

The Transformation of the Hero and the Loss of His Faith in the Work "Argonauts of the Jungle" by the Ecuadorian Writer Leopoldo Benites Vinueza

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This research aims to analyze the structure of the novel "Argonauts of the jungle" by the Ecuadorian writer Leopoldo Benites Vinueza. The study's methodology is qualitative and documentary since the object of study is the literary corpus of the work in question, which was analyzed from the technique of content analysis and structural analysis. In the results and discussion, the content analyzed after a careful reading of the work "Argonauts of the jungle" is found, thus, aspects such as the author's biographical data, the historical-cultural context, the literary genre, in a second part: the theme, the plot, the structure of the text and the characterization of the characters, in the third, the analysis of form, that is, the study of the literary or rhetorical resources, finally, the critical opinion are deepened. To conclude, the results found allow us to affirm that this work takes up an important period of history: the discovery of the Amazon River, and that, undoubtedly, it can serve as a support for the reader to learn about the history and the life of Francisco de Orellana, a conqueror and founder of part of the Ecuadorian land.

Keywords: Leopoldo Benites, Francisco de Orellana, Ecuadorian literature biographical-historical, Amazon River.

1. Introduction

Ecuadorian literature has a great wealth of literary works such as short stories, novels, poems, etc., as several Ecuadorian writers have ventured into the world of letters with the purpose of expressing their feelings and thoughts. There are periods that mean a lot for the literary identity of Ecuador, in which a literary and aesthetic maturity was achieved in terms of the writing of the works. It is for this reason that this documentary research aims to analyze the structure of

the novel "Argonauts of the Jungle" by the Ecuadorian writer Leopoldo Benites Vinueza.

To immerse the reader in this topic, it is important to cover in a general way, aspects of the work and the writer, which will then be taken up and deepened as the study develops. Now, it is essential to point out that Leopoldo Benites Vinueza was an Ecuadorian diplomat, essayist, journalist and writer who stood out for his brilliance and intelligence when he held important positions on behalf of the country. Like other Ecuadorian writers, Benites was criticized and scandalized for his rebellion in issuing his opinions on the reality of Ecuadorian society. A curious fact is that the life of this author resembles that of Eugenio Espejo, who was one of his main references.

It is important to mention that Benites traveled a short path in the world of letters, however, he left a great legacy in terms of literary works such as short stories, essays, novels, theaters, poetry, etc. In these works, this author courageously defended his homeland, because, in some of these writings, such as Ecuador: drama and paradox or Argonauts of the jungle, reference is made to the history of Ecuador, the misadventures and adventures of historical figures that marked a before and after for what would make up this land, small in geography, but great in diversity and patriotism. Likewise, stories such as "La Mala Hora" where Benites captured the Ecuadorian reality and that according to "him inaugurated social realism in Ecuadorian literature" (p. 161)(Espinosa, 2005)

Of equal importance, it is important to mention that the structural study of Ecuadorian literary works is scarce, and to a greater extent, that of those that have not been so well received by readers. This does not mean that these books do not deserve to be read and analyzed, since they undoubtedly represent the cultural richness and identity of Ecuador. For this reason, this study also aims to motivate the reader to immerse themselves in the literary works of Leopoldo Benites Vinueza based on a structural analysis of one of his magnificent works: "Argonauts of the Jungle".

2. Methodology

The present study has a qualitative approach, according to Hernández, et al. (2014) "qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena, exploring them from the perspective of the participants in a natural environment and in relation to their context" (p.358). In this case, we are going to study a literary work that deserves to be known by Ecuadorians, because its plot introduces us to know the history and deeds of the heroes, in important events such as the discovery of the Amazon River.

Hernández, et al. (2014) states that "The qualitative approach is recommended when the topic of the study has been little explored or no research has been done on it in any specific social group." (p. 358). In this sense, it should be noted that this work has not been studied as expected, however, it is never too late to recognize and disseminate a work with great historical-cultural value.

Of equal importance, it should be noted that the study was carried out based on documentary research, which "has the particularity of using as a primary source of inputs, but not the only and exclusive one, the written document in its different forms: printed, electronic and audiovisual documents" (Rizo, 2015, p.22). In this study, the literary corpus of the work *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No. S10 (2024)

"Argonauts of the Jungle" is used as a primary source.

