of us that we like and want to promote.”

In the criticism of Argentine literature, there is a more or less widespread choice of a foundational moment: the perception that the beginning of the twentieth century in literature coincides with the emergence of the Argentine avant-gardes during the twenties. This choice results in the establishment of a canon and the more or less immediate proscription of literature that does not conform to this new standard.

In this case, it is the writers prior to this period or those contemporaneous who were not enlisted in the avant-garde ranks who are relegated to the group of the outmoded. We are going to start from three examples of different latitudes and chronologies, with the aim of analysing the criteria used by each critic for their aesthetic classification.

Horacio Salas, in the introduction to the *facsimile* edition of the magazine *Martín Fierro*, from 1995, vehemently states, in the first paragraph of his study on the work: “Argentine literature of this century had its birth delayed until the beginning of the 1920s” [“(…) *la literatura argentina de este siglo retrasó su nacimiento hasta el comienzo de la década del veinte*”] (Salas, “El salto a la modernidad”, VIII). This statement comes as the second term of a military comparison, by which Salas attributes similar importance to the emergence of the avant-gardes and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which triggered the outbreak of the First World War. In this way, Salas confers a status of unique importance on the avant-garde movement, which had the power to overdetermine time, “despite the chronologies [*“A despecho de las cronologías*”].

The critic Donald Shaw (1999), when dealing with the same twenties, is willingly seduced by the charms of the new:

It is seen, then, that in the Buenos Aires of the Boedo-Florida controversy the physiognomy of **something new** was already beginning to take shape. *Don Segundo Sombra*, together with Enrique Larreta’s *Zogoibi*, and in another sense with Horacio Quiroga’s *Los desterrados*, which contains his best stories from the jungle of Misiones, all appearing in 1926, **represented the past**, the rural themes, the autochthonous. On the contrary, Arlt’s *El juguete rabioso*, according to Jitrik, “will definitively inaugurate urban literature with **universal projection**, on the one hand, and *literature that shows the way of being and the myths of a specific social class* on the other”⁹ (Shaw, Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana, 23, our highlights).

⁹ “Se ve, pues, que en el Buenos Aires de la polémica Boedo-Florida ya empezaba a perfilarse la fisionomía de algo nuevo. Don Segundo Sombra, junto con Zogoibi

Shaw values the new urban theme, to which he attributes universality. The proper examination of Horacio Quiroga's literary output indeed shows that part of his narratives corresponds to the exploration of themes deemed “*rurales*”; however, the narrative treatment they undergo strays from the conventional realism that is repeatedly attributed to them. Furthermore, attributing “universal projection” to certain literature because it is urban and new seems to imply that Quiroga's allegedly outdated regionalism cannot harbor universality just because his stories are set in a forgotten corner of Argentina. Taking this vision forward, Chekhov, when dealing with the *muzhiks* from the cold and distant Russian countryside, could not have any universality either. The euphoria of the urban – this is what seems to move the critic's pen, which, like a broom, sweeps nineteenth-century regionalism under the rug.

On the border through transculturation

Let us now turn our attention to a comment by the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, who addresses the same theme in his book *Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana* (1982). The greater interest in Rama is due to the fact that, although he seems to go in the same direction as the two previously mentioned critics regarding the founding character of the Spanish-American avant-gardes, he attempts some articulation between the avant-gardes and the “regionalist” writers – including Quiroga –, which is worth discussing at greater length.

Rama, when dealing with what he calls the conflict between avant-gardes and regionalism, cites Horacio Quiroga's article “Ante el tribunal” (“Before the tribunal”) (1930) as an exemplary mark of a defensive attitude and *drastic confrontation* on the part of the regionalists, with Horacio Quiroga as its leading figure, or “venerable master”. This confrontation, still according to the critic, does not come to fruition completely.

What will come, years later, is a response, in the form of the renewal of Latin American regionalism. This response from the regionalist camp would have been given because, according to Rama,

de Enrique Larreta, y en otro sentido Los desterrados de Horacio Quiroga, que contiene sus mejores cuentos de la selva de Misiones, todos aparecidos en 1926, representan lo pasado, los temas rurales, lo autóctono. Por el contrario, El juguete rabioso de Arlt, según Jitrik “inaugurará definitivamente la literatura urbana con proyección universal, por una parte, y la literatura que muestra la forma de ser y los mitos de una clase social concreta por la otra”

Regionalist writers saw that if the movement became stagnant in its debate with *vanguardismo* and critical realism, it would plunge into a death spiral. (Rama, *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*, 14)

However, this entire process of renewal, according to Rama, would only have occurred from the 1930s onwards. So Quiroga would once again be an example of outdated regionalism, given that his narrative output appeared between the years 1899 and 1937.¹⁰

My way of dealing with the idea of transculturation departs from Rama's in two points. If we take into account that the writers referred to by the critic come from several different countries (José María Arguedas, Juan Rulfo, Guimarães Rosa, Gabriel García Márquez) and also that many of the traits of this so-called transculturation are also present in Quiroga's narrative works, some nuance is needed, in the sense of both:

- a) the assertion that narrative transculturation is the result of the conscious will of a group of authors, and therefore the result of a conscious project with a specific time frame;
- b) and the assumption that transculturation would emerge as a response to the conflict between regionalism and the avant-gardes, or even that it occurred in the aforementioned 1930s, since – as I intend to demonstrate later – Quiroga's narratives present elements of what could equally be considered as transculturation already in the 1910s.

More than chronological overzealousness, this proviso regarding the writers' collective will and the setting of dates aims to show that, in a certain sense, Rama's reflection can be extended to other authors from different periods. This does not mean that “Rama was wrong”, but rather that he seems to forge an instrument of analysis, but reduces it based on, according to Marcos Piason Natali (“José María Arguedas *aquém da literatura*”, 57), a “triumphal vocabulary of rescues, restorations, unifications and solutions.”¹¹

If we read Quiroga through the lens of some of the presuppositions of transculturation, we may notice that this process of transmutation in Latin American regionalist literature took place in a much more gradual manner,

¹⁰ The milestones I establish are based on the publication of Quiroga's first story, “*Fantasia Nerviosa*” (1899), and his last, “*La tragedia de los ananás*” (1937). I would like to point out that in the 1930s there was a marked decrease in Quiroga's published output, which has led some critics to consider his literary career to be over after the publication of the book *Los desterrados*, in 1926. Even though his production after this date is not numerically large, I consider that he published important narratives during this period, some of which I will analyse in the following chapters.

