



The self-figuration in *Man of the Pink Corner*, by Jorge Luis Borges.

La autofiguración en *Hombre de la esquina rosada*, de Jorge Luis Borges.

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Benjamin Aguilar Sandin

Autonomous University of the State of Morelos (MEXICO)

CE: aguilarsandin@gmail.com / ORCID: 0000-0003-0758-6262

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ABSTRACT

This work will analyze the short story *Hombre de la esquina rosada* by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, in order to establish a relationship between the textual image created by Borges and the concept of Self-Figuration proposed by critic José Amícola (who builds upon the work of critic Sylvia Molloy). In order to further this analysis a brief historical review will be made, particularly focused on the appearance of Autobiography as a genre in the Eighteenth Century and its later consolidation in both Europe and Argentina during the Nineteenth Century. This historical relationship will be used to help analyze the concept of Self-Figuration in the specific case of Borges. Subsequently, this analysis will consider Borges' relationship with cutlers' stories, the relationship of these stories with larger literary tradition and, finally, the Argentine author's Self-Figuration in the tale "Man on the Pink Corner." Commentary from theorist Jesus Davila will also be used to analyze significant features of Borges' cutler's stories and identify elements of said stories which could contribute to Borges' Self-Figuration.

Keywords: Self-figuration. Borges. Autobiography. Cutlers stories. Writings of the self. Spanish-American literature.



RESUMEN

En este artículo se analizará el cuento *Hombre de la esquina rosada* del escritor argentino Jorge Luis Borges. El objetivo es establecer la relación entre la imagen textual elaborada por Borges en el cuento y el concepto de “autofiguración” propuesto por el crítico José Amícola, que lo retoma de la crítica Sylvia Molloy. Para realizar este análisis, en primer lugar, se hará un breve recorrido histórico, sobre todo desde la aparición, en el siglo XVIII, de la autobiografía como género, hasta la consolidación de los escritos autobiográficos en Europa y Argentina en el siglo XIX, y cómo esta relación histórica ayudará también a analizar el concepto de autofiguración en el caso específico de Borges. Posteriormente se abordará la relación de Borges con los relatos de cuchilleros, la relación de los relatos de cuchilleros en la tradición literaria y, finalmente, la autofiguración del escritor argentino en el cuento “Hombre de la esquina rosada”. Para analizar los elementos significativos de los relatos de cuchilleros en Borges e identificar algunos elementos de dichos relatos que podrían coadyuvar en su autofiguración se utilizarán también la teoría sobre Borges y la gauchesca desarrollada por el crítico Jesús Dávila.

Palabras claves: Autofiguración. Borges. Autobiografía. Relato de cuchilleros. Escrituras del yo. Literatura hispanoamericana.

Introduction

The study of autobiography and other texts related to the constitution of the self such as intimate diaries, letters and, more recently, autofictional stories, have attracted the attention of critics and literary theory practically since the autobiography appeared in Europe under the figure of Juan Jacobo Rousseau, although since the classical Greco-Latin era some essential references for the consolidation of the genre could be perceived with texts such as the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (Amícola, 2007) title that would emulate Rousseau himself to give life to this constitution of the modern textual self.

Subsequently, it has been possible to see the exercise of the autobiographical genre not only in Europe but also in America, where it has had a very particular development. With its point of emergence in the nineteenth century, autobiography has become an important reference for the construction of fundamental concepts in the consolidation of the modern state such as the concept



of national identity, and this relationship can be made evident, for example, in the case of the heroes who actively participate in the independence of the Spanish colonies in America, in such a way that in these nascent countries as was the case of Argentina, the autobiographies of historical figures such as Esteban Echeverría or Domingo Faustino Sarmiento would help to conform, with the story of his life told in the first person, a relationship that would try to become intimate for the readers of the time with the idea of me and the idea of nation (Prieto, 1966).

In the twentieth century, the positions of the self are modified and pluralized. From the first decades, writers problematized the self and its autobiographical configuration in the terms in which it was conceived in the nineteenth century. This does not mean that the configurations of the authorial self have been eliminated, but that it changed the very conception of the self. The aim of this article is to explore, specifically in the short story "The Man in the Pink Corner", how Borges constructs a figure of himself. It starts from the idea that its approach is diametrically opposed to the autobiographical scriptural model, and examines how the figure of itself can be related to the position that rejects the idea of a monolithic self, opting for the constitution of a multiple self. In particular, José Amícola's proposal on self-figuration will be used to observe the constituents of the textual construction of the author figure in the aforementioned story.

Origins of autobiography as a genre

Rousseau, Autobiography as an Established Genre and the Constitution of the Self

A direct antecedent of what autobiography¹ will represent as a genre and, therefore, the constitution of the self within the autobiographical story is the appearance of Montaigne's *Essays*, which adopt two modes that will later be recovered by Rousseau in his "confessions". In the *Essays* the first-person self is articulated for the first time, which is a self that is constructed from the idea of "sincerity", Rousseau being the direct heir of this tradition, "In this way the complexities,

¹ Neither Vico nor Rousseau would have used the term, which is an English coinage that is made, according to Olney (1980), in 1807 or, according to Bruss (1976), in 1809. Before these tentative dates, the closest term to designate this phenomenon was that of "Periautography", used in 1700 by the editor of Vico (Sturrock, 1993, p.106).



contradictions and aberrations of the person himself do not cause hesitation or repugnance, but surprise" (Olney, 1980, p.33) For the first time in the text are formed "all kinds of mental deviations that affect the life of the intelligentsia and that is now seen as a set of exception" (Amícola, 2007, p.73).