On the one hand, it is worth mentioning that for the study of the work, content analysis was used as a technique. In Tinto's (2013) opinion, "analysing content means studying the contents of previously selected material. It is widely accepted to consider that any critically active study of a message already constitutes a 'content analysis' in itself" (p. 139). That said, it is essential to indicate that in order to develop this study, the work of Leopoldo Benites Vinueza was carefully read.

On the other hand, it should be noted that structural analysis was used as a technique, which according to Ramírez (2002) refers to:

Structural analysis is based on the idea that every text has a structure that organizes it, it is an artifact that can be decomposed into its constituent parts. This force

structural is immanent to the text. The elements of the structure have cohesion and interdependence and an internal dynamic. From this results a system not of a sum but of a solid coordination, of a dynamic interaction and tension of the parts, in each of which is to be found the meaning of the whole. (p.4)

For this reason, in the present study of structural analysis of the work "Argonauts of the Jungle" we will delve into aspects such as: the biographical data of the author, the historical-cultural context, the literary genre, in a second part: the theme, the plot, the structure of the text and the characterization of the characters, in the third part, the analysis of form, that is, the analysis of literary or rhetorical resources and finally, critical opinion.

3. Results and Discussion

1. Text localization

1.1 Discover the author: Leopoldo Benites Vinueza was born on October 17, 1905 in the city of Guayaquil – Ecuador. He studied in the city of Riobamba, at the "Pedro Vicente Maldonado" institution, but due to adverse situations he returned to his hometown and completed his high school studies at the "Vicente Rocafuerte" establishment. Later he obtained his degree in Political and Social Sciences at the University of Guayaquil with which he worked as a professor of philosophy and history in the institution where he completed his first studies, being thus, he was a teacher of some writers of the Generation of the thirties, among them, Demetrio Aguilera Malta.

Like the Generation of the Thirties, Benites witnessed the massacre of workers on November 15, 1922 in Guayaquil, an event that years later, inspired him to write works such as "La Mala Hora". This author also stood out as a journalist, a function that led him to be dismissed due to the criticism he made in his writings. In spite of everything, Benites continued to write and was taken to prison, however, he did not waste time, because during his ten-month stay in the prison of Esmeraldas, he wrote "Argonauts of the jungle". . He died on March 7, 1995 in Guayaquil.(López, 2018)

1.2 Historical-cultural context: "Argonauts of the Jungle" was written in 1943, at the time of the

in which Benites was locked up in jail due to his political, economic and social criticism of the government of Carlos Alberto Arroyo del Río. However, it is considered that there were also other historical antecedents that motivated this author to write this work, among them, the workers' massacre of Guayaquil on November 15, 1922, the cocoa crisis as a result of the First World War, the Julian Revolution of 1925, among others. It is considered in this way, because in the work an important character in the history of Guayaquil is taken up: Francisco de Orellana, the founder of his homeland.

1.3 Literary genre: biographical novel – epic genre.

2. Analysis of literary content

2.1. Theme of the literary text: The adventures and misadventures of Francisco de Orellana and the discovery of the Amazon River, the reason for his downfall.

2.2 Plot of the Literary Text:

In "Argonauts of the Jungle" a very important stage in the life of Francisco de Orellana is narrated. This story tells the adventures of one of the most unfortunate Spanish conquistadors in history, as he was accused of treason by Pizarro whom he accompanied during several expeditions, suffering from hunger, shortages, etc., and died poisoned by a tribe during his great discovery of the Amazon River.

The epic novel begins in the city of Santiago de Guayaquil, it was a rainy day and Francisco de Orellana was preparing for a very important event in his life, because Gonzalo Pizarro asked him to join a new expedition in search of the kingdom of the Golden Cacique and the Country of Cinnamon. During this first stage of the adventure, many Spaniards died from fever, lack of food, mosquitoes, etc., and Pizarro only buried them under trees, since they were of no use to them anymore and meanwhile the Indians were tortured and burned alive, without mercy.

While they advanced on that journey that seemed to have no end, Francisco de Orellana took care of the dying Spaniards, obeyed orders from his great friend Pizarro and even received gifts from the Indians (food, turtles, provisions, cows, roasted monkeys, etc.), but he was a little suspicious, as time went by, Orellana learned to speak in the language of the Indians and to understand it.

