



REVISTA

CÁTEDRA

Alterity, introspection, self-knowledge in the works Bruna Soroche y los Tíos and La pasión según G.H.

Alteridad, introspección, autorreconocimiento en las obras Bruna soroche y los tíos y la pasión según G.H.

Glenda Viñamagua-Quezada

Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador
Facultad de Filosofía Letras y Ciencias de la Educación, Carrera de Educación Inicial del
Programa de Educación Semipresencial
gmvinamagua@uce.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9514-1855>

Paúl Puma-Torres

Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador
Facultad de Filosofía Letras y Ciencias de la Educación, Carrera de Pedagogía de la Lengua
y la Literatura
pfpuma@uce.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3932-7196>

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Abstract

In this research work, a critical and interpretative analysis of the works Bruna, soroche y los tíos by Alicia Yáñez Cossío and La pasión según GH by Clarice Lispector was carried out, taking as a point of convergence the theme of the image as a space where the gaze of the other is determinant in the construction of identity. For the development of this research, the methodology proposed by the theatology and the imagotypes was used. Concerning the theoretical support, the postulates of Córdova 2016, Boadas 2016 and Sánchez 2005, who is based on Moura's theoretical proposal on the three aspects of the image, were used as a starting point. In this way, the religious conception in the imposition of identity and



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ethnicity as a social construct product of the gaze of center and periphery were determined as thematic axes. This analysis, which is based on the hermeneutic tradition, aims to analyze the construction of identity from the gaze of the other and how this idea is perpetuated and conceived as true from the transcendence of the image and religious symbology, as occurs in the novel *Bruna Soroche and the uncles*. While in the work *La pasión según GH*, the image is assumed as a trigger for self-recognition through the introspection provoked by the subaltern gaze. The contribution of this research lies in determining how fiction creates narrative spaces where there is a relationship between the gaze and the image in the construction of identity.

Keywords

Alterity, social construct, imagootype, image, thematics.

Resumen

En este trabajo de investigación se realizó un análisis crítico e interpretativo de las obras *Bruna, soroche y los tíos* de Alicia Yánez Cossío y *La pasión según GH* de Clarice Lispector, se tomó como punto de convergencia el tema de la imagen como un espacio donde la mirada del otro es determinante en la construcción de la identidad. Para el desarrollo de esta investigación se tomó la metodología propuesta por la tematología y los imagotipos. En el concerniente al sustento teórico se partió de los postulados de Córdova 2016, Boadas 2016 y Sánchez 2005, quien se basa en la propuesta teórica de Moura sobre los tres aspectos de la imagen. De esta manera se determinó como ejes temáticos la concepción religiosa en la impostación de la identidad y la etnia como un constructo social producto de la mirada de centro y periferia. Este análisis, que se sustenta en la tradición hermenéutica, tiene por objetivo analizar la construcción de la identidad a partir de la mirada del otro y como esta idea se perpetúa y se concibe como verdadera a partir de la trascendencia de la imagen y de la simbología religiosa, como ocurre en la novela *Bruna Soroche y los tíos*. Mientras que en la obra *La pasión según GH*, la imagen se asume como un detonante del autorreconocimiento a través de la introspección que provoca la mirada *subalterna*. El aporte de esta investigación radica en determinar cómo desde la ficción se crean espacios narrativos donde existe una relación entre la mirada y la imagen en la construcción de la identidad.

Palabras clave

Alteridad, constructo social, imagotipo, imagen, tematología.

1. Introduction

In this research work, an analysis of the literary works *Bruna, soroche y los tíos* by the Ecuadorian writer Alicia Yánez Cossío and *La pasión según G.H.* by the Ukrainian-Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector is carried out. In order to deepen the study of these novels, two elements that are considered key to this approach will be taken. The first will address the thematology to deal with the theme of otherness as a common factor in both works. Meanwhile, the second aspect of this study will focus on three aspects of the image, according to the postulates of Moura, who according to Sánchez (2005):

First, he proposes to approach the term image as an image of the (or of the) foreign or foreigner. Second, he suggests investigating the image as a product of a nation, culture or society (the social imaginary). Finally, he



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suggests delving into an image as a product created by a particular author (p. 13).

The question to be answered in this analysis is how is otherness constructed from fiction based on introspection and social revelation, actions that characterize the characters GH in the work *The Passion* according to GH by Clarice Lispector and María Illacatu in the work *Bruna Soroche and the uncles* by Alicia Yáñez Cossío? For this purpose, the theory of the theatology and imagology developed in Moura's proposal will be taken as a basis, according to Manuel Sánchez 2015.

Regarding otherness, it will be based on the postulates and the vision of Córdoba, who conducts his studies on otherness from the perspective of transmodernity. In this sense, the definition proposed by Eduardo Sousa (as cited in Córdoba, 2016) will be used as a starting point.

The "other", being defined by Eduardo Sousa as the philosophical principle of alternating or exchanging one's own perspective for that of the other, considering and taking into account the point of view, the conception of the world, the interests, the ideology of the other, and not assuming that "one's" is the only possible one (p. 1003).

In the literary works analyzed in this study, otherness is portrayed in the female characters mentioned above, who from their internal dialogues reflect on the dimension of life from introspection and from the questions that arise from their relationship with society. In this sense, the stereotypes that model behaviors, assign roles and annul human beings in their deepest feelings gain strength. In some cases, this leads to the revelation of the female characters, who undertake the search for their own selves through the motif of the journey. Either from the space of introspection as in the case of the character GH or from focusing the gaze outward as in the case of Bruna.

