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自我消融的語言：分析克拉麗斯·利斯佩克托的小說《A paixão segundo G.H.》、《Água viva》和《A hora da estrela》中的神秘主義與句法結構

The Language of Effacement:
Mystical Union and Syntactic Structure in Clarice Lispector's *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva*, and *A hora da estrela*

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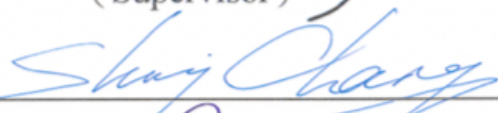
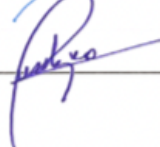
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A hora da estrela

本論文係黃晁駱君（R09122016）在國立臺灣大學外國語
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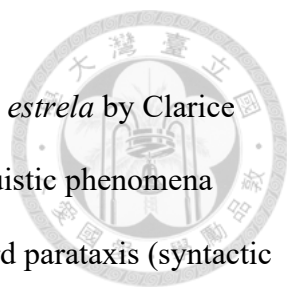
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Abstract



This thesis examines *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva*, and *A hora da estrela* by Clarice Lispector through a literary-linguistic approach. Close attention to linguistic phenomena allows this thesis to find correspondences between the tendencies toward parataxis (syntactic coordination) and hypotaxis (syntactic subordination) with different positionings of the narrating voices relative to the incommunicable experience of mystical union. This thesis shows that, in the moments where the sentences tend to a paratactic structuring, the narrating voices in Lispector's fiction are often found in proximity to the experience of immanence, as parataxis affords to enunciate sensations and revealed truths in a manner that evades conceptual hierarchization. On the other hand, when these voices attempt to explain what the experience of mystical union consists of, or to communicate its incommunicability, the prose tends to become hypotactic. This subordinating syntactic structure affords to better expound the connections necessary for a conceptual and synthesizing cognition, which is only possible when the narrating voices maintain an analytical distance from the experience of mystical union. This thesis argues that, by reading these works as a unitary project in light of these shared syntactic tendencies, the meaning of certain cryptic passages becomes clearer, which allows for the elaboration of a global interpretation that accounts for the content and form of Lispector's work, and points out the misreadings of other interpretative approaches, often informed by post-structuralist theory.

Keywords: Clarice Lispector, mysticism, Michael Toolan, syntax, stylistics.

摘要

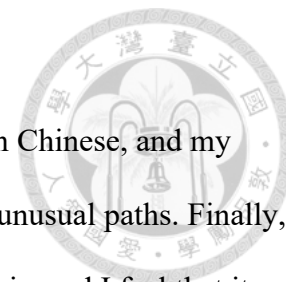
本文透過文學語言學方法，針對巴西作家克拉麗斯·里斯佩克托的《根据 G.H.的激情》、《活水》、《星辰時刻》三部作品中的語言現象進行細讀。筆者在研究中發現，小說中的敘述者對於無以言表的神秘合一經驗（*unio mystica*）的遠近定位與文本中的句法結構息息相關。據此，當小說中的句子呈並列結構（*paratactic syntax*）時，敘述者的角度往往會趨近萬物內在神性（*immanence*）的神秘體驗，因為此結構有益於產生一種避免概念從屬化的語言並可以作為感官感覺和神性啟示的表達形式。另一方面，當敘述者試圖闡釋神秘合一經驗為何，或試圖解釋其無法被闡述性之時，在敘事者與內在神性的經驗保有一定距離的情況下，敘事者往往會趨向於使用從屬句（*hypotactic syntax*），因其有益於闡明概念關聯、構建概念認知。因此，若根據這些句法趨勢的理解可將這三部小說視為同一部完整的作品，各文本中較晦澀段落的意涵將變得更加清晰，而這有助於對里斯佩克托作品的內容與形式達到全面性的詮釋，同時並能指出過往以後結構主義理論為基礎的其他詮釋所產生的誤讀。

關鍵字：克拉麗斯·里斯佩克托，神秘主義，Michael Toolan, 句法，文體學。



To Mariana Manrique

Acknowledgements



My desire for a humanistic education, my interest in studying Mandarin Chinese, and my professed love for the Portuguese language have taken me down some unusual paths. Finally, three years of exploration and hesitations have somehow led to this thesis, and I feel that it could not have been otherwise. Of course, it *certainly* could have, yet this road has been so fruitful and pleasurable for my inner world that I would travel it again if I had the choice.

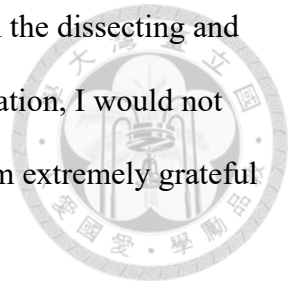
Writing a thesis on language and mysticism in Clarice Lispector as a foreign student at National Taiwan University seems to me, now that it is done, a very capricious undertaking. Since I got away with it, I want to thank those who became my accomplices. For the sake of being inclusive, I will begin by thanking the fortuitous combination of coincidences that produced me and brought me to this time and place. Thank you very much.

With his course on European modernism, Professor Duncan Chesney alone reinvigorated my interest in the academic study of literature. The course was the best I have taken in a long time, and contributed much to my aesthetic education. Ever since, I have benefited from Professor Chesney's seriousness, commitment to scholarship, and intellectual generosity. It has been an honor to have him read and advise my work.

