

Chapter 6

Representation of Charrúa Speech in 19th Century Uruguayan Literature

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6.1 Introduction

Both Juan Zorrilla de San Martín and Eduardo Acevedo Díaz, from very different ideological camps, “attained the highest positions in Uruguay’s literary canon, with the ensuing operability of their discourses, the publishing of new editions of their works, and their early incorporation into official school syllabi, etc.” (Rocca 2000: 245).¹ In the late 19th century, these two literary figures contributed to found Uruguay’s idea of its national self.

In that “nation-building literature”—that founding of the national self—both “the Poet of the Nation” and the author who pioneered the Uruguayan novel sketch different characters that define Uruguay’s history and identity. Charrúa characters are featured throughout both their works, with various degrees of importance, as heroes and forgers of the fate of the Nation. Tabaré—as the main character in Zorrilla de San Martín’s romantic epic poem—and Cuaró—as a secondary character in Acevedo Díaz’s historical novels—contribute to create the Charrúa myth embedded within the larger myth of the Nation.

Here I will examine how these two writers developed these characters through the representation of their speech and their own metalinguistic comments on such representation.

6.2 A Voice for Tabaré

The poem’s epic theme—which centers on the Charrúa raid of the Spanish settlement of San Salvador, the Charrúa chief’s funerals, and Yamandú’s abduction of Blanca—is combined with a romantic view (Zum Felde 1930: 264) that results in Zorrilla de San Martín depicting the protagonist Tabaré as having “a genuinely romantic soul, the sentimental and

chivalrous soul of a Lamartine or Chateaubriand character” (Zum Felde 1930: 260). This romantic interpretation of the indigenous theme extends inevitably to the representation of the character’s language. Tabaré, the son of a Charrúa chief and a Spanish captive, will also speak like a Chateaubriand character.

This resorting to the Spanish canon of the time to give a voice to 19th century indigenous characters has been highlighted before by Rocca (2003: 133-158) in his examination of the various compositions in which Charrúa and/or Guaraní speech are represented in 19th century Uruguayan poetry (cf. Adolfo Berro, *Yandubayú y Liropeya (Año de 1574)* (1840); Melchor Pacheco y Obes, *Una fiesta guaraní* (1841); Ramón de Santiago, *El último charrúa* (1851); Alejandro Magariños Cervantes, *Celiar* (1852); Pedro Pablo Bermúdez, *El charrúa* (1853)) and prose (cfr. Florencio Escardó’s novel, *Abayubá* (1873)). Rocca briefly comments on the language chosen by some of these authors to represent their indigenous characters: “It is interesting to note how, even with the spattering of some indigenous words, Ramón de Santiago’s Charrúa—like Berro’s Liropeya—is portrayed as an educated speaker and, therefore, functions as a visible interlocutor of the author’s thoughts” (Rocca 2003: 143-4). And he later adds: “Bermúdez cannot break away from the canonical Spanish he makes the natives speak in—even while being consistent in using some native names for flora and fauna” (Rocca 2003: 147).

Similarly, Houot sees “Berro’s and Bermúdez’ heroes [as] speaking like 19th century literary lovers” (Houot 2007: 237).

In *Tabaré*, the main character also talks like an educated Spanish speaker, but here there is a conscious attempt—made explicit by the glossary annexed to the poem—to find a more or less convincing way of representing the eponymous character. Precisely in the glossary’s entry for “Tabaré,” Zorrilla de San Martín voices this concern through reflections

on his own capacity for evoking the main character's speech, what he succinctly describes as his desire to make his character "speak Tupí in Spanish":

As regards the form, will critics value the effort I have condensed into the phrase—if not the verse—structure, that I have striven to wrench from the study of the Tupí language, as I sought to disentangle the Indian's way of thinking and feeling, from the nature of the language, and find the means to speak Tupí in Spanish? (Zorrilla de San Martín 1888: 296-297).