The importance of this study lies in reflecting on otherness as the space that allows us to explore the internal and external world of the characters in order to know the different ways of seeing, understanding, feeling or living them. And literature shows this possibility that remains hidden in the course of everyday experiences. In this sense, literature is revealed as a space of sensitivity, analysis and reflection that shows a different reality characterized by questioning the status quo of a homogenized society, imposed from the West, which mutilates the being to assign value from its objectification and thus make it functional.

It is considered that this study is pertinent and addresses a topical issue, since from art and specifically from literature, aspects are opened through fiction where it is possible to reflect on facts that concern humanity in general and that are manifested through individual experiences.

When the character is the narrator himself and tells us the story from his point of view, he does not usually give us descriptions of himself, physical descriptions, but he does communicate his vision of the world, his moral and aesthetic categories, in a very powerful way, we end up having an image of him, knowing him (Puértolas, 1993, p. 148).



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In the novels under study, the conflicts of the female characters are the product of the struggle between social impositions and the construction of their own destiny that opposes the norm. The narrative voice in both works shows beings who, upon recognizing themselves, question the roles that society has assigned to them, thus producing a struggle where memory, religion, and social conventions trigger internal conflicts in the characters. In a passage of *Bruna, Soroche and the uncles*, Bruna gives her friends bathing suits that fall apart when the young women dive into the water. This moment of relaxation culminates in a tragedy, due to a society that appropriates the female body; where sexuality becomes a value to which life itself is sacrificed:

They preferred to resist the cold of the water rather than go out and expose their nakedness: The girls were compared to Maria Goretti and declared from the pulpits of the churches: martyrs of purity -These heroic girls preferred death rather than commit a sin of impurity (Yáñez, 2010, p. 306).

The female body has been relegated to the space of taboo and social property promoted by religious power. It is a world where women do not decide, but rather they accept what society determines and even more, they feel guilt for not complying with what society demands of them. When the woman submits herself to the norm that leads her to assimilate her body under the concepts of taboo, shame or shamefulness, she is forced to sacrifice her thoughts and identity in favor of a religious reward that makes her a saint, then, religion endorses the social subject as the owner of the female body.

The conflict in *The Passion* according to GH also has a religious background, society takes over the decisions about women's bodies. At this point, in addition to moral motives, as in the case of Bruna, there are also aspects such as the preservation of status, economic, social or intellectual notoriety, which are superimposed on the value of life.

Mother: I killed a life, and there are no arms to embrace me and in the hour of our desert, amen. Mother, everything now became solid gold. I interrupted an organized thing, mother, and that is worse than killing, that makes me enter through a breach that showed me, worse than death, that showed me rude and neutral life yellowing. The cockroach is alive, and the eye of it is fertilizer, I'm afraid of getting loutish, mother (Lispector, 1964, p. 55).

When these conflicts that concern a patriarchal vision of society are manifested through literature, these stories become unique and revealing. The exercise of recreating these themes in depth through the actions of the characters allows us to internalize diverse feelings, thoughts or sensations. Then, those who get involved in the plot through reading have the ability to question the system that takes over individuals, their affections and desires.

This characteristic of fiction creates in the reader a catharsis by recognizing in the reality of these characters personal or social sequences. From this emotional and intellectual shake-up, reflection and critical thinking are enhanced and, at the same time, it contributes to the construction of a symbolic reparation.

Regarding the structure of the article, section 2 contextualizes the works that constitute the corpus of this analysis. Section 3 presents the methodology applied for the development of



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this research. Section 4 presents the results of the research, applying the selected analysis criteria. Section 5 deals with the discussion. Section 6 records the conclusions according to the results obtained.

2. Contextualization of both novels

In order to continue with this study, it is necessary to approach both novels through the most outstanding features that lead them to converge in the same subject of analysis.

2.1 Bruna soroche and uncles

Bruna, the protagonist of this novel, is the youngest member of a Quito family whose prejudices lead them to hide their indigenous ancestors, masking them with a change of surname, religious fanaticism, naivety or madness. These characteristics become symbols in the behavior of Bruna's uncles, who also come to represent a society in decline that is ending along with them and that gives way to new generations with new conflicts. These new generations seek a space and an identity by emulating the behaviors and customs of foreigners. The death of each of Bruna's uncles is understood as a metaphor for the death of thoughts marked by the shame of miscegenation, characteristic of a society in decline that gives way to a new generation in a constant search to find a place and an identity.

2.2 Passion according to GH

G. H. are the initials of the protagonist of Lispector's novel. She belongs to an influential economic and social sector of Rio de Janeiro, where she is well known for her closeness to the arts, an activity that has allowed her to achieve status within her social circle. In her inner life, however, the protagonist experiences an emotional uprooting caused by an abortion and her failure in love.

These conflicts that GH experiences generate emptiness and anguish, emotions that she tries to purge when she eats a cockroach in the room of her ex-employee, whom she has just fired. In addition to these feelings that the protagonist experiences, as a result of the introspection generated by being alone in her apartment, there is also the questioning that she feels when she can't remember the name of her employee, Janair. The indifference she has shown to Janair leads the protagonist to question her lack of empathy towards others. Janair, through her gaze, invites GH to self-knowledge. The trigger in this process of introspection is an image: a mural that Janair is presumed to have drawn in the room she occupied before being fired.

3. Methodology

The methodology followed in this research is based on the methodology of theaterology and imagotypes. As a branch of comparative literature, theaterology studies the abstract dimension of literature and its relationship with multiculturalism. It allows an approach to works coming from different cultures, where similar themes are addressed. This discipline is fundamental to understand the connections between literary works from different cultures and their communicative force, as is the case in this study. The application of this method, approached from the analytical documentary approach, allows focusing the analysis on the elements that determine the themes, motifs and characters such as stereotypes in the context of literary representation.