Rousseau proposes a way of thinking that will assume nuances diametrically opposed to the maxims of the Enlightenment, and in this way the old phrase "I think, therefore I am" that will condense part of this way of knowing reality, will now be supplanted by the "Since it is I who spend my life with me, I must know myself" (Starbinski, 1971, p. 222) which inaugurates bourgeois romantic thought.

Rousseau founds, with "The Confessions", a way of perceiving reality, a model of internalization that, subsequently, will be repeated both in the autobiographical model and in the narrative of authors such as Jane Austen, who, recovering the guidelines of Rousseau, will also make a sharp critique of the bourgeois society of his time (Amícola, 2007, p.77) but from the fictional story.

In addition, Rousseau inherits a form of constitution of the self that will be repeated in numerous later texts. For the Genevan philosopher, the fact of telling the intimate and the everyday is above all a feat, since, when trying to gain in itself a sense of totality, it will also be questioned by the narrative mechanisms in this new and intimate constitution of a self that perceives the world. Rousseau will then advocate reconstituting a new meaning, a new way of telling that has the impression of the fact of telling life itself through the everyday. According to Starobinski (1971): "In short, the problem lay in how to choose the trivial facts, how to count the tiny instant that has left, however, a mark of consciousness" (p.229-230).

Faced with this problem there will be another no less essential, which has to do with the question of how the moment in which one's life will begin to be represented should be chosen, since, according to Starobinski (1971), Rousseau is aware that any moment of life that is chosen to tell is arbitrary and, therefore, the temporal flow in the text is also, so that the life told itself becomes a "fragmentation of the facts lived".



Amícola, for his part, will make a criticism regarding the position of Starobinski, whose central argument will lie in the fact that the tradition in the way of narrating is historically not separable from the moment in which it is narrated, and thus:

In the same way that a novelist must decide at what moment he begins his story and believes to do so by being original in that selection of the experiences of his characters, there is a tradition that marks in each era and in each society what are the milestones to take into account, from beginnings that are related either to ethnocultural facts, such as the rites of passage, or either with the traditions of discursive genres, which have already made a cut by themselves in the daily life of the members of a society. (Amícola, 2007, p.79).

For George Misch, in relation to what Amícola said, the Autobiography will then be a model and a way of being in the world, but not only from the purest contemplation, but rather a "throwing oneself into the tide, although with the weapons of writing" (Amícola, 2007) to try to reflect individually on the experience in the world.

Similarly, in the constitution of this autobiographical self, Rousseau, a great reader of the Greek and Latin classics, will feel a special predilection for authors such as Plutarch and the text *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (How to profit from enemies), and thus, in the constitution of this self, "the Genevan philosopher is an exemplary figure, for in a typically paranoid attitude and being convinced that he had enemies on all sides, he acted scripturally accordingly, especially in his autobiographical texts (Sturrock, 1993, p.49).

In the configuration of this self, Rousseau uses very particular narrative mechanisms, for example, he can make use of a vernacular register of language as to how he refers to others touching on issues related above all to sexuality, but, when it comes to addressing his own sexuality, he is extremely decorous and maintains a great deal of care towards how he represents his sexual experiences (Lejeune, 2005, p.56) marking again here a barrier between the public self, which is this textual Rousseau, and the private self, the figure of the author who writes the text.



For Lejeune, "Las confesiones" represent a milestone in the way in which the truth is configured in the text, since, Rousseau, in recounting the misdeeds carried out from the earliest childhood to adolescence, with particular interest in the episode of the maid, where, flagrantly, the young Rousseau commits the theft of a tape and then incriminate the maid, with which he is in love, and thus perform this act of confession several decades later, the way in which Rousseau (and most autobiographical texts) "work with an economy of disjunction, displacement and asyndeton" is questioned (Amícola, 2007, p.83).

Autobiography in Latin America: The Case of Autobiography in the Río de La Plata and Adolfo Prieto as antecedent of the study of Modern Autobiography

One of the most important theorists of the study of autobiography in Latin America and particularly in Argentina is Adolfo Prieto, who, in 1966 begins to publish, represents a milestone in the study of autobiography, since the debate begins on the question of the autobiographical figure even before Lejeune problematized the subject.

Prieto's intention was originally to erase the line of indeterminacy that covered the entire spectrum of autobiography as a genre, since this textual manifestation had been very popular in the Río de la Plata (Amícola, 2007, p.100) and had not been given enough attention.