This question leads him to elaborate on what he means when he says he makes Tabaré speak Guaraní. It involves employing metaphors used in that language, transferring them to or replicating them in Spanish:

"Cold dream, body that was, time of the long suns, fire moon," with their clear meaning of "death, corpse, summer, star," and a hundred others that can be drawn from the context, are all images of an unquestionably immense beauty; but they do not spring from the poet's inspiration, and are rather fruit of a laborious research of the etymology of the Guaraní words with which Indians expressed these ideas" (Zorrilla de San Martín 1888: 297).

This "speaking Tupí in Spanish" then, includes speaking in Spanish with Guaraní metaphors, a naïve attempt that implies a theory on the relationship between language and worldview.

These statements also reveal Zorrilla de San Martín's intention to let readers know that his linguistic choices are based on—and in a way legitimated by—research. This is repeated by critics such as Zum Felde: "From autobiographical information we know that the author carefully documented the temperament, ways, and language of the natives, consulting

major writings by chroniclers from the time of the Spanish conquest, and, in particular, by Jesuit missionaries” (Zum Felde 1930: 265).²

Thus, Zorrilla de San Martín’s strategy is to sprinkle Tabaré’s speech with indigenous words “with the aim of making the characters authentic” (Houot 2007: 242).³ For example, when Tabaré addresses his beloved Blanca:

“Thou bringest sleep, like *algarrobo* sap;/ Dost cast a poisonous shade like the *ahué*./
I fear the shade, and trembling flee from thee;/ But thou, when I awake, dost follow
me;/ Thou mak’st my nerves, that once were heart of *ñandubay*./ As feeble as the
ombú tree’s weakest sprout...” (Book Second, Canto Third, IV).⁴

Tabaré’s speech is not always peppered with indigenous words. When he speaks to his mother, Magdalena, for example, he uses only Spanish words (Book First, Canto Second, VI). Neither is Tabaré the only native who uses Guaraní words in the poem: the speech of the natives at chief Abayubá’s funeral presents several Guaraní lexical elements, such as “*tubichá*” or “*Añang*” (Book Third, Canto Second, XII), and the new chief, Yamandú, also uses Guaraní words (“*ñandú*” and “*guaycurú*,” Book Third, Canto Second, XVI; “*añanguazú*,” “*Hum*,” “*Tupá*,” and “*chajás*,” Book Third, Canto Second, XVII).

In this poem, the spattering of the text with indigenous words, as observed by Rocca (2003: 143-144) in the speech of the indigenous characters in Berro, Santiago, and Bermúdez, transcends the speech of Tabaré and his people. We find several Guaraní loans in the poet’s voice as he describes the preparations for the Charrúa chief’s funeral: “And to affright the evil spirits *Añang* and *Macachera* from his path/ They paint his body with *urucú* juice,/ And then with gruesome figures paint his face/ to make it still more horrible than death” (Book Third, Canto Second, V). Other indigenous words used by the poet include “*curupirá*” and

“*Añanguazú*” (Book Third, Canto Second, XI), “*mburucuyás*” (Book Third, Canto Fourth, I) and “*cipó*,” “*ñapindá*,” and “*payés*” (Book Third, Canto Fourth, II).

Zorrilla de San Martín highlights these words by italicizing them in the poem and listing most of them in the “Alphabetical Index of Indigenous Words Used in the Text” that he compiles and annexes to the book (Zorrilla de San Martín 1888: 201-215). The poet includes 40 entries of mostly Guaraní words, whose indigenous origin he stresses with comments such as: “*ahué*: [...] the Indians call it *ahué* or bad tree”; “*Camoatí*: indigenous name for large honeycombs”; “*Chajá*: its name in Guaraní (*yajá*) means ‘Let’s go’”; “*Hum*: name given by the Charrúas to the Negro River [...] *Hu*, pronounced with a nasal sound, means ‘black’ in Guaraní”; “*Ñandú*: Guaraní name,” and so on.

