A MULTIMODAL TRANSLATION OF FOLKTALES: TEXT, ILLUSTRATION AND CULTURAL COUNTERSIGNS IN EL HEMATOCRÍTICO[1]

GERARDO FERNÁNDEZ SAN EMETERIO
gerarfer@ucm.es
Universidad Complutense de Madrid / ELLI Group

Abstract

Folktale's versions can be understood as successive translations of underlining archetypes. In the case of El Hematocrítico's stories, this translation happens in a double sense: that of the text and that of the illustration. In the dialogue between both aspects, the whole sense of the story emerges. In this paper, we will analyse the connection between both of them in the narrative sense, but in the descriptive one as well. Moreover, these stories have been published between 2014 and 2020 and this makes the dialogue go from a timeless worldview to another one, clearly marked by post-digital (or hyper-digital) culture. Besides this, but connected to it, we find in these stories some cultural countersigns devoted mostly to adults intermediating in children's readings. They show the transformation of the collective imagination after years of interaction between reading and audiovisual media.

Keywords: Folktales. Translation. Multimodality. Children's and young readers' literature. El Hematocrítico.

Resumen

Las versiones de los cuentos tradicionales pueden entenderse como sucesivas traducciones de los arquetipos que subyacen a ellos. En el caso de los cuentos firmados por El Hematocrítico, esta traducción se da en un doble plano –el del texto y el de la ilustración–, y surge del diálogo entre ambos aspectos. En este estudio veremos la relación que se establece entre los dos tanto desde el punto de vista narrativo, como del descriptivo. Por otra parte, a lo largo de los seis años que separan el primero, y el quinto y último de esta serie de cuentos, este diálogo avanza desde una visión atemporal del mundo, hasta una visión postdigital (o híperdigital). Junto con ello, encontramos contraseñas culturales destinadas, en buena medida a mediadores en la lectura infantil, que muestran la transformación del imaginario colectivo tras años de interacción de los medios audiovisuales con la lectura.

Palabras clave: Cuentos tradicionales. Traducción Multimodalidad. Literatura infantil y juvenil. El Hematocrítico.

1. Introduction

The tales that will be under discussion in the following pages are signed by El Hematocrítico. Behind this pen name hides the author from A Coruña Miguel López, a pre-school teacher in his hometown's school of Las Esclavas who is also active as a blogger and commentator in social networks like Twitter or Instagram, where his pen name initially came from. His identity had remained unknown until the popularity of his tales led him to reveal himself. So far, the tales are *Feliz Feroz* (2014), *Agente Ricitos* (2016), *El Lobo con botas* (2018), *Rapunzel con piojos* (2019), *Excelentísima Caperucita* (2020) and *Menudo cabritillo* (2021). The first three tales, along with some paratexts such as introductory letters or kitchen recipes, were featured in a volume entitled *El bosque de los cuentos* by the end of 2020. The author has collaborated with two illustrators: Alberto Vázquez, for the three first tales, and Mar Villar, for the last three. In parallel, the author has started to publish other works such as *Leyendas del recreo*, *Max burbuja* o *Hematitos*, all of them of a very different nature to the one under discussion.

What has finally become the ensemble of *El bosque de los cuentos* first appeared as a standalone title in 2014 (*Feliz Feroz*), building up one title at a time. As opposed to the recurrent writing of planned sagas, the author under discussion has seemingly opted for an 'on the move' strategy marked by the surprise factor (see interview for *El Progreso*) with which he takes advantage from his closeness to a child audience.

So far, the author has avoided "the publishing of success tailgating clones"[2] (Lluch 2007). Quite the contrary, El Hematocrítico displays a great ability to create stories based on characters and settings found in folktales. The narrative approach is different in each case, without resorting to a parody version up until the fourth one (*Rapunzel con piojos*). Even so, the parody brings about a brand-new story. This will not be the case with *Menudo cabritillo* (2021), where the author finally does resort to a modernized version of *The Seven Young Goats*. As for the remaining tales, the stories stem out of the clash between the subject matter of folktales and different aspects of current life.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the relation between text and illustration in the development of the narrative and descriptive levels within each of these tales. I will study the interrelation between text and illustration in these tales because both constitute two aspects of the same piece of work and entail two types of learning for the child reader.

Moreover, the authors of both text and illustrations are modifying said interrelation as the storylines of the tales become deeper and more complex, seemingly targeting older children. This will affect both the narrative and descriptive aspects, which will become more complex from tale to tale.

Along with this, the writing moves on towards a post-digital —namely hyper-digital— environment; an aspect that shall be analysed in the last section of the paper.

---

2. Unless otherwise noted, translations of quotations in the text are mine. See the Spanish version of this article for the originals.

2. Versions of tales as translations

2.1. Folktales as literary and cultural foundation

One of the most interesting aspects of the tales that will be under discussion is that the authors have used them as a way of elaborating brand-new creations designed for six-year-old children and up (*Feliz Feroz*), as well as for older children, even if the subsequent titles have no minimum reading age recommended by the publishing house. Folktales, an ever-renovating material, stand out for their lability and resilience. If "our daily life is pierced by allusions and references to tales" (Pisanty 1995: 9), an aspect that would be subsequently developed by other authors (Frank 2010; Zipes 2012). Even more so, these have been claimed as a universal collective memory (Burkert, in Zipes 2012: 33) and described as an "endless text" and a "humankind's historical project" (Rodríguez Almodóvar 2004: 25). The latter scholar states that "under the appearance of chaos" there lie "certain patterns, certain structures that provide cohesion while giving room to diversity; that is, a grammar" (Rodríguez Almodóvar 2004: 25).

