

# Chilean women and their identification with female models of *Pasión de Gavilanes*<sup>1</sup>

## Chilenas y su identificación con los personajes femeninos de *Pasión de Gavilanes*

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### ABSTRACT

Published research has not delved into the importance of female models deployed in telenovelas as *Pasión de Gavilanes*, which become references for their viewers, particularly for women. This is why, in this study, we took as reference a group of twelve Chilean women from socioeconomic segments C3 and D, followers of the telenovela, to answer questions regarding which types of identification arise from the exposure to the female roles shown in the last broadcasting of the Colombian telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes*. To achieve this purpose, from a description of the male and female roles of the telenovela, we proceed to obtain – through in-depth interviews with a semi-structured guideline – the information on how women who watch the telenovela perceive them. As a result, we conclude that the admiration for a character is secondary compared to the identification by likeability, stressing that the actress or interpreter is relevant to follow the telenovela through its different chapters.

**Keywords:** Identification with female characters, women, telenovelas.

### RESUMEN

*Las investigaciones publicadas no han profundizado en la importancia de los personajes femeninos desplegados en las telenovelas, que se vuelven referentes para sus telespectadoras. En este sentido, y tomando como objeto de estudio a un grupo de doce mujeres de entre 26 y 64 años de los estratos socioeconómicos C3 y D, el presente trabajo se propone establecer los modos de identificación que surgen a partir de la recepción de los personajes femeninos desarrollados en la última emisión de la telenovela colombiana *Pasión de Gavilanes*. Para conseguir este propósito, se procede a obtener información respecto de la percepción que de tales personajes tienen las consumidoras de la telenovela, tarea realizada a través de entrevistas en profundidad con pauta semiestructurada. Como resultado, se observa que la admiración por un personaje es secundaria si se la compara con la identificación por simpatía, destacando que la figura de la actriz es relevante para seguir la telenovela a través de sus distintos episodios.*

**Palabras clave:** Identificación con personajes femeninos, mujeres, telenovelas.

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## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2011, channel Chilevisión programmed, for the third time in Chile, *Pasión de Gavilanes* ("Passion of Hawks" or "Hidden Passion"), a Colombian manufactured telenovela that achieved to snatch the leadership from channel Mega and its Mexican telenovelas at that timeslot, as evidenced by the *rating* of the day February 2nd, 2011, when it became the most-watched foreign telenovela in Chile (Time Ibope 2013). Two years later, Chilevisión decided to show it again at 18:30 hours, only to later move it to the 19:30 timeslot due to its success.

*Pasión de Gavilanes* (2003) is a co-production of RTI Productions, Caracol Television and Telemundo, written by Julio Jiménez and a *remake* of *Las aguas mansas* ("The still waters"), also done by the same author in 1992. Its plot combines drama, comedy and romance, and tells the story of love and heartbreak of the "Reyes brothers" and the "Elizondo sisters". The characters have typical characteristics found in a rural environment, stereotyped and - as stereotypes- meet a specific function within the story (Mazziotti, 2008).

But why study *Pasión de Gavilanes*? First, in past decades, the University field has seen the development of a current strong research on telenovelas, its cultural matrices and social uses.

Secondly, its crucial importance in the formation of a new category of telenovelas was considered. This audiovisual work is among productions part of the globalized model of melodrama. It blends modern elements with traditional ones, and is not consolidated in a narrative (such as Mexican, Brazilian and Colombian models), becoming part of the stories associated as "transnational novelas or global novelas" (López Pumarejo, 2006, cited in Mazziotti, 2008, p. 8).

Thirdly, it is interesting to note the twist *Pasión de Gavilanes* gives to the traditional formula of Colombian telenovelas. In Colombian fictions produced by Telemundo (with production company RTI and local RCN and Caracol), there are two narrative paths to represent the social image of women, influenced by social changes and the emergence of new formats: on the one hand, the traditional telenovela; and on the other hand, the new telenovela, that breaks former stereotypes while exploring new narrative models. Within the first spectrum are grouped the stories in which women with little physical grace fall for senior professional men who do not value their professional ability. At this same level are those sto-

ries that focus on love between a young innocent, poor and, occasionally, uncultivated woman, and a rich heir (Galán, 2007). It is in this scheme that we find the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes* reversing the traditional formula: wealthy girls, who fall for young men of a humble origin.

Fourthly, *Pasión de Gavilanes*, broadcasted on the prime timeslot, is transformed into a product likely to be seen by a lot of people and, in particular, by women of all ages, who are the main consumers of daily television (CNTV, 2013a).