¹¹ “*vocabulário triunfal de resgates, restaurações, unificações e soluções*”.

and it was also not the result of a deliberate effort by a specific group, nor driven by partisan disputes like those of the avant-gardists. Without such a proviso, Ángel Rama's concept becomes inexorably limited to be used only from the 1930s onwards and exclusively for regionalist writers, which would prevent its application to Quiroga, who had been previously categorised as a “traditional regionalist” – in opposition to a “transcultural regionalism”, which only emerged in the 1930s.

What I am interested in highlighting is that Rama's theorization, originally conceived for purposes different from those at play here, can still serve as a starting point for the reading I propose, allowing for the detection of some tensions in Quiroga's work, which would challenge the “uniformity” that is commonly attributed to his narratives and direct attention to what I have been approaching as the *border*. Thus, beginning with a succinct exposition of Rama's concept of transculturation¹² in its three fundamental levels – linguistic, worldview, and literary – I will propose some displacements in order to weave my theoretical framework for Quiroga's analysis, in a different light.

The linguistic level

Rama's concept of transculturation (cf. 1970; 1974; 1982) comes from the Cuban Fernando Ortiz (1940) and is conceived in relation to Latin American narrative. It seeks to account for Latin American literature's response to the tension between universalism and regionalism, strongly connected to the European cultural and political influence on the autochthonous cultures of Latin American countries.

The most immediate example of what the transcultural use of language is for Rama would be the renunciation of procedures that mark the distance between the narrator's linguistic register (which Rama identifies with the author's) and that of the characters who make use of some different linguistic variant: such strategies could include, for example, the use of quotation marks around non-dictionary terms employed by the characters or the inclusion of appendices with vocabulary in regionalist works:

¹² The criticisms and discussions that I propose here around Ángel Rama's concept of transculturation are based on the discussion of the texts in which the author deals with the matter, and in relation to its possibilities referred to the reading of a specific author, Horacio Quiroga, in this case. I will not, therefore, dwell on other readings, criticisms and operations with this concept taking place in the last thirty years, which generated a series of other analytical devices serving the most diverse purposes, and which are related to Rama's theorization, such as the concepts of hybridity (García Canclini), heterogeneity (Cornejo Polar), creolisation (Glissant), among others.

This kind of regionalist novel established a curious divide between the character, who spoke in a particular Creole gibberish, and the author, who hovered above his creations and, in describing, commenting, or narrating, spoke from his more or less purist standpoint.¹³ (Rama, “Diez problemas para el novelista latinoamericano”, 224).

For Rama (“Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 220), what exists in transcultural regionalism is the intersection of the “characters’ speech” with the “writer’s language”. In his words, “The author rejoined his linguistic community and spoke from inside it, using all its idiomatic resources freely” (Rama, *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*, 25).

One could wonder whether this intersection constitutes a positive value in itself, as Rama seems to be saying. For, if on the one hand, the naturalisation of the narrator’s relative linguistic unassailability, posited as normative, is certainly harmful, would it not be the case, on the other hand, to wonder whether “the unitary tone” advocated by Rama (“Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 24) would also not be another facet of this same homogenising effect, now manifested as a masking of diversity in the name of a supposed artistic unity?

Crucially, they diminished the distance between the language of the narrator/writer and the speech of their characters, viewing linguistic duality as contrary to the rule of artistic unity. (...) These are some of the ways writers **unified their literary texts** linguistically in response to a clearly more modern concept of artistic organicity, with the aid of a **very new, impetuous confidence in their own American language**, the speech these writers used as a matter of course day in and day out. (Rama, *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*, 24-5)

Rama seems to resort here to what Antonio Candido had called, years before, the “social function of literature” (1972). The fact is that, in the way Rama’s precept is stated, “their own American language” appears as a value in itself and, furthermore, as the achievement of a utopia. Thus, I would like to give some nuance to Rama’s assertion, as the search for what is typically local can result, according to Candido (1972, p. 86), in a social function that is “humanising and alienating at the same time”. Humanising, in the case of Rama, aims to rescue the characters in the regionalist text from the status of

¹³ “Las novelas de este regionalismo establecían un curioso escalón entre el personaje que hablaba en particular (sic) galimatías criollistas, y el autor, quien se situaba por encima de sus criaturas y al describir, al comentar, al narrar, hablaba desde su cátedra más o menos purista”

infra-human, giving them a voice in a dignified way. And also alienating, because, by setting “their own American language” as a goal, it may end up producing a kind of concealment, since, if cultural and political conflicts also make themselves known through the linguistic marks of their speakers, such conflict would not have to be masked by necessity, in the form of “their own American language”. In this case, the project of transculturation could run into its opposite extreme, as indicated by Chiappini's (1994, p. 688 ss.) analyses in the field of Brazilian regionalism, in which she points out that an author, by taking care to step down from the chair, “betrays this intention through Romantic mythification”.

There are examples in Quiroga's narrative that, in my opinion, do not fall into either extreme. I am going to discuss a short story by Quiroga that goes in the opposite direction to masking by narratively recreating the linguistic conflict – which may be taken as an index of other conflicts – without this harming any “unitary totality” of the stories. I am talking about *Los desterrados* [*The Exiles*]¹⁴ (1925), where Brazilians are very peculiarly subjected to the discursivity of the Spanish language – as we are going to have the opportunity to analyse later, the story rests on this tension, that is political but also subjective and linguistic. It should be noted here that the Quiroguian narrator, contrary to what is usually believed (cf. Rodríguez Monegal, *Las raíces de Horacio Quiroga*), does not occupy a position of omniscience, which, in these stories, implies that the narrator occupies the place of the foreigner in relation to the foreigner who is his character. In other words, the narrator is an outsider talking about characters who are also outsiders in the borderlands of Misiones.