Prieto, to support his theory, quotes Misch, following this idea that "there is a general law of formation of great autobiographies, according to which their development depends on the degree of general understanding that the autobiographer reaches through his own life experience" (Prieto, 1966, p.15). This has to do, then, with the autobiographer, rather than telling the story of his life, tells his life experience, which does not necessarily correspond to a linear and closed narrative.

Since autobiography presupposes an understanding of the reality of the autobiographer, it is not surprising that he can, in the same way, "possess the necessary power to form and transform historical facts" (Prieto, 1966). For Misch, autobiography would be, in that sense, at the same level as poetry, since both textual expressions, despite having such dissimilar pretensions, narrate the



experience of "inhabiting" the world, with the difference that, for obvious reasons, autobiography does have to seek first of all facticity.

For Misch the autobiography would be linked to the realm of the poetic in a kind of "pigeonholing" of the genre (Amícola, 2007, p.101) also attending, in the classical sense, to the *Dichtung*, which is related, in German, with the sense of the purely literary (Prieto, 1996, p.15)

In the same way, Misch will establish a direct relationship between the configuration of this purely autobiographical self with the Philosophy of Life proposed in turn by William Dilthey. Thus, Amícola will find, following both Prieto and Pierre Bordieu, a line of convergence between modern biography and autobiography in the philosophical proposal of the philosophy of life (Bordieu, 2005, p.87).

Self-figuration: concept and constitutive

The term self-figuration was first used in 1991 by the Argentine critic Sylvia Molloy (1996) and was later recovered by the Argentine critic José Amícola, who defines it, in a resignification of the term, as "That form of self-representation that appears in the autobiographical writings of an author, complementing, strengthening or recomposing the own image that that individual has come to carve within the scope in which his text comes to be inserted" (Amícola, 2007, p.14).

Another important antecedent to establish the concept of "self-figuration" is the so-called "Philosophy of Life", proposed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), and the role that this philosophy gave to experience. Dilthey used the term *Selbstbesinnung* ("autognosis") to underline the mode of apprehension of spiritual facts by the individual (Ferrater, 1958, p. 362).

The question of the father in the process of self-figuration

Amícola establishes a relationship between the figure of the father and the process of self-figuration while the idea of men of the social elite of the moment appropriates the merit of being able to tell their own life and build themselves publicly in this textual order. In this way Amícola, following



Prieto's study, establishes how in Argentine autobiographies the Oedipus complex can be found in almost all cases.

Freud (1986) had argued that each child elaborated his oedipal complex, constructing the figure of an "aristocratic" father. Thus, according to Freud, the child is in love with the mother and has to separate the figure of the biological father to seek a replacement for the biological father, who is fundamentally a symbolic father who also belongs to the aristocratic social class and thus preserve the mother (Freud, 1986).

Another Freudian analyst, Marthe Robert, will take up the same idea to affirm, in addition, that "the fabulation in the child about his paternal origins has to do with his shame of having had a low birth and of never being sufficiently loved" (Rober, 1972, p.46). Now, in this fabulation of life, the mother will also be pigeonholed into a lower class, of peasant origin, and this origin will allow the child, in fabulation, to keep the mother with him and place the mother, at the same time, "at a distance from a fabulous and chimerical father who would procure for himself a nobler origin" (Robert, 1972, p.50).

To finish linking the concept of self-figuration in Borges' narrative, it will be necessary to take into account this last point, since it will serve to establish, as criticism does with Rousseau, the mechanisms that make possible in Borges the self-figuration of himself in the first part of his narrative production, which has to do with the stories of cutlers, since, as Freudian theory points out, we can find this maternal and paternal separation in the narrative of the Argentine writer, identifying elements in the stories of cutlers with the figure of the mother and father in the representation of himself.

The genealogy of Borges, the political and the autobiographical

For practical purposes, two edges have been taken to analyze the Borgean self-figuration, the first, as has already been seen, will have to do with the insertion, or, rather, Borges' interpretation of the literary canon, which will derive, as will be shown later, in the introduction of the gaucho, popular literature, within the Western tradition. The second edge will have to do with the heroic family



lineage and the reworking that the writer makes of this lineage in the stories of cutlers, especially in the addition of elements that can be symbolically related to the maternal and paternal figure, respectively. In this way, when doing the analysis, these two elements will be taken into account.

It is known that Borges' ancestors "were among the first Europeans to arrive in America" (Williamson, 2006, p.23). Among his most illustrious predecessors are, for example, Jerónimo de Cabrera, Spanish conquistador, who founded the city of Córdoba in Tucumán, and also Juan de Garay, who founded "the settlement of the remote town of Buenos Aires" (p.23).

We can find in the early literary production of Borges this affinity between the political translated into the essence of the national and the autobiographical. Now, the ancestors for whom the Argentine writer felt predilection "were the men who had cut ties with Spain and had fought to create the Argentine nation" (p.23). As Williamson affirms, although Borges feels a predilection for the Argentine, in his public image as a writer he will always be critical of the concept of the Nation-State and in the same way with the concept of national identity.