Returning to the first point exposed as to why study *Pasión de Gavilanes*, the studies on melodrama and mediation between a text and its reading done by Jesús Barbero (1992) must be mentioned, as they made way to a line of study that examines telenovelas by applying different approaches. Jost (1999) takes as his starting point the indisputable fact that reality is different from fiction, but is the main source for fiction. Thus, fiction and reality are two different forms of truth. From this, Jost defines two major communicative modes on television: the "authentic" mode, which refers to the existence of a self, an "Ego – real origin", a category that brings together broadcasts that seek to inform us or put us in touch with reality, and secondly, the fictional mode, which projects to a "made up" self, an "Ego – Fictitious origin". This groups the broadcasts that are aimed at building a diegetic world, imaginary and coherent. It is at this level that we find telenovelas, in those television genres labeled as first grade (second grade are those programs that include part of the reality into the fiction as a story engine).

While consuming this type of content – following Bianchi and Bourgeois (1992) – the viewer modifies the media's proposed purport, in a sequence that includes the identification process. That is the aspect that is interesting to address in relation to the female characters shown in the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes*.

In this direction, the National Television Council (CNTV, 2013b), until 2009, developed a line of research focused on television and women. *The Sixth National Survey of TV - Woman and TV* (CNTV, 2009) emphasized the importance of stereotypes and images transmitted by the media, as they become deeply rooted in the minds and endure over time (Ortiz, 2001, cited in CNTV, 2009). For this reason, it is important to know what are the types of identification that arise from the female models deployed in telenovelas like *Pasión de Gavilanes*.

Taking responsibility of a point of view unaddressed by official studies (CNTV), only analyzed in academic research in relation to a teenage audience, and taking as a reference a Chilean telenovela (Amigo, 2002), we set ourselves the following question: what are the types of identification that arise in a group of adult women, socio-economic strata C3 and D, from the reception of the female characters displayed in the latest broadcast of the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes*? As a possible answer to this question, the following hypothesis was proposed (based on the work of Bernardo Amigo, 2002): the reception of the female characters in the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes* would result in a group of adult women (aged 26-64) of strata C3 and D, having little to none associative identification. Secondly, the cathartic identification would be widespread, while the sympathy identification would be above the admiring identification. On the other hand, the figure of the actress would be of vital importance for the process of identification with the character and the follow-up of the fiction.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When we speak of a telenovela, the idea pertained of a melodrama is key. In this paper, we will understand it as a story focused on the private and everyday life, a world supported in the exacerbation of the sentimental-loving element, which is articulated through the regular dialectic between desire and impediment, as it shows the confrontation between conflicting models of social guidelines. In its television version, melodrama is structured around a set of permanent rules of production, that can also be transgressed, which reflects a particularized way of mediation with reality (Tesché, 2006).

The models that are faced in the world of a telenovela do not have equal weight within the plot: one of them is identified as right and just, and the other as wrong and evil. This clash manifests itself in four traditional patterns. The first is the desire/love/impediment. There is a woman and a man struggling to defend their love and consolidate, not without effort, the happiness of a monogamous and heterosexual couple, which will result in building a family rooted in a religious marriage (Aprea & Martínez, 1996).

The traditional structure of a telenovela has two women who compete for the love of the same man. The one that must fight for good and the man's love is the "Heroine", which is selfless and humble, and has sex

because of love, ultimately thinking of the sacred bond of marriage. She loves the "Hero" and seeks to free him of the power of the Woman-Tormentor, so that he can guide her to happiness (Roura, 1993). Its counterpart is the "False Heroine", which is strong, ambitious, classist, individualistic and unfaithful. She has sex without love and fights for goals without thinking about the rest. She personifies evil and embodies the opposite female model (Gómez, 2006, cited in Corro et al., 2009).

The "Hero", for its part, is unfaithful and fearful, manipulated by his family and the strategies of seduction of the "False Heroine". However, the gimmicks are not enough to conquer him, and he finally frees himself from both of them and becomes part of the life project of the "Heroine" (Corro et al., 2009). The figure of the "Hero" is juxtaposed by the "Justice-seeker" figure ("*Justiciero*"), one that never doubts the legitimacy of the values proposed by the "Heroine", and thus helps faithfully (Martín-Barbero, 1992). The role of the "Mother" figure is also important, a self-sacrificing character that protects the protagonist against any eventuality. The "Mother" symbolizes morality and cares for the interests of its daughter, ensuring her a rich and good man (Roura, 1993).

In this sense, the structure of the telenovela is marked by the prominence of female role models framed in a work carried out by the media during the "feminist revolution of the 1970s", which sought to achieve economic, political, social and cultural equality for men and women.