Thus, I reiterate that the linguistic conflict occurs in Quiroga's narrative as a constitutive element of his stories, as an element of the characterization of the characters and their relations, and not as just some tinge of local colour, and that the way these characters' border language is narratively managed distances such tales from the conventionalism that is usually attributed to regionalism's indiscriminate use of the indigenous language. On the other hand, the first-person narrative of the *peón* is also distant from Quiroga, the only exception being the short story “*Los precursores*” [“The forerunners”] (1929).

However, such language use in Quiroga, neither transculturative nor masked, does not exempt the writer – and in saying this I once again question the *will of the intellectual* that Rama speaks of – from a somewhat prejudiced view in relation to the Spanish being spoken by those who would

¹⁴ Other short stories, such as “Un peón” (1918) and “The forerunners” [*Los precursores*] (1929) are also based on the relationship between the characters and the foreign language.

inspire such characters. Let's see what Quiroga says, in an article about translation, regarding what he thinks would be the appropriate use of the characters' peculiar verbal turns and what their role would be in their characterization:

This vigorous depiction of a personality would gain nothing from the fact that the brief dialogue exchanged between the master and the slave reproduced the slightly corrupted lexicon of the master and the more shabby speech of the slave. The reaction inside the rural magnate's soul is what defines, colors, and affirms his being in his environment. The rest: poorly spoken Spanish, truncated words, or oddly accented ones, these have no inherent ability to characterize a type. (...) In very skilled hands, under the guidance of deep regional knowledge and impeccable taste, the artist is sometimes able to add more color to their depiction through the very restrained use of the native language. Sustained jargon, used from beginning to end in a story, far from evoking an environment, dissipates it in its heavy monotony.

Nada agregaría a este vigoroso planteo de una personalidad el hecho de que el breve diálogo cambiado entre el patrón y el esclavo reprodujera el léxico un poco corrompido del patrón, y el más astroso del esclavo. La reacción en el alma del magnate rural es lo que define, colorea y afirma a éste en su ambiente. El resto: español mal hablado, palabras truncas o caprichosamente acentuadas, no poseen por sí solas capacidad alguna para caracterizar a un tipo. (...) En manos muy expertas, bajo la vigilancia del hondo conocimiento regional y su impecable buen gusto, el artista logra a veces acentuar el colorido de su cuadro con el uso muy sobrio de la lengua nativa. La jerga sostenida desde el principio al fin de un relato, lejos de evocar un ambiente, lo desvanece en su pesada monotonía. (Quiroga, "Sobre 'El Ombú' de Hudson", 1929, our translation)¹⁵

Before it is said that what Quiroga says easily falls into the mass grave of conventional regionalism demonised by Rama, I would like to make the proviso that Quiroga's writings on literature do not always correspond to his

¹⁵ In this study, citations from works by Horacio Quiroga are going to be accompanied by the title of the text in question and the date of its initial publication. This does not, however, correspond to its date of publication in book form. This caveat is important because I believe that some inconsistent diachronic analysis of Quiroga's work were due to the fact that the dates of his books were taken as reference, instead of its initial publications. The texts cited here come from Quiroga (1996) – in the case of short stories – and Quiroga (1993) – in the case of articles –, unless otherwise indicated. For more precise information about the dates and periodicals in which the first publications took place, I refer the reader to the exhaustive work by Rela (1972).

own practice. The writer Quiroga is certainly reasonable when he says that the border language, in itself, is not enough to characterise a character; however, the prejudice present in his explanation regarding the “*mal hablado*”, “*corrompido*”, “*astroso*” Spanish of the characters in relation to the “*impecable buen gusto*” and sobriety of the narrator is undeniable. Quiroga clearly treats language in this article as someone sitting in the purist’s chair, and deals with the impure language of *peones* and masters from a distance; nevertheless, not even this prevents him from contradicting this theorization in his own literary writings, with which we are led, once again, to question the notion of a political project for raising awareness that Rama talks about. It seems that Quiroga’s lack of a transculturative consciousness does not prevent him from producing writings that we could, in certain aspects, call transculturative.

A preliminary example should suffice for this initial presentation. In the same year of 1929, when he published “Sobre ‘El Ombu’ de Hudson”, the Uruguayan short story writer also published a story entitled *The forerunners* [*Los precursores*], which completely contradicts his own article. It is an account of an indigenous *peón*, written in “sustained jargon, used from beginning to end in a story” (“*jerga sostenida desde el principio al fin de[l] relato*”), in which Guaraní and Portuguese are mixed with his recently learned Spanish – and it is in this hybrid language that the *peón* narrates his own experience and that of his companions during the times of communist indoctrination and the labour movement. Contrary to what Quiroga says in his article, the text is neither monotonous nor illegible. This is a specific speech by the main character, which also suggestively occupies the position of narrator, and leads us to think about the concept of transculturation as a transforming transitivity between the native culture and the culture of the other, to put the discussion in Rama’s terms. The narrator character says in the first paragraph:

Now, boss, I’m sort of educated, and from gabbing so much with the big shots and lowly comrades, I know a lot of words about the cause and can make myself understood in Castile talk. But those of us who did our tossing talking Guaraní, can’t none of us never forget the lingo altogether, as you’re going to find out right away” (Quiroga, *The Exiles and other stories*, 145)

Yo soy ahora, che patrón, medio letrado, y de tanto hablar con los catés y los compañeros de abajo, conozco muchas palabras de la causa y me hago entender en la castilla. Pero los que hemos gateado hablando guaraní, ninguno de esos nunca no podemos olvidarlo del todo, como vas a verlo en seguida. (Quiroga, “Los precursores”)

It stands out how distinct the paths taken by the author are in his aforementioned article and in this short passage, in which the mother tongue, Guaraní, appears to be impossible to forget, and how the state of being “between languages” is both sustained and fundamental in shaping the character; to the point that this would be unthinkable for the reader using any language other than this very particular one.