Leonor Suárez, the mother

The political position of Borges will lean towards the unitary side, both by the ties of blood and by the writer's own conviction, and this feeling will remain valid in the figure of the mother, who will transmit in the son the filiation with the heroes of the unitary side and, consequently, the contempt for Rosas,² "[Leonor Suárez] identified so strongly with the dispossessed heroes of the family that even as an old

² It should be remembered that the period in which Borges was born (1899) is especially problematic because an important debate is brewing in Argentina and Latin America as to how identity is conceived, and, therefore, the construction of the self. Thus, writers of the stature of Esteban Echeverría or Domingo Faustino Sarmiento will establish another fundamental point, which has to do with civilization opposed to barbarism. In Borges this dichotomy is manifested above all on the maternal side, since his entire family, adept at Unitarianism and therefore a fervent detractor of the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas, could be seen not from the perspective of civilization, that is, with the *stablishment*, with the prevailing socio-political order, but with barbarism, which in Argentina particularly has at least two aspects, the first and most obvious is the gaucho, a nomadic man who lives on the plain and does not want or pretend to be part of the nascent State, and, on the other hand, the radical groups that are formed and that will end up overthrowing Rosas to form modern Argentina, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To delve deeper into this relationship consult *Borges, a life*, by biographer Edwin Williamson, which offers a broad overview of this relationship of Borges' maternal family with Unitarianism and with the conformation of the modern Argentine State.



woman she described herself as an old woman. proudly of herself as a "unitary savage," rejecting anything that reminded her of the tyrant Rosas" (p.40).

In the same way, it will also be curious how Borges reverses these relations of contempt for the mother, that is, he takes up "gauchos, caudillos, the provinces [and] the uses and customs of the lower classes" (p.40) and thus forms a universe of his own, novel for this mixture between the cultured and the popular that will be so characteristic of his prose. The influence of the mother will be decisive for the consecration of some of the recurring themes in the stories of Borges, of themes and also of characters, an example of this will be the province of Fray Ventos del Uruguay in the story of "Funes el memorioso", or a coachman named Epifanio, personal coachman of Leonor Acevedo (2006).

Jorge Guillermo Borges, the father

The Borges have less tradition than the Suarez, and are most likely descended from Francisco Borges, a lieutenant in the Portuguese navy (Williamson, 2006). Borges' grandfather, Francisco Borges, was born in Uruguay in 1833 (Williamson, 2006) and fought during the Battle of Caseros.

A fundamental feature in the treatment of the paternal family is the fact that the paternal grandfather also actively participates in the political life of Argentina and ends up joining the rebellion of Bartolomé Mitre, who tries to prevent the presidential succession of Nicolás de Avellaneda, Sarmiento's favorite. Colonel Borges ends his days involved in the revolt, during the Battle of La Verde, after two bullet shells hit him while he is giving orders on the battlefield (Barrenechea, 1992, p.1005).

Due to the death of the colonel, his wife and two children are forced to live closely, Fanny Haslam ends up becoming a professor at the Institute of Living Languages, "becoming [...] in head of the English department" (Barrenechea, 1992, p.1005). In that sense, Jorge Guillermo never identifies with the Argentine, rather, he carries his english heritage well rooted, and this English consciousness later passes to Jorge Luis.

Finally, an important fact about the death of Colonel Francisco is that his widow is in charge of romanticizing his death, and this romanticization passes to his son and later to his grandson, who



would find here another important germ to enable the construction of the stories of the cult of courage. Now, this romanticized account of death has fantastic overtones, another reason that Borges will recover later:

In this [romanticized version of the story] General Mitre had ordered his troops to withdraw from the battlefield even though Colonel Borges informed him that they had run out of ammunition. When Mitre insisted on retreating, Borges, wearing a white poncho, mounted his white steed and rode towards the enemy lines, his arms crossed over his chest. He fell into a hollow of bullets and his men took him on a cow leather to a neighboring ranch, where he died of his wounds. It is said that his last words were "I have fallen into the belief that I have fully fulfilled my duty and my convictions, and for the same principles for which I have fought all my life." (Vaccaro, 1996, p.22)

Most likely in this romanticized story there will be the germ of another concern no less Borgean, that is, the almost obsessive fact of Borges for trying to retain these family episodes, not to let them pass, which is why another fundamental issue in the Borgean narrative that is competent in the first self-figuration of the Argentine writer has to do with spaces and historical time:

As several specialists have analyzed, in Borges there is a tendency to idealize the Argentine past, especially the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth; in his narrative and poetry, the present—from the mid-1920s onwards—is usually a degeneration of an illustrious and heroic past. (Dávila, 2018, p.10).

It is clear that for Borges the fictionalization of the family heroic past will give rise to dialogue with his own self-figuration, since much of the image he builds of himself has important bases in these ancestors. The interesting thing is to see how Borges takes a turn when dealing with episodes like *Junín's* in the poem of the same name, it is also interesting that, at the same time, he builds and appropriates an image of Argentina that apparently does not share neither the mother nor much less the father, thus, it could be thought that the insertion of the gaucho in his literary production will perhaps be the way in which Borges could be trying to break with that preconceived heritage that



could be combined with the topic Civilization-Barbarism raised by Echeverría, Sarmiento and José Hernández.