This 'grammar' would be based upon a series of functions (Propp 1968) or 'motifemes' (Burkert, in Zipes 2012: 33), as well as on certain archetypes (Jung 2002) that would be repeated by humankind every time they 'tell themselves'. Superimposed on these, as metaphorical elements, would be the motifs analysed by Aarne, Thompson and Uther. All this is also connected to the fact that "the pleasure of narration and the joy of listening to stories are as inherent to human beings as they are essential to their happiness" (García Carcedo 2020: 15). This 'self-telling' of our species is conveyed through absolutely personal versions. As Ayala (1984: 54) stressed:

> Based on the fantasies that inspire children's games and the youth's day-dreaming […], our lives are set in motion by a project with which each one seeks to comply […], a project that sets the way of all our meaningful acts, and even determines our very physical appearance.

All of the above may explain why, since Count Gozzi in the 18th century, specific authors such as Balló & Pérez (2006) or Polti (2018) have referred to the existence of a limited series of theatrical —as well as cinematic— storylines that we humans would continue to depict in either oral or written literary works, therefore conforming an "intangible heritage" (Prat Ferrer n.d.: 7ff.)

that, still, would be considered brand-new and personal. I accordingly consider the versions of folktales to be translations, as they render from one language to the next —thus implying a different worldview— based upon a system of upheld archetypes and functions. Zipes (2012: 15) considers these to "emerge out of the biological and cultural dispositions of human beings".

Therefore, the interrelation between the oral —which had prevailed for centuries— and the written versions had spawned an immeasurable series of creative variations throughout the ages in the same way that we humans are able to create countless enunciations out of a limited set of signs.

Despite the abovementioned, the connection between orality and writing was deeply modified throughout the 19th century, probably due to the international circulation of the compilation by the Brothers Grimm. Their translation —both in the literal sense and in the one I give to the term in this paper— 'helped establish folklore as a field for serious academic inquiry' (Tehrani 2013: 1). That is to say, it was a translation in the regular sense of the term that modified the way in which these cultural translations about heard-read-told tales were carried out. Even so, these translations were not exempt from changes (García Carcedo 2020: 182), so that referring to them is to simply refer to a series of adapted formulations into different languages and cultures.

In addition, during this process, the tales began to be considered as something preferably written and almost exclusively meant for children (Shavit 1989), an assumption we are facing nowadays:

> Contemporary Western societies often make the mistake of seeing children as the sole receptors of folktales, an error that has made version makers simplify and empty the tales of their original richness. (García Carcedo 2020:15).

The two verbs used by professor García Carcedo, 'to simplify' and 'to empty', define a large amount of the versions —in the most diverse formats— that we find of these stories. Frequently, in addition to closely following the texts by Charles Perrault or the aforementioned Brothers Grimm, their aim is to deactivate the tales' darkest side —which cannot fail to appear, as it reflects the image of human beings (Colomer 1996; Hanán Díaz 2020). Nonetheless, Rodari (1996: 95) had already pointed out that the "decodification" of the tale "does not occur according to laws that are the same for everyone, but

according to private laws that are highly personal". That is, whenever each one of us listens to, reads, or watches a tale, we render that version into our personal worldview. Namely, we would update that universal grammar that Zipes (2012: 59) explains through the whale metaphor as a symbol of the lability and resilience that were highlighted at the beginning of this paper.

This is what El Hematocrítico will carry out, albeit using parody as the primary element of his translation. Parodies are defined as a "burlesque imitation" (DRAE), whose venerable antiquity had already been underlined by Genette (1982: 19-20). Furthermore, Rodari (1996) had stressed several years ago how children used to put it into practice over children's literature as they grew older. As confirmed by García Carcedo (2018), this procedure helps to move forward from folktales to adult literature through various pathways. Among those, the author under discussion makes use of two of them: the dialogue with illustrations —the multimodal— and the insertion of cultural countersigns. This way, the lability and resilience of tales allow them to be used almost constantly in new translations— "old wine into new wineskins", as Menéndez Pelayo paraphrased the biblical text.

2.2. *The multimodal and its extension into children's and young readers' literature*

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, these translations of tales have been influenced by the experimental advance in the audiovisual, and in the multimodal milieu (Zipes 2012: 14), defined as the one where "options do not only occur at a verbal communication level, but simultaneously with other choice systems that are made along with it" (Martín Menéndez 2012: 64).

In this respect, picture books present themselves as a basic multimodal product, a "hybrid medium that maintains resources from classic literature and images, while incorporating a temporal succession shared with audio-visual media" (Lapeña Gallego 2013: 87). Its evolution has brought about products such as the tales under discussion, whose format may be referred to as 'picture book' even though their length tells us otherwise, yet sharing the distinctive connection between text and illustration as a "harmonious ensemble" (Hoster & Lobato 2007: 120) or as a "unique body text" (García

Padrino 2004:74). Let us not forget, however, that Barbara Bader (quoted in Senís 2014: 116) has described it as a "work of art".