Thus, it would be a case of nuancing Quiroga's statements when he is wearing the hat of a supposed literary theorist, as it does not always go hand in hand with his own practice. Since if we start from Rama's categories, Quiroga's narrative would be “transculturative”, while his theorization would belong to traditional regionalism. And, of course, this perception also leads us to nuance something of Rama's transformative impetus, according to which the transculturation project should be a banner for Latin American intellectuals since, as we have seen, much of what Rama calls transculturation occurs contingently in Latin American literary discourse, regardless of any conscious project for raising awareness.

Finally, it seems appropriate to allude to yet another linguistic aspect of Quiroga's literature, beyond the divergence in his view, as a writer, on what the literary use of language is, and what he actually puts into his characters' mouths. I am now referring to the narrator's very language, which, while not being the same as that of his characters, cannot be considered a standard of chaste purism either. Some of Quiroga's contemporaries, by demonstrating their awkwardness when dealing with Quiroga's narrative language, will serve us as a parameter for its particularity.

Manuel Gálvez (1944), Quiroga's friend and editor, in the chapter of his memoirs dedicated to the short story writer, is revealingly reticent regarding the lexical and syntactic peculiarities of Horacio Quiroga's literary language:

Quiroga was not interested in the perfection of prose. I used the correction of proofs to make several suggestions to him, which he did not accept. Describing a social party, in the short story *Los ojos sombríos*, he spoke of a young lady passing by “del brazo [“arm in arm”]. He had to say that she was arm in arm with a certain individual, or with “an old man”, or “a blonde”, or “a fat man”, but not simply “del brazo” [“arm in arm”]. However, Quiroga insisted that it should remain as it had been written. In *Los Mensú*, one of his most tragic and well-told tales, he wrote of “the rise of provision”. I thought it was talking about the arrival of the provisions for the work, which, as they were brought from Buenos Aires, upriver, were coming up. I was wrong. Nobody would have imagined, not even in a hundred years, that

“the rise of provision” was the rise in prices...¹⁶ (Gálvez, “Negocios con Horacio Quiroga”, 276-7).

We notice from this passage and, mainly, from Quiroga's stories that his narrators explicitly do not speak like his jungle characters, but they also do not speak in perfectly polite Spanish, whether in urban or rural stories.

The Spanish critic Guillermo de Torre, in his prologue to a collection of stories by Quiroga, also criticises the author's style, which is described as follows:

In perhaps Barojian fashion, undervaluing literature over action, the author of *El salvaje* had come to excessively despise the arts of saying it well. At times he wrote prose that, in striving for concision, turned out confusing; in striving for ruggedness, turned out clumsy and vitiated. Strictly speaking, he did not have a feel for language, nor many scruples about verbal purity. A curious fact for someone who had begun with stylistic efforts and boasts of the most complicated end-of-the-century rhetoric!¹⁷ (Fleming, “Introducción”, 92).

There is a certain normative tone in Torre and Gálvez's speech about “saying it well” – as there was also in Quiroga the “theoretician”, in which we readily recognize the purist writerly standards to which Ángel Rama would refer, decades later –, but it should be noted that the same “writerly and purist” procedures definitely cannot be attributed to the Quiroguian narrator. Furthermore, we notice, from Quiroga's different texts, how there are in his literature – which includes articles like this one – more nuances in

¹⁶ “A Quiroga no le interesaba la perfección de la prosa. Con motivo de la corrección de pruebas le hice varias observaciones, que no aceptó. Por ahí, describiendo una fiesta social, en el cuento Los ojos sombríos, hablaba de una joven señora que pasaba “del brazo”. Debía decir que pasaba del brazo de tal individuo determinado, o de “un viejo”, o de “un rubio”, o de “un gordo”, pero no “del brazo” a secas. No obstante, Quiroga se empujó en que debía ser como él había escrito. En Los Mensú, una de sus más trágicas y bien contadas historias, hablaba de “la suba de la provista”. Creí que se tratase de la llegada de las provisiones para el obraje, las cuales, como eran traídas de Buenos Aires, río arriba, venían subiendo. Me equivoqué. Nadie hubiera imaginado, ni en cien años, que “la suba de la provista” era el alza de los precios...”

¹⁷ “Al modo barojiano quizá, infravalorizando la literatura ante la acción, el autor de El salvaje había llegado a menospreciar excesivamente las artes del buen decir. Escribía, por momentos, una prosa que a fuerza de concisión resultaba confusa; a fuerza de desaliño, torpe e viciada. En rigor no sentía la materia idiomática, no tenía el menor escrúpulo de pureza verbal. ¡Hecho curioso en quien había comenzado con pujos de estilista y alardes de la más complicada retórica finisecular!”

the registers and languages than an awareness-raising and politicising project like Rama's would suggest; and that this diversity is not only desirable but also necessary for Quiroga's literature. The language in Quiroga appears to be more diverse and nuanced than a desire for any monolithic, standardised, and common form, whether for Torre, Gálvez, or Rama, or for Quiroga himself, whose narrative accomplishments fortunately go beyond his personal opinions.

Worldview or level of meanings

The concept of worldview dates back to a 1911 edition of an essay by Dilthey, "The types of Weltanschauung and their Development in Metaphysics" [*Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den Metaphysischen Systemen*]. Rama, however, seems to be drawing it from Jung, for whom it is inseparable from the notion of the unconscious. Jung postulates the existence of different "psychologies" between different "races". Thus, Rama operates on two fronts: (a) narrating the introduction of this German psychology from the early twentieth century in America; (b) arguing that it is through it that Latin Americans find their identity.