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Professor Raúl Verduzco was the one who introduced me to literary studies in 2015, when I took his course on Literature and Power in Latin America. There, I understood that

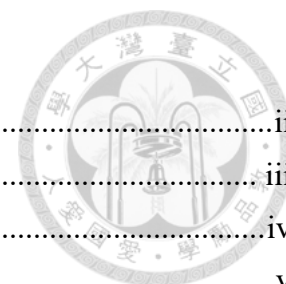
the study of literature could be stimulating and enlightening, rather than the dissecting and sterile activity I had always imagined. Without his letter of recommendation, I would not have fulfilled my dream of earning a scholarship to study in Taiwan. I'm extremely grateful to him.



I treasure the company of Limuy Asien, Jiayu Jian, and Mark Lai over these years. They are great friends and I wish them the best in their future careers and personal life. I'm also very thankful for their help with the title and abstract in Mandarin Chinese. If the reader finds them odd, Limuy, Jiayu, and Mark may be partially responsible for that.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to thank my parents Ana Laura and Juan Alberto, and my sister Helena, for being who they are, and for supporting me in all my oddities and schemes. I am more than ready to return to the nest, should my time on this beautiful island soon come to an end.

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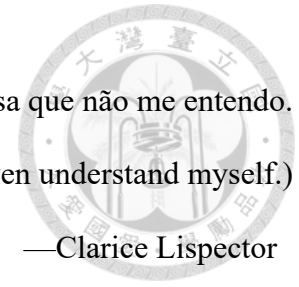
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Introduction

Sou tão misteriosa que não me entendo.

(I am so mysterious that I don't even understand myself.)

—Clarice Lispector



The epigraph is just one of the several instances where different voices authored by Clarice Lispector insist on incomprehension. The narrator of her novel *A paixão segundo G.H.* declares: “eu não entendo o que digo” (181) (I don't understand what I'm saying.) The one of *Água viva* elaborates: “Posso não ter sentido mas é a mesma falta de sentido que tem a veia que pulsa.” (18) (I might not make any sense but it's the very lack of sense that has the pulsating vein.) And, in *A hora da estrela*, the narrator discloses: “A verdade é sempre um contato interior e inexplicável.” (9) (Truth is always an inner, inexplicable contact.) What lies behind these expressions? How can we make sense of them?

Although often inscribed in the Brazilian third generation of modernism by the national literary historiography, Lispector has been rarely compared to other Brazilian authors by Brazilian critics, who have rather sought similarities with international modernist figures such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Katherine Mansfield, among others (Moser 169). Lispector's prose is rich with cryptic moments and unexpected twists and turns that make her difficult to be understood, classified, or aligned with other authors. This thesis that seeks to demonstrate that there is much to be gained in terms of understanding her oeuvre's mystical content by paying close attention to certain linguistic phenomena in her writing style, particularly, on her use of syntax. It is a stylistic study that examines the ways her use of language reflect a mystical vision of life.

Among the extensive literature on Lispector, there is one important study which systematically studies a set of linguistic patterns found in her writing. In *O drama da linguagem*, Brazilian philosopher Benedicto Nunes devotes a chapter to a stylistic study to

her works in relation to the mystic ideas he identifies in her work. Nunes' approach mainly addresses figures of speech. Here, I propose to focus on the functioning of the syntactic structures in three among Lispector's most celebrated texts. This thesis thus approaches *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva*, and *A hora da estrela* through a stylistic analysis of their syntactic tendencies to ground an interpretation of these three texts as a unitary literary project that revolves around the idea of mystical union by which the individual ego dissolves.

I aim to demonstrate how the syntactic tendencies of coordination (parataxis) and subordination (hypotaxis) often distribute across the three texts according to the position that a narrating voice assumes with respect to the state of grace, which is the experience of immanence in the present moment. The experience of immanence here refers to an immediate contact with *the divine inherent in all materiality*, a worldview that is shared by Spinoza and other pantheists. I will show an observable tendency present in the three works: when the narrating voices approach the state of grace, experiencing the world in a more direct way or enunciating mystic truths obtained by this experiencing, there is a tendency towards a paratactic structuring of sentences. Since the experience of immanence is understood in Lispector's work as a de-individuating communion with materiality, parataxis affords the articulation of a free flow of sensations that does not organize the experience of reality by means of logical connectors or rational hierarchies. On the other hand, when the narrating voice contemplates the state of grace from a rational distance, the sentences often assume a hypotactic tendency, where an attempt is made to explain or conceptualize the unpronounceable: hypotaxis often works to elucidate the state of grace, or to explain its incommunicability.

Two legs make this thesis walk: the stylistic analysis, that is, an account of the linguistic phenomena that make up my object of study (hypotaxis and parataxis) and their function in the text, and the interpretative exercise, that is, a persuasive demonstration of my

reading of the three texts as a unitary literary project with mysticism at its core. The stylistic analysis of syntax sets out an unprecedented way among critical studies of Clarice Lispector, since her writing has hardly been studied from a linguistic angle in a systematic way. My interpretation of her work, on the other side, is informed by the readings of David Moser, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, Bernardo Nunes, David Mittelman, and Hélène Cixous. Neither leg derives fully from the other, which is to say that neither interpretation nor linguistic analysis is fully determinant of each other. Instead, they both work as independent units that must move in a coordinated way towards the same direction: a better understanding of the meaning of the text and its particular use of language.