This sense of unity has allowed narration to become more and more complex over the past few years. Beyond the case under discussion, we find examples such as *El pueblo durmiente* (2017), where Rebecca Dautremer carries out a version of *Sleeping Beauty* where we can distinguish two simultaneous narrative levels, each one defined by a different illustrating process; or Ibon Barrenetxea's illustrated edition of *Snow White* (2019) by the Brothers Grimm, where the pictures present —in parallel— the hunter's story once he disappears from the plot of the tale. Another recent example would be the short story collection *Siete caperucitas y un cuento con lobo* (2016) by Carles Cano (Fernández San Emeterio 2019), where text and illustration perform a dialogue that builds up the entirety of the text; not just a literary text anymore, but artistic as well.

In the case of El Hematocrítico's tales, as well as in the abovementioned collection by Cano, illustration works as the bridge to a more complex narrative structure than the text alone would allow. This lays out a challenge in the field of education, as it enables the translation of image into text, thus inverting the main image-based trend.

3. The tales of El Hematocrítico

In the case of the tales by El Hematocrítico, translation emerges from the dialogue between text and illustration, which will be modified in each of the six titles that have been analysed.

3.1. How does the author write?

The author plays with written and audiovisual versions of folktales; that is to say, oral tradition is not considered. The impression transmitted by the tales is that functions and characters are used as dolls in a toy box with which new stories are created. This working method is directly related to child's play as seen by Rodari (1973: 219-228) in "Games in the Pine Forest", but also to the metaphorical substance of said functions and characters that face, through parody, what could be their expected use within the grammar of tales. Rodari himself stressed a change in their use, which I have been considering as

translation: "from the sacred to the profane, from rites to games: such is the path taken by more than a few human products throughout the ages and the cultural models" (Rodari 2017: 120). In other words, the tales that originated from an explanation of the world end up being used to create new stories without losing their essence in the process.

These are very personal versions where the playful component does not neglect proposals related to contemporary values. If "as with all cultural products, children's literature is not exempt from ideology" (Hanán Díaz 2020: 11), the author proposes situations that can be extrapolated to the most day-to-day reality, related in turn to personal statements, philanthropy, and social commitment. Thus, we may find ourselves with the will to find a path of our own (*Feliz Feroz*, *Rapunzel con piojos*, and *Menudo cabritillo*), or to trust oneself despite the image others may have of oneself (*Agente Ricitos*); but also, to be on guard against consumerism and social media (*El Lobo con botas*), or to trust in the possibilities brought by collective action (*Excelentísima Caperucita*).

Furthermore, all of this appears as the logic consequence of the main characters' actions, which break away from the archetypes on which they are based without needing to turn to an explicit moral that would undo or lessen the playful component. It is what has been described as "the derisory effect […] of modifying what is expected" (Cañadas García 2020: 26).

3.2. Working with illustration

Since these new stories, the presence of narrative and descriptive elements in the illustration makes it possible to work towards the expansion of the child reader's linguistic abilities, as well as their 'visual literacy'. It is precisely "extra information, not strictly necessary to understand the story" (Colomer 2002: 19), but which undoubtedly complements it, and can serve as an incentive to the child reader's expression.

3.2.1. Illustration as a narrative element

The first group of tales, in different numbers depending on the title, and almost always on double-page spreads —for "the predominance of double-page spread over single-page spread so as to catch the reader's attention

over a specific scene on which to pause for a longer period of time" (Lapeña Gallego 2013: 88)—, presents a time jump —similar to the summary in literature for young readers and adults.

Thus, they will set the change of narrative sequence in *Feliz Feroz* as follows: we see Wolf and Little Wolf howling on top of two hills (pp. 18-19) because Wolf wants to test his nephew's acoustic power so as to start his education as a wolf once the cosiness of home has been abandoned. Thereupon (pp. 22-23) is a meadow where rabbits collect and eat carrots, and they go fishing; meanwhile, the two wolves are lurking: "'Look at this meadow! Now! Attack, now! Go fill up your tummy!', Wolf says, and Little Wolf replies: 'What tasty carrots! And those clovers just look delicious!'" (p. 24).

Thus, the two first double-paged illustrations show the nature of both Wolf and Little Wolf, whereas the tales in which the Big Bad Wolf has a prominent role —*Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Seven Young Goats*— are introduced starting from the third one. Both uncle and nephew will appear in these ones. However, their appearance in *The Seven Young Goats*, which will not actually come to fruition, will break up said structure: the illustration presents the main part of the tale (pp. 53-54) to show the immediate conflict resolution and the passing of time, whereas we already find out the end of the story on pages 60-61.

The main character in *Agente Ricitos* —a nosy, mouthy little girl— is firstly depicted throughout image before it is done through words: when the bears scare her into waking up, the double-paged illustration (pp. 16-17) shows us this Goldilocks with teased-up hair —perhaps a nod to Dolly Parton's backcombed hairstyle— who is not the sweet girl from the nineteenth-century tale anymore, but a very self-confident person. The expression in her pupils —as she appears sideways— is more than enough to know her reply in the next page will be feisty: "'Good grief!', Goldilocks yelled, 'What a ruckus! Do you think you can scare someone who is sleeping like that? That could've given me a stroke, come on!'" (p. 18).

As in *Feliz Feroz*, the illustration in double-page spread aims for the introduction of brand-new narrative sections, such as the one where Goldilocks, alongside the reader, enters the Seven Dwarves' house (pp. 28-29) and searches the wardrobe while Snow White and her seven friends, standing behind her, are looking angrily at the girl.

In this new section, the action will be expressed more clearly through the image rather than through the text —limited to the essential and to trivial details, albeit certainly amusing. Goldilocks manages to prevent Snow White from falling into her evil stepmother's trick; even more so, she makes the police officers in the woods arrest her (pp. 36-37), just as if we were watching a film scene. I insist on the use of the first-person plural because the authors are playing here with the anticipation of what child readers already know about the tale: even before the characters appear, the signs included in the illustration make it possible to identify them, thus working on the inference.