The concept of worldview would correspond, for Rama ("Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana", 29), to that which "generates meaning", the point where "values abide and where ideologies are put on display; by the same token, it is the most difficult one to hand over to the process of homogenizing modernization along foreign patterns". In this way, for Rama, the achievement of Latin American transculturators would be the rediscovery of mythical thinking, from which they could assert themselves in the face of homogenising modernity.

Thus, contrary to the avant-garde – who would surrender to the acculturation promoted by irrationalism, surrendering to the tenets of modernity – transculturators will operate with what he calls "mythical thinking".

It draws our attention that, apparently, the concept of worldview is itself equivalent to a homogenising vision,¹⁸ which, through Rama, would lead us

¹⁸ To think about the homogenising effect of national psychology, we may recall the anti-Semitic use that Jung himself made of this concept, when he defended that the Aryan unconscious was superior to the Jewish unconscious: "The Jew, who is something of a nomad, has never yet created a cultural form of his own and as far as we can see never will, since all his instincts and talents require a more or less civilized nation to act as host for their development" (Jung, *Collected works of CG Jung*, Volume 10: *Civilization in Transition*, 165). Two months later, when trying to defend himself from being criticised as anti-Semitic, Jung returned to the attack:

to conclude that there are three major exclusionary ways of thinking: (a) “mythical thinking”, marked by the rediscovery of the unconscious, by transculturators; (b) avant-garde irrationalism; (c) and finally the logical-rational discourse, “which the regional novel applied thoroughly” (Rama, “Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 222).

According to Rama's position, what he considers the achievement of transculturators, the Amerindian unconscious and the mythical thinking that characterises it, could be mobilised with ideological purposes. It would be as if America could respond to exocentric ideological homogenization through mythicising homogenization, through its Amerindian unconscious:

the transculturators eventually discovered something even beyond myth. (...) the transculturators began spinning new mythic tales, drawing forth precise and enigmatic inventions from the ambiguous, powerful trove of regional culture” (Rama, “Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 33-4).

However, it is important to say that, based on the way I am going to read Rama, the concept of worldview will be essential, not because of what it represents, but because it raises an important discussion, one that takes place in the ideological field. Therefore, in order to operate with what Rama hopes to account for – the ideology as it is manifested in the literary text –, I would like to propose some mediations. A formulation that highlights central aspects in the treatment of ideology and that may serve as a starting point for presenting our way of operating with this aspect is the one offered by Mikhail Bakhtin.

In his journey through the various critical readings of Dostoevsky's work, Bakhtin focuses on the Russian critic Vyacheslav Ivanov, who, according to him, when trying to account for ideological aspects in the novelist's prose, made a sudden shift from the supposed worldview of the author to the one present in the text. Bakhtin then ponders:

Vyacheslav Ivanov did not show how this principle of Dostoevsky's worldview becomes the principle behind Dostoevsky's artistic visualization

“Are we really to believe that a tribe which has wandered through history for several thousand years as ‘God’s chosen people’ was not put up to such an idea by some quite special psychological peculiarity? If no differences exist, how do we recognize Jews at all? Psychological differences obtain between all nations and races, and even between the inhabitants of Zurich, Basel, and Bern. (...) That is why I attack every levelling psychology when it raises a claim to universal validity, as for instance the Freudian and the Adlerian” (Jung, *Collected works of CG Jung*, Volume 10: *Civilization in Transition*, 1028-9).

of the world, the principle behind his artistic structuring of a verbal whole, the novel. (...) Here Vyacheslav Ivanov commits a typical methodological error: he moves directly from the author's worldview to the content of the author's works, passing over the form (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 11)

Here is an important guiding principle of my work: the analysis based on form, as well as its relationship with content and its extratextual references, which lead to the historical and social dimensions when these are manifested in the text or raised by it.

Bakhtin, as a consequence of his argument – the one that sees ideology in form – will end up operating with the concept of *polyphony*. Such a concept seems the most appropriate to account for the discursive aspect of Quiroga's work, and I understand “discursive” here as the ideological aspect manifested on the linguistic surface or, put another way, as the marks on the linguistic surface that reconstruct, in the text, conflicts of the society that gave rise to it.

Thus, when analysing Quiroga's work in this aspect, we are going to be interested in seeing the ideological tensions present, for instance, in his argumentative texts on the writing of short stories, or even how the discourse of science is manifested in his stories, and what role they narratively play in the writer's work. For this purpose, the concept of polyphony is here deemed the most appropriate. However, as Tezza (2003) pointed out, when referring to the nature of Bakhtin's work on the polyphonic novel, there is a certain difficulty in directly operating with the concept of polyphony, precisely because it is not quite an operative concept:

Far from developing a closed system of a literary order to be applied universally, Bakhtin brings out in the works he confronts (Dostoevsky, Rabelais) a highly complex network of formal and evaluative relations, rooted in history and culture, which gives them extraordinary singularity: thus, *polyphony* and *carnivalization* emerge as unique expressions of historical moments, categories that cannot be repeated at random, and that may only be reducible to an abstract scheme with great care; hence the inadequacy of trying to submit them to an *instrumental* use. Perhaps part of the difficulties encountered in the search for a better understanding of Bakhtin stem from the attitude of taking end points as starting points¹⁹ (Tezza, *Entre a prosa e a poesia: Bakhtin e o formalismo russo*, 26-7).

¹⁹ “Longe de desenvolver um sistema fechado de uma ordem literária a ser aplicado universalmente, Bakhtin faz emergir das obras que enfrenta (Dostoevski, Rabelais) uma rede de relações formais e valorativas altamente complexa, enraizadas na história e na cultura, que lhe dão uma singularidade extraordinária: polifonia e carnavalização, assim, surgem como expressões únicas de momentos históricos,

I believe, on the other hand, that the author who best dealt with the issue of polyphony, removing it from its primary referents – the novels by Rabelais and Dostoevsky – and giving it some productive operability, was the linguist Oswald Ducrot (1984), when outlining his polyphonic theory of enunciation. The operability of the concept of polyphony in Ducrot occurs primarily because – based on questioning the uniqueness of the speaking subject – the author seeks the polyphonic character of language not in literary works, but at the level of utterances.