At this point, we need to consider more closely how when Zorrilla de San Martín characterizes the speech of the Charrúas he does so through indigenous words of Guaraní origin. In fact, the (con)fusion of the two ethnic groups is explicit throughout the poem: “Guaraní” and “Charrúa”, as identities, alternate synonymously in the poem with Tabaré even referring to himself as “the Guaraní chief” (Book Second, Canto Third, IV), and the narrator calling chief Yamandú “the cowardly Guaraní” (Book Third, Canto Third, VII). This fusion is also evident, for example, in the description of the body paints or ornaments used by Charrúas and in the reference to the god Añang, a Guaraní—not Charrúa—deity (Houot 2007: 358).

This might seem peculiar to modern readers, and to those who expect fiction to reflect reality, but it should be borne in mind that while today the Guaraní and Charrúa are distinguished as separate indigenous peoples in Uruguay’s imaginary and in contemporary Uruguayan historiography, when *Tabaré* was written the Charrúa people were considered part of the Guaraní. It was even thought that the Charrúa language was genealogically related to Guaraní (see, among others, Ameghino, cited in Lafone Quevedo 1897: 4),⁵ a connection

which today is unthinkable. I will come back later to how in 19th century literature the Charrúa language is channeled through the Guaraní language.

But first I would like to take a closer look at Tabaré and the fact that the most salient aspect of his linguistic characterization is not how he talks but how he remains silent. Silence and taciturnity are two traits that are very much a part of the depiction of Tabaré and the other Charrúa characters. In a way, Tabaré's linguistic competence is questioned, and with it his humanity.

Charrúas are compared to beasts or tigers, but, in any case, to silent, quiet animals: "Never they look you in the eye nor lift their voice, dying in silence" (Book Second, Canto Second, IV). When Spaniards speak of Tabaré they say: "Look at him! There he goes! Never a word he speaks [...] / How silently he walks, yet he appears in pain ... / They die without a groan ... / Yet we know not his voice" (Book Second, Canto Third, I). He does not reply when he is spoken to in San Salvador (Book Second, Canto Fourth, VII) and neither does he answer when Gonzalo de Ordaz demands that he tell him why he was prowling around Blanca's house (Book Second, Canto Fifth, V).

But when he does speak, when he manifests his humanity, there is a sort of "reconversion through words." When Tabaré is accused of plotting a crime, Blanca defends him because she has heard him and spoken with him: "A crime! Ah, no! I cannot think it true, / A crime by Tabaré! What sayest thou! / Thou has not Heard him speak, as I have Heard; / Thou couldst not hate him, hadst thou heard his voice" (Book Second, Canto Fifth, IV).

But, in general, when a Charrúa utters a sound it is in the form of screams, howls, or roars: "The drunken savages / Howl in the distance, / And the night air transforms their hideous cries / And makes of them complaints and lamentation" (Book First, Canto Second, VIII); "At the sound of the footsteps of the hated Spanish invader, Yells of rage break forth

from savages hid in the thicket,/ Always there to be feared, in ambush, cold-hearted and wary (Book Second, Canto First, II). This also occurs when Yamandú speaks: “With the sharp point of his lance, and fiercely gives voice to a war-cry/ Shaking his flowing black locks, and shouting in eloquent language” (Book Third, Canto Second, XV).

These sounds, shrieks, and roars animalize the figure of the Indian, as observed by García Méndez:

The only human trait that is left to the Indians when it comes to expressing their feelings is speech. But in them, speech is crushed by the weight of pre-linguistic expression, a purely animal expression [...] Individually and collectively, Charrúas constantly resort to screaming to signify their hates and joys, sorrows and fears, and they exhibit, in particular, a surprising inclination towards that horrific form of screaming that is howling. That explosion of animal voices is found constantly throughout the text, from beginning to end, and takes on endless forms: ‘hoarse,’ ‘immense,’ ‘ferocious,’ ‘strident,’ ‘savage,’ sometimes turning into roaring and bellowing. But this animal nature is not limited to the throat: it extends to every part of the Indian’s body, commanding his gestures and attitudes and transforming him into a complete beast. (García Méndez 1992: n.p.)