Furthermore, pages 36 and 37 open up a new sequence: Goldilocks starts saving all of the tales' protagonists from the dangers they encounter —first up, Hänsel and Gretel— , making the police ask her to work alongside them. Goldilocks rejects the offer, but has an idea that is brought to life, once again, through two apparently disjointed illustrations (pp. 48-49): the Wolf, who has turned into a tailor, is measuring Goldilocks and, in the next page, a piper is marching towards a cliff followed by a group of children —a new case of inference. Only on page 50 will we see Goldilocks dressed as a super heroine standing in the Piper's way to distract him up until the police (pp. 52-53) arrives to arrest him: "Freeze, you're under arrest! Put the flute on the ground!". That is to say, the two illustrations entail a change of sequence while leaving the action on hold, which will be resolved once the next sequence starts, when Goldilocks makes it easier to arrest the Piper.

Later on, the illustrations will return to serve as a narrative summary in showing how Goldilocks progresses in her fight against 'the bad ones', promptly leading us to an ending where we see her watching over the woods, always on the lookout, on top of a tree. Prior to this, we may see a summary —this time, in the literal sense— of her deeds on the police station's bulletin board: "Piper arrested on massive kidnapping", "Foiled robbery on the Big Bad Bakery", "Goldilocks named favourite daughter of the woods by major" (p. 54).

From *El lobo con botas* onwards, the role played by illustration will be different both for its narrative function and for the page layout itself: though illustrations are on double-paged spread on pages 10 and 11, as well as on pages 18 and 19, they share space with the text —broader and more elaborated than in the two last tales.

However, pages 16 and 17 only feature one illustration with two scenes where the Wolf finds a pair of boots like the ones the Puss wears and offers them to his nephew. Rather than a summary, it is a full episode on its own that, just like the ending of *Feliz Feroz*, has no text. Instead, we do find a summary function on pages 40-41, where the Wolf transforms his tailor shop into a Puss in Boots' branded shop, much to Little Wolf's dismay, who is watching it all from the roof in disgust. Nevertheless, the process in which the Wolf tricks the Puss into posing with the products he gave him as presents (pp. 32-39) shows a balance between both components where the illustration fully captures the Puss's reactions to the Wolf's presents, whereas what is purely narrative stays on the text.

Moreover, as it already happened in *Agente Ricitos*, this illustration leaves the action on hold to bring it to the Puss's palace, where a group of soldiers bursts in: "Your Catness! [...] There is a giant wreaking havoc in the kingdom!" (p. 42). In this case, the change in narration introduces the second part or "sequence" of the tale (Rodríguez Almodóvar 1983: 26), which is frequently lost according to this scholar, but has been preserved in cases such as Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*.

This second part is based on Propp's ninth function —" misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go, or he is dispatched" (Propp 1968: 36)—, a regular in chivalry books as well, with which the world of tales has so many similarities. I would like to emphasise this aspect, for it is precisely what will happen to the Puss: he is on his way to slay the giant, yet his fans —led by the Three Little Pigs— ask him for a signature on their "official T-shirt", which can be purchased on the "Puss in Boots official store" (p. 49); which, of course, is the one owned by the Big Bad Wolf.

As soon as the Puss is aware of the situation, he quickly forgets his mission and storms into the store, where he and the Wolf reach an agreement after an initial argument. The corresponding illustration —pp. 44 and 45— shows how the Puss sets off to accomplish his mission. At this point, we find ourselves with a similar page layout to the ones found in comic books, as it already appeared in *Feliz Feroz* and in *Agente Ricitos*: that is, four little illustrations accompanied by four pieces of short texts, which leads us to a more ancient reference: the 'alleluia' broadsheets.

Meanwhile, however, Little Wolf has already arrested the giant, capturing him thanks to one of his cakes: the one that leaves him hungry —and then sleepy. Text and illustration are specially interposed and complementary to each other in the following narrative sequence (pp. 59-63): the excerpt where Little Wolf tells how he got ahead of the Puss comes with an illustration featuring a setting sun effect —see the elongated shadows— that highlights the character's sadness while showing the let-down of both the Wolf and the Puss. The descriptive, and even subjective, element of the evening light is easily interleaved in the preferentially narrative discourse of these illustrations.

As the complexity of the text evolves in *Rapunzel con piojos*, the interleaving of illustrations also becomes more complicated. To begin with, the full double-page spread, aside from marking the narrative sequences, defines the action as a graphic replacement for the tales' opening and closing formulas. The end (pp. 66-67) is particularly remarkable, as the text features the closing formula while leaving, in turn, an open ending: "Snip, snap, snout, Rapunzel got her fleas out. Beaten and defeated, the terrible fleas got… away? Oh…". The image shows three rubbish containers at the foot of the tower. Rapunzel's cut out hair comes out of them, and the fleas jump out of it to invade the Piper's dog, Little Wolf, the Puss in Boots, and a superheroine clad Goldilocks. Thus, the picture allows the story to go on beyond the formula, even imagining a follow-up.

In the rest of this tale, except for the illustrations of Villa Piojo —the town built by the fleas on Rapunzel's head—, to which I will be referring in the section about descriptive illustrations, the illustration will act as a narrative companion to the text. This will allow for the presence of nods to cultural references, as we will discuss later on.