This conception of a linguistic study to be coordinated with an autonomous exercise of textual interpretation is set forth by theorist Michael J. Toolan. In *The Stylistics of Fiction: A Literary-Linguistic Approach*, Toolan proposes to consider stylistics as an orientation rather than a method, “a confessedly partial or oriented act of intervention” (111). With this proposal, Toolan opposes the objectivist tendencies of structural and generative stylistics, which he criticizes for ignoring the specificity of the correlations between the form and meaning of each textual passage (110). For this stylistic orientation, Toolan stresses the need for a self-critical awareness of the provisionality and contextuality of one’s own interpretation. Since there are no context-free models or theories, Toolan argues, neither are there absolute, complete, or essential readings. Toolan’s linguistic-literary stance advocates a stylistic approach to texts that emphasizes the context of the linguistic phenomena of the text, rather than becoming a totalizing account of its formal features (112). As Toolan observes, the meaning of a given speech act is not in the syntax, but the syntactic and lexical features can carry meanings in themselves (113). Therefore, he formulates that stylistic approaches can be concerned with identifying the meanings carried by certain linguistic features and relating them to concrete meanings interpreted from the expressive plane, adding greater

depth to our understanding of the text. Following Toolan, this thesis takes stylistics as an orientation to analyze Lispector's work with particular attention to some linguistic phenomena, which are to be located in its context to facilitate an interpretation which can elucidate its meaning. I consider this approach to follow in spirit a maxim of Leo Spitzer: "the idea and the word are, at every moment of the reading, seen together" (Green 93).

In my linguistic examination of Lispector's style, I adopt the concept of affordance proposed by Carlone Levine in her new radical formalist project (*Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* 6) to better determine what particular meanings the syntax may be working to express. Levine borrows the term of affordance from design theory to describe the potential uses latent in a given form, allowing her to address both the specificity and generality of patterns and arrangements (6), all of which treated as forms by Levine. A given form's affordances can be theoretically delimited, but its actual uses are not. Its particular configurations in literature and the world can therefore work in vastly different ways for many kinds of purposes, which is to say that the effects afforded by forms can vary in unexpected ways. In this thesis I propose to explore some of the affordances of syntactic and paratactic arrangements as they are observable in their specific configuration found the three texts that constitute the object of my interpretation. These affordances, I argue, often work in specific ways that point towards ways of understanding or alluding to the ineffable experience of immanence. Therefore, my work also aspires to offer a contribution to the mapping of potential affordances and uses of parataxis and hypotaxis as syntactic forms in literature through the study of their specific configurations in Lispector's fiction.

The resort to a stylistic orientation has been taken largely in response to a tendency observed in certain critical studies of Lispector's work of a poststructuralist bent, particularly by Earl E. Fitz and Evando Nascimnto. The conclusions that have been derived from their various readings of Lispector's work often claim to observe in her distinguished use of

syntax, evidence of the writing project that they identify in it. However, these assertions are not supported by linguistic analysis, and tend to make generalized statements without concrete reference to textual evidence. With my stylistically oriented method, I seek to demonstrate that mysticism is at the center of Lispector's work, which is a thesis that has already been advanced by other interpretations that inform my reading of it. A deepening observation of the linguistic phenomena of her writing, I argue, demonstrates how Lispector's mystical quest manifests itself in contrary syntactic structures depending on the position assumed by the narrative voice with respect to the sought state of grace: whether it enunciates from an experienced closeness it or whether it observes it and discusses it from an analytical distance.

Spitzer's maxim affirms that the idea and the word are to be seen at the same time. In this thesis, the idea refers to the interpretation of the text, and the word, to its linguistic fact. The following literature review examines both previous textual interpretations in critical studies of Lispector's work (section **1. The Idea**) and previous stylistic studies that have studied parataxis and hypotaxis in their analyses of other authors and texts (section **2. The Word**). Finally, in the subsequent section **3. The Idea and the Word**, I explain how my approach to Lispector is grounded in the postulates and critiques that are cited in the literature review, and I outline my procedure for the three body chapters that comprise this thesis.

1. The Idea

In *O drama da linguagem* (1989), Benedito Nunes approaches the sum of Lispector's novels. The Brazilian philosopher identifies a mystical perspective in her work, whereby the subjectivity of the characters does not have an ontological privilege over the rest of objects and animals found in the world (101). He also observes a circular movement in her writing, which goes "da palavra ao silêncio e do silêncio à palavra" (135) (from silence to word and

from word to silence,) a movement that, according to Nunes, comes from the inexpressible nature of mystical experiences, thus producing a tension between saying and not saying that defines Lispector's style. The critic observes that her work not only addresses the existential drama of men and women on the margins of the middle class, but also the drama of language, managing its tensions in face of the ineffable. In his chapter devoted to her literary style, Nunes analyzes Lispector's use of repetition, oxymoron, antithesis, parable, paradox, and silence as expressions of her mystic conception of the world (135-149). In the introduction to chapter one, I explore more in depth his stylistic observations. His account of Lispector's mysticism and style sets an important precedent for this thesis.

Since 1979, Hélène Cixous introduced a feminist and poststructuralist perspective in the reading of Lispector work with great repercussions for its international reception. Villares notes how Cixous clearly uses Lispector's texts as an example of *écriture féminine*, that is, outside of the masculine world of the Symbolic (19). Cixous thus remarked on the prelogical and presymbolic elements in her fiction (24). According to Verena Andermatt Conley, who writes the introduction to the texts collected in *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, Cixous stresses the blurring of the subject in Lispector's writing that allows for the emergence and recognition of the other (viii). For Cixous, Lispector's particular use of syntax follows the impulse of depersonalization, of non-authorship (23). In her essay on the short story "O ovo e a galinha," Cixous notes the paratactic procedure of the narration, and argues that part of the meaning is concealed in the space between sentences, making this story a clandestine and secretive text (117). An undoing of the subject-object relation is what Cixous identifies as the theme of both *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva* (23-24). In this thesis, her readings often inform my mystical interpretation of the texts. What I do not share, however, is her conclusive and pervasive celebration of Lispector as an example of *écriture féminine*, for I see there an external appropriation to accommodate her own philosophical program, as I

argue in the conclusions of this thesis. The question about the extent that Lispector could be considered a feminist author is also addressed in those final pages.

