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The childlike voice of Quixote: intertextuality and rewriting in Lobato's adaptation of Cervantes

The childlike voice of Quixote: intertextuality and rewriting in Monteiro Lobato's adaptation of Cervantes

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Summary

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of Monteiro Lobato's recreation of "Don Quixote for Children" (1936) in relation to the original work by Miguel de Cervantes. The study is theoretically grounded in the discussion of literary adaptation for children and young adults, drawing on the contributions of Regina Zilberman (2003) and Robert Stam (2005 and 2006). The analysis is structured based on the categories proposed by Göte Klinberg (1973), encompassing the adaptation of subject matter, form, style, and medium. Additionally, the investigation delves into crucial aspects of Lobato's adaptation, such as the recreation of the comic element, the maintenance of Cervantes' metalanguage, the representation of Don Quixote characters by figures from the Yellow Woodpecker Farm (Sítio do Picapau Amarelo), and the interpretation of the theme of madness.

Keywords: Don Quixote; Recreation; Children's and Young Adult Literature; Intertextuality; Lobato.

Abstract

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of the retelling "Dom Quixote das Crianças" (1936), by Monteiro Lobato, in relation to the original work by Miguel de Cervantes. The study is theoretically grounded in the discussion of literary adaptation for the children and young adult audience, mobilizing the contributions of Regina Zilberman (2003) and Robert Stam (2005 and 2006). The analysis is structured based on the categories proposed by Göte Klinberg (1973), encompassing the adaptation of subject matter, form, style, and medium. Additionally, the investigation delves into crucial aspects of Lobato's transposition, such as the recreation of the comic, the maintenance of Cervantine metalanguage, the representation of Quixote's characters by figures from the Sítio do Picapau Amarelo (Yellow Woodpecker Farm), and the interpretation of the theme of madness.

Keywords: Don Quixote; Retelling; Children's and Young Adult Literature; Intertextuality; Lobato.

1. Introduction

In this work, we will analyze *Don Quixote for Children* (1936), a reinterpretation of *Don Quixote*.

I (1605) and II (1615), by Miguel de Cervantes, adapted for children and young adults by Monteiro Lobato. A

Lobato's retelling, based on Cervantes' classic, differs from the others mainly because...

to bring together two narrative spheres, that of the adapted work and that of Sítio do Pica-Pau Amarelo. That is, in addition to

When adapting a work, Lobato creates a fictional narrative that runs parallel to the recreated story, which generally...

The story is told by Dona Benta, one of the characters from the Sítio do Picapau Amarelo (Yellow Woodpecker Farm). Dona Benta is responsible, on a fictional level, for...

through the adaptation of the book for their grandchildren, who reproduce, within the work, the potential readers of recreation.

Initially, the discussion will focus on the issue of adaptations, precisely because of their...

Validity is widely questioned. This discussion will be resumed taking into account the

The needs of the children's and young adult audience, the encouragement of reader development, and the issue of loyalty to...

original text. To this end, we will use the theoretical contribution of Robert Stam (2005 and 2006), who works on

The issue of adaptations is supported by theorists such as Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Derrida; and Regina



Zilberman (2003), one of the great critics of children's and young adult literature in Brazil.

Next, we will move on to the analysis itself, exploring the characteristics and the
The artifices of recreating Don *Quixote*. Regarding the criteria for adaptation to literature.
For children and young adults, we will use the criteria identified by Göte Klinberg (1973), which are: adaptation of
subject matter, form, style, and medium. It is based on these criteria and the text by Maria Augusta da Costa Vieira
(2012) that we will investigate how Lobato recreates Cervantes' text. In addition, there will be
other aspects not included in Klinberg's criteria, but which are also worthy, were explored.
Of note, such as the reproduction of Cervantes' metalanguage; the representation of episodes from Don *Quixote*.
by the characters of Sítio do Picapau Amarelo; interpretation of madness in Lobato's adaptation, which differs from the conception
that is found in Cervantes's *Don Quixote* ; and, finally, the production of comedy in the *Children's Don Quixote*.