The same idea of putting the illustration at the service of narrative complexity may be found in *Excelentísima Caperucita*. On the opening formula, we may observe a dichotomy between the illustration —a castle with red crenels in the style of *Exín Castles* in a green garden and under a lowering sky— and the text that is featured above: "Inside a very scary castle, a very evil stepmother talked to her mirror" (p. 10). There is nothing, apart from the clouds, that turns this toy castle into a scary place. On the next page, the Stepmother and her mirror —which is actually a tablet with voice

assistant— are arguing. This beginning requires a much more mature reader, as the scene will be on hold whenever a new character in the woods —a 'covered-up' character 'visiting a pig' (p. 12)— draws their attention. This new character will, in turn, lead us to the main plot of the tale, whereas the mirror will not appear again until the end of the story (p. 57 and onwards), in a game set in 'ring composition' that requires some reading experience: we see the Mirror transformed into an information service that offers us, on the last page, a healthy partridge recipe from Little Wolf's ebook edition of *A 101 Cooking Recipes to Live Happily Ever After*.

Going back to the 'mysterious figure' who visits the Three Pigs' real estate agency searching for "a nice house to rest and be at ease" (p. 14), as they just retired, the illustration (p. 15) shows us an oriental piece of clothing from with the unmistakable Aladdin's lamp falls. The pig, dressed in a high neck sweater, and sitting on an office desk with a computer, and agenda and a pencil pot, cannot hide his astonishment: "Excuse me, mister! You dropped this... GEEEE!" (p. 14). Playing with the world of tales and the contemporary world brings the archetypes up to date without making them lose their historical content, thanks to the careful presentation of each character. Thus, we see the park to where the pig is headed (16-17), where we find his two siblings standing next to Red Riding Hood, Little Wolf, Garbancito, Cinderella, who is drinking from a can, Gretel, who is reading a book, and Hansel, who is brushing the hair of a doll that resembles Rapunzel.

The text takes precedence over illustration in the rest of the tale, as far as narration is concerned.

With regard to *Menudo cabritillo*, the predominance of the text carries on through a roguish version of *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Seven Young Goats*. The illustration only completes the narration in three specific moments: firstly, when the Wolf climbs up the chimney to try and catch the Pigs, but ends up falling into the boiling pot; secondly, when he has to build a swimming pool for the Young Goats —who laugh at him in this version, the youngest one calling him a "loser" (p. 35); and, thirdly, in a rather strange open ending —such as the one in *Rapunzel con piojos*—, where the Young Goat, now a police officer, has bought the house next to the one owned by a now domesticated Wolf, "a respectable citizen and a good person; well, animal —a *humanized* one—" (p. 12), and makes his tea cup fall —the

illustrations only show a pair of wide-opened eyes and the broken cup on the floor—, while the text clarifies that this tale "is far from over" (p. 68).

3.2.2. Illustration as a descriptive element

Certainly, all images, even if their predominant function is the narrative one, include descriptive elements that can be easily deduced by the child reader. Nevertheless, the descriptive function will diverge from the narrative as the tales become more complex and require more text for a full comprehension.

What stands out among the ensemble of these tales is the evolution of the common setting in which they all take place: 'the woods'. This 'counterworld' (Zipes 2012: 45) that is supposedly inherent to the folktale will be replaced by a remarkably modernised setting —not just because of the textual implications, but due to the image's fixation (Jover 2007: 48-49). If the Wolf and his sister talk in *Feliz Feroz* through a red land line reminiscent of certain models from the seventies, and the woods are dense and closed, with classic red gamble-roofed hamlets seen from afar —see *Agente Ricitos*—, the woods' limits are firstly set on the flyleaves, where they are located on a peninsula surrounded by water, as the setting in which all the tales appearing along the plot will take place: *The Three Bears*, *Snow White*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Ali Baba*, *The Three Pigs*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*, as well as the Big Bad Wolf's tailor shop. Thus, the woods start taking on a physical form, marked by modern elements such as the presence of the woods' police, whose cars and uniforms are very similar to those of the Spanish Civil Guard. These bring the tale closer to Spanish current life, as much or more than Goldilocks's way of speaking.

Nonetheless, the woods will still be a spooky place at night when Hansel and Gretel wander through them as the trees are seemingly moving to catch them (p. 39). The witch's house will also look traditional (p. 40-41), and even Mr. Wolf's tailor shop (p. 48), where one may find a measuring tape, an oval mirror, and a hundred-year-old sewing machine. This character will look the same in *El lobo con botas* (p. 12 and pp. 16-17). In each of these cases, the illustration completely replaces the descriptive aspects of the text, which is limited to its narrative function.

The woods' setting will not be as important in *Rapunzel con piojos*, for the whole story takes place inside the tower where the protagonist lives. However, there are three illustrations featuring Villa Piojo, the town built by the fleas on Rapunzel's head (pp. 32-33, 34-35, 42-43, 52-53, and 58-59). Here, on what is a second narrative level that barely has a role in the main plot, a modern universe appears, aimed at stimulating the descriptive skills of young readers: each of the illustrations by Mar Villar are an invitation to pay attention to them, to run through their details, to even create, out of them, the stories of a new town modelled on today's cities. The use of visual language to introduce a subplot guides the reader towards these secondary storylines and the interleaved stories that are found in so many literary works targeted to educated readers (Colomer 2002: 38). Moreover, the aforementioned rubbish containers that appear in the last illustration, whose narrative role has been previously discussed, will be bound to the update of the woods' setting.