Francisco de Orellana embarked in the company of the other crew members on the ship that Diego Mexía had built. As they sailed down the river, they went hungry, thirsty, and hopeless again. Orellana with conviction encouraged his fellow travelers, and they managed to find a piece of land that had already been colonized by other Spaniards, it was the island of Cubagua and the city of Nueva Cádiz.

Orellana returned to the expeditions with better experience, however, several difficult circumstances arose for him, since his great friend, Pizarro, had accused him of treason and had invented so many bitter calumnies about him. Things did not remain that way, as the King recognized Francis' loyalty. In 1545 Orellana arrived at the Amazon River, he wanted to find as much wealth as he could (gold) and faced several adversities, at times he seemed to be used to it, but there was always something that turned his experiences into new challenges.

Finally, Francisco de Orellana was losing hope, he was skinny, with sunken eyes and very

tired, because the Amazon River was so enigmatic that it did not allow him to achieve his purposes. Thus the last battle was undertaken, where hundreds of savages fell, but also Spaniards, and yes, one of them, the adventurer without fortune, Francisco de Orellana. In the epilogue of this work, the defeat of the Spaniards who remained under the command of Juan de Peñalosa is described.(Benites Vinuesa, 2002)

2.3. Structure of the literary text: This work has 271 pages, and is structured in two parts. The first part has 15 chapters subtitled according to what happened throughout the story, which presents the content in paragraphs.

Part One: The Adventure.

Determination, The Fleece Pose, Words in the Distance, Doubts, Crosses in the Jungle, The Buzzing Clouds, The Accepted Fate, Heading for the Mystery, The Sign of the Miracle, The Assault, From Scylla to Charybdis, The River of Black Waters, The Bloody Pillorys, Misfortunes of Fray Gaspar in the Land of the Amazons, Poisoned Arrows, Candles over the Sea.

On the other hand, the second part is structured with 15 chapters plus the epilogue and in the same way, it distributes the content in paragraphs.

Part Two: The Return

The Arrival, The Hispanic Paradox, The Spring of Memories, The Goal, Obstacles, The Shipwrecked Voice, Aut vincere aut mori, The Dark Stalking, The Visit, Escape, The Saving Storm, The Incognito Destiny, The Green Hell, Invisible Claws, The Final Combat, Epilogue.

2.4 Characterization of the characters:

Main character:

- Francisco de Orellana: he is the hero of the story, despite having been an unfortunate conqueror, he was a brave man who fought until the last moment to get riches, he loved his wife and encouraged his companions to continue on the expedition.

Supporting characters:

- Gonzalo Pizarro: supposed friend of Francisco de Orellana, as he accused the protagonist of treason.
- Doña Ana: she was the wife of Francisco de Orellana, who also accompanied him in the discovery of the Amazon River.
- Juan de Peñalosa: he was the faithful friend of Francisco de Orellana, he accompanied him until the end of his misfortune.
- Francisco de Heres: is a notary public of the Council who was in charge of writing the data of the city founded by Orellana.
- Rodrigo de Vargas, Ordinary Mayor, Gómez de Estacio, Francisco de Chávez, Pedro de Gibrleón, Alonso Casco, Juan de la Puente and Cristóbal Lunar: men of serious physiognomies, aldermen of the city of Santiago de Guayaquil.

- King of Spain and Natural Lord of the Indies: they were bourgeois Spaniards in the name of whom all the conquests were made.
- Antonio de Ribero and Captain Sancho de Carvajal: they were the crew members of the expedition.
- Indians: some were mistreated and burned alive at the hands of Pizarro and others helped the Spaniards in the search for the lands.
- Fray Gaspar de Carvajal and Fray Gonzalo de la Vera: they were monks from Extremadura on the expedition.
- Cristóbal Enríquez, Hernán Gutiérrez de Celis and Cristóbal Maldonado de Segobia: Spaniards who later joined the expedition.
- Francisco de Isásaga: is appointed royal notary by Orellana.
- Diego Mexía: was a carpenter from Seville who built the ship for the navigation of the crew.
- Arripuna: the chief of an inland region inhabited by black-painted giants.
- Aparia: he is an old man whose face has wrinkles and who tells great legends to the Spaniards.
- Alonso Robles: he was an ensign who was in charge of the expeditions.
- Charles V: the most powerful monarch on earth.
- Juan III, Diego Nuñez de Quezada: they were ambitious men who had power over their lands.