2. Literary adaptation for children: a gateway to new readers

More books have been written about other books than about any other subject
(MONTAIGNE *apud* STAM, 2006, p. 28)

Children's literature, unlike other types of literature, is conceived according to its...
public readership. Zilberman (2003, p. 70) points out that "rarely is any type of art defined by
"the type of consumption that it receives." The author points out that what designates a genre are elements
such as language, modes of representation, or subject matter. However, when we talk about literature
For children, it's quite the opposite; the reading public is "what determines its inclusion in the designated genre."
as children's literature" (ZILBERMAN, 2003, p. 70). Thus, the theme, form and narrative style
They are constructed in such a way that they can be understood by children. That is, they are, from their origin,
translated (or adapted) into their language.

With the aim of transmitting classical literature to these readers, the process of
Adapting classic works for children, a practice that has Monteiro Lobato as its name.
A highlight in the Brazilian scene. However, despite the greater accessibility that children have experienced
However, the recreated works were (and still are) highly questioned. This is because the adaptations are
viewed as losses suffered by the foundational literary work. Stam shows that "terms such as 'infidelity'
"Treachery," "deformation," "violation," "bastardization," "vulgarization," and "profanation" proliferate.
In the discourse on adaptations, each word carries its specific burden of ignominy." (STAM,
(2006, p. 20). As the author states, the question of what has been *lost* is always questioned , while what has been is ignored.
won in this process.

One of the most frequently cited "negative" points concerns "fidelity to the original work".
However, before making any assumptions, it is necessary to understand what is characterized.
commonly referred to as "fidelity to the original text." Robert Stam (*cited in* AMORIM, 2012, p. 04) speaks



This topic refers to film adaptations of literary texts; however, his assertion is...

This is also applicable in this context. He says that:

When we classify a work as *unfaithful* to the original text, we are actually expressing our disappointment at feeling that the adaptation fails to capture what we, as readers, consider the fundamental aspects of the narrative, themes, and aesthetics of the literary source. *Unfaithfulness* is, then, a way of externalizing our feelings in relation to the target text, which we sometimes consider inferior to the source text (...). (emphasis added)

It becomes clear, then, that the discourse of "fidelity to the original" is much more subjective than judicious in its judgment, and therefore cannot invalidate the transposition of a source text. to a target text.

The idea of an original text, which is the source of this discussion, has already been deconstructed by... various theorists, such as Bakhtin, through the notion of dialogism, and Kristeva, with the concept of Intertextuality. The two concepts, in a way, question the ideas of originality and copying. by highlighting that every text carries within it discourses present in other texts, whether intentionally or not. No. Every text, according to this understanding, is therefore just another thread in the great web of discourses. which is infinitely interconnected.

In addition to them, Jacques Derrida also shows how much what are considered copies do to Maintaining the life of a work considered original, in addition to giving it greater prestige. The idea of deconstruction proposed by Derrida

It dismantles the hierarchy of the "original" and the "copy." From a Derridean perspective, the aural prestige of the original does not oppose the copy, but is created by the copies, without which the very idea of originality loses its meaning [furthermore] the "original" always reveals itself to be partially "copied" from something earlier; the Odyssey goes back to anonymous oral history, Don Quixote goes back to chivalric romances, Robinson Crusoe goes back to travel journalism, and so on ad infinitum (STAM, 2006, p. 22).

While there are reasons to question adapted works, nothing replaces the original. Reading the source material; on the other hand, considering adaptations and recreations made for children and young adults, these are justified as a first entry into the world of classics. It is a fact that... Many classics remain alive today thanks to their popularization through... Adaptations. Thus, we see that recreations are indeed valid, especially in the context of literature. It's childish, since a child doesn't have the reading maturity of an adult to fully understand a book. classic, for example.

Therefore, when analyzing a children's adaptation in comparison to its source text, it is necessary to take into account the diversity of readers and their specific needs. After all, adaptation aims to to reduce inequality between the adult reader/author, who already possesses both life experiences and reading, and the young reader, still in training and with little background knowledge. On this, Zilberman (2003, p. 52) quotes Lypp:

The most general and fundamental characteristic of this communication process is the inequality between those being communicated, with the adult author on one side and the child reader on the other. This relates to linguistic and cognitive situations, social status, and other presuppositions.



One of the most important aspects of inequality. The sender must consciously desire the demolition of the pre-existing distance, in order to move towards the receiver. All the means employed by the author to establish communication with the child reader can be summarized under the term adaptation.

Thus, even starting from a source text, the recreation has the freedom and, in the case of Adapting it for children requires transforming it to reach the reader.