Regarding imagology, Moura's theoretical proposal is followed, as a branch of literature that focuses on the study of images and their relationship with identity and culture. In the case of this study, religion was determined as a guide for analysis in the imposition of identity



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and ethnicity as a social construct product of the look of center and periphery. In this aspect there will be an approach regarding the individual or collective self over the other individual and collective self, within the concept of otherness. The thematic inquiry followed in this research is linked to hermeneutics, since this interpretation explores the historical, social and cultural motives that configure the characters as the triggers of the works object of this study.

4. Results

4.1 The theme of otherness in the construction of the characters María Illacatu and G.H.

Otherness is presented as a concept where there is what is valid and what departs from this conception or differs from it. From this concept, the other emerges as a space of conflict that questions the fact of being classified as different. With respect to this concept that has its place of enunciation from a place of power. Ruiz (n.d) indicates that:

in this approach, the other (the foreigner, the madman, the marginal, the homosexual, the woman, etc.) is the one who distinguishes himself from the limit of the world and questions it. It appears fortuitously in the horizon of understanding that sustains us and shakes the system that sustains this horizon (p. 99)).

The other, then, within a system built from imposition, becomes the marginalized, a being that must be hidden or is forced to hide, to deny himself. Within this context, otherness emerges as a way of establishing difference and acceptance, recognition without making comparisons with a center conceived from a vision of center and periphery. Córdova (2015) is supported by Enrique Dussel's studies to affirm that:

otherness is knowing how to think the world from the alterative exteriority of the other, which has as a consequence the recognition of the other as different from the self, through the face-to-face encounter with the other, the oppressed, the poor; that is, someone who escapes the power of the subject and who responds rather to an experience and a temporality that do not belong to the self (p. 1003).

According to Aguirre, the Spanish invasion of America brought with it various types of violence that led to the annulment of a civilization that had been built based on logics different from those of Western thought. This other way of thinking the world had as one of its axes an integral and harmonious thinking, since both the environment and the human being were conjugated in spaces that contributed to the conservation of what could be understood as human dignity in consonance with the environment: "within the indigenous cosmivision [...] the earth is conceived as a mother, it is the mother that gives, compact with men, who are considered important within the community" (Aguirre, 1986, p. 18).

This principle of integrality that follows a form of horizontal relationship clashes with the vision and lacerating action that the Spaniards brought with them. This culture that was imposed with the use of violence marked the behavior of the original inhabitants, leading them to hide their way of relating to the world. This concealment of identity becomes a form of symbolic violence whose traces are manifested in the character María Illacatu, an indigenous woman from whom Bruna descends. María Illacatu was robbed of her culture,



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her identity, and they tried to implant a new way of life that tried to legitimize itself through the permanence of the image:

Maria Illacatu had succumbed long before her portrait was made. She did not resist the tragic process of her transplantation and her adaptation to the white world. Her customs, inherited from centuries and anchored to the land with a lordship of race, had to be erased overnight as if they were stigmata.

-The Indian has to be put in a corset to pose.

-And are you going to spend so much money to paint her...?

-So that my grandchildren won't say that...

-Oh, yes, I understand! (Yáñez, 2010, p. 83)

María Illacatu was disguised to erase her indigenous identity when she was portrayed. Thus, the portrait assumes an impostured identity. The indigenous past is hidden behind an image that denies the other, who is marginalized from a society that is built on shame. The meaning of the image is located as the truth that endures, survives and is accepted, because it is the only one that testifies in a tangible way an artificial and imposed truth. That truth that appeals to appearance and that complies with the stereotype of beauty that is demanded of women from the imposition of the West:

as individual images, photographs of natives and "traders" posing in awkward forms and exotically attired were judged by the same canons of beauty, convention and physiognomy used to evaluate bourgeois portraits (Poole, 2000, p. 164).

The character G.H., on the other hand, recognizes that the life she has (until the moment she sees the cockroach, an animal she describes as ancestral) and which is reflected in a photograph in which she smiles, is a reflection of what others have constructed about her, the image of the Western woman who triumphs in the modern social scene.

Sometimes, looking at a photo taken on the beach or at a party, I would distinguish with slight ironic apprehension what that smiling, darkened face revealed to me: a silence. A silence and a destiny that escaped me: me, a hieroglyphic fragment of a dead or living empire. When I looked at the portrait, I saw the mystery (Lispector, 1964, p.14).

The photograph in the novel *La pasión según G.h.*, or the portrait in the novel *Bruna, soroché y los tíos*, are associated with the idea of the stranger or foreigner where the gaze of the other is used to impose an identity, in addition to what Sánchez (2005) indicates as a second aspect of the study of the image "as a product of a nation, culture or society leads us to the theme of otherness" (p. 59). This affirmation that Sanchez takes from the studies carried out by Moura with respect to the imagotypes directs towards the image of the other with respect to the society in which he lives. These constructs turn the being into a stranger in front of his own reality and his image or what the individual assimilates as his image is not his true "I", but an artifice that society makes of the subject, with the purpose of achieving that he fulfills roles and that he adjusts and perpetuates an imposed system.

With respect to image and representation, Pool (2006) mentions "seeing and representing as material acts insofar as they constitute means of intervening in the world" (p. 15). The



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image becomes tangible through the act of the gaze, and this in turn becomes an act of domination and control, a situation experienced by María Illacatu and G.H., women with polarized social conditions one from the other, a particularity that makes even more tangible the symbolic violence that subjects two women who do not follow the route that society has historically marked for them.