6.3 Cuaró Speaks

Acevedo Díaz’s novels represent “the first serious and lasting embodiment of the narrative genre in Uruguay. Until *Ismael* was published in 1888, Uruguay’s budding literature consisted merely of weak essays, devoid of positive values and destined to be soon forgotten” (Zum Felde 1930: 275). Acevedo Díaz who, to a certain point, is considered to have been a romantic in his origins, “balanced [this romanticism] with his gift for accurate observation of reality and his sound historical knowledge” (Zum Felde 1930: 276).

For Zum Felde,

the characters [in Acevedo Díaz] have their own psychological traits and live their own existence, within the special conditions of their geographical and social environment; they are generic expressions of a certain nationality and a specific period in history. His novels present a vast gallery of original types, and, overall, they form a very complete portrait of Uruguayan life at the time of the wars for independence.

(Zum Felde 1930: 277)

Most notable among these “original types” is the Charrúa Cuaró, who is not in *Ismael* (1888), the first of Acevedo Díaz’ series of historical novels, but is featured in the following two, *Nativa* (1889) and *Grito de Gloria* (1893). He is also a character in *Lanza y Sable* (1914).⁶

In *Nativa* he devotes chapter XI (“Cuaró”) to the introduction of this character; in *Grito de Gloria* he describes the duel between Cuaró and the cattle rustler Ladislao Luna (chapter XXXII, “El duelo a lanza”) and in *Lanza y Sable*, Cuaró kills Camilo Serrano, without knowing he is his own son (Chapter XXIII, “Norteos de Centauro”). Cuaró’s characterization changed over time and with each new novel, to the point that it would appear that Acevedo Díaz was gradually stripping him of his indigenous characteristics. In *Nativa*, Cuaró is 25 years old and presented as a Charrúa of “pure indigenous race” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 186]). In *Grito de Gloria* he is still depicted as such but in a more diluted way, and in *Lanza y Sable* he is a “mestizo” (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 250]). This blurring of Cuaró’s indigenusness is reflected in his speech.⁷ As will be shown below, the linguistic devices used by Acevedo Díaz to represent Cuaró’s speech are not always the same.

The narrator supports his descriptions of Charrúa customs by citing sources, saying he drew “on what was often heard about the aboriginals, from travelers’ accounts” (Acevedo

Díaz 1889 [1964: 187]). He even describes Charrúa customs using Guaraní vocabulary: “some years had passed since Cuaró had stopped using the bow with *ñandú* feathers, the *quiapi* and the quiver with *urunday* arrows and crown” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 188]).

This Charrúa—like Tabaré—is characterized by silence or a quiet attitude, he is a man of few words: “Climbing onto his horse, Cuaró left silently [...]” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 222]); “The Indian [...] chose the second [path], without uttering a word” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 229]); “he galloped silently away” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 236]). His voice is low and unhurried (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 217 y 229]) and his “tone is impassive” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 283]).

But unlike Tabaré, Cuaró is not an educated Spanish speaker. On the contrary, his speech is substandard, rural, and typical of gauchos.⁸

This characterization is evident at the phonetic level, with vowel variations: “*traímelo*” for “*traémelo*” (“bring it to me”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 234]), “*mesmo*” for “*mismo*” (“the same”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 284]), “*ruempe*” for “*rompe*” (“breaks”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 119]), “*presiento*” for “*presento*” (“introduce”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 196]); velarization of /b/ into /g/ in: “*guen*” for “*buen*” (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 93]) and “*guena*” for “*buena*” (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 196]) (“good,” in both cases); /f/ > /x/ variation in “*jue*” for “*fue*” (“was”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 118]) and “*juyó*” for “*huyó*” (“fled”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 200]); and the dropping of the /d/ between vowels in: “*recao*” for “*recado*” (“tack”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 225]) and “*aonde*” for “*adonde*” (“where”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 324]). Note that these devices, which bring Cuaró’s speech closer to that of the gaucho characters, are not used excessively. They are brushstrokes that do not interfere with the flow of the text, but succeed in evoking a speech that departs from the linguistic standard.