From this, it is important to emphasize that recreation for children, despite originating It is not an inferior copy of a source text; rather, it is another text that, using freedom in Its (re)composition molds itself to its audience and disseminates a literature that, otherwise, He would hardly have access to it. Thus, the recreation opens new doors to old readings and encourages... training new readers.

3. *Quixote* revisited: characteristics and devices employed in the recreation of *Don Quixote for Children*

Don Quixote for Children, an adaptation by Monteiro Lobato of the classic *Don Quixote*. *La Mancha* is a unique recreation, as it combines two universes: that of Sítio do Pica-pau Yellow and La Mancha. In the first universe we have: Dona Benta – who is the fictional narrator. –, Pedrinho, Narizinho, and the doll Emília, and it is from them and the discussions they promote that the The reader gets to know *Don Quixote*. In a setting that seeks to evoke the oral tradition of listening to and telling stories, This is where Lobato's work is recreated. In it, the child becomes both a reader and a listener of D. Benta. As Zilberman (2003, p. 86) points out, Lobato reproduces the traditional “model” in his story.

"The communicational aspect of narration," as proposed by Jakobson:

| | | |
|--|---------|-----------|
| Issuer | Message | Recipient |
| | | |
| Dona Benta and <i>Don Quixote</i> , residents of the farm. | | |

The story begins with Emilia's curiosity about the *Don Quixote* book on the high shelf. After lowering it with the help of Visconde, the doll asks Dona Benta to read it. Everyone... They gather and she begins to read. However, right at the start, the doll interrupts and says she's going to play. playing hide-and-seek with Quindim, because he doesn't understand these "Viscount's tales" (LOBATO, 2010, p. 17). He says this in reference to the translation of the book made by the Viscounts of Castilho and Azevedo. It is the From there, the story of *Don Quixote* begins to be shaped for children, starting with... language, since Dona Benta decides to narrate in her own words. Or as she says Emília to her grandmother: “– That’s it! [...] With your words and Aunt Nastácia’s and mine too – and Narizinho’s – and of Pedrinho – and of Rabicó. Let the Viscounts speak convolutedly among themselves.” (LOBATO, 2010, p. 17) Regarding this, Vieira states that:

In this way, the reader comes into contact with two narrative spheres: one of them situated in



The time and space of Don Quixote; the other, the reading session that unfolds among the characters of the Sítio, eager for comments about the knight's adventures, implicitly has a well-defined objective of spreading the taste for reading and arousing interest in Cervantes' work. (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 98)

In other words, there is a concern that goes beyond the purely aesthetic issue, which is that of "taking forward a project to promote reading to children and young people" (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 98).

3.1 The Artifices

Göte Klinberg (1973), cited by Zilberman (2003, p. 140), identifies some criteria that the Adaptations are used in the (re)formulation of stories for children. Based on these criteria... The techniques and characteristics of Lobato's recreation will be presented there.

The first of these is "Subject Adaptation," which, by taking into account the worldview and the Given the children's still limited experiences, the author restricts himself to "certain themes, ideas or problems" (ZILBERMAN, 2003, p. 141). Furthermore, they are generally present, especially in Lobato's writing contains passages with doctrinal content, that is, with the purpose of teaching the child something. Lobato does this in his narration by suppressing, for example, swear words and scenes that refer to sexuality, like the episode of Don Quixote and Maritornes at the inn. It also reduces the story. of the platonic love between Don Quixote and Dulcinea, which is only mentioned in passing. An example This omission is the part where "the knight finds himself in the Sierra Morena and decides to send a letter." to the beloved, in the style of the love between Amadis and Oriana, which is replaced by a childish letter to niece, asking that three donkeys be granted to Sancho" (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 99). This omission Perhaps it will happen, as Vieira points out, to avoid what could be excessively disappointing: a A love story that isn't real.

Furthermore, the negative scenes and those in which Don Quixote is ridiculed are also removed. or only half-told. An example is the episode about André, which is only told up to the point where... Don Quixote orders his master to stop beating him and to pay what he owes. The episode in which the Dukes deceive and mock him, and in turn, he is transformed by Lobato: in him, Don Quixote is truly... well received and Sancho enjoys his time at Barataria. As Vieira puts it, "there is a declared defending the knight's actions, always ensuring the epic sense of the hero and, consequently, sometimes equivocating when it comes to his defeats." (2012, p. 100).