However, in both characters there is a trigger that allows them to look inward. Either through contact with nature, which becomes an accomplice in moments of uneasiness, as in the case of María Illacatu, in the context of her near maternity:

María Illacatu told the secret of her motherhood to the road and the road took pity on her by suddenly cutting off and stopping in the ejidos of a town that opened its windows to see an arriving caravan. No one noticed how the land ran into the ravines and the mountains retreated. The road contracted: ten trees went inside one. The birds fell down dead of old age and the eggs just laid became wings (Yáñez, 2010, p. 86).

A similar situation occurs in the case of G.H., when two key situations present themselves to her: the first, the contemplation of the drawing in her ex-employee's room. This image, which shows a naked couple with their dog, represents for the character G.H. a sort of mold in which she fits genuinely and more comfortably than in the photographs of her trips and parties, where she smiles. We would thus be in front of what Pérez (2016) nominates as "the image of the other is the mirror of one's own" (p. 19). These cave images open a door for G.H. to observe her inner self, that ancestral being that emerges through an exercise of introspection that allows her to undress her inner self. G.H. approaches her inner self, the one that society taught her to hide, since her role was to fulfill the stereotype of the educated, artistic, refined and well-to-do woman.

On the whitewashed wall next to the door - and that is why I had not yet seen it - there was almost a life-size silhouette, drawn in charcoal, of a naked man, a naked woman and a dog that was more naked than a dog. In the bodies was not drawn what nudity reveals, the nudity came only from the absence of everything that covers: they were the silhouettes of an empty nudity. The line was coarse, made with the broken tip of the charcoal. In some pieces the line was duplicated as if one stroke was the tremor of another. A dry tremor of dry charcoal (Lispector, 1964, p.25).

Before seeing the insect in Janair's room, G.H. does not recognize herself, she does not find her true self, she is only aware that what she has experienced up to that moment is the product of an image constructed by agents external to her. Her true inner self was known to her employee, the woman whom G.H. fired, and that is why she painted this image for her. In this regard, Levinas (2001) mentions that:

the Desire of the Other [Autrui] is born in a being that lacks nothing or, more precisely, is born beyond what can lack or satisfy it. This Desire of the Other [Autrui], which is our very sociality, is not a simple relation to the being in which, according to the formulas from which we started, the Other becomes the Self (p. 57).



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The second situation that G.H. experiences is the symbolism of the cockroach, because in the moments of his introspection this insect ceases to mean a pest-animal and becomes the symbol of the return to the origin and the integrality of the human being by merging with it. This form of acceptance of two realities in the same being is possible when he observes it carefully and turns it into his food in order to mimic the essence of the animal that represents the hidden side and thus recognize his true identity, the one he wishes to hide.

That morning, before I entered the room, what was I? I was what others had always seen me to be, and that's how I knew myself. I couldn't say what I was. But, at least, I want to remember: what was I doing (Lispector, 1964, p.14.).

This reflection precedes the turn that G.H.'s life will experience after entering the room of Janair, his former employee. And that then leads to a recognition of his true self, which at times he is afraid to face. When he observes this image, G.H. senses that this encounter will allow him to find himself again in a new space and tries to return to his origin, which he achieves at the end of the work, when he merges with an original insect by devouring it. In that instant GH dies as an image formed by the other and lives from herself by recovering her inner self. In this regard, Pérez (2016) indicates:

Nowadays, scholars are increasingly emphasizing that this discipline (imagology) not only helps to understand the idea of the Other from its representation but also to become aware of an "I" with respect to that Other (p. 12).

The character of María Illacatu recovers her origin through the murder of the person who took it away from her, and returns to it through her suicide. Thus, it is possible to establish an analogy between three actions that occur in these stories: the murder of the Spaniard, Maria Illacatu's husband; the death of the cockroach and the reunion that the authors of these murders experience with themselves, Maria Illacatu with her suicide and G.H. by eating the cockroach.

Through death, both women free themselves from the image that society constructed of them and recognize themselves in a new space where they are reunited, where they are no longer strangers to each other or to themselves. In this regard, Ruiz (n.d.) states that "the problem of otherness finds its origin in the assumption of a center. Accordingly, we acquire an identity whose foundation is to provide us with a location and a meaning that articulates the way we relate to the world" (p. 99). In the female characters indicated, that center wavers because they feel emptied within a space that does not recognize them, but has molded them to fulfill a role through the annulment of their self. To which they recover with their death, either physical as in the case of María Illacatu or the death of an image constructed by society in which GH does not recognize herself.

With respect to the identity that is constructed of the self through the vision of the other, it can be noted that the characters María Illacatu and Janair remain invisible, the space they occupy is that of the shadow and they come to light while they are productive for those who make use of them. Maria Illacatu is given another life and her welcome letter is the baptism she receives "I baptize you, Yahuma with the name of Mary. In the name of the Father, the Son and the... And she was called María from that moment when they poured water over her bent head and washed with it the ideas of father Sol" (Yáñez, 2010, p. 78). From the moment



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of baptism, María Illacatu becomes visible to a society that has marginalized her. Religion is then understood as a form of repression that annuls the human being and makes him/her visible as long as he/she adjusts to what the Western vision determines as the center. In this regard, Ruiz (n.d.) affirms:

The clearest criticism of the attempt to know the other is formulated on the basis of practical historical experience. It has been sought to know the other in order to dominate and subjugate him, never to establish a permanent and daily dialogue in which the possibility of the other's participatory existence is granted (p. 99).

Within her cultural context, Maria Illacatu was the daughter of a cacique and would be a wife of the sun. But when she was taken by force by a Spaniard, these privileges were taken away from her and she was visible as much as the gold she possessed, an element that nullified her and from which she detached herself with her suicide: "all the truths of our present are the surviving beliefs of the past. Beliefs that were imposed on others and come to us as truths in use. The history of the center is not wrong, until the other appears and shakes that order that excludes it" (Ruiz, n.d., p.99).