The movement managed to have certain effect, but slowly lost influence and doctrine, since at least in the entertainment industry, it was gradually buried by the fundamentalist right, as well as the Hollywood and television industry. For these agents, feminism was responsible of the dramas of the "new woman" (Ochoa, 1992, quoted in Roura, 1993). Thus, the male and female characters in telenovelas, according to Roura (1993), exalt ideas that maintain the female domain exclusively to sentimental and maternal levels, professing submission to men (Hero-Warrior), and leaving it completely outside the "male" sphere. Males freed from traditional masculinity by modernity are shown in a negative way in telenovelas. As far as the strong, free, competitive and occupationally active woman, she is portrayed as evil, in contrast with the "good girl". These ingredients, according to the narrative rules of the telenovela, have the family circle as their main setting, within the domes-

tic environment, where life projects and the character's actions are decided (Corro et al., 2009).

As a second facet we have the figure of ignorance/recognition. The several plots display a constant tension, a search for identity, linked to an unknown or denied paternity (Mazziotti, 1996).

The third aspect, on the other hand, is marked by the encounter of different social classes, a situation that becomes an obstacle for love to triumph or to recognize the identity of a character.

The last matrix is the one facing civilization and barbarism or reason/affections, meaning the "order and primacy of intelligence with respect to the passions" (Corro et al., 2009, p. 29).

Formally, the telenovela "is divided into episodes linked by the continuation of a series of different dramatic lines, clumped around a central story" (Aprea & Martínez, 1996). These episodes seek to reach a massive audience, coinciding with the "ethic-cultural system of references and hermeneutic skills of a vast audience" (Corro et al., 2009, pp. 34-35). It is achieved by studying narrative, music, and iconographic references that the people have, trying to connect with them. This goal has been accomplished by the telenovela genre, and is reflected in the numbers given by audience studies (Roura, 1993). The plot of these productions explains the great popularity it holds, as it brings together subplots around a main story identified with a dialectic that is also central. The subplots are useful to lengthen the telenovela and, at the same time, to extend the margin of identification between the audience and the characters (Corro et al., 2009).

However, while telenovelas are increasingly standardized products, homogenized by the circulation of the formats, the titles maintain unique style trademarks, such as mannerisms or cultural tones (Mazziotti, 2008). Thus, we have, firstly, styles with greater success and international circulation, which are from Mexico, Brazil and Colombia. In second place, there are two models that are discontinued (Argentina and Venezuela); and one in constant growth, the global one. We will delve into the most successful models as well as the latter one, where *Pasión de Gavilanes* is found.

The Mexican model (Televisa) is the traditional one, the "offspring" of the radionovela and cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, with a classic melodrama as the pivotal axis, prone to *remakes*. Catholic morality is crucial for action to happen, with sin as a center: guilt is

weighty and suffering essential to achieve happiness. The characters are archetypal, marked by a unique feature, which is emphasized by their speech, makeup and wardrobe. Mazziotti (2008) examines this model in a parallel with the Brazilian and Colombian one, pointing out that the Mexican model maintains the extremes: the Mother, the Evil, the Innocent, the Ambitious and the poor but honest young man. On the other hand, the Brazilian style (Globo) is modern, agile and colorful; it has a strong regard for the visual aspect of the telenovela and the pace of the story, focusing on the middle class, and is more permissive at a moral level. Eroticism is important, Mazziotti says, as is reflected in the staging. "While there are archetypal characters, they are not presented as drastically as in the Mexican case, and they tend to be individual, to constitute a character, to develop a personality" (p. 5). The Colombian variant, instead, has an "attitude of inquiry, an exploration of urban, provincial, rural, working life, domestic and professional universes" (p. 6). The division between good and evil inherent to melodrama is kept, but perhaps the most attractive aspect is the presentation of characters, "drawn in detail, combining wardrobe, speech, physical type and tics. There is an articulation between humor and irony perceived, and the presence of caricatured characters stand out" (p. 6).

The global version (Telemundo) has its own particular seal, with the constant mixture of those aspects that have been characteristic and successful in the models that it nurtures from (Telemundo has made co-productions with Globo, Televisa and Caracol). Taking this characteristic into account, it must be said that the production of Telemundo engages two privileged scenarios, the *hacienda* and the people. For Alvarez Curbelo (2006), "there is no story, just geography. The body is displayed and undressed in a generic land without cities" (quoted in Mazziotti, 2008, p. 8). According to Rincón (2005), the narrative incoherence of the story, its slowness or repetitiveness is not relevant. It is the triumph of the industrial over the cultural (cited in Mazziotti, 2008): the global version of the telenovela is to the traditional telenovela what the *spaghetti western* is to the *western*. According to the same Nora Mazziotti, if to the classic *western* "the point of reference for the construction of the myth is the historical past, to the *spaghetti western* it is the same myth, the cinematic myth. What counts is not the reality, but its image" (p. 9). The characters, she continues, "maintain strong family ties, live everything

with a strong passion, are supportive, and have a liking for dancing and alcohol” (p. 9).

