


## IDENTITY AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN "THE MAN WITH THE HOLE IN THE HAND", BY IGNÁCIO DE LOYOLA BRANDÃO

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### ABSTRACT

This article develops the analysis of the short story "The man with the hole in the hand" by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, aiming to understand the role that society has as an influence in the construction of an autonomous human being, having as a theoretical basis Ramiro Giroldo (2012), bringing some concerns about our daily life, and evidencing the causes of living in a completely dictating and exclusive society and about identity with Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000), Carlos R. Brandão (1990), Ana M. B. Bock et al (2008), Olegária Matos (1999), Samuel Ponsoni and Karl Marx (1978) and others. The method is descriptive, since we seek to understand some issues present in our society such as prejudice, search for identity, exclusion and related issues. The tale shows the life of a man completely stuck to work and a marriage completely of appearances, thus living a monotonous life. Exclusion from the environment in which he is inserted generates some complications of his experience in society. When the character goes through an identity crisis, because he recognizes himself with the hole even in the face of all the repression, we evidence a search for the self that until then was unknown to him, having as a relational then an acceptance of authenticity and his own uniqueness, contrasting with the need to conform to the norms established by the environment in which he was inserted. In view of the above, the hole in the hand becomes a symbol of the search for identity, of resistance to social impositions, also feeding the desire to break the ties of everyday alienation.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this work we propose to analyze the identity and the identity crisis in "The man with the hole in the hand" inserted in *Forbidden Chairs*, by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão. *Forbidden Chairs* brings short story sessions with themes such as "daily life, body, climate, world, inquiries, discovery, action and life". They are tales that make us think about our daily lives. In "The Man with the Hole in Hand", the narrative brings us doubts and questions, as it shows the monotonous life of a man who apparently lives for work and for his wife, but who gradually becomes a life full of appearances and interests.

This study uses the descriptive form as a methodology, as it is an analysis seeking to understand some concerns of a man with an identity crisis for appearing with a hole in his hand, however, little by little, he identifies with the situation. In this way, studying identity and crisis in the short story "The man with the hole in the hand", by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, offers a window to better understand the individual and collective anguish faced by human beings, as well as the prejudice that affects them historically, having a theoretical basis for some articles that portray identity and identity crisis. These themes are fundamental to discuss issues about alienation, existential emptiness, and the struggle to preserve the "I" in a challenging and unpredictable world. We can take into account the following question for the elaboration of this research, such as social prejudice in the construction, in the construction of an autonomous human being, in the short story "The man with the hole in the hand"

Ignácio de Loyola Brandão was born on July 31, 1936, in the city of Araraquara, in the interior of São Paulo. His career arose from the influence of his father Antônio Maria Brandão, who encouraged him to read constantly. In 1952, he published a review for the city newspaper. However, he began to publish weekly chronicles and short stories for the newspaper *Última Hora*, making success with his publications that, many times, were indignation, irritability disguised as tales, fables or even a metaphor for the context in which he belonged. He was considered a surrealist author, for showing something he could not show, since he lived in the military dictatorship (1964-1984) and as any writer of that time feared censorship, Brandão was smarter to leave his indignations in the form of tales, fables, etc. He managed to show everyone how things worked at that time.

It should be added that Loyola Brandão highlights, in his works, the figure of man as a being subordinated to the imposition of a repressive power and that therefore needs to be omitted as his identity. In this sense, many narratives report men without names, this

reflects moments lived in the military dictatorship in which repression was evident and that the name of any person could not be revealed, because he could be persecuted by the government, that is, reality could not be portrayed openly, and it was necessary to write them using fantastic artifices, in order to report men living absurd situations that they were forced to accept without having the right to oppose it.

In this work, we will seek to understand the role that society has as an influence in the construction of an autonomous human being, starting from some aspects such as prejudice, ignorance and fear, all of which can be an influence not only in the construction of an individual's autonomy but also in the process of acceptance or denial of identity, that is, the way we feel about ourselves.

The reading of the short story "The man with the hole in the hand" made it possible to build this article and instigates us to research more about this short story since the work is a trigger to understand some contexts in which we are inserted. In this way, it is intended to analyze the relationship of man with himself, since he has something that only he has, which is the "hole in the hand". The process of acceptance is what leads to a situation of extreme exclusion from society and those around him, that is, an identity crisis.

As a theoretical reference, we have Ramiro Giroldo (2012), bringing concerns about daily life and the causes of living in a dictatorship and about identity with Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000), Carlos R. Brandão (1990), Ana M. B. Bock et al (2008), Olegária Matos (1999), Samuel Ponsoni, Karl Marx (1978) and others. We want to highlight social identity, so we will observe and relate the identity crisis that the character in the story has when he denies the scoop for fear of people's reaction and, perhaps, that they will socially exclude him from the environment in which he lives.