Thus, in speech attributed to the same speaker (which coincides with the one who enunciates “I”), more than one enunciator may be identified. This notion will become very productive when we analyse both Quiroga's short stories in which there is a border language, as well as the intricate argumentative articles on the writing of short stories.

Let us anticipate an objection that could be made to the analysis proposed here, namely, that Ducrot's theorization would not be suitable for real speakers or literary texts, given that, as Nolke states (*in* Charaudeau & Maingueneau, *Dicionário de Análise do Discurso*, 385), “what pertains to the actual speaker is of no interest to Ducrot.” For, if the subject producing the utterance, as Ducrot (1984) also states, does not constitute the centre of his theoretical concerns, it is because he is occupied precisely with a theory of the production of meanings, and the same will occur here. It is not going to be, in any way, a matter of taking Horacio Quiroga or the narrator of his stories as a speaker, and much less of knowing which of them was the real speaker, the producer of the utterance. Our interest will lie, first of all, in taking the produced utterances and analysing their linguistic marks: deictics, fragments of Portuguese and Spanish; such marks have analytical value because they reconstruct ideological conflicts within the text, whether in the case of utterances in Portuñol that reveal power conflicts and tensions in relations with what is foreign, and which operate in the literary construction of the short story, or in the promises of “Manual del Perfecto Cuentista”, which state the readers could also be writers, if they followed in the master's footsteps.

Thus, starting from a concept woven within the scope of literary theory by Bakhtin, I appropriate how Ducrot works on it to use it in order to read Horacio Quiroga's literary works. In this way, it will be interesting to show how there are linguistic marks of a confrontation between narrator and supposed reader (in the case of “Manual del Perfecto Cuentista”), between

categorias não reiteráveis ao acaso, que só com muito cuidado serão redutíveis a um esquema abstrato; daí a inadequação de tentar dar a elas um uso instrumental. Talvez parte das dificuldades que se encontram na busca de uma compreensão melhor de Bakhtin decorra da atitude de tomar pontos de chegada como pontos de partida”

the *peón* and his boss, between the *peón* and his past, emerging as a conflict on the border that would correspond to enunciators who collide in conflict.

In this way, I am going to project into the field of discourse the discussion raised by Rama's worldview, and the ideological character that such discussion brings will be addressed through the linguistic marks of the text.

Level of *literary composition* (Rama, 1974) or *literary structuring* (1982)

The crossroads for transculturators, according to Rama (1982, p. 269), would consist in choosing a narrative model between those available to them, namely, the naturalist model from the nineteenth century, with a “rigidly rationalising conception, inherited from the nineteenth century’s sociologising and psychologising tendencies”, or the avant-garde model, which would bring with it “a fractured worldview”.

The transcultural way out from this crossroads would have been the recovery of structures coming from oral and popular narration, through the “discursive monologue” (an example of which is Guimarães Rosa’s *Grande Sertão: Veredas*) instead of the *stream of consciousness*, or of fragmentary narration. Thus, it may be said that the transculturation process, in its three levels, seems to take as a parameter the acceptance, by Latin American writers, of the autochthonous culture, speaking from within it, portraying it, and giving meaning to the continent from within it, unlike what “the traditional regionalists” had done, among whom Rama considers Quiroga to be an “indisputable master” (Rama, “Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 248).

However, if we return to the *regionalist* Quiroga from *A la deriva* (1912), what best describes his narrative procedures is precisely the following fragment by Rama, in which he shows the literary effects of the avant-garde’s irrationalist discourse on urban critical realism:

The avant-garde challenged the logical-rational discourse that had a hold over literature and that, whether through referential language or symbolic remission, which the regional novel applied thoroughly. (...) Its effects were also extended (...) through the examination of the indefinite margins of consciousness, dreamlike states and emotional upheavals, but above all through the incorporation of the so-called “point of view” mechanisms that dissolved the supposed objectivity of narrative²⁰ (Rama, “Los procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana”, 222).

²⁰ “El vanguardismo puso en entredicho el discurso lógico-racional que manejaba la literatura y que, ya sea con lenguaje referencial o con remisión a símbolos, aplicaba

Let us emphasise that Rama, in the fragment above, is referring to the avant-garde, considered by him to be the opposite of regionalism, and that characteristics listed by him also apply to Horacio Quiroga – and perfectly so. After all, it is precisely “the indefinite margins of consciousness” and “dreamlike states and emotional upheavals” that we have in short stories like “Las moscas” (“The Flies”) (1933), in which the delirious consciousness of a man facing his imminent death wanders at the mercy of external stimuli; also in “A la deriva” (“Drifting”) (1912), in which a man mortally wounded by a snake bite becomes delirious at the mercy of the poison; in “El hijo” (“The Son”) (1927), the father, who suffers from hallucinations, sees the most diverse images referring to the possibility of his son’s tragic death. Furthermore, the different points of view articulated by the narrator constitute a fundamental feature in all the stories above – as I will demonstrate in the following chapters. We saw, then, how Rama, when describing the avant-garde, also describes their opposite, the “regionalist” Quiroga.