In relation to the process of audience identification, as a dimension of use of fiction, here we apply the interpretations of this phenomenon made by Fuenzalida (2012) and Amigo (2002), which have been integrated into this work to have a more complete vision of the types of identification that are examined.

From the aesthetics of reception, Jauss and Godzich (1982) have formulated a model “to understand the identification of the receiver with the literary hero that defines the reader’s identification with fictional characters as the experience of oneself living through the experience of the other”. Fictional creations, through the various characters in them, enable dynamic and successive identifications inside the text. Through identification, analyzing the issues raised by Jauss and Godzich (1982), Fuenzalida (2012) says that the “communicative function of fiction occurs: it delivers ideas and behavior patterns via characters and situations” (pp. 13-14).

Jauss and Godzich (1982) established five forms (patterns) of interactive identification between the reader and the “heroes” of the text. The first pattern is the associative identification. In it, the recipient merges with a fictional role; in its positive aspect it may constitute a social and playful celebration of free pleasure, but negatively so it can be a regression back to an archaic social ritual; its ideal context is a sociable one, in games, sports, sacred rites, etc. Secondly, Jauss and Godzich continue, we have admiration, which tends to occur with a character overflowing with perfection much different from one’s own: an extraordinary being. This variant of identification has an awareness of the distance between the receiver and the character object of admiration, “and may incite the receiver, in a positive way, to emulate by developing the best abilities it has, while negatively it can provoke a mere external mimesis of the admired model”. A third variant is empathy, which occurs with a protagonist similar to us. Positively it can “generate sympathetic compassion, moral judgment, and action; negatively it can act as sentimentality and appease the consciousness”. The fourth way is a catharsis, which occurs in two ways: “on the one hand, with the ‘Hero’ suffering from the tragedy, before which we can experience, in a positive view, the tragic emotion/release along with reflection;” but negatively, it can possible be only charm.” It can also happen with the “Hero” pressured by comedy, and “in

a positive light, experience an empathic and relieving laughter, along with moral judgment; it is the positive humor of laughing at oneself by laughing with the other, different from the mocking derision, which is making fun of the other”. The fifth and last category - Jauss and Godzich conclude - is the ironic one, which occurs with the anti-hero; “the disappearance of the ‘Hero’ is, positively, a incitement to reflection, to perceptual acuity and creativity; but negatively it can lead to indifference, cynicism and solipsism”.

To this we must add that the two types of *Ego-origin* (real and fictitious) fail to explain the set of possible expository phenomena on television. Thus, it is necessary to establish a third category: *Ego - Lyrical origin* (Hamburger, 1986). The lyrical enunciation does not seek to exert an action upon reality, as does the authenticating statement, nor is it presented as a mimesis of reality as with fiction. The lyrical enunciation (ontological status of the actor / actress in the telenovela) refers to the sensitivity of the receiver (Amigo, 2002).

## METHODOLOGY

Firstly, a bibliographical revision was executed, in order to extract the relevant criteria to correlate them with the empirical telenovela analyzed, which implied describing the types of female and male characters present in it. The unit of observation and analysis was the production entitled *Pasión de Gavilanes*, broadcasted between 18:30 and 19:30 and then from 19:30 to 20:00 hours during 2013 and 2014 (in Chilevisión), timeslots that are in the range of highest consumption according to CNTV (2013). The sample used included the first ten episodes, the ten middle episodes and the last ten episodes.

In a second stage, through in-depth interviews with a semi-structured guideline, the information regarding the perception of the female characters in the telenovela by the viewers was obtained, and the type of identification that surfaced from them. In this phase, the unit of analysis was a set of Chilean women aged 25 to 64 years; the observation unit and the sample was a group of twelve Chilean women of the socioeconomic strata C3 and D (four aged between 25 and 34, four of 35-49 and four between 50 and 64). The main reason to choose this group is that the strata that compose it represent 60.4% of the population of the Grand Santiago (Adimark, 2013); moreover, as CNTV (2013) reflects, the female population watches more televi-

sion and consumes more telenovelas. As specialized sources pointed out, in the broadcast of 2013-2014, *Pasión de Gavilanes* obtained its highest ratings among adult strata C3 and D women. Within this segment are the groups that we will study, in which the telenovela obtained ratings ranging between 6.7 and 1.8 points (data up to October 17, 2013 provided by Time Ibope).

However, since this is a qualitative research limited in resources that seeks to explore how the modalities of identification are manifested from monitoring a foreign telenovela in a group of adult women, we did not have as an aim to establish a statistical basis of the reception of the studied production. Hence, the sample was constructed based on the validity criteria limited to the possibility of observation of inferential processes of compression spectatorship (Jost 1999). For this reason, all respondents were selected for being followers of the latest broadcast of *Pasión de Gavilanes*.