From the analysis of the tale, it is possible to perceive the denial of society in relation to differences, that is, that "hole in the hand" made man lose everything, being taxed as an outcast of society. All the ignorance present in that environment is clear.

To understand this study, the article is organized as follows: initially, the introduction, then, in section 2, we present the methodology used to conduct the research. In section 3, the theoretical foundation on the identity that structures the research is discussed. Section 4 brings "identity and crisis from the perspective of the short story "The man with the hole in the hand". Session 5 addresses the results and discussions, highlighting as a relevant aspect the discussions and a reflection on the results. Finally, section 6, which concludes the article with final considerations and references.

## METHODOLOGY

The work will start from an analysis of the short story "The man with the hole in the hand", focusing on identity and identity crisis as a necessity to understand man around himself within a social context.

The method for this article is descriptive, as it is an analysis seeking to understand some concerns present in our daily lives, such as, for example, the prejudice that affects the man with the hole in the hand, having as a theoretical basis some articles that deal with identity and identity crisis. Regarding the term "identity", Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000) point out that:

Numerous issues are associated with identity. Historically, the term used to mean what is now understood as identity was personality, privileging not only the individualistic perspective, but also a view in which the principles of medical science supported every proposal for understanding. In this context, the debates were about the "normal" and the "pathological", the "natural" and the "inherent".

The research emphasizes two important points for its construction, which is the search for identity, in which man is willing to lose everything to be himself and conquer his space in the environment in which he is inserted. And, finally, the identity crisis in relation to himself, as he feels different when he notices the hole in his hand.

We will take into account the research of Ramiro Giroldo (2012), which brings us an analysis of the tale and will serve as an element for the perception of the construction of the man with the hole in the hand as fiction and that of Bock et al (2008) to understand the construction of the character's identity. Samuel Ponsoni with "Power relations in the fantastic narrative: concepts and analyses", Matos (1998) with "Society, tolerance, trust, friendship", also Elder R. Pereira (2024) and André Green (1981) and others.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

As a theoretical foundation, we have: Olegária Matos (1999) with the text "Society, tolerance, trust, friendship"; Samuel Ponsoni (2010), with "Power relations in fantastic narrative: concepts and analyses"; Ramiro Giroldo (2013), with "The man with the hole in the hand" by Ignácio de Loyola Brandão and science fiction as a generic trend"; Identity: conceptual and contextual issues. Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000) with "Identity: conceptual and contextual issues"; Karl Marx (1978) with "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts: Third Manuscript" and others.

Thus, it should be emphasized that identity has a fundamental function of study for psychology, as it refers to the understanding of the self and the place that the human being occupies in the society in which he lives. Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000) reflect: "The term identity has always aroused interest, both from ordinary people, representatives of the consensual universe, and from social scientists". According to Bock et al (2008), identity is built from social relationships, cultural influences and individual experiences, being a dynamic process that is in constant transformation. In this sense, we can affirm that it is built both in individuality and collectivity, as it is built in the face of the values, norms and social expectations that the subject incorporates throughout his existence. Identity is marked by a search for self-discovery and meaning, where the person sees himself as a unique being, but at the same time recognizes himself as belonging to a social group in which he is inserted. For Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000):

Identity is constructed by opposite elements, it is difference and equality; objectivity and subjectivity, concealment and revelation, humanization and dehumanization, sameness and sameness, and, in order to understand it, it is necessary to articulate these apparently contradictory dimensions in order to overcome the individual/social dichotomy that has constituted the problematic of identity since the origin of the term.

We can also add that identity is a process of continuity of everything we experience throughout our existence, taking into account family and social relationships. These aspects remain unchanged throughout our experiences. According to psychoanalyst André Green (1981, p. 203):

[...] The concept of identity groups several ideas, such as the notion of permanence, of maintaining points of reference that do not change over time, such as a person's name, their kinship relations, their nationality. These are aspects that people usually carry throughout their lives. Thus, the term identity applies to the delimitation that allows the distinction of a unit. Finally, identity allows a relationship with others, providing self-recognition.

The identity crisis, according to Bock (2008), occurs when the individual goes through deep questions about himself and the role he plays in society, in addition to the process of reconstruction of an autonomous being. This crisis is often established in moments of transition, such as adolescence, in which the subject begins to question values and roles that were given to him as normal. In this process, he may feel lost or without

direction, since the old references no longer satisfy him and the new ones are not yet fully consolidated.

Olegária Matos (1998), in turn, in the discussion about identity, points out that self-esteem is intrinsically linked to the construction of an individual's identity, with self-esteem being the main factor that involves the individual's evaluation of himself, in addition to his attributes. Matos also adds that self-esteem, when positive, is fundamental for emotional well-being, as the individual can accept himself and build good confidence in his own abilities.

Social exclusion, also according to Matos (1998), is linked to the marginalization of the subject, who is excluded from assiduous participation in social spaces. This process directly affects identity and self-esteem, as the individual begins to internalize a negative view of himself, resulting in a feeling of inferiority, that is, in an identity crisis. Thus, the individual may be subject to social exclusion, which can aggravate the identity crisis, as it establishes a distancing of values from a social group.