Concerning Janair, there is a singularity, she is invisible while she is useful to G.H., and her strength is present in her absence, her being takes shape while G.H. remembers her through the traces she left in the back room that was destined for servitude, a space that G.H. had never been to, although it was within the same place where she lived as the owner of the apartment. When she entered that white room, she recognized herself and realized that the image that society had made of her was nothing more than a staging that she had represented up to that moment

That woman, G. H. in the leather of the suitcases, was me; is it me, still? No. From now on I foresee that the hardest thing my vanity will have to face will be the judgment of myself: I will have all the appearance of one who failed, and I alone will know if bankruptcy was necessary (Lispector, 1964, p. 20).

This questioning that arises from her loneliness and that in an internal dialogue allows her to recognize that she does not feel identified with the life she has and that is represented by the initials of her name. This identity that has been built from the gaze of her environment, also opens a door to the uncertainty of knowing if the identity in which she recognizes herself, which is distant from the other and which comes only from her, will be enough to move away from the one she was. These reflections come to her and come to the surface when she remembers Janair:

I looked at the mural where I must have been represented... Me, the Man. And as for the puppy, was this the epithet she gave me? For years I had been judged only by my peers and by my own environment, which were made, in short, of myself and for myself. Janair was the first truly alien person whose gaze I became aware of (Lispector, 1964, p. 26).

The gaze of the other gives way to the construction of an identity. In the case of G.H., the gaze of an invisible person offered her the possibility of recognizing and reconstructing



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herself, far from the gazes that had constructed an identity that she felt alien to, and that turned her into a hollowed-out being.

It was then that I unexpectedly managed to remember his face; of course, how could I have forgotten it? I saw again the black and calm face, I saw again the entirely opaque skin that seemed more like one of her ways of keeping quiet, the well-drawn eyebrows, I saw again the fine and delicate features that were barely distinguishable in the dull blackness of the skin (Lispector, 1964, p. 26).

Janair, in this case is a door to introspection and to the construction of identity based on self-knowledge and acceptance. "We are the other with respect to a history of thought that ignores us. And it is the otherness and its possibility what sustains us and the aspiration to a realization that in this time we ignore what we expect" (Ruiz, n.d., p.100). When G.H. recognizes Janair's physical features, she also recognizes herself, she banishes from herself the image she has created of her identity and now longs to rediscover the truth and the origin, elements symbolized in an ancestral insect.

4.2 Imagotipo: three aspects of Moura's proposal in Bruna Soroche and the uncles and The Passion according to GH.

Before carrying out the imagological analysis, we quote what Boadas (2015) mentions regarding the factors that need to be taken into account when carrying out a work of this nature: "to stop and reason about which cultures are looked at, how they are looked at, from where they do it and if from that look attitudes linked to judgments, questioning, dreams, fantasies about the Other emerge" (p. 143). The aspects mentioned by Boadas coincide with the three axes from which Moura starts: "the image of the foreign or foreigner, the image as a product of a nation, culture or society, and the image as a product created by a specific author" (Sánchez, 2005, p. 13).

Within the works analyzed in this study, the elements that are found in function of the parameters indicated are presented in the following tables:

Works under study	Traces leading to otherness
Bruna soroche and uncles	Presence of religion Image configuration Imposition of identity Image, identity and meaning
Passion according to G.H .	Alterity Social role as a construct Recognition of the inner self Encounter between the real self and the self as social construct

Table 1. Traces of otherness in the plays Bruna Soroche and the uncles and The Passion according to GH.



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Bruna, soroche and the uncles	Passion according to GH
The apostles in Aunt Catalina's bed	Rupestrian images in the utility room Images of a man, a woman a dog painted in the utility room. service room.
images of pool, mermaid, manneken pis	The image of the unclean and the occult represented in a Cockroach.

Table 2. Imagotypes in the plays Bruna Soroche and the uncles and The Passion according to GH

4.3 Bruna, soroche and the uncles: the apostles in aunt Catalina's bed

The character of Aunt Catalina shows a woman who takes refuge in her particular way of understanding faith, a faith that instead of evoking peace in those close to her, provokes fear and rejection. This character conceives faith from the point of view of repression, flagellation, sacrifice, etc. And he demands the same behaviors from those around him. In this regard, Sánchez (2015) indicates that "the imagotype consists of several elements, including images, stereotypes or prejudices" (p. 24). Catalina's stereotype is that of a woman who shuns affection and the spaces of pleasure that life generates and hides in religion conceived from repression.

This way of living her faith led her to ask a carpenter to build her a bed whose pillars were the four Evangelists, and which is described in the novel as follows:

The four evangelists: St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John and St. Matthew had been lowered from heaven itself to contemplate the murky dream of the aunt. They were covered with gold leaf on which the painting had been applied... (Yáñez, 2010, p. 265).

The significant thing about this image of the bed is its exterior, as it is described as an unreachable space, it transmits fear and marks distance. It can be noted, according to the description, that there are inconsistencies in the proportions of the evangelists, a detail that is narrated with a certain sarcasm. In view of this particularity, Aunt Catalina, a woman marked by religion, does not feel comfortable, but accepts it. Another detail of this resting place is that, just as its exterior is majestic, despite the errors pointed out, the mattress, the inner part of the bed, is rather modest and neglected. In this passage of the novel, the latent conflict between the inner self and the outer self is addressed.

It was a papal bed, imposing, superb, on which any mortal other than the aunt would have had qualms of conscience when lying on it. But the mattress was miserable, made of moor straw, stiff and cold, full of icy edges that penetrated through the skin, until they touched the bones (Yáñez, 2010, p. 266).