## RESULTS

The female characters of the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes* could be fitted into the different categories of the typical characters in a melodrama, after identifying and describing the conflicts that better represented them, following the dialectics of the telenovela (desire and impediment, lack of knowledge/recognition, interclass and reason/affectations). It is thus that in this production we find categories "Heroines", "False heroines" and "Mothers".

Within the first nomenclature, we find "Libia Reyes", a pure, innocent, simple, virginal young woman who is deceived by "Bernardo Elizondo", with the false promise of a marriage that never took place. After his death, her three brothers swear revenge and scheme a plan to reach the ranch of "the Elizondo" to kill "Doña Gabriela". The second character fitting into this classification is "Ruth Uribe", a sweet, sympathetic, ideologically unbiased, tolerant, candid, brave and honest photographer. She is the daughter of "Eve" who gave her to "Raquel Uribe" under orders from "Gabriela". She notices the three brothers and befriends them. No attraction arises between them due to the close resemblance with "Libia", since they look like twin sisters.

As the third representative of this type of role we have "Norma Elizondo", a careful dentist who is unfaithful, refined, aggressive and with a strong character. She is the oldest of the sisters, forced by her "Mother" to marry

"Fernando Escandón". When the "Reyes" brothers arrive at her house, she cannot remove "Juan" from her head, falling in love with him, putting her marriage at risk and, above all, unleashing the wrath of her husband and her "mother". She shows a certain frailty that dissipates once she feels safe with "Juan", defending herself from the attacks of "Fernando" and her "Mother". She is independent and has clear ideas, away from what Roura (1993) affirmed regarding female stereotypes in telenovelas.

Within this category, we also find "Ximena" and "Sara". "Ximena" is cunning, capricious, determined and of strong character. She wants to have fun and knows how to get by the rules of her "Mother". She has artistic abilities and is the first one to fall for the charms of the three brothers. She maintains a fleeting romance with "Franco". Later on, she notices "Oscar", the most cunning of the brothers. This character, Ximena, although fitting to the description of a "Heroine" given at the beginning, is not fragile, and knows how to defend herself, putting limits both to "Franco" and "Oscar". She wants to pursue acting, and is not subject to the rules of her boyfriends. "Sara", on the other hand, in the first phase of the story, is cautious, conservative, controlling, classist, aggressive and obedient of her "Mother". In a second stage, she is shown as more tolerant, reckless (monogamous) and decided. It is the female character which least conforms to the definition given by the authors that we have quoted. She is not weak or in need of a "Justice-seeker". She protects "Franco", is intelligent and takes care of the family's estate, the "*hacienda*", despite the oppositions of "Fernando" and "Gabriela".

The second category ("False Heroines") has "Rosario" and "Dinora" as representatives: The first is a singer, who works at the "Bar Alcalá", provocative, ambitious, materialistic and unfaithful. She is abused and exploited by her manager, "Armando". She is in love with "Franco" and seeks love, because it is easy to have lovers with experience and money. She seeks "Franco" once she learns that he inherited a large fortune, but Franco already forgot her for "Sara". Thus, she tries to seduce him using intrigues and lies, generating the classic love triangle described by Roura (1993). "Dinora", on her part, has an aggressive attitude, has a masculine stance juxtaposed to "Norma". She is cunning, deceitful, promiscuous, unfaithful and murderous. She falls in love with "Juan", also, unleashing the traditional trio of a telenovela.

Finally, in a third classification, we find the "Mothers", embodied in the story by "Gabriela", "Eva"

and “Raquel”. The first one is a dominant, classist, sexist, moralist, and a manipulative, jealous woman. In a second phase of the telenovela, she appears renovated, with a more modern look and tight clothing, in love with “Fernando” and increasingly intolerant with the love relationships of her daughters. She forces “Ximena”, “Sara” and “Norma” to comply with her orders, becoming nonetheless their moral referent: she represses them, but cares for them and seeks them good husbands. “Eva”, for her part, is the “Elizondo” trusted employee. She is submissive, quiet and, at the same time, vengeful and spiteful, but she repents. She helps the “Reyes” brothers to be hired to work at the home of “the Elizondo”, thus allowing the main plot of the telenovela to start to take shape. Finally, we have “Raquel Uribe” (“Ruth’s” adoptive “Mother”), who is inflexible, conservative, a liar and authoritarian. She is friends with “Gabriela” and supports her in all her decisions, since she forced “Eva” to give “Ruth” to her. The true identity of Ruth’s “Mother” (Eva) is concealed until the very end of the telenovela.