Furthermore, it is in this title where the tales' characters, who have been interacting more freely on previous titles, are mixed out of the toy box into a counterworld that is, paradoxically, deeply rooted in the most immediate present day. Evidence of this is shown since the flyleaves, where, as it happens in *Agente Ricitos*, there are relevant pieces of information related to the plot: that is, the posters with which each of the political parties is running for the woods' polls. Through this, the authors place us into completely different woods right before the start, closer to a concrete jungle than actual woods. Thus, the authors propose a reality for 'older children', which concurs with a greater narrative difficulty and surely overlaps in terms of age with the departure from tales pointed out by Rodari (2012: 55) while potentially serving, like Pilar García Carcedo (2018) has proposed, as a bridge towards literature for young and adult readers. It is interesting to note that these urbanised woods are the foundation to a subversive vision of the tale: the

mirror becomes independent, the Genie retires, the Stepmother and Red Riding Hood go to the polls, etc.; each one, a choice made in adult life.

This allows description to take on alternative paths: if we had characters from some tales reappearing on others on previous titles —such as the aforementioned reimagining of the Wolf as a tailor measuring Goldilocks for her superheroine suit—, in *Excelentísima Caperucita* (pp. 16-17) we may see the Pigs at the park together with Red Riding Hood, Little Wolf, Garbancito, Cinderella, who is drinking from a can, Gretel, who is reading a book, and Hansel, who is brushing the hair of a doll that resembles Rapunzel.

Likewise, starting from p. 28, whenever the woods' campaign brings the characters together, we may see odd groupings where a dragon leans out over the witch with the red apple and, alongside them, we may see, among others, Rapunzel's father, Snow White —reprimanding the dwarves for playing around her—, Pinocchio —who is only indirectly derived from folktales—, and animals from the fables such as the Hare, the Tortoise and a vulture that resembles the Nottingham Sheriff's guard on Disney's version of *Robin Hood*. In doing so, the authors fully immerse themselves into the aforementioned parody of tales that I have been comparing to a toy box.

With regard to *Pequeño cabritillo*, the illustration —as well as the text— keep up with the same contemporary, urban living standard of the previous title. Thus, the Pigs' houses are qualified according to current adult patterns that clearly reach a mocking sense whenever they appear in the following context: according to its builder, the first pig's house of straw is "responsible and ecological architecture" (p. 14), whereas the house of stone is described by the narrator while being shown through an illustration:

> The older brother's house of stone was a whole different thing. It was neither ecological, nor recyclable, nor sustainable. It was not particularly responsible either, but it was made of stone. That hard thing that castles and churches are made of, and all ancient buildings too. It with-stands the rain, cannon fire and the blowing of big bad wolves as well. (p. 16)

This is the first case of duplication in the entire series of tales.

Likewise, the Young Goats' appearance —one of them is wearing red glasses and another one is wearing his cap backwards—, is consistently modern in contrast with the Wolf's, who is drawn wearing leopard jeans, a leather jacket, and sporting an eighties punk hairstyle.

Besides its use in the creation of settings, the descriptive use of illustration is found in abovementioned details such as the introduction of Goldilocks (pp. 16-17), or the Puss's reactions to the new accessories the Wolf gives him as gifts (pp. 32-39), as well as the moment when Little Wolf arrests the giant (pp. 59-63).

4. On updating the worldview: the presence of cultural countersigns and the post-digital in the tales under discussion

As we have seen above, during the six years in which these translations of folktales that are the tales by El Hematocrítico have been written and published, the dialogue between text and illustration has progressed from a modern, yet timeless worldview —which could be easily set between the seventies and the nineties— into another contemporary worldview that gives room to the post-digital or hyper-digital.[3] The feeling is that the authors are targeting an increasingly older audience, and, therefore, may tackle adult life issues that require more current references. This will be traced through the presence of cultural countersigns and post-digital aspects.

4.1. Cultural countersigns: Svetlana Boym's concept of nostalgia

Initially aimed for mediators in children's reading, these countersigns show the transformation of collective imagination after years of interaction between reading and the audiovisual media. Their inclusion is not just a nod to the adult mediator (Cámara Aguilera 2019), but a bridge —understood within the terms of what Boym (2020) refers to as "reflexive nostalgia"— in the gap between past and future that shows aspects of a not-so-distant past to children who read in company of others. These are little details that mostly appear in the last three titles: *Rapunzel con piojos*, *Excelentísima Caperucita* and *Menudo cabritillo*. The possible reference to Dolly Parton's hairdo in *Agente Ricitos* remains aside altogether. The greater complexity of the plots in these tales often relegates illustrations to the background, often

---

3. The term 'hyper-digital' has been suggested (Feixa *et al.* 2016: 109), and, personally, an advantage to its use is the avoidance of the 'pre-' prefix, which I consider imprecise, if the excess repetition of said prefix be excused.

literally the action's 'illustration'. This allows them to spare no details such as references to Disney films —*Snow White* and *Robin Hood*— in *Rapunzel con piojos*, or the election propaganda posters and the reference to the 2014 Oscar selfie (p. 35) where the Genie sees the other characters waiting on the other side of the camera viewer in *Excelentísima Caperucita*. A remarkable case may be seen on the 58-59 double-paged spread in *Rapunzel con piojos*, where the fleas sing to the tune of the —singing— melody played by the Piper. In doing so, the parasites adopt several styles and outfits, from classic ballet and traditional Russian ballet to Charleston, conga, rock or twerking.