## **IDENTITY AND IDENTITY CRISIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SHORT STORY "THE MAN WITH THE HOLE IN THE HAND"**

Ignácio de Loyola Brandão debuted in literature in 1965, with the collection *After the Sun*, which brings together stories set in the São Paulo night of the 1960s. The first novel, *Bebel Que a Cidade Comeu*, was published in 1968 and recounts, with sarcasm, the political repression experienced in Brazil. Brandão's consecration came in the mid-1970s when he organized the edition of the magazine *Planeta*, which addressed psychic sciences, esotericism and occultism. With the publication of the novel *Zero*, first published in Italy in 1974, he became internationally known and recognized by literary critics.

Loyola Brandão has more than forty books published, among them are: novels, short stories, chronicles, children's books, travels, biographies and plays, many of which have been translated into several languages. He also received several awards, including the Jabuti Award for Best Fiction Book of 2008, with *The Boy Who Sold Words*, and the Machado de Assis Award, received from the Brazilian Academy of Letters - ABL, in 2016, for his body of work. On March 14, 2019, he was unanimously elected to occupy chair number 11 of the ABL, which belonged to Hélio Jaguaribe, taking office on October 18,



2019. Loyola Brandão also writes fortnightly chronicles for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*<sup>5</sup>.

Loyola Brandão portrays in his narratives the man and his relations with the urban space of the city of São Paulo, expressing about the troubled world lived by his characters, as well as their anguish and doubts. The themes worked on in the short stories and chronicles of *Forbidden Chairs* reflect the loss of identity, dehumanization of man, incommunicability through repression, dissociating man and society. The stylistic resources used to shape Loyola Brandão's literary universe point to what the history of arts and literature define as postmodernism. Therefore, his works play an important role in Brazilian literature. In this way, the importance of knowing and analyzing identity and identity crisis in "The Man with a Hole in the Hand" is understood. According to Elder R. Pereira (2024, p. 88), the so-called identity crisis can be understood in a broader process of displacement and even fragmentation of the modern individual, that is, in a broader and more complex view, the individual faces challenges that will be responsible for instability, that is, making it less fixed and unstable. The identity crisis is seen throughout the story when a man discovers the hole in his hand and his entire conception of the world begins to change, this change in turn determines how the being is constituted from his vision, from the self in the face of his own conceptions and not from the conception of the other, thus initiating, the crisis in identity that until then was constituted by the understanding of others. See:

[...] It was on time, I could walk calmly. He scratched his hand, discovered a slight reddish spot about two centimeters in diameter. When the bus arrived, the hand itched again. Now it burned a little and he had the impression that in the place of the stain there was a slight depression. As if he had squeezed a ball for a long time, with his hand closed.

The story highlights an ordinary man, with a life considered "normal" until a small mark appears on his hand, which begins to itch, over time, turns into a hole, a symmetrical and painless hole: "A perfect hole. As if he had always been there. Born" (Brandão, 2002, p. 20). The man starts to admire and like the hole in his hand, since it makes him different from other people, hence his identity crisis. Carlos R. Brandão (1990, p. 38) says that identity explains the personal feeling and the awareness of the possession of an I, of an individual reality that makes each one of us a unique subject before other I's; and it is, at

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.estadao.com.br/cultura/ignacio-de-loyola-brandao/>



the same time, the individual recognition of this exclusivity: the awareness of my continuity in myself, In other words, every human being has his particularity.

When a reddish spot appears on his hand, apparently nothing unusual, he wonders what it could be, but he doesn't see anything much, since initially it was just a spot. Then, on an overcrowded bus, he feels a discomfort in the same place where the stain is: "Three stops before the end, the overcrowded bus, he felt a violent itch. He could not look, nor raise his hand. It was coming, we could wait." (Brandão, 2002, p. 20). Although the stain was no big deal, the man was afraid to show it at work: "He spent the day disguising his hand between the papers." (Brandão, 2002, p. 20). The fear present in this context is fully understood, because in that environment it did not allow difference. In "The Man with the Hole in Hand", we see that in the historical context in general, being different is prohibited, the identity of the other is acceptable when it does not hurt the opinion of the ruling elite and that for him to be included as a citizen in society he will need to abdicate the hole and deny its existence. In opposition to what is imposed on him, he feels proud when he realizes that only he has the hole, it is as if he were an exception to a whole. Note:

He held the briefcase with his right hand, with his left he leaned on the rod of the ceiling. Three stops before the end, the bus overcrowded, he felt a violent itch. He could not look, nor raise his hand. It was coming, we could wait. He was pushed to the exit, said goodbye to the people, looked at their hands. In place of the stain there was a hole. About two centimeters in diameter. A perfect hole. Perfect, as if he had always been there. Born. She ran her fingers around the edges, inside, tickled. He blew inside. He looked through it, following a cripple who was walking on the other sidewalk. He moved his hand away from his eyes, focused on an object, brought his hand closer. (Brandão, 2002, p. 10).