To understand how these roles are developed, it is necessary to see the way in which the masculine and the feminine are represented respectively in *Pasión de Gavilanes*. Being a telenovela with Colombian roots – meaning that it emerged within the context of the Colombian model – it has a tendency to alter, within parameters of the story that it presents, the idea that the female domain occurs exclusively on sentimental and maternal levels. In this sense, this fiction reflects the feminine distanced from the issues raised by Roura (1993), as in this production, women are independent and hard working. However, although “Gabriela” manifests, on many occasions, that her home needs a man to take over, the force with which her daughters impose their whims and wishes to their loved ones is a reflection of a reversal of roles, since the men are defended and influenced by their partners. The women take on the role of a “Hero”, as defined by the aforementioned authors; they fight with blows and handle weapons with ease. This aspect is also important, since in telenovela tradition, it is established that the man is the wealthy and intelligent character. In this telenovela, the three sisters are the wealthy and educated. It is them who must tolerate the poverty and ignorance of their partners.

In this analysis, it is necessary to add that the Colombian variant serves as a basis for one more version of the “global model”. As stated, this is the pattern in which,

according to Mazziotti (2008), the telenovela that we are studying is found, since it takes from its source the elements that are most useful in terms of marketing. Thus, *Pasión de Gavilanes* took from the Colombian model all the characteristics that made it popular and added the typical features of the most successful productions. In this particular case, the location where the story is set in is indeterminate, like in many telenovelas, including Chilean ones, where they even use fictional places, such as in Sucupira (Alvarez Curbelo, 2006, cited in Mazziotti, 2008). According to Rincón (2005, cited in Mazziotti, 2008), this configuration, detached from the argumentative and acting quality, would explain its success.

For López Pumarejo (2006, cited in Mazziotti, 2008), *Pasión de Gavilanes* is one of those productions that create stereotypes about country life, mixing elements difficult to connect to in other contexts. However, it is unclear what Alvarez Curbelo wanted to say when he stated that there is no story, only bodies that attract each other and are placed in any given geography. If we look closely at the telenovela, we will find that it has a clear narrative structure, related to the melodrama, which highlights the inversion of roles between female and male characters (this is a novelty for Colombian parameters, although it had already been in Brazilian novels, such as *Fiera Radical*), where mainly the men are the ones who resort to their sensuality to seduce.

On the other hand, it is essential to understand that a central feature of all telenovelas is the extension and consequent reiteration of stories. Telenovelas, as almost all television programs, seek to retain an audience, using for this purpose a story that can be understood at any time it is seen, to engage more and more spectators. For this purpose as well, the characters included have diverse cultural, economic and social characteristics. Furthermore, as Santa Cruz (2003) pointed out, sensuality is an element very seen and worked in the Brazilian telenovelas, which have had nudes and are much more sexually explicit than those produced in Colombia or other Latin American countries. In terms of the acting level, in all these productions attractive men and women are included to capture audience, as seen in some Hollywood films.

In the second stage of our research, twelve in depth interviews with a semi-structured guideline were conducted during October 2013, to women belonging to the socioeconomic strata C3 and D aged between 26 and 64, followers of the latest broadcast of the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes*, in order to glimpse identification

modes arising from the reception of their female characters. The differences in their responses were relevant due to their age differences: four were aged between 25 and 34, four ranged between 35 and 49 and four were between 50 and 64 years of age. If divided by socio-economic segments their answers did not differ, and their occupation was not a differentiating factor, since they all affirmed to be housewives.

With the information gathered we defined that entertainment was the main reason to watch telenovelas, highlighting the innovative plots with intrigue and constant conflicts as the main ingredient. In relation to the motivation to see *Pasión de Gavilanes*, the three leads managed to attract four viewers, including the two youngest. However, the plot full of suspense and romance got six mentions. The music obtained two preferences. In this way, among the younger audience, the protagonists are the essential factor, while for the average adult and advanced adults a new and intriguing plot is the decisive factor to watch a telenovela.

As for the favorite female characters, the preferred ones by the women interviewed were "Norma" and "Sara", which got four preferences each. Both are "Heroines". The average adult follows "Norma", mainly due to her careful nature and refinement; her unfaithfulness justified because of love, and particularly because she is persistent and aggressive in defending her impossible love with "Juan", as well as being a watchful and worried mother to her son "Juan David". "Sara", on the other hand, was a favorite among the younger audience, because of her change halfway through the telenovela and becoming a hardworking, determined and sympathetic woman with her sisters. The breaking point for her audience was when she came to terms with her love for "Franco" and decided to fight for it, despite the opposition of her "Mother". They also valued her eagerness to manage the finances of the *hacienda*, ignoring the orders of her "Mother", who dismissed her for being a woman and weaker than a man.