Thus, we find Quiroga again in the border territory because, if on the one hand one of his dominant themes is regionalist, which is precisely what allows much of the criticism to be satisfied with classifying him as such, on the other hand, we see how his narrative procedures are far from being described by categorical formulas stating that Quiroga's art wants to be a “mere tremorous translation of life” (Cf. Rama, “Medio siglo de narrativa latinoamericana”, 138-139), or as Monegal says, referring to the narrator of short stories like “A la deriva”:

The view is still external. Even though the narrator has acquired great skill, even though he tells whatever he wants in whatever way he wants, the creation, **with its magnificent objectivity**, is limited. Because the narrator is markedly absent from it: he is a spectator, sometimes even a secondary character in the story, but not someone fully present, with his anxieties and a horrible sense of personal fatefulness²¹ (Rodríguez Monegal, *Las raíces de Horacio Quiroga*, 13, our highlights).

a fondo la novela regional. [...] También pudo extender sus efectos [...] mediante el examen de los márgenes imprecisos de la conciencia, de los estados oníricos o de las conmociones anímicas, pero sobre todo por la incorporación de los mecanismos del llamado “punto de vista” que disolvían la presunta objetividad narrativa”

²¹ “La visión es todavía externa. Aunque el narrador ha alcanzado una habilidad enorme, aunque cuenta lo que quiere y como quiere, la creación, de magnífica objetividad, es limitada. Porque el narrador está notoriamente ausente de ella: es un testigo, a veces hasta un personaje secundario del relato pero no está él entero, con sus angustias y su horrible sentido de la fatalidad personal”

The reading being here proposed goes towards showing in Quiroga's best narrative work the presence of the dreamlike states to which Rama referred, and a suspension of characters in border states between life and death, sanity and madness, day and night, which find an echo in linguistic procedures that may consist in a very peculiar use of *Portuñol*, as well as a narrator intermixing with the narrated matter, either through the atypical use of deixis,²² or through his veiled intrusion into the characters' (un)consciousness. Such intrusions are brought about by an apparently impartial third-person voice. This, however, should lead us less to want to reclassify him as an *avant-garde* or *proto-avant-garde* writer than to assume that his singularity should be enough to suspend overhasty labels, leading us to pay greater attention to his narratives on their own merits.

Thus, based on what has been said so far, we are going to start from the three levels proposed by Rama, with the displacements already discussed – linguistic, discursive, and literary –, in order to reread some of Quiroga's texts and discuss the criticism around them. In addition to what has already been pondered and discussed, I also propose an inversion that merits some discussion. While Rama takes Latin American literature under the sign of confluence, in its most diverse aspects, what primarily interests me is the tension, the marks pointing to that which remains unresolved; the border, then, is what names this territory of conflict. And it is precisely from these borders that Quiroga's narrative is constructed.

Rama, therefore, was essential in this journey as he allowed us to name aspects of Quiroga's narrative, based on what he described as “*avant-garde*”, “*traditional regionalism*” and “*transcultural regionalism*”. Thus, before defining Quiroga as a hybrid writer – through which we would endorse stagnant classifications, merely singling out Quiroga as an exception –, it is preferable to show how such different narrative stances collide and intersect in the most diverse ways throughout his fiction. In this way, I move away from Rama in the sense of not privileging the chronology dealing with the emergence of these literary movements, and of taking Quiroga's literature as being in movement. However, I also share with Rama what, in my opinion, is his most productive insight: the doors to the literary text, under the three levels already discussed.

Thus, the first path of literary analysis proposed in this work leads us towards demonstrating the non-univocity of the Quiroguian narrator. Showing him as divided, as a border entity speaking from different places. In this way, I am going to be able to reassess some short stories that some critics have considered confusing and even unaccomplished, trying to

²² This procedure will be explained later, in the analysis of “*Las moscas*” (“*The Flies*”) (1933).

reconsider them based on the peculiarity of how the Quiroguian narrator actually works. Opposite cases, concerning stories about which the objectivity and univocity of the narrator has been reiterated, such as “A la deriva” (1912), are going to be subjected to a similar reading.

From denotative to constitutive borders

I began these *Foundations* by stating that the geographic location of Horacio Quiroga's birth, in Salto, Uruguay, close to the southern border of Argentina, and his long periods of stay in Misiones, on the northern border of Argentina, could not be ignored, but that, nevertheless, this would not form this study's framework.

However, I am going to raise questions that, without intending them to be the central thesis of this study, may serve to formulate a guiding hypothesis when going through these pages, and indicate other possible readings. It would be necessary to think about whether the aspects raised so far regarding the border in the linguistic, discursive and narrative levels, would necessarily be linked to the fact that Quiroga's narratives had the Argentine borders as their theme or setting. This question would consequently lead to another, also of capital importance: are these levels that I raised and that I named as borders only present in the short stories set in the Misiones jungle, or would they be extendable to stories with an urban theme?

Answering such questions forces us to review the inseparability that is commonly pointed out between form and content or theme and technique, as stated by Arriguetti Jr. (1973, *O escorpião encalacrado: A poética da destruição* em Julio Cortázar, 185) when resuming an essay by Mark Schorer: “Technique conditions thematic development at the same time that it is conditioned by it”²³. And an uncomfortable question would still need answering: if the category of the border as considered here is extendable to a set of stories larger than just those based on the Misiones jungle, what general theme would Quiroga's stories respond to? In other words, if the border I am dealing with here is not just the dividing line between countries and languages – and also corresponds to a procedure or set of formal procedures –, what is the theme to which this border would correspond?

I propose that we begin the discussion with the relationship between the social and the literary, in the terms proposed by Antonio Candido, in an essay written in 1961 that served as the introductory chapter to his *Literatura e Sociedade*, from 1965. The subtitle of this short text – which

²³ “Ao mesmo tempo que a técnica condiciona o desenvolvimento temático, é condicionada pelo tema”

aims to be a reckoning between sociology and literary criticism – gives us an example of how thorny the issue is: “Criticism and Sociology (An Attempt at Clarification)”. Candido says (“Criticism and Sociology”, 142, his emphasis): “We know, further, that the *external* (in this case, the social) is important, not as a cause, nor as a meaning, but as an element that performs a certain role in the constitution of the structure, becoming, therefore, *internal*”. The case then would be to know whether the social, as is going to be said later,

furnishes only the matter (ambiance, costumes, group features, ideas), (in Lukács’s terms, if it only makes the realization of aesthetic value possible); or if, beyond this, it is an element that acts in the constitution of what is essential in the work as a work of art (in Lukács’s terms, if it is determinant of aesthetic value). (Candido, “Criticism and Sociology”, 143)

And then yet another question arises: does this suspension, this threshold that I have been calling the border, recover, in Quiroga’s work, merely a geographical fact (that is, it is a mere “vehicle to carry the creative current”), or does the border discursively take up something already present in Argentine culture, which would become an essential, constitutive feature of its narrative? It is possible to say that Quiroga’s writing is marked by the fact that he was born and inhabited border regions and, furthermore, that he wrote about them, but the issue certainly does not end there.