When the man discovers the hole he is curious to know how it came about, at first he was a little afraid and wanted to hide it for fear of the judgment of people in his work environment. His identity crisis is present there, when he refuses to accept himself with the scoop. The search and discovery of identity is something of paramount importance for the construction of man as an autonomous human being. It can be related that events change man's life, which reflects the observation of Carlos R. Brandão (1990, p. 37), who highlights:

The events of each person's life generate the formation of a slow image of themselves, a living image that is gradually built over the course of experiences of exchanges with others: the mother, the parents, the family, the kin, childhood friends and the successive enlargements of other circles of others: other subjects invested with their feelings, other people invested with their names, positions and social rules of action.

This reflection makes us understand that, when we analyze it more deeply, the identity crisis goes through some aspects until man reaches an acceptance, it is a new formation of himself generated by the disintegration of the body and the identity of the persona, that is, the interpretation of the hole makes it understood that this disintegration is linked to society, to his daily life and how people will react to the new image, to the hole, however he tries to fit in and follow the patterns, however, as the hole in his hand gets bigger and he realizes that there is an internal crisis that he cannot deny:

It didn't matter, for fifteen years he hadn't had a foul, a minute discounted. He went to the table, a little disturbed by the puncture. Not sad, but wanting to know what he could do with it. He spent the day disguising his hand between the papers. I didn't want my colleagues to see it. They had no hole in their hand. From time to time he would blow through the hole, making strange noises with his mouth. At snack time, he focused on a colleague, placing his hand over his eye. When it was time to hit the exit point, he stuck the lever in the hole and pushed it. Content, he felt more than the others. The sensation had begun in the middle of the morning, after the first depression had disappeared. I had thought about going to the doctor, explaining the case. Quit. (Brandão, 2002, p. 10).

Another aspect that we can analyze in the short story is the alienation and isolation that is portrayed in the short story, as shown in this passage "He went to work and in the late afternoon he was disappointed. No one in the office had cared for his hand. He had done everything in front of his colleagues. He had blown his nose, he had spent the day with his hand on his forehead." (Brandão, 2002, p. 11).

According to Bock et al (2008), stigma reveals that society has difficulty dealing with what is different. In relation to the short story "The man with the hole in the hand", society has a significant influence on the construction of man's identity, that is, it is present in the context in which the character is experiencing a very great lack of understanding on the part of society, the coexistence with difference, because having a hole in the hand was not part of the necessary parameters to be an inserted and socially active citizen.

The hole in his hand was part of the construction of man as an autonomous human being, that hole became part of his history from the moment he appeared. The man didn't feel intimidated to show it, although he couldn't, he felt like a unique being, deconstructing himself from everything he used to be. That hole was his identity and he was proud of it, being willing to be himself, no matter what they were going to say. In the article "Identity: conceptual and contextual issues", Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000) make the following reflection:

Identity is at the same time difference and equality. According to Jacques (1998), the word identity evokes both the quality of what is identical, equal, and the notion of a set of characters that make an individual recognize as different from others. Thus, identity implies both the recognition that an individual is the very person he is talking about, as well as belonging to a whole, confusing himself with others, his equals.

We know that our identity is given to us even before we are born, that is, our parents plan the entire trajectory of life, from the discovery of our sex, to how we should behave. Metaphorically speaking, it is as if society gave us a box and inside it explains attitudes, actions, behaviors that we must have or do to be a man or a woman and any behavior contrary to these taxes, society discriminates. Compared to the man in the short story, society imposes in a more aesthetic way that that hole was inconvenient.

Man's autonomy begins when he finds his own identity, that is, when he begins to understand and see that that hole was just a detail in his body and the hole did not make him a person to be taxed as a marginal. By accepting the hole as part of this singularity, the character then begins to break with the ideas that a person needs to mold himself to please the conditions of others, also realizing that his essence is not conditioned by social expectations. When analyzing identity, Jacques points out (1998, p.161):

Jurandir Freire Costa uses the qualification "psychological identity" to refer to a universal and generic predicate that defines the human par excellence as opposed to only one attribute of the self or of some self such as social, ethnic or religious identity, for example. Habermas (1990) refers to the "identity of the self", which is constituted based on "natural identity" and "role identity", based on the integration of these through equality with others and difference in relation to others. Based on the inter-relational assumption between the individual and social instances, the expression "social identity" has been used. (Neto, 1985) seeking to account for this articulation.

Olegária Matos (1998) states that, in order to see dialogue in society and between cultures, it is necessary to forget one's own origin. Bringing the question of identity to the plane of the acquisition of a sense of identity, we could think that in order for there to be dialogues between subjects, groups and society, everyone would have to abandon themselves in a forgetfulness of themselves capable of allowing the encounter with the diverse. Loyola Brandão presents a multifaceted and ambiguous man, flexible by his characteristic, the man with the hole in his hand is responsible for the ability to reorganize daily life, forgetting his own origin to become the owner of a plasticity that always suggests new expectations, new domains of being.