Borges and the stories of cutlers

The first story published by Borges was "Leyenda policial", published in 1927, in number 38 of the *Martín Fierro Magazine*. Later this story was collected in *El idioma de los argentinos* with the title of "Hombres fought" (Dávila, 2018). According to authors such as Jesús Dávila, already in this story will be established constitutive elements of the Borgean narrative that will be constant in the subsequent stories of cutlers and that have to do with the spaces and the historical time narrated (late nineteenth century, early twentieth century) (2018).

Another important feature pointed out by Dávila regarding the theme of mourning and gaucho is that "the behavior – ambiguous and illegal – of the characters excludes the participation of impeccable heroes" (p.11). Important, in that sense, will be the fact that, while in the Borgean narrative there is an apology for these characters who impeccably represent marginality, in Borgean poetry, these themes are not recurrent (2018).

Another feature that "Police Legend", "Man from the Pink Corner" and later stories such as "The Challenge" do have is the "stunned veneration of the compadrito", since in later stories with the same theme this characteristic "[is] questioned or even annihilates the admiration of the cutler" (2018). In the same way, another capital text to understand how the atmosphere of the fight between cutlers will be configured will be "Evaristo Carriego" which, curiously, responds to a biography of the Argentine poet written, or rather even fictionalized by Borges, and curious will also be how from this text Borges will end up settling the possible world of the stories of cutlers, to which he will return constantly, and where "Man of the Pink Corner" will be "the first lucky return to that world" (2018).

The treatment that Borges gives to the stories of cutlers should not be confused, because what Borges does is to amalgamate vernacular themes, popular themes, with this knowledge of the cult. In that sense, Borges understands the importance of the oral tradition in the gaucho, which he then takes up in the way of speaking of his own characters:



From its origins, the genre in question brings together people with very different backgrounds: on the one hand, there are men with a culture refined for the time – for example, José Hernández and Eduardo Gutiérrez; on the other, illiterate men as the gauchos used to be. Borges' treatment of these issues and their favorable reception among the Argentine public are part of a long process in which the literate culture and popular culture of Rio de Janeiro converge, not without constant tensions. (2018, p.14)

In this way, just as Borges is able to identify the tradition of Western literature, so he is also able to identify in orality another mode of tradition, which is why the plane of the linguistic register, how his characters speak, will perhaps be the way in which Borges leaves his very particular mark that will later be emulated by other contemporaries.

Pink corner man, characters, setting, atmosphere.

Regarding "Man of the pink corner" and the first self-figuration of Borges in this story, it will be necessary to rescue what Dávila said regarding how the dubious biography of Evaristo Carriego serves as a germ to develop the story of cutlers. The first thing worth noting is the title, which comes from an excerpt from Carriego's biography:

[...] the courtyard that is an occasion of serenity, pink for the days, the humble fire of San Juan, wallowing like a dog in the middle of the street, the stake of the coal shop, its block of tight darkness, its many logs, the iron screen of the conventillo, the men of the pink corner. (Borges, quoted in Dávila, 2018, p.22)

In "Evaristo Carriego", Borges will develop some elements that he will later repeat in late stories such as "El encuentro" (1969) "Historia de Rosendo Juárez" (1969), "Juan Muraña" (1970) and "El indigno" (1970) (Dávila, 2018) and that of course are already identifiable in "Hombre de la esquina rosada". These elements will be "the nocturnal establishment, the Maldonado stream, the immigrant and the handsome" (2018). Thus in "Man..." the reference of the scenario where the events take place will be concatenated with the points indicated above:



The boys were early in Julia's living room, which was a zinc plate shed, between the Road of Gauna and the Maldonado. It was a place that I used I saw from afar, by the light that the scoundrel lantern sent around, and by the noise as well" (Borges, quoted by Dávila, 2018, p.23).

In the story will be relevant, among other issues, the relationship that for Borges tango will have with nightlife and, obviously, with the clandestine establishments where the characters of "Hombre...", cutlers and prostitutes, participate in the description and plot:

Towards the many corralones of Cerviño Street or towards the cane fields and hollows of Maldonado —an area left with zinc sheds, variously called salons, where tango flamed, at ten cents the piece and the companion— the ear was still braided and some male face was historyized, or a dead compadrito dawned with a human stab in the belly (Borges, cited by Dávila, 2018, p.23)

To understand in context how the elements indicated above in the first Borgean self-figuration are related, it will be necessary to add, in addition, the criterion of the Argentine writer himself regarding how he understands the fundamental elements in the way of writing stories of cutlers that is already found since "Hombres fought", where Borges describes the cult of courage:

This is the account of how courage in knife tasks faced the North and the South. I speak of when the suburb, pink of walls, was also flashed with steel; of when the provocative milongas raised the name of a neighborhood at the tip; of when the small homelands were fervor. I speak of ninety-six or ninety-seven and time is a hard walk to retrace (Borges, cited by Dávila, 2018, p.17).