In addition to these phonetic traits there are several lexical and morphosyntactic archaisms typical of rural environments: “*aura*” for “*ahora*” (“now”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 200]), “*asina*” for “*así*” (“thus”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 59]), “*allegarse*” for “*llegarse*” (“arrive”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 250]). The diminutive suffix “*-ito*” is also used, for example, in “*mesmito*” (“right now”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 323]) and the construction “*haber + de*” (“must + of”) with the sense of obligation in “*había de ser*” (“must have been”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 118]). He uses the expression “*de juro*” (“made to”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 222]) with the sense of “by force, unavoidable.”

It should be noted that most of these linguistic traits are found in the Cuaró of *Grito de Gloria*, a novel in which this character’s speech is more ruralist than in the previous novel, *Nativa*.

Cuaró’s speech is full of popular sayings, contributing to his linguistic characterization: “Tiene más maña que el zorro” (“Wiler than a fox”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 184]); “No hay que correr guazubirá” (“Don’t go chasing waterfalls”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 282]), “Blando como cera de camoati” (“Soft as wild bee wax”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 119]), “Las piedras rodando se encuentran y juntan” (“What goes around, comes around”) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 324]), “Solo anda mandinga” (“The devil walks alone”) (Acevedo Díaz 1914 [1964: 325]). These sayings also show his knowledge of the arts of war and the rural world.

His linguistic representation includes Guaraní words: “Tell the *chirubichá* that sleeping is not good. They’re killing and stealing, with Frutos’ people. At the *pulpería* [tavern] they drank *miñangué* from a bottle, and speared two cattle rustlers right by the small marsh” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 320]); “No more *butyhá* -he continued in a whisper, smiling-; but we have spears and bullets. You hear, brother?” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964:

202]). Or, “The Indian looked up and answered indifferently: ‘*Iguá*. Now we’re going to the *yathays*, right over there, for gunpowder” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 202]).

“*Iguá*” is explained in a footnote: “Guaraní word for *heaven*, literally meaning ‘the color of water.’” In that same footnote, Acevedo Díaz justifies the use of Guaraní words: “The Indians of the eastern region spoke several languages or dialects—Charrúa, Bohane, Chaná, Minuane—but in more recent times Guaraní predominated” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 202]).

Many of the Guaraní words used in *Nativa* are also compiled by Acevedo Díaz in a glossary annexed to the novel under the title “Notes on Some Local Words Used in the Novel for the Better Understanding of Foreign Readers” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 397-420]). “*Aguará*” is defined as “an indigenous species, like its name [which] comes from Guaraní”; “*Chajá*: its Guaraní name is an exact imitation of the animal’s peculiar cry”; “*Guaynita*: Guaraní for ‘little girl’”; “*Guazú-birá*: large deer, from Guaraní”; “*Mbiguá*: Guaraní word meaning ‘water raven’”; “*Ñandú*: Guaraní word,” etc.

Not only does Cuaró occasionally use Guaraní words, he also understands the Guaraní of the Tape Indians, the “Guaraní of the northern settlements” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 418]), and this also contributes to his linguistic characterization:

–The “*chirubichá*”⁹ sleeps, – the “*Tape*” said.

–Let him rest. We’ll save him the best piece. – Cuaró said to the freedman.

[...] Upon seeing him, as he raised the “*chifle*” [horn] to his lips, he addressed him in his language:

–“*Yacarú, Ñapindá?*”

–“*Yacarucema – cué*” –the other replied.¹⁰

[...]

–“*Yajá*” *al caigüé, cambá.*”¹¹

After barely tasting it, he gestured like a man versed in the matter and, winking mischievously, said:

–“*Llaigüé.*”¹²

The dialogue continues: “*Herú miñangué,*¹³ Cuaró –the ‘Tape’ said in his native tongue, stretching his arm delighted. And touching his neck, he added in correct Spanish, as if he could taste the liquid: Throat’s dry. Give the lieutenant the ‘*chifle*’ [horn]” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 320]).