In the unfolding of the short story "The man with the hole in the hand", one observes the man going on with any more day, waking up early and going to work as he had done for

years, without any news. When saying goodbye to his wife, it is easy to see her concern about her husband's appearance, according to the following situation: "Twelve years ago they had coffee together and she accompanied him to the door." You have a strand of white hair. Either dye it or take it off." He smiled, picked up his briefcase and left to take the bus" (Brandão 2002, p. 19).

In the office, the protagonist struggles to disguise the hole in his hand that causes feelings of shame and pride. The desire to be the same as other co-workers is replaced by the pride of being different and the appearance of the hole in the hand is what triggers the process of recognizing one's uniqueness. A concern of the man with the hole in his hand is to detach himself from social ties and disregard the issues of the world in which he lives to assume a new identity and realize that reality is complex and contradictory. This is due to the wife's first reaction to learning of the hole in her hand, which is crying and trying to make a bandage to hide the hole. In opposition to his wife's behavior, the man seems to reaffirm his position of difference in an attempt to individualize himself in an increasingly massified world: "Only I have this hole" (Brandão, 2002, p. 21). The wife denies the difference and does not accept to live with her husband while he has the hole in his hand: "I cannot live with you as long as this hole exists" (Brandão, 2002, p. 21). The departure of his wife causes a feeling of freedom for the protagonist, let's see the following excerpt:

He woke up to the silence of the house, the rooms in the dim light, everything messed up. He liked the mess. He made coffee, threw powder on the ground, wet everything he could, knocked down the garbage. He took a shower, threw the towels, wet the floor, dropped the soap inside the toilet. Left. For the second time in twelve years, he went out alone with no one to accompany him to the door, without the feeling of being watched, of having to go back to the same place, having to justify things, the day, his movements (Brandão, 2002, p. 22).

Perhaps the woman's concern is not just an aesthetic issue, or a matter of repulsion, but a matter of pure prejudice or even a matter of the pressure that society will put on her, thus meaning questioning of her role as a wife. She fears that people, when they perceive this "difference" in man, will end up rejecting him, persecuting him or preventing him from frequenting places he used to frequent, such as work, public transport and other environments. In these circumstances, man suffers various retaliations from the current power, such as aggressions, both physical and moral. He then begins to wander around the city, without a destination, with a double feeling of pride and shame for his singular condition. Man is in search of new spaces, he wants to have a new relationship of

citizenship, which makes us infer the perception of Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000, emphasis added), who indicate:

The conquest of new spaces of expression and social recognition, in which the relationship between citizenship and subjectivity is based on the idea of emancipation, must be based on Rousseau's principle of community, which, according to Santos, articulated the ideas of horizontal political obligation between citizens and the idea of participation and concrete solidarity, emerging from this a new political culture and, "[...] ultimately, a new quality of personal and collective life based on autonomy and self-government..". (Santos, 1999, p. 263).

In this way, it can be understood that the man with the hole in the hand is obsessed with difference, looking for a distinction in relation to others, the hole in the hand is an achievement, it makes him recognize himself socially and brings the idea of emancipation. In this way, we bring the vision of Ramiro Giroldo (2012), who in an analysis of the short story, keeps us informed of the perspective of man in his construction of self-acceptance, and the context in which he is inserted can influence the process of inclusion and/or exclusion. According to Giroldo (2012, p. 3):

The impersonality of the work environment, where behavioral information is demanded, puts the protagonist in an impasse. Not fitting into the implicitly required parameters causes a guilt that seems unjustified and resists ready understanding. However, the desire to be equal to those around him begins to be replaced by a pride in having differences, particularities. The hole in the hand is the trigger of the process.

It is clear the concern of men to continue inserted in the society they are part of. However, his desire to be different, to be accepted by himself is greater when the hole appears. As a result of his altruism, exclusion from society. Thus, we bring to this research aspects of the process of self-acceptance of the individual in an environment of appearances, being fed in a bubble of total authority of those around them.

Man's present need to show the world something that only he has was more precise than closing himself off and isolating himself from the world. Something that only he had, something of his own, and that transformed him into a complete being, or even unique. The hole in the hand gives man a new identity, which is the way in which he expresses himself in the world as resistance and overcoming the identity crisis, this implies a new social role. Man, at the same time, is confused and differentiated from others because he does not insert himself into the social world (with pre-established roles, institutions, and identities), but appropriates it with his new characteristic.

Identity, in this context of seeing oneself with the hole in one's hand, is not only an internal construction, that is, before the hole he felt the need to recognize himself, but it was also something that manifests itself in the interaction with the other and with society, which is more painful and intimidating. The choice to expose oneself, instead of isolating oneself, reflects the desire to be recognized for what one really is, that is, without interference from the vision of others with the need to make a difference in a world that often seeks standardization.