3. Shape analysis

1.1. Phonetic Resources

Alliteration

- His body was covered with disgusting bubas and deformed warts (p. 25)
- Orellana tries to make the poor friar's pains more bearable. (p. 130)

Onomatopoeia

- He sings now in a different way: I fled... Huiii (p. 138)

3.2 Morphological resources:

- The character of this energetic and gentle man at the same time, has not been forged for sterile calluses. (p. 37).
- The trees are so tall that you can't see their crowns. (p. 45)

3.4. Syntactic resources:

Polysyndeton

- Nor the parchment bureaucrats. Nor the suday-inked legulellos. Nor did Father Torres with his tiresome advice. Nor the intrigues of those interested.

Hyperbaton

- Skilful and cautious he passes the episode of the battle as if on embers... (p. 37)

3.5 Semantic resources:

Comparison

- They eat with their swords under their armpits, with their bucklers in their arms, looking everywhere, like fearful beasts that raise their heads to see if anyone is approaching. (p. 57)

Prosopography

- His face has deep wrinkles that mark the stamp of the years on his stern countenance. (p. 71)
- One of them – the one who seems to be of the most respect – is a thick man, with severe features, and a military bearing. He is missing an eye and that gives his face a harder appearance. (p. 155)

Personification

- High and sonorous rises the oak grove. The giant trees rise into the twilight sky and look at themselves in the mirror of the river. (p. 129)
- The wind whistles, shouts howls, among the sonorous trees. (p. 129)
- The water also sings a song of breaking waves. (p. 247)
- ... this river so enigmatic that it does not want to reveal its secrets (p. 256)

4. Critical opinion

Undoubtedly, "Argonauts of the Jungle" by the Ecuadorian writer Leopoldo Benites Vinueza is a magnificent literary work, in which the reader will be amazed, because a profound description of the beauty of the Amazon jungle is made. Sometimes this wonderful place became the protagonist of the story, because, in effect, it is described as an enigmatic and mysterious place. On the other hand, the role played by Francisco de Orellana is crucial, because this character teaches that, even if you make the greatest possible effort to challenge nature, you will never be able to, it is one of the great limitations of man, but it is fine, because it is part of the mystery of nature. It is also important to manifest the role of the Indians, who were burned alive, enslaved and violated, and in some way, were recognized as the sole owners of the wonderful Amazon.

4. Conclusions

The results found in this documentary research allow us to affirm that "Argonauts of the Jungle" is a very valuable and representative work in history, since it narrates the life of Francisco de Orellana, the founder of Santiago de Guayaquil and to whom the discovery of

the Amazon River indisputably belongs. Undoubtedly, this novel reconstructs in a sublime way the time and life of the most unfortunate of the conquistadors, who marked an important milestone in the history of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador, countries fortunate to possess the richness of the Amazon rainforest.

Taking into account the above, it is important to mention that this literary work of a biographical and historical type can serve as a support to teach the history of the discovery of the Amazon River, because in addition to telling a formidable adventure, in this one the beauty of the jungle stands out, in which the reader can immerse himself through the wonderful world of the imagination and thus, to feel part of the time, to be part of the adventures that the conqueror lives in his expeditions, and of course, to devise their own experiences to discover something as good and magnificent, as happened with Orellana.

Finally, it should be noted that in this study there is valuable information about the work in question, which will serve as a guide for the reader to undertake its reading in the complete work of Leopoldo Benites Vinueza. Readers are urged to value the Ecuadorian literary richness, since, in it, the worldview of the peoples is reflected and described, which is part of the cultural identity of the country.

There is no doubt that there are Ecuadorian literary works that have transcended time due to their fame, however, it is essential that the reading of the works of the authors that are kept in the trunk of memories is resumed, because, if they have not achieved renown, it is not due to bad writing or because they are irrelevant topics. on the contrary, it is due to the devaluation of what is ours.

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