An analogy can be drawn between the inner and outer parts of the bed with the image of Catalina, whose stereotype is that of a sanctimonious woman who shows a reserved



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exterior, intent on following the norm, but with an intimidating lack of feelings. However, her inner self is cold, worn, stiff, just like the mattress. According to Sanchez (2005) "the imagotype consists of several elements, among them images, stereotypes or prejudices" (p. 24) In the character of Aunt Catalina we can see portrayed the stereotype of a repressed woman who takes refuge in religion as a way to face the outside world that hurts her, because her inner self, like the straw of the mattress of the papal bed, is dry.

4.4 The images of the pool: mermaid, fish, manneken pis

These three images have water as a common factor, symbol of the flow of time and of the generations that are renewed in Bruna's family. The little mermaid would be linked to the uninhibited, spontaneity, femininity that characterized the house, while Camelia the weeping one led it. This image of novelty represents the new world that Camelia discovered on her journey and the sensuality that characterizes this female character.

When Aunt Catalina was in charge of the house, she replaced the little mermaid with a stone fish. She attributed this change to the fact that the fish was the first symbol of Christianity, and since religion, in the way she understood and practiced it, was her main reference, she decided to make this change. Religion from a traditional conception constituted the axis that guided Catalina's life, which was reflected in the image of the fish in the pool. This symbol located in a strategic place in the family home constituted a refuge from what Catherine considered an impure world.

With the manneken pis, which came to replace the fish, the novelty of getting to know new worlds through migratory displacements returns and now comes from the hand of Bruna's brother, when he travels to Europe. The manneken pis, as well as the little mermaid, are uncovered images, that do not wear clothes and that to a certain extent represent freedom and abolition of ties, as well as the disinhibition that shows the inner being. These three elements that with the appearance of each family generation are replaced in the decoration of the pool of Bruna's house, are related by the flow of liquid, the mermaid and the fish inhabit the water, while the manneken pis emanates liquid in the form of waste. This last symbol is understood, then, as a prelude to the dissolution of Bruna's family.

It was only a few days before grandma's house was to be demolished. They were going to tear down the walls that sheltered so many lives of orphaned children and so many generations. They were going to tear out the doors and windows as they had torn out the children of María Illacatu (Yáñez, 2010, p. 207).

These images, which represent the identity of a family that tries to hide its origin, change as different stages pass and new generations inhabit it. Both the family and social spheres are linked in a space crossed by the religious and the mundane and are questioned within the novel because none of these spheres offers the possibility of freedom for its characters. On the contrary, these spaces of submission are confirmed or endorsed, which perpetuates the idea of the center-periphery and its influence within the family sphere. Faced with this behavior of abandonment that arises from the power groups, the other is marginalized, the one who does not fit within the parameters of social imposition inherited from the West. In this sense, Ballesteros (2016) indicates that:

The oppressed, offended and humiliated, the vilified of history who become aware of their situation, are the only protagonists capable of



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breaking the silence that has denied their voice and presence for centuries (p. 176).

In the works analyzed in this study, the characters María Ilacatu and Janair break the imposed silence and reveal themselves through the decision to appropriate their lives. In the case of María Ilacatu, her presence is revealed through her suicide, while Janair, G.H.'s employee, acts as a mirror of the protagonist mediated by the image she painted in his room. This image plays the role of triggering processes of introspection that lead G.H. to question how he had led his life up to that point.

4.5 Passion according to G.H.: image in the utility room

Among the most significant images found in this work is the painting that GH finds in the maid's room, which he presumes could have been made by Janair. What stands out about this image within the construction of the story is the freedom from conventionalisms that it presents, an aspect that is reflected in the nudity of the painting:

On the whitewashed wall next to the door - and that is why I had not yet seen it - there was almost a life-size silhouette, drawn in charcoal, of a naked man, a naked woman and a dog that was more naked than a dog. In the bodies was not drawn what nudity reveals, the nudity came only from the absence of everything that covers: they were the silhouettes of an empty nudity. The line was coarse, made with the broken tip of the charcoal. In some pieces the line was duplicated as if one stroke was the tremor of another. A dry tremor of dry charcoal (Lispector, 1964, p.25).

This image is described as a sort of cave painting, whose objective is to leave testimony of a way of life or, in Moura's words, the second point is presented with more precision, where the study of the image as a nation, culture or society is approached. A society that, according to the narrative voice, built the image of the protagonist and she only lived it. From this construction, G.H. only recognizes the initials of her name, but when she observes the painting in Janair's bedroom, she feels that she has the possibility of constructing her own story and locating it in a physical space, since from the window of the maid's room she can see the peaceful landscape of the city, a place that calms her and where she aspires to be.

I looked at the mural where I was supposed to be represented... Me, the Man. And as for the puppy, was this the epithet she gave me? For years I had been judged only by my peers and by my own environment, which were made, in short, of myself and for myself. Janair was the first truly alien person whose gaze I became aware of (Lispector, 1964, p. 26).

The quote reads that in the gaze of Janair, a woman who, because of her work and her skin color, is marginalized from society, G.H. can recognize her identity. The image presumably painted by Janair plays a mediating role between G.H.'s identity and Janair's gaze and allows the protagonist to rediscover herself, her origin or her inner self, a concept that is very recurrent throughout the novel.

4.6 The image of the cockroach as a symbol of origin, transcendence and ancestry.

The relationship that is built between the character G.H. and the cockroach as a product of the protagonist's introspection has as a common thread the search. This search that leads



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to understand the origin or to reach a sense of belonging to society, which occurs as a process of personal construction that arises from the subject himself and not from his environment. When the environment intervenes in the construction of identity, it gives way to stereotypes that lead to the fulfillment of roles. Throughout the work, we reflect on the annulment of the self when a role is fulfilled, which leads to a permanent search for oneself. With regard to stereotypes, Sánchez (2005) states that:

However, the question arises as to whether stereotypes and prejudices contain some elements of reality or whether they are exclusively the product of our fantasy. It seems that there are stereotypes and prejudices that lack any basis in reality, but we can assume that both real and unreal elements are united in them. Thus, conflicting interests between peoples are commonplace, but these are self-servingly exaggerated on the part of one or even both sides (p. 23).