To be complete, or unique, involves the recognition and acceptance of this individuality. Showing the world what only he possesses is, for man, a way of freeing himself from the shackles of conformity and reaffirming his singular identity. This process, although painful, is essential for the construction of a deep sense of oneself within the abnormality of the vision of others, because it is by allowing oneself to be seen as one is, that is, without the ties of society, in its totality, that man achieves a fuller understanding of who he really is. Identity, therefore, it is as much an act of discovery as it is of expression. See:

The relief was so great that he began to sweat. And he was a little scared. It was as if he had been healed of a terrible disease, after having been on the verge of death. Or getting out of the water, when he was drowning. He felt frightened, a strange feeling inside. Guilty of being at a loss for what to do. Free, walking where he wanted. All because of the hole. He looked at people through him. The gesture of bringing the palm of the hand in front of the eye was becoming a tic. (Brandão, 2002, p. 13).

The unfolding of the tale continues with the separation of the woman, who leaves home leaving a note for her husband. "When he returned home, he did not find the woman at the door. On the table was a note. "I can't live with you as long as this hole exists." (Brandão, 2002, p. 21) The woman's attitude shows how she cannot deal with that hole in her husband's hand, evidencing once again the prejudice persisting in the wife, separation is a response to the pressure that society puts on us when we need to follow standards that it imposes on us. Contrary to what is imagined, the man did not feel sad about the abandonment of his wife, because this event broke his routine a little, being at peace with himself without needing to explain himself, which makes him a free man without many worries.

What is the importance of being an autonomous person? analyzing the man's need to be himself was present in that context, since the woman's abandonment was not something painful. He needed that sense of freedom, to be present with himself. According



to Giroldo's (2012) thinking: "The departure of women is seen as something positive, which configures the reinforcement of stereotypes about the roles allegedly played by the masculine and the feminine." (Giroldo, 2012).

The feeling of freedom is interrupted when the man is forbidden to use public transport and has to walk to work, and it gets even worse when he is fired from the company where he has worked all his life:

- What about my money? The compensation?
- Indemnity? You were fired for cause.
- Just cause?
- It is forbidden to have a hole in the hand. Didn't you know?
- There was never this in the regulations.
- Exists. It is in the Non-Existent Decree.
- I want to see.
- It is non-existent. You cannot see (Brandão, 2002, p. 24).

According to Giroldo (2012), the passage refers to the dubious legality that allowed the military government to coerce and curtail individual freedom.

When going to the cinema, something he had not done for a few years, he was asked about the film he had chosen to watch, and was suggested to go to another cinema because that place was not convenient for a man with a hole in his hand. See the excerpt:

"Are you sure this is the movie you want to see?"  
As he did not have it, he was undecided, surprised. The doorman took advantage of it.  
"See?" You were wrong in the film. If you want, the ticket office will refund the money.  
He recovered, protested. Was it really this movie, what is this business, also here this joke?  
"Please, my lord, go to another cinema. Otherwise, I lose my job."  
"And if I want to go to this one?"  
"Better not to enter. Or I'm forced to call the manager."  
"You can call."  
The manager came accompanied by a Military Police with a frown.  
"Why can't I go into the theater?"  
"You can, gentleman. What's the problem?"  
"The doorman said I can't."  
"I didn't say it. I just asked you to go to another cinema."  
"I want this one."  
(Let him in, the manager muttered to the doorman). (Brandão, 2002, p. 25).

After the film ended, he was kicked out of the theater by security guards. He started walking around the city, aimlessly, he just walked without knowing where he was going to go, but a feeling of anguish, because he didn't understand why he was going through all that, it was just a puncture. He sat down in a square to rest, when, once again, he was



expelled from there by a guard, who was not very nice to him. Since, he was kicked out of there with clubs. Taking shelter in an overpass. The story ends with the following situation:

Vagabonds (were they vagabonds?) had lit a bonfire. He woke up, the sun was rising, he got up quickly. Standing up, he remembered that he didn't have to go to work, to go anywhere. He sat down again, watching the bums (were they bums?) drink what looked like coffee. He approached. One of them held out a can. When he looked at the man's hand, he saw in it a hole of about two centimeters in diameter that went from the palm to the back. Then, he also showed his hand. The man said nothing. He drank his coffee. A drain, of dust collected in the garbage of bars, had already passed through the strainer once or twice. It served to settle the stomach (Brandão, 2002, p. 27).

So, after losing everything, thus being on the margins of society, that is, a criminal, he finds people with the same hole as him. When he meets these people, he realizes that there is nothing wrong with him and that it was pure prejudice from society. It is a somewhat prejudiced view from man, because according to Giroldo (2012). "The outcome of the story, finally, presents the hole in the hand as a broad representation of difference: both the protagonist and the marginal who welcomes him possess it."