In the case of *Menudo cabritillo*, both the illustration and the text will be reflecting these countersigns. Thus, when mocking the Wolf, the Young Goats do not only tell him his voice and his paw are not the same as their mother's, but they also ask him for "six cream pies and one chocolate pie [...] and seven pineapple juices" (p. 41), and a game console later on (p. 46). The illustrations merely show the Young Goats laughing themselves sick while the Wolf has to go and get everything they have asked him for.

This type of countersigns allows the youngest readers to be introduced into a collective imagination that brings tales into the most current present day, thus connecting with the abovementioned eagerness to parody the known version of the tale as a way of relying on it to develop a personal intertextuality.

4.2. *The presence of the post-digital*

Incidental and gradual, but never structural: such will be the function of the post-digital in these tales. Nevertheless, and starting from *El Lobo con botas*, they will be appearing as the setting moves closer to the present-day world. In this same tale, in fact, the effect of social media on the children from the woods will be the focus of the criticism —indeed, it is— on consumerism and false advertising. After *Rapunzel con piojos*, where the contemporary world of Villa Piojo lacks all post-digital aspects —which does not seem coincidental to me—, the vicarious function of illustration when it comes to narration will give room to the presence of cultural nods, such as the one related to Disney's *Snow White*, where she offers herself to wash Rapunzel's hair while singing surrounded by animals as it is seen in the film (p. 41) or

the renowned song about Garbancito in the old radio version of *Cuentos del abuelo*, broadcast in the old days by Cadena SER (p. 49).

Even so, just like in the everyday lives of Spanish children, the use of computers, game consoles and tablets will be fully displayed and normalised in *Excelentísima Caperucita* and in *Menudo cabritillo*. Nor do I think it is coincidental that technology has reached its real role at the same time as current social issues, such as the risk of overexposure to social media, or the significance of public life, are beginning to be addressed.

5. Conclusions

Folktales are characterised by their labile and resilient nature, which has allowed them to adapt to political, social and cultural change. Nowadays, pieces of work such as the ones under discussion have incorporated, through multimodality, elements of everyday life.

Throughout these five tales, El Hematocrítico and the illustrators carry out a translation of folktales that brings about six brand-new stories close to current sensitivities. To this effect, firstly, the author treats the tales' functions and characters on which he is based on as a pre-existing material with which he creates new stories: that is, through parody.

This playful nature does not leave out the concern to bring child readers to reality by treating them as the adults they will become. This way, the counter-world implied by folktales is articulated in an increasingly contemporary, urban and realistic setting —as far as possible.

Illustration will serve as an extension to the text during this process, either narratively or descriptively. As the complexity of the text increases, the illustration will gradually have less narrative and descriptive elements, while laying out a contemporary setting where we will find audiovisual references from various origins. As for the last two tales, the countersigns present post-digital elements that bring the world of tales closer, if possible, to the current-life world.

References

AYALA, Francisco. (1984) *La estructura narrativa y otras experiencias literarias*. Barcelona: Crítica.

BALLÓ, Jordi & Xavier Pérez. (2006) *La semilla inmortal*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

BOYM Svetlana. (2021) "Nostalgia." <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html>. Last access: 30/04/2021.

CÁMARA AGUILERA, Elvira. (2019) *Traducciones, adaptaciones y doble destinatario en literatura infantil y juvenil*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

CANO, Carles. (2016) *Siete caperucitas y un cuento con lobo*. Illustrated by Emilio Uberuaga. Madrid: Anaya.

CAÑADAS GARCÍA, Teresa. (2020) "El cuento tradicional y su percepción actual." *Educación y futuro* 42, pp. 15-35.

COLOMER, Teresa. (1999) *Introducción a la literatura infantil y juvenil*. Madrid: Síntesis.

DAUTREMER, Rebecca. (2017) *El pueblo durmiente*. Zaragoza: Edelvives.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2014) *Feliz Feroz*. Illustrated by Alberto Vázquez. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2016) *Agente Ricitos*. Illustrated by Alberto Vázquez. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2018) *El Lobo con botas*. Illustrated by Alberto Vázquez. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2019) *Rapunzel con piojos*. Illustrated by Mar Villar. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2020) *Excelentísima Caperucita*. Illustrated by Mar Villar. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2020) *El bosque de los cuentos*. Illustrated by Alberto Vázquez. Madrid: Anaya.

EL HEMATOCRÍTICO. (2021) *Menudo cabritillo*. Illustrated by Mar Villar. Madrid: Anaya.

FEIXA, Carles; Ariadna Fernández-Planells & Mónica Figueras-Maz. (2016) "Generación Hashtag. Los movimientos juveniles en la era de la web social." *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud* 14:1, pp. 107-120.

FERNÁNDEZ SAN EMETERIO, Gerardo. (2019) "Caperucita en la obra de Carles Cano." *CLIJ* 292, pp. 18-27.

Frank, Arthur. (2010) *Letting stories breathe. A socio-narratology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

García Carcedo, Pilar. (2018) "Otros cuentos tradicionales y sus orígenes. Propuesta didáctica para las aulas de Secundaria." *Letra 15* 8. Online version: <http://www.letra15.es/repositorio/L15-08/L15-08-12-Pilar-Garcia-Carcedo-Otros-cuentos-tradicionales-y-sus-or%C3%ADgenes.pdf>. Last access: 25/05/2021.

García Carcedo, Pilar. (2020) *Entre brujas y dragones. Travesía comparativa por los cuentos tradicionales del mundo.* Madrid: Verbum.