Amidst mature adult women, "Gabriela" captured the preference of two of the four women interviewed. She is the "mother" of the three protagonists and, in a first stage, exercises her role with an ironclad hand, being moralistic, chauvinistic and very rigid. She loses likability when she marries her daughter "Norma's" ex-husband, but her followers insist that they prefer a vigilant and intransigent mother, who demands that her daughters fulfill her rules. "Rosario", on the other hand, as "False Heroine", got two mentions, one in the

younger audience and the other in the average adult, drawn to her because of her sensuality, talent for singing, perseverance in her singing career and her love for "Franco", an aspect that they supported, while condemning her sudden interest in the wealth of the latter.

The twelve women interviewed also liked that the female characters in the series were strong and dominate the man in every sense, either through their economic power or their education. However, the youngest interviewees affirmed that it was "complicated" for that to happen, because in reality, the men are the ones who prefer women of lower status. Regarding the role inversion, it was emphasized that the economic position was what gave the women the status of dominant characters.

As far as conflicts and the attitudes concerning conflict, the preferences were distributed between two dramatic knots, tying six preferences each. It is worth mentioning that the conflict of "Sara", "Franco", "Rosario" and "Armando" managed to captivate most of the younger audience and half of the middle-aged spectators. The other half of the latter, as well as three of the mature adults interviewed, chose the intrigues of the plot of "Juan", "Gabriela", "Norma", "Fernando" and "Dinora", leaving just one preference for the conflict young women liked. The factor that explains this preference is the attraction towards the character of "Gabriela", a favorite amongst mature adult women, because of her interference, along all the telenovela, in the life of her daughter "Norma", who is the favorite of the middle aged women.

Entering the most important aspect of the investigations, we found that, in relation to the associative identification, younger women talk about the telenovela with their family while among the older women they do so with their friends. Of this group, two do not discuss it with anyone at all and do not "become one" with the character they are following. As far as the *Ego – Lyrical origin*, respondents declared to follow or admire some actress or performer in particular, but that they focused more on the character or story.

While five of the twelve women admired their favorite "heroine", the remaining seven felt sympathy for their preferred "heroine", a trend that prevailed among the younger audience, who were inclined to sympathize with "Sara" due to her strong character. It is also remarkable that this trend was seen in half of the other two segments. In the case of the middle-aged women, "Norma" was admired and seen as a role model, while the other two preferences were for sympathy: "Sara"



and “Rosario”. Among the oldest women, sympathy and admiration also tied, since half of the women expressed sympathy for “Gabriela” and the other two admired their favorites and saw them as role models to follow.

In terms of taking in the positive or negative aspects of the characters, the twelve women pointed out that they looked for the positive aspects of their favorite characters. Thus, among the youngest, a great empathy for “Sara” existed, although they were able to distinguish in which situations she is either right or wrong. In the case of “Gabriela” something similar occurred, since they empathize with her when she rectifies her daughters, but not when she became a henchman of “Fernando” to disturb them. In terms of role models, especially with “Norma”, the spectators stressed out that she was the most normal and that her will and correctness did not waver despite her suffering, while “Sara” was admired because she changed her attitude at the right moment. “Rosario”, on the other hand, obtained empathy from her two followers, but both disapproved the way in which she confronted the feelings she had for “Franco”.

Furthermore, the majority (eleven of the twelve women) admitted that they identified themselves with the emotions and experiences of their favorite character (catharsis). On the positive side, all were clear in stating that, despite being a fiction, they saw in it their own experiences and tried to draw the positive and use it to improve. As mentioned regarding the identification by admiration, many of these women take as a model the “heroines”, seeing them suffer and fight for their relationships. Eleven of the twelve interviewees laugh at the comical aspects of the telenovela, developed by the antiheros or “Dummies” (“Bobos”). In addition, all of them try to draw lessons from the telenovela and contemplate about it, either personally or with friends, either laughing or bemoaning the fate of some particular character, depending on their role in the story.

Finally, and as extra information obtained, we could test the level of importance of telenovelas as entertainment and classism within them. All the women interviewed said that telenovelas were their main entertainment. The younger ones do not read and supplemented Internet usage with watching the telenovela. Middle-aged adults do not use a lot of Internet and do not read either. The oldest adults, on the other hand, also prefer to see the telenovela, but have other distractions that go beyond Internet access, such as attending workshops or dance classes organized in the area. The young and middle adults cannot focus as

much as they would like to see the telenovela, while older adults can do it and enjoy it in a more serene and reflective way. The main reason for the lack of concentration to see telenovelas is the need to divide the attention with the care of children and household chores.