From the point of view of imagery, the image of the cockroach in the novel represents the place of encounter with the ancestral or the point of origin. It can also be related to the infinite circle that has been present since the beginning of the world and that in its form encloses the mystery of the origin of life. In the novel we read:

to know that they were already living on Earth, and the same as today, even before the first dinosaurs had appeared, to know that the first man had already found them proliferating and crawling, to know that they had been witnesses of the formation of the great oil and coal deposits of the world, and there they were during the great advance and then during the great retreat of the glaciers, the peaceful resistance. I knew that cockroaches resisted for more than a month without food or water (Lispector, 1964, p.3 0).

The description of this ancestral being, witness of the past and the formation of the world and also adapted to the dynamics of life, puts the protagonist in conflict, as she experiences a process of searching for her identity that occurs in two moments. The first occurs during this exercise of introspection, when the protagonist recreates Janair in her mind, when she is no longer there, because when she worked with her, she did not see her, she was an invisible being. The second and decisive step is the approach to this ancestral insect: "I learned that the unclean animal of the Bible is forbidden because the unclean is the origin, since there are created things that have never changed and have remained the same as when they were created" (Lispector, 1964, p. 46). The image of the cockroach represents the opposite side of her life and at the same time points the way to approach the origin of her life, that space that remains hidden in every human being because it is constantly changing.

The process of introspection that G.H. undergoes ends with the longing to appropriate the mysterious being that lives on the opposite side of what his life was, to interiorize in that new space and recognize himself:

Oh, God, I felt baptized by the world. I had in my mouth the matter of a cockroach, and at last I had performed the smallest act. Not the ultimate act, as I had thought before, not heroism and sanctity. But at last the smallest act that I had always lacked. I had always been incapable of the smallest act. And like the smallest act, I had been deheroized. I, who had



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lived in the middle of the road, had finally taken the first step of its beginning (Lispector, 1964, p. 113).

The contact with the ancestral being allows G.H. to explore within herself, to recognize herself and understand her true identity, where the imposition that is built from the assignment of roles no longer influences her behavior. Regarding the image and the way of assuming it, Zambrano (2002) affirms: "the image of what we are offered, the vision of what we should be, does not appear confronting what we are, but developing in a movement that irresistibly tends to be followed" (p. 97). However, after the process of self-recognition that G.H. undergoes, the character turns this conception of identity upside down and confronts what he should be with what he is. He has tasted, through the viscosity of the cockroach, all the dimensions that make up the human being and in this process of renewal, a new way of starting to build himself arises, based on self-knowledge.

5. Discussion

By analyzing the works of this study under the criteria of religion, identity, otherness, as well as the incidence of the image when assuming behaviors and roles as one's own, the preponderant influence exerted by society in the construction of identity is determined. This process, which is presented as an imposition, modifies self-perception as an act that is generated from self-knowledge. The subject loses autonomy over himself and gives way to alienation as a personal state that then overflows to the cultural plane and endures in the social memory through the image as a product imposed and perpetuated from the imposition that is generated from the concept of race.

In the configuration of the character María Illacatu, the annulment of identity is presented as an act of violence that is generated from the complex that is enunciated from miscegenation. The desire of whitening that her environment exerts on the indigenous woman, to show her as the root of a new generation is given in a process of impostor image. The portrait shows a woman who has been masked; her indigenous features have been annulled, and the image emerges as a perpetuator of the idea of the white woman as the matriarch of a new generation. To this is added the gradual transformation of her surname, then the reconstruction of the name, that is to say, the language as a form of personal and cultural identity joins the force of the image to derive in a social construct that annuls and invisibilizes until it leads to the suicide of the character.

The force of the image as an imposition is also incorporated from the religious plane. The character Catalina, moves between cruelty and dogma, which is experienced as suffering or purge. The body is conceived as a space of sin, of guilt, so the character martyrs it, with actions that move from the emotional to the physical, which is manifested in the discomfort she feels by the noise of the children or by the exposure of the sensuality of the female body. It is also evident in the mortification she inflicts on her own body. The religious images that make up the character's bed are described as deformed, it is then represented in a serpentic image, similar to the way in which the character lives religion.

In *Passion* according to G.H., the main character questions the role she has assumed, her stereotype conforms to that of a woman who develops in spaces where art is conceived as a place for the elite. The gaze of Janair, the woman who works for her and of Afro descent, becomes an upheaval that leads her to question the extent to which life is subject to a construction of its own, the product of self-knowledge, or is clearly due to the assignment of a role that is enunciated from a social imposition, based on the concept of race.



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Janair leads the protagonist towards a return to her inner self, in this process, the symbolism of the cockroach as the ancestral being witnessing the events of time, opens the way for the main character towards her self-knowledge. The image of the insect is accompanied by the portrait that remains in Janair's room as a reinforcer of the ancestral being that shows his nakedness and his return to the original being supported by the image of the dog that protects the memory of the original state that survives in the character's consciousness. The absence of identity of the protagonist is also manifested in the social construction that provides identification such as the name. G.H. are the letters that identify her, and reinforce the confusion that the character experiences at that moment, she is torn between anonymity and the saturation of symbolism that leads to multiple interpretations. The character's feelings are exacerbated to the point of questioning the life he has led up to that moment, he thinks he has worn a mask imposed by society that has annulled his humanity and only when he has swallowed the cockroach has he become aware of it.