García Padrino, Jaime. (2004) *Formas y colores: la ilustración infantil en España.* Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

Genette, Gerard. (1982) *Palimpsestes. La litterature au second degré.* París: Éditions du Seuil.

Grimm, Jakob & Wilhelm Grimm. (2019) *Blancanieves.* Ilustraciones de Iban Barrenetxea. Madrid: Nørdica.

Hanán Díaz, Fanuel. (2020) *Sombras, censuras y tabús en los libros infantiles.* Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

Hoster, Beatriz & María José Lobato. (2007) "Iniciación a la competencia literaria y artística a través del álbum ilustrado." *Lenguaje y textos* 26, pp. 119-134.

Jover, Guadalupe. (2007) *Un mundo por leer. Educación, adolescentes y literatura.* Barcelona: Octaedro.

Jung, Carl Gustav. (2002) [1974] *Los arquetipos y lo inconsciente colectivo*, en *Obra completa*. Madrid: Trotta, vol. 9/1.

Lapeña Gallego, Gloria. (2013) "Intencionalidad estética y narrativa de la doble página en el álbum ilustrado." *AILIJ* 11, pp. 81-92.

Lluch, Gemma. (2003) *Análisis de narrativas infantiles y juveniles.* Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

Martín Menéndez, Salvio. (2012) "Multimodalidad y estrategias discursivas: un abordaje metodológico." *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso* 12:1, pp. 57-73. Online version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.35956/v.12.n1.2012.p.57-73>. Last access: 12/05/2021.

Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. (1953) *Romancero Hispánico*, in *Obras Completas*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, vols. 9 & 10.

Prat Ferrer, Juan José. (n.d.) *Grandes relatos de la humanidad: el pensamiento mítico*. Documento inédito. Online version: <https://www.

academia.edu/3654895/El_pensamiento_m%C3%ADtico_Libro_de_texto?auto=download>. Last access: 25/09/2021.

PISANTY, Valentina. (1995) [1993] *Cómo se lee un cuento popular*. Barcelona: Paidós.

POLTI, Georges. (2018) [1895] *Las 36 situaciones dramáticas posibles*. S.l.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

PROPP, Vladmir. (1968) [1928] *Morphology of the folktale*. Transl. Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press.

RODARI, Gianni. (1973) *Gramática de la fantasía. Introducción al arte de crear historias*. Madrid: Booket.

RODARI, Gianni. (1996) *The grammar of fantasy. An introduction to the art of inventing stories*. Transl. Jack Zipes. New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative.

RODARI, Gianni. (2017) *Reflexiones sobre educación para profesores, padres y niños*. Barcelona: Blackie Books.

RODRÍGUEZ ALMODÓVAR, Antonio. (2004) *El texto infinito. Ensayos sobre el cuento popular*. Madrid: Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez.

SENÍS, Juan. (2014) "El álbum ilustrado como agente de educación artístico-literaria y de género el caso de *Mamá*, de Mariana Ruíz Johnson." *Dossiers feministes* 19, pp. 115-133.

SHAVIT, Zohar. (1989) "The concept of childhood and children's folktales: test case- *Little Red Riding Hood*." In: Dundes, Alan (ed.) 1989. *Little Red Riding Hood. A casebook*. Madison: University of Winsconsin Press, pp. 129-158.

TEHRANI, Jamshid, J. (2013) "The phylogeny of Little Red Riding Hood." *PLOS ONE* 8:11, e78871. Online version: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0078871>. Last access: 15/03/2021.

ZIPES, Jack. (2014) *El irresistible cuento de hadas. Historia cultural y social de un género*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

BIONOTE / NOTA BIOGRÁFICA

GERARDO FERNÁNDEZ SAN EMETERIO, PhD in Spanish Language and Literature at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), has taught both at the University of California and at the Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurés as well. He currently works as associate professor at the Department of Languages, Arts, and Physical Education (Faculty of Education, UCM). He belongs to

Grupo ELLI, (Literary Education and Children's Literature in Spanish) which is conducted by professor Begoña Regueiro in the same faculty.

His research comprises different aspects of Spanish literature between the Spanish Golden Age and the 20th century, mostly about the connection between words and music in theatre. Since his incorporation in the Faculty of Education, he has adapted his research career towards children's literature and literary education.

During the 2020-2021 school year, he has conducted the Innova Docentia project no. 440, "Reescritura y reciclaje de cuentos tradicionales. Recopilación de materiales para una página web".

GERARDO FERNÁNDEZ SAN EMETERIO es doctor en Filología Hispánica por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, ha trabajado también para las universidades de California y de Toulouse-Jean Jaurés. En la actualidad es profesor contratado doctor en el Departamento de Didáctica de las Lenguas, las Artes y la Educación Física en la Facultad de Educación-Centro de Formación del Profesorado de la UCM. Pertenece al Grupo ELLI (Educación Literaria y Literatura Infantil), que dirige Begoña Regueiro en la misma facultad.

Su investigación abarca diferentes aspectos de la literatura española entre el Siglo de Oro y el siglo XX, especialmente en la relación entre música y texto en el teatro. Desde su incorporación a la Facultad de Educación, ha redirigido su trayectoria investigadora hacia la literatura infantil y la educación literaria.

Durante el curso 2020-2021, dirigió el proyecto Innova Docentia 2021 nº 440, "Reescritura y reciclaje de cuentos tradicionales. Recopilación de materiales para una página web".