In the Anglophone sphere, Earl F. Fitz's *Sexuality and Being in the Poststructuralist Universe of Clarice Lispector: The Differance of Desire* (2001) continues with the poststructuralist approach. This author asserts that “a poststructural ethos permutes Lispector’s sense of language and writing,” (1) and he considers her work to be “essentially poststructural texts before poststructuralism as such even existed” (2). Fitz claims that Lispector’s work in general remains an enigma “because of the elusive and ambiguous nature of her *escritura*, the great bulk of which struggles, directly and indirectly, with the twin problems of meaning and communication in human existence” (7). According to Fitz, to read Lispector’s writing is to experience the “most basic conflict, to seek but never find, as Derrida conceptualizes it, an elusive ‘transcendent reading’ (*Of Grammatology* 160) that, paralleling both the motivations of Lispector’s characters and those of her reader, will eventually yield a more comprehensive and satisfying understanding of her works” (7). Fitz asserts that if we recognize this crucial parallel between Derridean theory and Lispector’s writing, we can glimpse more clearly the “nature of the distinctive ambiguity, or ‘undecidability,’ that marks her narratives” (7). He claims that Lispector’s texts dramatically demonstrate Derrida’s statement there was no center, but “a nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutes came into play” (8).

Without providing specific illustrations of this idea, Fitz argues that Lispector’s “unorthodox syntax (and the unusual punctuation that accompanies it)” (50) helps build what the critic considers a very important feature of her work: the systematic dissolution of binary oppositions. As Fitz puts it:

By subverting what we can understand as established (phal)logocentric assumptions (and, by syntactically reordering them, showing how artificial and subject to convention they are), Lispector’s structurations reflect and embody both our human need for logical order and the anxiety of our confrontation not only with the anarchy of

language, but, through it, with the relativity of our social, political, and psychological structures. (50-51)

This type of approach is continued in the Brazilian context through Evando Nascimento's *Clarice Lispector: Uma Literatura Pensante* (2012). In Nascimento's view, Lispector's works make it possible to "pensar o impensável" (29) (to think the unthinkable,) a thought that can only be thought "ali onde se dá o advento da alteridade enquanto tal, o outro como Outro ou Outra, em sua radical diferença" (29) (where the advent of otherness as such takes place, the other as an Other, in their radical difference.) This thought of Lispector's works, Nascimento affirms, is an experience whose radicality

está no estranhamento de si mesmo que acontece de maneira não calculada. Se cálculo houvesse, ainda se estaria no reino da razão pura, da ratio, do lógos, da simples lógica, e a experiência descambaria num "exotismo mental", nada diferente de tantos outros inventados pelas escolas literárias, cujo exemplo mais esclarecedor seria o panteísmo simbolista (40).

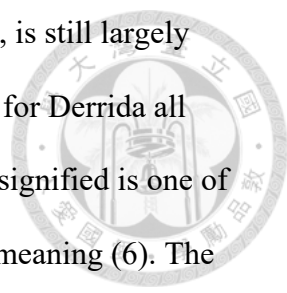
(lies in the estrangement from oneself that happens in an uncalculated way. If there were calculation, one would still be in the terrain of pure reason, of ratio, of logos, of simple logic, and the experience would fall into a "mental exoticism," no different from so many others invented by literary schools, whose most enlightening example would be symbolist pantheism.)

Of *Água viva*, Lispector's most experimental text, Nascimento asserts that its author opens other dimensions of thought through a supposed "loucura da sintaxe" (268) (madness of syntax,) a term which he does not define. In an essay published in 2021 that continues along the same argument as his previous book, Nascimento asserts that Lispector's works are characterized by encounters between human and non-human alterities that occur as crises, yet lead to an ecstatic experience of love for the other in her most radical difference (175). Her oeuvre allows us to think, writes Nascimento, what has been considered unthinkable in the Western tradition, elaborating a form of thought that he calls decolonizing (175). This kind of thinking, the critic argues, denaturalizes relations both between human genders and between living species (175). Nascimento refers to the Deleuzian notion of "becoming" to explain that experience of otherness that he identifies in Lispector's fiction as a product of her "thinking

fiction” (literature pensante) (164). According to Nascimento, Lispector’s texts ground the ideas of caring for oneself and the other by seeing the other as intimately linked to oneself, and experienced in oneself (175). The concept of ‘becoming’ is also used by Fátima R. Nogueira to advance a Deleuzian reading of Lispector’s novels in *Poéticas del devenir: Lispector y Valenzuela*.

In this way, Cixous, Fitz and Nascimento are part of a current that tends to celebrate Clarice Lispector as a kind of poststructuralist heroine. Within it we may also include Florencia Garramuño (2021), who affirms that the radical narrative of *Água viva* gives off a diversity of nuclei that disdains any hierarchical organization. Florencia Garramuño observes in this way of writing a clear democratic impulse of a text written during the years of the military dictatorship in Brazil (200). Ricardo Iannace, another scholar coming from poststructuralism, argues that *Água viva* radicalizes the writing process in a centrifugal and rhizomatic way (376). In his view, Lispector’s writing coincides with the ideas of philosophers of language who explicated polysemy and semantic uncertainty, such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Maurice Blanchot, and Jacques Derrida (379).