Cuaró interacts with these Tapes who speak to him naturally in Guaraní, while Esteban, a freedman who accompanies them, demands that they “speak like Christians” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 320]). Cuaró also understands the Guaraní of the Tape who says “*Yapuj-janié*” (“Hold on fast”) (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 372]), when trying to save Dora, who had jumped in the river. There are no passages with Cuaró speaking Guaraní, but he clearly understands that language, at least in *Nativa. Grito de Gloria* has no passages at all in this Amerindian language and, as noted above, in this novel Cuaró’s speech is tinged with rural features typical of a hypothetical criollo speech that became firmly established in the region’s imaginary through Gaucho literature.

Cuaró also speaks in Portuguese, thus showing his ability to adapt his speech to the historical conditions in which he lived. He fights with a “*mameluco,*” a soldier from São Paulo, and after wounding him, Cuaró “yells at him in his language - *Volta cara, mameluco!*” (Turn around, soldier!) (Acevedo Díaz 1893 [1964: 80]). This and the passages in Guaraní, “which in the 19th century was still spoken in rural areas,” also reveal “the writer’s profound knowledge of the rural world” (Houot 2007: 326).

6.4 Some Final Comments on Names, Linguistic Ideas, and Representations of Charrúa Speech in Zorrilla de San Martín and Acevedo Díaz

The choice of “Tabaré” and “Cuaró” as the names for their Indian characters is discussed explicitly by Zorrilla de San Martín and Acevedo Díaz in the texts themselves.

Zorrilla de San Martín says in his glossary (Zorrilla de San Martín 1888: 208-212): “*Tabaré* is a genuine and very characteristic word of the Tupí language [...] formed by *Taba*, meaning village, or hamlet, and *ré*, after, that is, he who lives alone, far or apart from the village.” To back this statement he cites Pedro de Angelis’ annotations to Ruy Díaz’s historical writings, and adds, “the fierce Charrúa race, even when appealing to compassion, had to be portrayed as embodied in Tabaré,” thus showing again—and perhaps with a special symbology in terms of proper nouns—the Guaraní-Charrúa fusion. Tabaré’s “mestizo” origin should perhaps be interpreted as more than just a Spanish-Indian dichotomy, as his Indian origins are themselves a combination of two ethnic groups: his own Charrúa identity is mixed with Guaraní and thus is in itself a hybrid.

Acevedo Díaz also refers explicitly to the Guaraní origin of the name Cuaró, but only in the last novel, *Lanza y Sable* (1914). Cuaró himself says: “I am ‘bitter cave’ – he added, alluding to his Guaraní name.” The meaning of the word *Cuaró* is explained in footnote 14: “bitter hole or well [...] originating in the taste given by certain herbs to the water that pools around this strong willow, according to accounts of long ago” (Acevedo Díaz 1914 [1964: 320]).

This information on the origin of Cuaró is framed by the linguistic ideas that Acevedo Díaz presents in that same footnote, echoing the Colombian Francisco José de Caldas, for whom:

if one knows even a little about the language [used by ancient Peruvians to name plants and things], then the criteria and selection that guided Peruvians in naming all

the objects around them is evident [...] this language's names hold all the virtues of the plants and the qualities of all the objects. Upon hearing the name of a plant one can almost perceive its virtues [...], something similar, if not identical, to what this wise man says, occurs with the names given by the Guaraní to all kinds of plants and objects in the country of Uru [...] A fabric that brings to mind a spider web because of its fine and delicate threads converging in a small nucleus [...] receives the name *Ñanduty* —“white spider”—perhaps for this artistic work's similarity to the web spun by the apterous insect to ensnare its prey. (Acevedo Díaz 1914 [1964: 320-31])

The note, which includes other similar examples, reveals an Acevedo Díaz in awe of the Guaraní language and the capacity to name things that he believed the language had, in an almost naïve conception—shared by Caldas—in which language is not arbitrary.