In this way, the man chose to follow his own paths, since everything he went through to be himself was painful, being present in a completely prejudiced society is difficult, as shown in the tale. Despite everything, the man met with people he knows who went through the same difficulties as him, showing that there are people who can give us a hand in any of the circumstances.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For the discussion of this work, two important points will be addressed, which is the search for the identity of the character, who is willing to lose everything to be himself and the process of man's relationship with himself, that despite everything the man does not give up showing the hole, which for him is an achievement, since this hole is part of his identity.

Taking into account all the effort that man has to seek his own space in the environment in which he lives, we can realize how important it is to be ourselves. Our choices bring consequences that we sometimes do not expect, as we see in "The Man with the Hole in Hand", that he is willing to lose everything to assume a singularity and form an image of himself. For Carlos R. Brandão (1990, p. 37): The events of each person's life generate on them the formation of a slow image of themselves, a living image that is gradually built over the course of experiences of exchanges with others [...]."

The hole in the hand symbolizes this uniqueness, a mark that when it appears begins to be part of the protagonist's identity and that he persistently defends, even when everyone around him sees it as something wrong or unacceptable. The idea of losing everything, whether material possessions, relationships, or social status to stay true to who they really are, reinforces the existential dilemma of many people who find themselves conflicted between authenticity and social acceptance.

We know how painful it is to stop being ourselves to follow the standard set by society, no matter what we do, it will never be enough and carrying this burden is an endless prison that most people are willing to experience for fear of losing everything. Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000):

Identity is totality, and one of its characteristics is multiplicity. Social roles are imposed on the individual from birth and assumed by him to the extent that he behaves in accordance with society's expectations. [...] To each materialized character, identity is assured its manifestation as a totality, but a totality that is not exhausted nor is it reduced to the concretion of characters. The characters are constitutive parts of identity and, at the same time, are configured as a whole that creates itself, as a phenomenon of a concrete totality. Identity is still a universe of characters already existing and others still possible.

In "The Man with the Hole in the Hand", we see the man lose everything due to ignorance of society and those around him because he does not fit into the standards that are established for him. However, we also see man conquer his own identity, which despite everything changing in his life did not stop fighting for what was impossible. See.

Several currents of Psychology (and Psychoanalysis, included) teach us that the recognition of the self occurs at the moment we learn to differentiate ourselves from the other. I become someone when I discover the other and the lack of such recognition would not allow me to know who I am, because I would not have elements of comparison that would allow my self to stand out from the other selves. In this way, we can say that identity, the equal to oneself, depends on one's differentiation in relation to the other. (Bock et al, 2008, p. 267).

Given this, we come to the conclusion that the human being is a result of different selves, taking into account that coexistence influences people's behavior and structures character, we can see this throughout the story when the protagonist follows the standards imposed on him, before his identity crisis due to the hole. This crisis emerges as a breaking point that leads the character not only to be interpreted by the expectations of others but also to his own. This journey of acceptance and discovery only shows that we are a dynamic construction, that is, we are molded before the vision of various beliefs, customs,

precepts and everything that structures a sociable being. From this perspective, we should add what Marx says (1978, p. 41, emphasis added):

Man, however, is not only a natural being, but a *natural human being*, that is, a being who is for himself and, therefore, a generic being, who as such must act and conform both in his being and in his knowledge... Neither objectively nor subjectively is nature immediately present to the human being in an adequate way. And as everything natural must *be born*, so man also possesses his act of birth: *history*, which, however, is for him a conscious history, and which, therefore, as an act of birth accompanied by consciousness, is an act of birth that surpasses itself. History is the true natural history of man.

In the process of man's relationship with himself, we understand that the hole, which initially presents itself only as a physical detail, until then unexpected and sneaky, takes on a greater meaning throughout the story, becoming a metaphor for the existential emptiness that the character begins to feel. However, such a metaphor is what leads man to reconstruct himself and to recognize himself as different. The inability to find rational or scientific explanations for what is happening reflects the powerlessness of the human being in the face of the unknown and what cannot be controlled. The character then isolates himself, increasingly obsessed with the scoop, and this comes to symbolize a disconnection with his own daily life and the people around him.

In the view of Bock et al (2008), these are moments, very important periods in a person's life in which they seek, with a greater or lesser degree of awareness of this crisis, to redefine or ratify their way of being in the world... their identity: for themselves and for others. We then understand that these periods of crisis can be understood as moments of self-acceptance and knowledge, where we go through the need to review certain certainties, values, and behavior, and, finally, abandon external expectations to then build a new understanding of who we are.

Then, we see the character begin to face a process of alienation from himself, realizing then that such a feat points to an identity crisis. The hole in the hand suggests a kind of internal flaw, a void or lack that the character does not know how to fill. As the obsession grows, he loses the ability to see himself in an integral way, questioning to what extent he still is himself. This internal conflict, between what he was and what he is becoming due to the hole, reveals the theme of the fragmentation of identity, common in Brandão's work, if we take into account the time in which this work was written.