These critics working from poststructuralist frameworks often seem to approach Lispector from a logic of exemplification. For them, her oeuvre illustrates, “dramatically” as Fitz puts it (7), the decentering thought of poststructuralism. While I do not directly affirm that this illustrative logic necessarily weakens their approaches, I do suspect that could be the reason why their interpretations tend to ignore or undervalue what I consider to be a central element in Lispector’s work: her mystical orientation. Beyond the matter of whether or not Lispector’s writing points towards a way of experiencing the world in which the subject-object relationship is undone (which seems to me a commonplace of both poststructuralist and mystic thought), the most questionable aspect of these poststructuralist approaches is that they all seem to ignore or misinterpret the explicit enunciations of a transcendent truth which,



although the different narrative voices adjectivize it as incommunicable, is still largely alluded to and significantly explored. Fitz, for instance, reminds us that for Derrida all language is marked by *différance*, so the relation between signifier and signified is one of indefinite postponement which cannot produce a stable and permanent meaning (6). The main problem I identify in Fitz's account and in poststructuralist critics in general consists in reducing her work to a mere metalinguistic illustration of the limits of language or an alleged escape from logocentrism. If Lispector's works repeatedly reassert the limits of language or attempt to escape logocentrism, I argue, it is not because they question the idea of transcendental meaning, but rather because a narrative voice explicitly assures us that true transcendental meaning is inaccessible by language and can only be either directly experienced in silence or just indirectly alluded to by the mediation of language. It is precisely in *Água viva*, Lispector's most experimental text, that the transcendental meaning sought in her work is made the clearest: The narrative voice of the text claims to have entered "o estado de graça" (180) (the state of grace,) and defines it apophatically as a thought without form or author. As I aim to show, this state of grace constitutes the thematic unity of *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva*, *A hora da estrela*.

Depersonalizing the author and undoing the subject-object relationship, diluting binary oppositions and subverting (phal)logocentric assumptions, opening new dimensions of thought where the other in its radical difference fits; all these merits are imputed to Lispector's syntax. While my interpretation of the mystic content in Lispector will argue that her work does point to analogous effects such as the overcoming of the subject-object relationship, depersonalization leading to the death of the ego, and the overcoming of logocentrism, it will insist that it does so with the conviction of acting in accordance with a mystical truth to which incommunicable direct access has been had and which ends by rendering any mediation of human thought and language insubstantial. The poststructuralist

accounts, on the other hand, are often oriented by an ethical vision of the transformation of individual consciousness which may illuminate new horizons of reconciliation with difference. Poststructuralist approaches mostly seek in Lispector's language a radical element charged with subversive potential. I suspect that this desire to find an ethically coherent material with the thought of poststructuralist authors may also explain why these authors ignore or understate Lispector's mystical orientation, which, as I argue later, *seems to elude any positive subsumption into an ethical project*.

The ethical reading of Lispector's work as tending towards the appreciation of otherness in its radical differences that drives a subversion of logocentrism is difficult to reconcile with her strain of mysticism, which undermines the constructs of human mind. Fitz, for example, engages in dialogue with the critics Daphne Patai and Carol Armbruster, who have questioned *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva*, accusing their author of shying away from confrontation with the other and preferring to stagnate in self-absorption with idiosyncratic definitions of life and the world (123). Fitz quotes Armbruster's critique: "Mysticism can lead to true Otherness, but it can also lead to the most extreme self-centeredness. Depersonalizing and dehumanizing one-self in order to enter Otherness, take it on, and then speak for it is nothing short of self-deification" (123). These criticisms cited by Fitz denounce Lispector's mystical orientation as incapable of suggesting reconciliations to interpersonal or social problems. As a response, Fitz does not explicitly deny what he calls Lispector's alleged mystical orientation (87), but rather explores possibilities for reading away its mysticism. According to Fitz, in *A paixão segundo G.H.* the narrator-protagonist does not stagnate in a static world, as Patai and Armbruster seem to suggest, but actually embraces the "irresistible ebb and flow of language" (124) with its changing signs that "elusively and mysteriously define human existence" (124). "The life that embraces G. H., then, is "the post-structural life" (124), he concludes. By alluding to the subversive character

of Lispector's fiction, which he finds in her recognition of the unstable nature of language, Fitz suggests that her work leads us to better ways of relating to otherness (124). In this way, Fitz de-emphasizes mysticism to reaffirm an ethical substance in Lispector's work.

José Miguel Wisnik notes that Lispector once expressed her guilt for not writing about social issues in her writings as forcefully as she feels that she should have (446). Despite her confession of guilt, Wisnik argues, Lispector was not a writer disconnected from social unrest and fervor, immersed in the existential and psychological intricacies of a work in which the political dimension would be absent (450). Wisnik takes the prime example of *A hora da estrela*, stating that this text expresses a cry of discontent in the face of social unrest (450). Indeed, Mariângela Alonso notes that critics have thoroughly applauded *A hora da estrela*'s account of social misery and exclusion through the character of Macabéa, a poor girl from northeastern Brazil who barely survives in Rio de Janeiro (158). As Mariângela Alonso points out, it is the novel's fictional narrator, Rodrigo S.M. himself, who asserts the obligation to narrate Macabéa's social exclusion (158). Critics often refer to this explicit affirmation to demonstrate the relevance of the sociopolitical character in Lispector's fiction. Nascimento (2021) thus identifies an experience of otherness in the explicit exchange between the narrator-writer Rodrigo S.M. and Macabéa (164). On this matter, Cixous writes that "Clarice" must efface herself to give voice to Macabéa while not disappearing altogether (159). Yet I will argue that the novel's main concern is not to elaborate a social denunciation, but to give an account of how the experience of mystical union makes the social unsubstantial in the greater scheme of things.

In what reads as an exception to this tendency to celebrate Lispector's ethics, Anna Kiffer analyzes a specific encounter with otherness in the novel *A paixão segundo G.H.* This takes place in a domestic context, where the upper middle-class protagonist G.H. realizes that she might hate her black maid, Janair. Kiffer points out that the encounter produces a

detritorialization of the protagonist as a result of her racism that denies the maid's humanity (45). Kiffer questions the author herself for supposedly not displaying an explicitly critical attitude toward her protagonist's racism (46). However, in a diametrically opposite position, her biographer Nádia Battella Gotlib argues that *A paixão segundo G.H.* is actually a denunciation of social inequality, for its protagonist ends identifying with the otherness of both the maid and the cockroach she finds in the maid's room. (370-71). Overall, Battella Gotlib's position of affirming Lispector's ethical engagement is more representative of how critics tend to evaluate her work. Chapter one of this thesis, which addresses *A paixão segundo G.H.*, incorporates a discussion on the ethical readings of it.