The circumstances surrounding Cuaró's birth are also explained with Guaraní words. He is the son of a “*cuña-caray*,” Guaraní for “married woman” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 196]), who gave birth to him “under a deadly tree, the *ahué*, or *bad tree*, whose shadow poisons and kills, according to the Indian tradition” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 196]), thus killing her after the birth. Cuaró is motherless, like Tabaré, but by virtue of his own birth he has two names; “among his fellow tribesmen [...] he was known as “*Ahué*,” preferred over Cuaró even by his fierce father, chief Naygú” (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 196]). The narrator prefers, as we have seen, *Cuaró*.

It is evident from the *Nativa* glossary entry for “*Bohanes*” what Acevedo Díaz knew and thought of the linguistic reality of the region's indigenous people:¹⁴

Some believe the Bohanes, like the Charrúas, Chanás, and Yaros, had a different language, that each group spoke a distinct language; others think all these tribes were simply breakaways from the large Guaraní family, which is known to have spread

across enormous territories in this region of America. This hypothesis might be backed by the very special circumstance that most of the local names given to things in the Uruguayan region, from the great river to the seacoasts, are Guaraní. Whatever the case, not one of those scattered tribes left traces of their language, with only the “Tape” language surviving the tribe’s extinction, wiped out by the spear and fire of the Charrúa Indians after living for many years in small settlements south of the Negro River. (Acevedo Díaz 1889 [1964: 400])

Tabaré speaks in the educated Spanish of the romantic author who created him, while Cuaró is characterized linguistically by his understanding of Guaraní and his speaking in a rural Spanish that brings him closer to the gaucho characters. In both cases, the characters use some Guaraní words, in particular when referring to wildlife. Unlike Zorrilla de San Martín, Acevedo Díaz even includes some brief passages in Guaraní. Incidentally, it would not have been logical for Zorrilla de San Martín to try to adjust this Amerindian language to the poetical structure of *Tabaré*, that is, to a varied combination of literary Spanish meters.

In both characters, the Charrúa language clearly lacks its own voice. This fact is due, in part, to practical and unavoidable reasons, as neither Zorrilla de San Martín nor Acevedo Díaz could have had access to information on a language of an ethnic group that had virtually been exterminated at Salsipuedes more than 50 years before the publication of *Tabaré* and *Nativa*. While there could still be some Charrúa speakers scattered in the countryside, the process of extinction of this language was clearly very advanced when both authors wrote their works. How could Zorrilla de San Martín and Acevedo Díaz have represented the unrepresentable—a language of which very little was known at the time and of which even today little is known?

This fact is also due to the state of knowledge at the time, as the Charrúas were not clearly distinguished from the Guaraní as a people. In this sense, Houot says:

Zorrilla de San Martín cannot be reproached for confusing the Guaraní and Charrúa languages, as the Charrúa language was considered a branch of the Guaraní language. Recent studies have refuted this, a mistake that was based on the fact that most of native people understood and used that language. (Houot 2007: 285)

A modern writer aware that the relationship between the two ethnic groups changed over time (Levinton n.d.; Bracco 2004), but knowing there has always been a strong interaction between them, might also choose this hybrid characterization. Tomás de Mattos (2000), for example, in *¡Bernabé! ¡Bernabé!* has the Charrúa chief Sepé speaking Guaraní. Therefore, be it because of the state of knowledge in the 19th century, but also in the 20th, and notwithstanding the differences between the two, the Charrúas in Uruguayan literature are portrayed as speaking Guaraní, a language that today is known to have been spoken by a large part of the Charrúa population, in addition to their own language.

Zorrilla de San Martín and Acevedo Díaz arrive at this representation of their native characters' speech through paths that are different but which converge in the selection of Guaraní. Zorrilla de San Martín clearly states that his knowledge of Guaraní is purely academic, obtained through research. In Acevedo Díaz's case, in addition to what he had read and researched, he had participated in several rural military campaigns in Uruguay (Visca 2001) and it is more likely that he would have heard this Amerindian language spoken during that period of his life, as Guaraní "is spoken with few alterations in the lowest classes of people in our countryside and the vast riverside region of the Paraná, Uruguay, and Paraguay" (Lamas 1843 in Houot 2007: 116). His novels follow history closely, which is why Cuaró's speech varies over time, accompanying historical developments. In *Nativa*, he

understands the Guaraní that was spoken in the countryside during most of the 19th century, in *Grito de Gloria* he speaks Portuguese, and throughout the three novels in which his exploits are described his speech gradually becomes fused with rural speech.