The doctrinal content is also very present throughout the discussions on the subject of Madness. As we can see in the dialogue below between Dona Benta and Narizinho, which takes place after the scene. where Maritornes binds Don Quixote's arms to a window high up in the inn:

"Yes, ma'am! That Maritornes was quite a character," observed Little Nose. "For me, there are no people worse than those who amuse themselves at the expense of poor fools."
"I think so too, my daughter," said Dona Benta, "and yet, that is the inclination of humanity. Look at that madwoman who runs loose in the village. As soon as she goes out into the street screaming, the kids gather behind her [...]" (LOBATO, 2010, p. 100)



The second criterion is "Adaptation of form," that is, maintaining linearity in the narration and not to maintain narrative linearity, Lobato removed the novellas that These elements permeate the novel, such as "The Impertinent Curious One"; the long speeches of Don Quixote and the The lengthy cases he hears, such as that of Pastor Marcela, are used to pique the reader's interest. It is given to action episodes, such as the battle against the Biscayan, the fight against the sheep, among others. others.

The third is "Style Adaptation," which is the simplification of language and syntax. in order to construct sentences with accessible vocabulary, not too long and in the active voice. Lobato uses the Oral language. Dona Benta, in her narration, uses onomatopoeia, which brings the text even closer to the spoken language. The reader's childhood universe. This excerpt from André's episode exemplifies this: "But the boss didn't..." " I didn't want to know anything, and *lepte! lepte!*" (LOBATO, 2010, p. 27). Furthermore, the constant interruptions The grandchildren's questions and observations recreate a face-to-face conversation, making the little one... The reader will identify with the words of the grandchildren and the talking doll, who are also children. Amaya Obata Prado, in his article about this adaptation, observes that Monteiro does:

A series of simplifications, neologisms, and onomatopoeias recovers the pleasure of telling and listening to stories, without any distinction in degree or quality between reading and listening. The text aims to respect the cognitive level and linguistic competence of the reader and, at times, seeks to contribute to their development. Discussions and reflections on language among the characters themselves are frequent. (PRADO, 2008, p. 05)

Regarding the discussions about language that Prado mentions, we have, in the second chapter, the Dialogue between Dona Benta and Emília:

"This book," she said, "is one of the most famous in the whole world. It was written by the great Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra... Who crossed out the second 'a' in Saavedra?"
"It was me," said Emília.
- Why?
- Because I am a personal enemy of that old, outdated spelling that complicates people's lives with useless things. If one 'a' says it all, why two? (LOBATO, 2010, p. 16)

The fourth criterion used is "Environmental Adaptation," which is achieved through attractive resources. placed in the work. Lobato makes extensive use of illustrations as a way to attract children. In the edition used In this work, published by Editora Globo in 2010, the illustrations are by Camilo Riani. They allude to both The universe of Don *Quixote*, by Cervantes, as well as that of the Sítio do Picapau Amarelo, are developed according to the scenes. described in the book.

Beyond these four criteria, there are other characteristics in *Don Quixote for Children*. which deserve to be highlighted.

The first refers to the reproduction of Cervantes' metalanguage. In Don *Quixote*, we have the Characters in the novel discuss the authorship of the book. Don Quixote, for example, says "that it is not..." She feels comfortable knowing that the author of her story is of Arab origin and therefore capable of many things.



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Fantasies that are not always acceptable." (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 101). In the *children's Don Quixote*, the characters, in addition to talking about Cervantes, the "merciless author with his characters" (VIEIRA, 2012, (p.101), they also talk about Lobato himself, who, according to them, pays more attention to Emilia than to the others. other characters. Furthermore, they are constantly discussing the direction of the narrative.

Vieira points out that:

A parallel is thus created between Lobato and Cervantes, because, by incorporating the author himself into the narrative, Lobato seems to project the reproduction of a procedure similar to that of Cervantes when he introduces Cide Hamete Benengeli as a reliable author and at the same time unworthy of credibility in the eyes of Quixote. (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 101)

Another interesting point is the way the characters from Sítio do Picapau Amarelo represent episodes.