According to David Mittelman, there has been stream of scholarship since the later 80s that analyzes Clarice Lispector from the lenses of Jewish mysticism (“Água Viva, um salmo clariciano” 57). Within this current, can find authors such as Nelson Vieira, Berta Waldman, and David Moser, Lispector's American biographer, and Mittelman himself. His account of Lispector's appropriation of Psalmist and other religious vocabulary and his interpretation of the mysticism in her oeuvre informs my reading of *Água viva* and *A paixão segundo G.H.* As for Moser, in *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector*, he explores the importance of the Jewish mystical tradition for Lispector, addressing its connections to the themes of her novels and some of her short stories. Moser relates the theme of a search for that mystic word, the “word that has its own light” (127) to the ultimate purpose pursued by Jewish mystics for centuries. Quoting Gershom Scholem, he observes that they have seen in the names of God the greatest object of mystic contemplation (127). To find “the symbol of the thing in the thing itself,” “the word that creates the thing it describes” seems to Moser to be the ultimate purpose of Lispector's literary project (127), effectively treating her as a mystic writer.

Moser points out that mystics' distrust words and intelligence because "God is by definition beyond human understanding, so attempts to reach the divine through 'intelligence' are futile" (222). Therefore, the mystic must pass from rational thought to irrational meditation in order to know how to transcend this world (222). Yet the mystic must come back to tell the story, writes Moser, and adds: "The difference between the mystic and the madman is that the mystic can return, emerging from the state of grace and finding a human language to describe it" (222).

In 1964, the year of publication of *A paixão segundo G.H.*, Lispector is reported to have written: "If I had to give a title to my life it would be: in search of the thing itself" (Moser 267). Her biographer notes that this objective is also that of the protagonist of her novel, known by her initials G. H. (267). The protagonist must undergo a transformation where she strips herself of human language and morality, in which he sees a rejection of the humanized God of religions, to finally approach the thing itself, to which Lispector alludes with words such as *neutral, inexpressive, insipid, colorless, unsalted* (267-268). Yet, Moser writes, "no matter how many words she uses to describe it, it remains unfathomable" (267). Moser considers that *Água viva* continues the same search for the thing itself (320). Since this text is stripped of the intermediate resources of story and character, her writing acquires a fascinating immediacy (320). Finally, in *A hora da estrela*, Moser asserts, Lispector "managed to bring together all the threads of her writing and of her life" (373). This novel is, according to Moser, explicitly Jewish and Brazilian, social and abstract, tragic and comic, as "it unites the Northeast of her childhood with the Rio de Janeiro of her adulthood" and "her religious and linguistic questions with the narrative drive of her best stories" (373).

João Camillo Penna, Belinda Mandelbaum and Enrique Mandelbaum also argue that Lispector's fiction is nourished by Hasidic narratives (397). Camillo Penna considers Lispector as part of the Hasidic galaxy of mystical saints with strong individuality (219).

These authors report that Hasidic spirituality is characterized by maintaining fidelity to a body of laws while promoting the enjoyment of life in its material sense, which is both immanent and transcendent, thus insisting on a virtual lack of differentiation between the sacred and the profane that can also be observed in Lispector's texts (397). These authors also observe that her texts offer the experience of a state of grace in which the sacred is found within the profane, an experience often understood and portrayed in her work as an epiphany (404). These correspondences between Lispector and the Hassidic tradition are not called into question by my thesis, yet I will prefer to approach Lispector's work as an original expression of mystical thought which has been influenced by the Jewish tradition without being a mere derivation or replica of it.

Working from a different angle to Jewish mysticism, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira also recognizes in the assemblage of Lispector's fiction the same intrinsic mystical search for the thing itself as the main characteristic of her work. In *Alvorço da criação: a arte na ficção de Clarice Lispector*, Ribeiro de Oliveira studies artistic creation in its expressions within Lispector's novels, and ties art to the mystical vision she identifies as the theme of her oeuvre. For Ribeiro de Oliveira, all of Lispector's fiction is haunted by an anguished sense of lack (32). Ribeiro de Oliveira sees this tireless search for "a coisa em si" (the thing in itself) "a coisa na própria coisa" (the thing in the thing itself), as expressed in the lament of the protagonist of *Perto do coração selvagem* when she says "eu tenho o contorno á espera da essência" (32) (I have the contour of waiting for the essence.) The word contour, Ribeiro de Oliveira notes, emphasizes the idea of emptiness, of the "moldura de uma ausencia" (32) (the frame of an absence.) This idea of the thing itself is often expressed in the negative, as instantiated by G.H.'s anguished search for the inexpressive, the insipid, the colorless, the saltless (Nunes 71). The interpretations elaborated by Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira of *A*

paixão segundo G.H., *Água viva*, and *A hora da estrela* will be informative to my own reading.

Here ends the first part of the literature review, where I have presented some of the representative critical discussion of the three texts to be addressed in the body chapters. I have allowed myself to question some points that have been postulated by poststructuralist critics and scholars before presenting the relevant textual evidence. I did so not only to clarify my position in the debate at the level of ideas, but also to emphasize the need I have perceived for a linguistically oriented study of syntax in Lispector's work that discourages the kind of unsubstantiated claims that have been issued from these approaches. With a stylistic orientation, I want to foreground some linguistic phenomena observable in Lispector's writing in order to engrain it in my interpretation of the texts. For this reason, this section is followed by a bibliographical review of the linguistic categories that constitute my stylistic analysis.