What stands out, in addition to the figure of the cutler, a figure that will be mythologized, and the cult of courage, will also be the configuration of a space to which Borges will constantly return in his work (2018). A constant resource, as already mentioned, will be to set the time of the facts but not in a specific way, a determining feature both in "Man..." as in later cutlers' accounts it will be precisely this temporary indeterminacy, which will place the events somewhere in the late nineteenth and



early twentieth centuries, and in fact, perhaps the only specific date proposed by Borges appears in "Police Legend", where a much less vague date is established: 1896 or 1897 (2018).

Since he began to write stories of cutlers, Borges offers a definition of the shores: "Nobody said arrabal in those yesteryears. The circular zone of poverty that was not 'thecenter' were 'the banks': a word of more contemptuous orientation than topographical" (Borges, cited by Dávila, 2018, p.18). Likewise, this term is not the invention of the writer, but recovers the word precisely from the late nineteenth century, a word that was used to derogatorily call the inhabitants of the poor and bordering neighborhoods of Buenos Aires.

Returning to the figure of the cutler, it is understood that "The greatest obsession of the suburban cutler is fame: for this he lives, kills and dies. He cannot tolerate that another surpasses him in that area" (Dávila, 2018, p.18), and this will be another reason that Borges will take advantage of continuously in his narrative, because there will always be an opposition between the main character and a direct opponent who, in theory, equals or surpasses him in strength and value. In that sense, "For the 'liturgy' of mourning to occur, there must be two handsome ones: one goes to the neighborhood of the other to challenge him" (p.18), which is just what happens in "Man...".

Finally, language will be another fundamental element of the relationship between story and self-figuration. Dávila points out that one of the characteristics of the language that Borges uses is that it uses archaic forms to emulate the voice of the cutlers:

Not only vocabulary can make it difficult to understand this passage. In the gauchoorilleros stories of Borges, there is usually an "archaic" handling of the nomenclature of the streets –which agrees with the time in which the actions are developed—; that is, old names are used. In addition, there is talk of sites that with the passage of time disappeared. (p.26)

In "Hombre...", the story focuses on the mourning and subsequent murder of a character nicknamed "el Corralero". Borges will use a specific way of narrating to which he will return in his late stories. In "Hombre...", "Borges employs a narrative scheme that will be recurrent in his late gauchesco-orilleros stories [...] a man of mature age recalls events from his childhood or early youth" (p.29). In this way



we know that the narrator who tells the story is still very young when he meets the Corralero on the night of the murder (2018), and we can also know that that young man, who will later murder the Corralero, has the aspiration to also become a gaucho, that is, he aspires to the fame that being a cutler will grant him.

Another element in relation to the language and the narrator of the story is the awareness of misery, which becomes evident as the character narrates: "[...] I thought I was just another yuyo from those shores, raised among the toad flowers and bones. What was going to come out of that garbage but us, screaming but soft for punishment, mouth and run over no more?" (Borges, quoted by Dávila, 2018, p.29).

Now, the climax of the story in "Man..." it has to do with the fact that the Corralero, who arrives in the area as a handsome, snatches the woman from Rosendo Juárez, the other handsome, who should have challenged the Corralero to a duel and did not do it, thus spoiling his honor and, for this reason, the narrator feels obliged to assassinate the Corralero as an almost heroic gesture not so much to return the honor to Rosendo Juárez so much so as to test their own courage. In this way, Dávila establishes at least three reasons why the narrator murders the Corralero:

It could be said that the narrator assumes the responsibility of killing the Corralero for three reasons: the cowardice of Rosendo, the bragging of the stranger and the possession of the Lujanera; perhaps the latter is the ultimate reason. The narrator does not tolerate the idea of that woman spending that night and many more next to Francis. (2018, p.30)

Here we find a last motive for the murder of the Corralero, which has to do with desire, and in this way, the game of the cult of courage and betrayal works from two perspectives, the first and most obvious between the Corralero and Rosendo Juárez by stripping him of the Lujanera in the tangueda, and the next, that we will only discover at the end, has to do with the narrator carrying out the murder for the same reason as the Corralero: desire. In the story the intentions of the narrator are made evident precisely by the omission of a crucial passage to understand the order of events, a



passage where he follows the Corralero and the Lujanera out of the ballroom and, suddenly, cuts the story and directs it elsewhere. This is how Dávila (2018) tells it:

"Far away they couldn't be. Maybe they were both already being used in any [sic] ditch."
After these words, there is a sharp interruption in the story; the narrator begins to talk about his return to Julia's living room —after having mortally wounded Francisco Real, as revealed to us at the end of the text—: "When I managed to return, the bailongo continued as if it were the thing." (p.30)

Daniel Balderston (2013), an important theorist of Borges' work, affirms, about this story and the series of omissions perpetrated by the narrator, that "the fundamental event of the story is not narrated, it is hardly suggested" (p. 8). On this abrupt cut, the other character that can fill the void of the narrative is Lujanera herself who, at one point, almost at the end of the story, returns to the room with the Corralero on the verge of death:

The man was not there to plead. La Lujanera looked at him as lost, with her arms hanging down. Everyone was wondering with her face and she managed to speak. She said that after going out with the Corralero, they played a little camp, and that in that a stranger falls and calls him as desperate to fight and infers that stab and that she swears that she does not know who she is and that it is not Rosendo. Who would believe him? (Borges, quoted by Dávila, 2018, p.31)

Finally, the story closes with the confession of the narrator himself to Borges, who only until the end is shown as the interlocutor to whom practically the whole story is addressed:

Then, Borges, I took out again the short and sharp knife that I knew how to carry here, in the vest, next to the left sobaco, and I hit another one checked slowly, and it was like new, innocent, and there was not a bit of blood left. (Borges, quoted by Dávila, 2018, p.33).