Fleming (2001), in the section “La frontera en los textos” of her introductory study to a collection of Quiroga’s short stories organised by her, touches on the question of the border with regards to the author. This reason leads us to see what kind of answer this author has to the question stated above. To address what is related to the border in Quiroga’s work, Fleming raises three levels, primarily: a) the “geographical border”, which would be the setting for Quiroga’s stories; b) the “human border”, which refers to the characters, most of whom are immigrants, exiles, and fugitives in general; and, finally, c) the “linguistic border”, the mixture between Portuguese, Guaraní, and Spanish. From these three levels, Fleming (“Introducción”, 42) points out the composition of “a border style” since, for her, “A border world necessarily demands a border style”²⁴.

Fleming’s discovery is the relationship she establishes between the geographic, political, linguistic, and human borders and Quiroga’s way of writing. However, there seems to be some underlying determinism to the way the argument is presented, with a causal relationship between the outside world and literary production, as if all writers from Misiones had to

²⁴ “Un mundo de frontera reclama necesariamente un estilo fronterizo”

necessarily be a kind of Quiroga, writing – in a border language – short stories in which the border was a theme – which is certainly not the case. On the other hand, if the author's answer to the question I raised above suggests an inseparability between theme and technique, Quiroga's "border style", according to her argument, corresponds only to a reflection of the world, even with all its accompanying natural, linguistic, and political thickness. The border for Fleming would then be, above all, the limit between territories, the consequent linguistic interpenetration, and, finally, the presence of exiled, banished, and acculturated people; and this given world would correspond to the style that Quiroga makes use of in his narratives. According to this perspective, consequently, Quiroga's masterpiece where the border is fully realised would be the book *Los desterrados*: "the encounter with the border, which grows throughout his work, is only openly realised in his mature stories; *Los desterrados* is the most representative work in this regard"²⁵ (Fleming, "Introducción", 33).

However, the notion of border that I am building along these lines, even though it considers aspects addressed by Fleming – such as the relationship between form and content –, does not share with her the view that such a relationship is fully causally determined. Furthermore, I distance myself from her point of view by taking into account that Horacio Quiroga's literature is not the way it is merely because it was written on the border between nations and languages as defined by the current geopolitical configuration of that given region. The border is seen here as something more than this separating mark; I consider Quiroga to be more than a Uruguayan exile in the neighbouring country, in the jungles of northern Argentina, writing literature on the border; Rather, he is, above all, a writer

²⁵ "el encuentro con lo fronterizo, que va creciendo a lo largo de su obra, sólo se realiza abiertamente en los cuentos de la madurez; *Los desterrados* es el libro más representativo en este sentido". It would also be worth noting how Fleming seems to refer in a somewhat negative way, either to this border world or to Quiroga's style. To the former, regarding the linguistic aspect, the author says, when referring to Portuñol: "This language, considered 'savory' by a professional wordsmith, nevertheless reveals deep cultural limitations in its speakers – who are soon turned into characters" (Fleming, "Introducción", 40). As for Quiroga's way of narrating, this i show she qualifies it: "a **fluctuating and contradictory point of view**" (Ibid, 43, our highlights), "The change in point of view is in this case **slow and confusing**" (Ibid, 52, our highlights). The causal relationship that Fleming sees can also be noticed in: "[Quiroga] values the voice of his characters and achieves agility and conciseness **by giving aesthetic richness to the outlandish and clumsy language of his actors** (...) the narrator's language (...) is attuned to the roughness of the world it describes" (Ibid, 41, our highlights).

inserted in the Argentine discourse, bringing to his own writing a fundamental aspect of the border, the discourse that permeated the establishment of Argentine territory in the nineteenth century.

Thus, by assuming the category of the border as something broader than the natural, geographic, political, and linguistic boundaries, I am also going to assume that the theme and style of the short stories that allude to this border world are not limited to jungle stories that have Misiones or Chaco as their settings. I therefore extend my attention to urban narratives and articles dealing with the writing of short stories, for example.²⁶ This is a way of reading that factors in a feature of Quiroga's work that is fundamental in its constitution.

In this way, it is necessary to cover, albeit briefly, central elements of the process of constitution of Argentine borders, given that the historical will be, at this moment, another other level of the border with which we are going to work, as it provides an account of the genesis of a discourse that is present in Quiroga's narrative.

This approach aims to make it explicit that the border, beyond being denotatively constituted as a landmark establishing the limits of Argentine territory, showing how far Argentina physically extends and where the foreign begins; it is also discursively constituted throughout the nineteenth century, governed by a discourse that defined what did not fit into that national project. This discourse also has its landmarks, often more naturalised than those of the physical borders. And even if these are hidden milestones, they often become manifest when transgressed.

On the border discourse

We are going to begin this discussion with some strong terms, whose presence in Quiroga's literature is remarkable, such as "*frontera*", "*desierto*", "*salvaje*".²⁷ These terms are also frequently found in the intellectual production

²⁶ I use the term "narrative articles" based on Lafforgue (in Quiroga, *Todos los cuentos*). Reading Quiroga's articles on literature not as theory, but as narrative, or a fiction of theory, is Macherey's approach (1971) when dealing with the articles and Poe's conference on literature, such as "Philosophy of Composition" (1846). I would also like to add that freeing the writer's work from the constraints of his own – necessarily partial – reading is a greatly productive step towards a better understanding of his work. I allude here to the critics who insisted on reading Quiroga's short stories in the light (or under the shadow) of his "commandments", even when some clearly contradicted the others. We are going to address these issues in the third chapter of this work.

²⁷ I am referring here to the following works by Quiroga: *El salvaje* (1920), *El desierto* (1924), and *Más Allá* (1935); the territorial notion is brought up in the titles