From *Don Quixote*. Emilia, for example, in the passage below, fantasizes about being the knight. Narzinho enters giving the news:

– (...) We have news – she replied. – Emilia is out there doing the craziest things. She became a knight-errant and forced Rabiçó to become Rocinante. She acquired a shield, lance, little sword, and even armor. And she wants to attack Aunt Nastácia, saying that she's not Aunt Nastácia at all, but the giantess Frestona. Poor Viscount follows behind as a squire, dressed in a baggy suit that Emília stuffed with chamomile so that he would be fat and pot-bellied like Sancho. You have to see it, Grandma! She's crazy, crazy... (LOBATO, 2010, p. 116)

Vieira also points out other passages, such as the rebirth of the Viscount of Sabugosa, in which the scientific liquid that resurrects Sabugo refers to Ferrabrás's balm. And the episode in that Pedrinho, after hearing the stories of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers of France, imitates Roland. fighting against the Moors, but instead of Moors, she knocks down stalks of corn. The author says that these "The incorporation of quixotic madness by the characters (...) ends up functioning as a form to counter the very interpretation of madness understood as something that should be excluded from life. social." (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 100).

The third notable aspect is the notion of madness present in Lobato's story.

In Cervantes we have a comical madman, in Lobato's recreation we have a romantic interpretation of *Quixote*. This last one, very common from the 18th century onwards, consists of replacing the figure of the fool.

A burlesque of fixed ideas through the figure of a misunderstood idealist who dreams of a better world.

One example of this perspective in Monteiro's work is the following statement by Dona Benta to her grandchildren:

Don Quixote is not only the type of maniac, of the madman. He is the type of dreamer, of the man who sees things as wrong, or as things that don't exist. He is also the type of generous, loyal, honest man, who wants the good of humanity, who avenges the weak and innocent – and always ends up getting hurt, because humanity, which is inherently bad, doesn't understand certain acts of generosity. (LOBATO, 2010, p. 19)

As the figure of Don Quixote takes on this guise of a "dreamer" and "idealist," the comic

He is shaken, given that "laughter has no greater enemy than emotion [...] to produce its full effect, the

"Comedy ultimately requires something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart" (BERGSON, 2001, p. 3-

4) Therefore, the reader of Lobato's version does not laugh at *Quixote*, but rather at Emília, a character for the which was the source of the comedy. In this way, the comic sense "gains space thanks to the artifice."



...to shift the humor caused by Quixote's madness to Emilia's parodic actions..."

(VIEIRA, 2012, p. 105).

The last aspect we will highlight is the device the author uses to get the children to...

They understand certain words and that they are placed in the context in which the narration takes place. The books

They use elements from *Don Quixote*, by Cervantes, so that the contemporary reader may have a greater understanding of reading, many footnotes. To make reading less slow and still comprehensible,

Lobato ensured that the characters' dialogue contained all the necessary explanations for...

children, whether in vocabulary or context. In the dialogue between Narizinho and Dona Benta we have a

Example of vocabulary explanation:

"What is a visor?" asked Little Nose.

–A visor is the part of the armor that covers the knight's face. A movable part that rises when the knight wishes to show his face, speak, or eat. (LOBATO, 2010, p. 22)

Another example, now referring to the context of the book, can be observed in a dialogue between

Emilia and Dona Benta:

"What are the spear and shield for?" Emilia asked.

– It was a sign that this nobleman belonged to an old lineage of nobles, those who in the Middle Ages wore iron armor and dedicated themselves to hunting as the noblest of occupations. (LOBATO, 2010, p. 17)

These were, therefore, some of the characteristics identified in the adaptation study.

Lobato's retelling, a recreation that works with the story of *Don Quixote* in language that is accessible to children.

inviting her to sit down and listen to a story told by Dona Benta.

4. Final considerations

We have seen that adaptations/recreations are valid perspectives on other works, since placing

In a new format, denser texts allow access to a wide variety of readers, including

The children. In this way, they encourage the development of reading skills.

Furthermore, we analyzed Lobato's retelling, *Dom Quixote das Crianças* (1936), under the criteria for children's adaptations identified by Gýte Klinberg (1973), cited by Regina Zilberman (2003). Through this perspective, we can see how Lobato adapted the subject matter, the form, of style and medium for a children's audience.

Finally, we address other characteristics of the book that do not fit the criteria of Klinberg, but which were considered worthy of recognition.

Monteiro Lobato, who took it upon himself to adapt various classics for children, had his Books widely used in classroom readings in Brazil. *Don Quixote for Children*,

Like its other recreations, it fulfills its objective of helping in the formation of readers, enchanting them.

targeting a young audience and encouraging them to read literary classics in the future.



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