For Carolina Laurenti and Mari Nilza Ferrari de Barros (2000): "Therefore, identity is not innate and can be understood as a socio-historical form of individuality. The social context provides the conditions for the most varied modes and alternatives of identity."

The story also explores man's relationship with the body as a reflection of the "I". The hole in the hand, something that should be part of his identity, becomes a strange and hostile element, in the view of those around him and those who impose a role of normality. This rupture between the body and the consciousness exposes a disharmony in the character's relationship with himself, which provokes not only fear, but a feeling of deep helplessness, perhaps helplessness. The tale questions the extent to which the physical body is part of identity and how fragile this identity is in the face of unexpected and inexplicable events.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Resuming the initial purpose of this research, which aims to understand the role that society has as an influence in the construction of an autonomous human being in the short story "The man with the hole in the hand", it can be stated that the protagonist goes through the process of reconstruction in the face of all the challenges he had to experience by the society in which he was inserted.

In the short story, it was noticed that the protagonist is in a continuous process of personal affirmation. The hole in his hand that appeared out of nowhere symbolizes something unique, which only he has, something that differentiates him from the others, but, on the other hand, society itself makes this hole something marginalized from his identity. But he chooses to embrace that extraordinary scoop which results in the loss of relationship, job and social recognition. This effort reflects the desire for authenticity, that is, the desire not to conform to the standards imposed on it.

It can also be seen that the separation from the man, who despite loving his wife, was not shaken by her abandonment. Prejudice is very present in the tale, from the moment she discovers the hole in the man's hand and thinks it is difficult to maintain the relationship. Another consequence is that he is forbidden to ride the buses, loses his job, is expelled from the cinema, all these events were due to the hole in his hand, because society taxed him as inconvenient.

The search for the character's identity overcomes all the barriers he has to go through to be himself. Finding himself, even if society says it's wrong is a privilege for him,

having that hole made him unique. When he understands that the scoop is not a flaw to be corrected, but an aspect to be valued this behavior to challenge the oppressive norms of those around him and we see the result of this bravery, he is faced with social rejection, which distances him from his job, his wife and his daily life, thus becoming a kind of liberation.

Precisely because identity is what we are, for example, "I am black", "I am heterosexual", and the hole in the hand triggers a process of acceptance of identity in man, who before his emergence did not have an altruistic vision and always followed the norms of standards.

This process of search and discovery that man has about identity becomes liberating for him, because we live in constant change, changes that make us different from what we once were. However, man shows that to be ourselves is a matter of strength and a matter of never giving up, as already mentioned, our choices bring consequences that we do not expect. However, the greatest consequence that man could have with all that would be not to fight for his own space in the environment in which he lives. In this way, carrying an identity that does not make us a very heavy burden.

The protagonist, by accepting the hole in his hand as an intrinsic part of his identity, reflects the universal struggle of the self in the face of his trajectory of self-discovery and uniqueness, thus remaining faithful in the construction of his new self, which arises as a result of the courage to let go of social ties. This is how the narrative explores the relationship between man and the body. It was realized that the hole in the hand became a mark of his identity, before it was a strange and hostile element, rejected by those around him and after the identity crisis the hole in the hand imposes itself as an aspect of normality, breaking with the existing patterns. This rupture between the body and consciousness exposed a new relationship between man and himself. This is how I tell the question to what extent the physical body reveals itself to be part of the identity and how fragile this identity was in the face of inexplicable and unexpected situations.

Loyola Brandão's short story shows us that the process of searching for identity when it makes us break with patterns is difficult and often lonely, but fundamental for personal fulfillment and for our recognition. Being true to oneself, even in the face of obstacles and rejection, is what gives the protagonist a sense of purpose and freedom. He chooses not to carry the scoop as a burden, but as a mark of his uniqueness, and this choice, while full of challenges, represents the victory of his own authenticity over external

pressures. The real negative consequence, as the tale suggests to us, would be to give up on oneself and stop fighting for one's space in the world. It can be said that man has moved towards a rupture with the idea of the common human being, whose assumption defines that all the individual's potentialities are already born with him, but he was not born with the hole in his hand, which enhances his individual characteristic. Hence, the social context he faces has led him to a secondary role, configuring him in the search for a new identity to relate to other men. Therefore, man, as a being, is related to a social role, and this represents a collective, abstract and generic identity; associated, constructed and mediated by social relations.

Finally, this study can contribute beyond an analysis of how society can interfere in the construction of autonomous human beings, however, it shows us that issues such as awareness about alienation and social pressure, promotion of discussions about identity and authenticity and reflection on freedom and control, all these topics make us realize how much the environment in which we are inserted influences us. In addition, the expected results were achieved, once we understood the essence of what identity is and how we can rebuild ourselves in the face of repression.

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