2. The Word

The central argument of this thesis is that the position assumed by the narrative voice in a given passage of Lispector's oeuvre is often correlated with its dominant syntactic structure. There is a tendency toward paratactic structuring when the narrative voice positions itself in experienced closeness to state of grace, while hypotactic structures tend to emerge when the narrative voice is reflecting on the state of grace and attempts to elucidate it or the effects it produces. In this thesis, I show that demonstrating this relationship between word and idea contributes to a better understanding of Lispector's literary project, for it helps us to visualize how the state of grace is unveiled in the immanence of materiality, reflected in a language without syntactic hierarchies and without attempting any kind of conceptual synthesis, while the personal exploration of the process necessary to approach the state of grace through

words implies a more hierarchical linkage in language, a linkage through which the very impossibility of apprehending this state of grace through language is conceptualized.

Parataxis and hypotaxis are the two organizing poles of syntactic structure which I assume as an object for my analysis of Lispector's style. In this section, I survey how these linguistic categories have been thought of in different types of literary studies, first from the stylistic perspective as identified by Toolan, followed by a more philosophical perspective. There are two philosophers whose reflections on parataxis inform my way of analyzing Lispector's work: Theodor Adorno and Jacques Rancière. These will be addressed in the second part of this section of the literature review.

Brazilian linguist Othon Moacir García defines "parataxe" (parataxis) as a "coordenação (...) que é um paralelismo de funções ou valores sintáticos idênticos" (49) (coordination (...) which is a parallelism of identical syntactic functions or values.) Moacir García states that, in parataxis, clauses and sentences have the same nature and function, and that they can be linked by coordinating conjunctions. He calls parataxis "um processo de encadeamento de ideias" (49) (a process of chaining ideas.) The following passage taken from *A paixão segundo G.H.* is an example of sentences in a paratactic arrangement:

Vejo tudo através de um copo cheio. Nada se ouve. No resto da casa a sombra está toda inchada. A superficialidade madura. São onze horas da manhã no Brasil. É agora. Trata-se exatamente de agora (78).

(I see everything through a full glass. Nothing can be heard. In the rest of the house the shade is all swollen. The ripe superficiality. It is eleven o'clock in the morning in Brazil. It is now. It is exactly now.)

This syntactic coordination contrasts with the subordination in "hypotaxe" (hypotaxis), in which, Moacir García points out, "não há paralelismo, mas desigualdade de funções e de valores sintáticos" (52) (there is no parallelism, but rather inequality of functions and syntactic values) According to Moacir García, hypotaxis is "um processo de hierarquização, em que o enlace entre as orações é muito mais estreito do que na coordenação" (52) (a

hierarchical process, in which the link between clauses is much closer than in coordination.) With syntactic subordination, Moacir García states, clauses are semantically dependent, since “[n]enhuma oração subordinada subsiste por si mesma, i.e., sem o apoio da sua principal (que também pode ser outra subordinada) ou da principal do período, da qual, por sua vez, todas as demais dependem” (52) (no subordinate clause subsists by itself, that is, without the support of its principal [which can also be another subordinate clause] or of the principal of the sentence, on which, in turn, all the others depend.). Here is an example of a hypotactic passage taken from *Água viva*:

E como o verdadeiro pensamento se pensa a si mesmo, essa espécie de pensamento atinge seu objetivo no próprio ato de pensar. Não quero dizer com isso que é vagamente ou gratuitamente. Acontece que o pensamento primário – enquanto ato de pensamento – já tem forma e é mais facilmente transmissível a si mesmo, ou melhor, à própria pessoa que o está pensando; e tem por isso – por ter forma – um alcance limitado. (184-186).

(And since the true thought thinks itself, this kind of thought achieves its goal in the very act of thinking. I don't mean by this that it is vaguely or gratuitously so. It just happens that primary thought – as an act of thought – already has form and is most easily transmissible to itself, or rather to the very person who is thinking it; and has therefore – because it has form – a limited scope.)

Stylistic studies of syntactical subordination and coordination in prose fiction begin in the modern period, writes Toolan, with Spitzer's study of an “apparent compulsion to attribute causes in Charles Louis Philippe's narrative *Bubu de Montparnasse*” (217). Toolan points out that Spitzer relates this compulsion directly to his concept of *Weltanschauung*, by which Spitzer saw the style of a literary work as an expression of its author's worldview (217). In opposition to Spitzer, Toolan proposes that explanations of the effects of style must first be made in terms of textual meaning, strategy, and aesthetic effect (217).

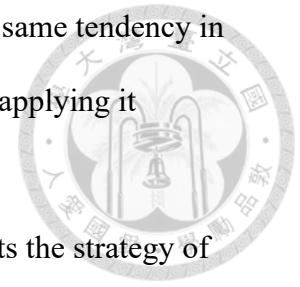
In *The Modern Epic* (1996), Franco Moretti makes use of Spitzer's stylistic study of Proust to evidence its significant stylistic contrast with Joyce's use of language in *Ulysses*. As Moretti notes, Spitzer argues that Proust revels in the use of dependent clauses because these “illustrate the dependence of man on chance, of the individual on the whole, etc., in a kind of

acoustic and architectural imitation” (150). Moretti observes that the ability to accumulate the sentence arises from Proust’s narrative ability to see the multiple connections between things in the world. In these complex representations, Moretti writes, “there is an enormous mastery and mastery over things, which knows all about precedence and subordination, and can put important and trivial things in their proper places” (151). What emerges from this hypotactic stylistic form, Moretti argues, is an organized vision in which the relationships between different elements are clearly seen, and particular things are linked to general principles.