The essential thing about the story to combine all the above with the construction of the figure of Borges himself is, precisely, that the Argentine writer is named at the end, and that he also shows



himself as an interlocutor of the other, of the cutler, of the murderer, because it is from this gesture that we can begin to dialogue between self-figuration and text.

José Amícola, in his definition of self-figuration, makes it very clear that it is essential that a direct relationship be established between author and textual construction, in this case the nominal identity between the Borges author of the story and the Borges who in the fictional plane listens to the story. In this way the author and his textual figure are combined, however, a decisive gesture in this self-figuration is the fact that Borges himself does not actively participate in the development of events, as would be expected, for example, from predecessors such as Echeverría or Sarmiento, who from the moment they take the floor are building an image of themselves through their experiential experiences and, to a lesser extent, of its intellectual relationship with other texts. Another fundamental point in the case of Sarmiento is how he assimilates these readings and builds an image of himself based on diverse literary models, since despite the uses and customs of a man who has not left Latin America, the European and Western ways of being are added, creating a very particular amalgam between author and self-figuration.

Adolfo Prieto, a theorist specialized in the autobiographical genre in the Río de la Plata, will establish this relationship, in the 60s, about how the most famous Argentine autobiographers make a tendency in terms of building a public image of themselves, a direct inheritance of Rousseau, and how this constructed image has well-defined political intentions. Prieto studies two autobiographical texts by Sarmiento on which he begins to build his theory. The two texts that Prieto analyzes are "My Defense" (1843) and "Memories of province" (1850) which, according to him, are shown as "complementary works, where the second is the corollary of the first" (Prieto, 1966). Regarding the first, Sarmiento writes it from exile, in Chile, and although he is relatively young (he is 32 years old at the time of its publication), he already has discursive tools to "make a sum of what he lived because of the political vicissitudes experienced" (Prieto, 1966).

This relationship more historical than literary between Sarmiento and Borges will have to do, precisely, with the refusal of Borges himself to accept without further ado the scriptural model of the time, and for this reason his self-figuration in "Man..." I could well try to question these inherited



models, since another important point to consider is how Borges himself, who knows in depth, as has already been said, the literary tradition in Argentina, will not innocently accept the traditional autobiographical model, rather, and this will be a constant in all his narrative work, he will try to establish individual guidelines to build his own image as an author.

The only palpable relationship between the autobiography of the Río de La Plata and the Borgean self-figuration is the topic of the library and the relationship of the author figure with his intellectual ideology inherited by the literary tradition, although, as has been said previously also, this relationship is not evident in "Man..." and it can only be deduced by the attitude of the fictional Borges, who is limited to listening to the story, who does not participate in the plot.

Finally it will be necessary to establish another relationship, now in terms of inheritance, the own family tree of the Argentine writer. Although Amícola accepts symbolic readings, in this case, psychoanalytic, when reconstructing the image of the self-figurative self, in the case of Borges it would not be strange to find elements that make this analysis evident.

The case of Borges is paradigmatic because, as is well known, one of the characteristics in his production is the absence of experiential experiences, which he replaces with the figure and symbol of the library itself. While it is true that in this particular text the conception of the library is not expressed, so is the attitude of the self-figuration of the Borges who listens to the story, and in that sense, of the Borges who gives the word.

As for the identification of elements related to father and mother in the narrative of the Argentine writer, Freudian theory itself offers, as is well known, an Oedipal relationship, which Amícola himself accepts when he begins to question the role of male self-figuration in the autobiographies of the Río de La Plata. Amícola establishes a relationship between the figure of the father and the process of self-figuration while the idea of men of the social elite of the moment appropriates the merit of being able to tell their own life and build themselves publicly in this textual order. In this way Amícola, following Prieto's study, clearly establishes how in Argentine autobiographies the Oedipus complex can be found in almost all cases.



In Freudian theory, Freud (1986) had argued that each child elaborated his oedipal complex, constructing the figure of an "aristocratic" father. Thus, according to Freud, the child is in love with the mother and has to separate the figure of the biological father to seek a replacement for the biological father, who is fundamentally a symbolic father who also belongs to the aristocratic social class and thus preserve the mother (Freud, 1986). Another Freudian analyst, Marthe Robert (1972), will take up the same idea to affirm, in addition, that "the fabulation in the child about his paternal origins has to do with his shame of having had a low birth and of never being sufficiently loved" (p.46). In this fabulation of life, the mother will also be pigeonholed into a lower class, of peasant origin, and this origin will allow the child, in fabulation, to keep the mother with him and place the mother, at the same time, "at a distance from a fabulous and chimerical father who would procure for himself a more noble origin" (Robert, 1972, p.50).