Tabaré and Cuaró are Charrúas from different moments in time: the first belongs to the time of the Spanish conquest, of the first contacts between Europeans and natives. The second participates in the wars for independence; he is thus a 19th century character. But despite chronological distances, the literature that represents them transcends fiction to shape Uruguay's collective representation of the region's indigenous people. And of their speech.

As shown above, the speech of these Charrúas is characterized by silence or scarcity of words, and in Tabaré's case it is marked by screams, howls, and cries, closely associated with war contexts. The Charrúa language has no voice of its own. It needs to be mediated by Spanish or Guaraní. Zorrilla de San Martín has Tabaré speaking "Tupí in Spanish," thus overcoming the problem of the linguistic representation of a language other than Spanish, of the representation of the language of the other, whether Charrúa or Guaraní. Acevedo Díaz solves this problem by resorting, among other strategies, to traits that bring Cuaró's speech closer to the speech of the gauchos.

In Zorrilla de San Martín, the Charrúa is all that is instinctive, pure force. In Acevedo Díaz, Cuaró is skill, popular wisdom, he is the ingredient that was missing in the gaucho's makeup. He is gradually assimilated to this human type while at the same time shaping it, even linguistically.

From different ideological and philosophical positions, and markedly different genres, Zorrilla de San Martín and Acevedo Díaz blur the speech of the Charrúas in 19th century Uruguayan literature, a blurring that was inevitable, as we saw, but which nonetheless ultimately contributed to the complete invisibilization of the Charrúa language.

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Notes

¹ All original works in Spanish cited in the text were translated into English by the author (Coll), unless otherwise indicated.

² Despite Zorrilla de San Martín’s research, Ramírez notes that “the scientific basis for the indigenous etymologies of the toponymy [in *Tabaré*] has since been refuted” (Ramírez 2001: 327).

³ This is certainly not a device used exclusively in this work or by this author. It was employed by chroniclers of the Indies, naturalists, realists, and others, who even use American toponyms to locate the text.

⁴ All the passages from *Tabaré* are taken from the 1888 Barreiro y Ramos edition. The corresponding book and canto are given. The translations into English are taken from Huntington (1934) and in some cases adapted to include the indigenous words omitted by the translator.

⁵ I thank Lic. José Pedro Viegas Barros for sharing this reference with me.

⁶ I thank Juan Justino da Rosa for his helpful comments on this and other aspects of my manuscript.

⁷ I thank Claudia López Fernández for her comments on this point.

⁸ His speech is so far from being standard that Luis María Berón himself corrects him in the following extract:

Cuaró says: Capitán Meléndez' and Second Lieutenant Piquemán's guard.

-That would be Spíkerman, lieutenant– Luis María observed, smiling to himself.

Cuaró shrugged and retorted:

-Same *thang* (Acevedo Díaz 1893: 201).

⁹ In the novel, it is translated in a footnote as “chief” (Acevedo Díaz 1889: 319).

¹⁰ Translated in the novel in a footnote as: “Eat. I've eaten already, thank you” (Acevedo Díaz 1889: 320).

¹¹ Translated in the novel in a footnote as: “Let's have some *mate* then, black man” (Acevedo Díaz 1889: 320).

¹² Translated in the novel in a footnote as: “It's watery” (Acevedo Díaz 1889: 321).

¹³ Translated in the novel in a footnote as: “Bring spirits!” (Acevedo Díaz 1889: 320).

¹⁴ For an analysis of the sources used by Acevedo Díaz to develop his characters, see, among others, Figueira (1977).

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