6. Conclusion

After carrying out a comparative analysis of these works by two Latin American writers, it was determined that the female characters present processes of annulment in the construction of their own identity. This type of social violence leads the female characters to find themselves in a constant search for a space that allows them to recognize themselves. The character G.H. explores the inner world to link the image that is constructed from the gaze of the other and that condemns her to fulfill a role assigned by society, but that annuls her as a thinking and feeling subject. GH's face, which is reflected in a photograph, in one of the passages of the work, is shown with a smile, this gesture clashes with the identity that remains hidden in the intimate and interior space of the character. The body is limited by a social construction that, by appealing to the exterior, prevents the emergence of one's own identity, which struggles to become visible.

The identity of the protagonist manages to emerge when the protagonist discovers in Janair's room a cave painting with a naked couple accompanied by a dog. The symbol of nudity in the image, far from showing a human being vulnerable due to the absence of a shell that protects him from the social gaze, presents a human being identified with his ancestral self. The message conveyed by this image becomes a destabilizing one that comes to shake what G.H. lived until that moment as his identity space.

From this process of inner search that detonated with Janair's dismissal, the gaze of the other emerges in the construction of identity. This gaze acquires the function of a mirror that deconstructs the imposed image. During this deconstruction, the character G.H. goes through phases that allow him to explore his inner self. At first she feels the need to clean the house, starting with Janair's room; this thought of the protagonist externalizes the concept of stereotype linked to prejudice. G.H. is surprised when she finds Janair's room clean. From this finding, the protagonist's beliefs are shaken. She feels that she lives in a farce that society has created for her. She accepts that a model of life has been imposed on her that she has limited herself to follow up to that moment. She then finds that one way to reclaim her inner self is to eat the cockroach that was in Janair's room and integrate her ancestral self into it. This mechanism of integration leads her to consider the construction of an authentic way of life that arises from herself.

Whereas, in Bruna's novel, *Soroche and the Uncles*, this search does not focus on the inner self that needs to recognize itself, but on the self that seeks a space in society. This being longs for his place in the world after a process of cultural destruction, where the identity of



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the subject has been annulled through the imposition of customs, religion and concealment of origin. These elements are based on the vision of superior and inferior race, as a product of the homogenizing vision of the West. This is the case of María Illacatu, an indigenous woman who lived a process of personal and cultural annulment through a forced marriage, where she gradually lost her identity, which is reflected in the image that remains of her as the initiator of the family until the metamorphosis that her surname undergoes. Finally, María Illacatu decides to take her life as a way of resisting her destiny.

The members of oppressed cultures are dehumanized and treated as objects, with whom mechanical and utilitarian relations of exclusive use and abuse are maintained. They themselves are functional instruments that annihilate not only the energy of their body, but also the breath of their spirit (Ballesteros, 2016, p. 173).

The female characters of Bruna, Soroche and the uncles hide their thoughts, their being and their feelings. In some cases, as in the case of Tía Catalina, this imposition becomes imperceptible, since the character complies with the assigned role. In her we can understand the stereotype of the beata who denies the sexuality of her body, of the spaces that generate joy or pleasure, such as the games or the children's commotion, for example. In her is embodied the construction of a woman who confirms with her actions an arbitrary construction of the principles of Catholicism. Thus, a double mask is condensed in her: the one imposed on women by confining them to the space of purity in order to be socially accepted, and the second one linked to the religious space, which preaches the need for suffering in earthly life. Both facets are combined in a mixture that annuls the corporal part of the feminine being, to polarize it by placing it in sin or in sanctity. The curious thing about Aunt Catalina's character is to notice how this imposition is naturalized in her. She does not question those who have constructed her character and willingly assumes her role as executioner.

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Authors

GLEND A VIÑAMAGUA-QUEZADA Bachelor of Science in Education Specialization in Literature and Spanish from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Master in Art Studies from the Universidad Central del Ecuador. Master's Degree in Ecuadorian and Latin American Literature from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador.

Worked at the Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE, Universidad de las Américas, Escuela Politécnica Nacional, Universidad UTE and Universidad Central del Ecuador. She wrote for Anaconda Arte y Cultura Magazine and Artes Magazine of La Hora newspaper. She was Style Corrector for Diplomacia Magazine of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for La Hora Newspaper. She participated as a jury member in the Literature Category of the "Sistema Nacional de Fondos Concursables para las Artes y Fondo Editorial" (National System of Competitive Funds for the Arts and Editorial Fund) organized by the Ministry of Culture. She is a member of the research group Mnemosyne and Transcendencia.



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PAÚL PUMA-TORRES BA in Social Communication, Specialization in Print Communication from the Universidad Central del Ecuador, MA in Cultural Studies, mention in Hispanic American Literature from the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, PhD candidate in Hispanic American Literature from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Alicante, Spain. Ecuadorian writer, literary critic and editor. He has published about twenty books in all literary genres.

Professor of the Pedagogy of Language and Literature Career. Former Director of the Pedagogy of Language and Literature Career of the Central University of Ecuador (2019), FACSO Award (UCE, 1994), for *La teoría del absurdo*, National Literature Award Aurelio Espinosa Polit of Poetry (Editorial Planeta, 2002) for Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Honorable Mention Juegos Florales (Ambato, 2013) for *Filamentum*, Universidad Central del Ecuador Award (Cascahuesos, 2016) for B2, Government of the Province of Pichincha Award (2017) for Sharapova, Joaquín Gallegos Lara Award (2017) for Sharapova. Joaquín Gallegos Lara Award (2017) for Mickey Mouse a gogo.



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