Robert's explanation would make sense in "Man..." taking into account that, if a balance can be established between the maternal and the paternal in the work of the Argentine writer, the maternal would be strongly influenced in the gaucho, this by the attitude of the mother herself to feel identified with the Argentine from a very young age, for example, in an episode where Leonor's mother, realizing his daughter's shyness, he "got her an Indian girl named Dominga as a playmate" (Williamson, 2006, p.39-40) or in a similar episode, she liked to listen to the stories of the family's heroic past at night, before sleeping (Williamson, 2006).

In this way, the idea of mourning is not so much literal as symbolic, since although Leonor did not feel special interest in the figure of the gaucho, the fact of having been a brilliant woman who had been subjected by the customs of the time to an almost servile life could contrast with her rebellious attitude, unadjusted, to respect the canons of the time and, in that sense, to fight silently with these imposed models, in addition, of course, to feel fully identified with the Argentine and the marginal, considering herself as "a dirty and savage unitary" (Williamson, 2006) when asked about her origins and her political affiliation. In this way, it is not difficult to glimpse in "Man..." these discreet winks where the image of the mother can be related to the idea of grief (not literal), with the marginal, etc.



The reflection of the paternal in Borges' narrative would be, otherwise, linked rather to the idea of the library, of bookish knowledge and could even be related to Borges' own lack of life experiences, with shyness and hesitation. Another issue of great importance is that the paternal could appear perhaps in the Argentine writer's own self-figuration, in that wink that the narrator makes when naming him at the end of the story, because we remember that, unlike the mother, Borges' father never feels a full identification with the Argentine, and even when he tries to identify with the death of the father, the colonel tends to be indecisive and hesitant, an attitude that he will inherit from his son Jorge Luis and that may be evident in "Hombre..." in the immediate fact of never taking the floor in the story:

The effect on Jorge Guillermo of this glorification of Colonel Borges was to make him doubt his own worth. The boy grew up under the oppressive image of a father whom he had never met and whom he could never have met except indirectly, through the mother. It must have been impossible for him, therefore, to question, let alone rebel, against that mythical father without experiencing a strong sense of guilt. (Williamson, 2006, p.48)

In this way we can glimpse that, the stories of cutlers, with the elements indicated above, would be intimately linked to the mother, that is, from the stage, the mourning and the costumbrista, and the figure of Borges himself would already be more related to this attitude of hesitation, this inheritance of the character of the father that will become constant in practically all the subsequent narrative of Borges where the writer himself appears self-figured. Thus, later stories such as "El sur", "Tlön, Uqbar Orbis Tertius" or "El Aleph" will have in common this self-figuration of the Argentine writer, a shy man who relates his life experiences with the topic of the library or tradition itself. A final point to emphasize is that, probably, in the paternal line, the canon and the European literary tradition will be a constant in the way of narrating, and for that same reason the stories of cutlers, related to the local color, with the national, would be an important exception that will remember the mother.



Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it must also be said that Borges' self-figuration, which tries to break this "absolute" self inherited by Rousseau and widely emulated in Argentina during practically the entire nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, takes up classical principles in the construction of the self, specifically speaking of the cases of Greece and Rome, where the community determined the constitution of the subject as a whole, as a collectivity. In this way, theorists such as Bakhtin will establish an important difference between the public self and the private self: From the above it can be deduced that the public man was what predominated in the classical era, understanding then that no other configuration could be conceived than this (Amícola, 2007, p.21) Therefore "In the classical world living was, thus, to live in function of others [...], to live within a community. This conception of life did not allow us to think that there was penury alone or introverted reflection" (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 281-283).

Perhaps for this reason Borges, in an unexpected turn, far from an individual pretension in the construction of his private self, wants to return to the idea of community by giving way. Perhaps this will be one of the main reasons for playing with his own self-figuration in his earliest narrative, and continuing to exploit this resource practically in all his later work, with the difference that in later textual self-representations we could see a more active participation, which would also be linked to his best known period, the one that has to do with the publication of *Fictions*.

Another aspect, that related to the Freudian reading admitted by Amícola, would not be seen as it is in a complete way in "Hombre...", although, when Roberts speaks of the impersonation of the father it is not difficult to think of intellectual tutors that the Argentine writer adopted from his earliest youth. We refer, in this case, to the Spanish writer Rafael Cassinos-Assens, who even commented on the first eight published books by Borges and not only that, but repeatedly the Argentine writer, in interviews, spoke openly of the influence of the Judeo-Spanish writer in his work (Cajero, 2015, p. 11) and also the Argentine writer Macedonio Fernández. Although when we talk about this search for a figurative father we refer to these two examples, the relationship would not be resolved in the story of "Man ...", and beyond thinking that the figure of the father has to be



subdued or erased in this oedipal game, in Borges we can see, however, that perhaps systematically gives different values and places in his narrative both to the figure of the father and to the figure of the mother, establishing a really special and unique bond in her process of self-figuration.

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