In terms of classism seen in the telenovela, understood as a discriminatory attitude the characters show depending on the social status other characters hold in the story, all twelve stated that there is an explicit classism both in content and in the expressions used by the characters. In addition, all indicated that the mature adult characters, such as “Gabriela” and “Raquel”, are the source of this classism, as they educated their daughters not to be with socially and economically “inferior” men, but the interviewees valued that the younger generations in the telenovela gradually set aside these teachings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Concerning the hypothesis, which suggested that the female characters in the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes* would provoke in the adult women of the studied strata, C3 and D, in the first instance, little or no associative identification, it was corroborated, as the younger women comment the telenovela with their family and, to a lesser extent with their friends, while between middle-aged women and older women, friends are the most relevant people to discuss the telenovela. Although in this last segment, they normally do not discuss it with anyone. On the other hand, these same models unleash a generalized cathartic identification: eleven of the twelve women acknowledged that they identified with the emotions and experiences of their favorite character. The third assertion to check was the idea that the sympathy identification would be above the admiration identification. This assumption was also confirmed, as it was found that seven of the twelve women felt sympathy for their favorite “heroines”, a trend that prevailed among younger interviewees, who were inclined to sympathize with “Sara” due to her strong character. Finally, the last claim to verify was if the figure of the actress would be relevant in the process of identification with the character. In this sense, respondents expressed to follow or admire an actress, but that their focus on the character or story came from how attractive it was on the script. This gives insights into the importance of the actress *Ego - lyrical origin* to attract public and position a relatable story.

If we take into account the favorite characters, we have to say that the most followers were for “Norma” and “Sara”, based on how they try to be happy with their loved ones, despite their family problems. These difficulties are focused on the mistakes and prejudices of their parents: their father falls in love with a younger woman and her brothers go to avenge her death by working in the sister’s house, while their “mother” does not accept their sweethearts, based on her classism. Respondents support “Norma”, because she lets herself be always guided by her sincere love for “Juan”, just as they do with “Sara” when she decides to have a relationship with “Franco”. If you could assume a premise for a study of greater complexity, it could be analyzed how much an impossible love may be important to keep the female audience captivated to a telenovela.

The third preference was the character “Gabriela”, “Mother” of “Norma” and “Sara”, who achieved notoriety thanks to the conflict that emerged between her, “Norma”, “Juan” and “Fernando”, and “Dinora” posterior entrance into the story arch. It is very revealing that she has more followers than several “heroines” and that the only thing that condemns her is the romance with the main antagonist, “Fernando”. Interviewees valued very much the fact that she never forgets her daughters, even if they disobey her. This concern appears in the telenovela as reciprocal, since her daughters never repudiate her. Something very interesting happens, to the eyes of this researcher, and it can also become a subject of study in a broader and more representative sample, and it is that, between family members, reciprocal concern never disappears: the characters insult and reject each other, but can never be happy if they know that one of them is in a bad situation.

The fourth favorite was “Rosario”, who was made relevant through her participation in the plots that derive from her marriage with “Armando” and her obsession with “Franco” when she learns of his great economic situation, which leads her to attempt to destroy his love for “Sara”. In addition, her role as a singer in the “Bar Alcalá” was also valued. In the telenovela she is shown as a “False heroine”. It is strange that this

character is admired above other “heroines”, such as “Ximena” and “Ruth”, who also have artistic virtues: one is a photographer and the other starts a career as an actress. The reason given by her two followers was her talent for singing and the lyrics of her songs. They also made clear that they like the way in which the character prioritizes her dreams, both professional and loving.

Broadly speaking, we can say that the women interviewed showed interest in characters that reflected problems that were inherent to the life stage in which they were. Being righteous, concerned for their loved ones and romantic were key factors for all, regardless of the age their favorite character had.

Finally, following the telenovela becomes the activity of distraction or main evasion of these women. This is reaffirmed, even when confronting this entertainment with other options that were considered less relevant or alternative (reading and/or navigating the Internet). This explains, in part, that they seek focus to see it, although sometimes they cannot, as it is the case with the younger women or middle-aged adults, who try to find quiet moments, but family life impedes it. Thus, the question that arises is why no stories of this kind are broadcasted at a more suitable time so that all those who want to can enjoy them. The choice (Chilevisión’s) to broadcast the telenovela *Pasión de Gavilanes* in a time slot more attractive and massive has accomplished the fact that more women can see it, but not in the way they want to. One possible answer, which may be examined in the future, is that television stations would predispose the night schedule for stories made in Chile, focusing on an audience with greater acquisitive power or a male audience.

Related to classism, all women perceived it and stated that the “mothers” were responsible for its existence, releasing the protagonists from liability, as they changed their way of thinking over time in the telenovela. In this sense, it would be relevant to investigate how people of different socio-economic strata and ages react to attitudes concerning discrimination shown in the television story, and find out how they can make it their own or reject the behavior represented there.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The results presented in this article are from the thesis to obtain the Master degree in Social Communication of the University of Chile. Advisor: Eduardo Santa Cruz.

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