Moretti points out that Joyce’s prose in *Ulysses*, on the contrary, tends to construct separate and independent sentences in a paratactic arrangement (150). Such a style, Moretti contends, is particularly well suited as a linguistic form that corresponds with the explosion of mental stimuli with which urban space confronts its inhabitants (155). According to Moretti, this urban experience is explored through the paratactic arrangement of sentences, which makes everything appear as an open possibility, thus reflecting the effect of posters, advertisements, signs, and other texts of modern life (136, 151). Moretti sees Joyce’s parataxis as a device that multiplies directions of development and makes them independent of one another, conveying the sense of an open present “where diverse developments are still all equally possible” (136).

Now I present a series of studies that take syntactic structure as an object of stylistic analysis, as gathered and examined by Toolan. First, Hayes (1969) offers a statistical and transformational approach to style in his analysis of the contrasting complexities of sentences in Gibbon and Hemingway (217). Toolan raises objections to Raye’s imaginative leap by Hayes from the notation of statistically significant syntactic contrasts between the styles of the two writers to his statements that Gibbon’s style is grand, majestic, complex, and that Hemingway’s style is simple in comparison (217). Toolan argues that Hayes, in his use of the word complex “makes the familiar mistake of importing syntactic meaning into literary

description-evaluation” (217). Smit (1988), Toolan notes, observes the same tendency in other stylists and describes it as “taking a grammatical description and applying it thematically” (217).



Toolan proceeds with a study by Gibson (1969), who also adopts the strategy of comparing two literary passages to perceive their distinctive stylistic character. In this way he approaches a passage from Howells’ *A Modern Instance* and the opening of Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (217). Gibson finds that the former text combines causal coordination and subordination, while the latter consists almost entirely of coordinated clauses. As Toolan informs, Gibson argues that Hemingway’s lack of subordination reflects an ingrained reticence, for it “involves the absence of extended (i.e. finite-verb-structured) nominal, relative, or adverbial clause information” (218), which would imply an absence of extended identification of subjects and objects. Gibson’s conclusion is that Frederic Henry, the narrator of *A Farewell to Arms*, is a “tough speaker” who conceals his vulnerability by claiming to have limited knowledge of the story he tells, and who narrates through a limited rhetoric of short sentences, verbal repetition, and the colloquial speech of assumed speaker-listener familiarity (218). This conclusion, Toolan argues, requires further substantiation and investigation, as Gibson’s two text samples are “dangerously brief” (218) and no comprehensive statistics on any syntactic features are presented. In long texts, Toolan suggests, internal stylistic variation, the development within the narrative as it progresses, should be a focus of the analyst’s attention. Thus, Toolan writes that “it would be interesting to know if Henry is as ‘tough’, and tough in the same way, at the end as at the beginning of the novel” (218).

Wells (1969) is another scholar who discusses Hemingway’s work. Toolan sees in some aspects of Well’s methodology sensible adjustments to the approaches of Hayes and Gibbon. As he observes, Wells analyzes extended passages of Fitzgerald’s prose in *The Rich*

Boy and of Hemingway's one in *Big Two-Hearted River*, and he limits himself to narrative passages (218). Toolan laments that other statistical analyses often fail to differentiate between prose and dialogue, which ignores most readers' intuitive conviction that the narrator's language and what counts as the characters' direct speech are distinct (219).

According to Toolan, Wells finds that sentences in Hemingway's early style are, on average, half as long as Fitzgerald's: 12 words and 24 words, respectively, and that 73 percent of Fitzgerald's sentences are complex or compound, while only 25 percent of Hemingway's are so (219). Wells concludes that Hemingway's simple sentence writing is childish, while his later style is more mature, a conclusion, which in Toolan's words, constitutes an "indiscriminate and generalizing assertion" (219).

Toolan refers to the Mann and Thompson study (1986) which shows that, in coherent texts, "there are necessarily inferred relational propositions (of elaboration, solutionhood, motivation, reason, etc.) that hold between distinct sentences, often without any formal indicators" (220). This observation might be shared by Moacir García, who affirms that there is often a semantic dependence between coordinated clauses, even when no conjunction syntactically links them; a fact he calls "justaposição" (54) (juxtaposition.) These clauses, according to Moacir García, can be separated in speech by a short pause with variable intonation, and marked in writing (in Portuguese) by a comma, semicolon or, more generally, by a colon. Moacir Garcia calls "subordinação psicológica" (psychological subordination) when a dependent clause relationship, like in a conditional sentence, is not made explicit (52). Toolan argues that sentence-internal punctuation as an intercausal link can be predicted to occur relatively more frequently in texts that purport to transcribe the flow of a particular individual's thoughts, as in certain modernist novels (220). He points out that the passages of free indirect discourse and stream-of-consciousness in Woolf's and Joyce's novels support this specific prediction, as does the whole hypothetical line of invisible linkages. At the

opposite extreme “from such linguistically a-connective, subjective-expressive prose” (220), Toolan suggests that texts with high frequency of conjunctions, especially subordinating and/or causal ones, signal “an objective, detached discourse” (220). Toolan contends that this tendency holds valid in relation to the representation of varying degrees of intimacy of consciousness by virtue of being a well-developed literary convention, so one cannot conclude that there is any mental or psychological reality or verisimilitude in the reduced syntax adopted by the presentation of stream-of-consciousness (220).

Finally, Toolan refers to Radomski’s doctoral dissertation, “Faulkner’s Style: A Stylistic Analysis” (1974), in which he compares the frequencies of certain familiar syntactic devices in two thousand-word passages taken from Faulkner and Hemingway (221). Radomski suggests that frequent syntactic subordination “indicates that Faulkner is continually reevaluating and changing the perspective of the action he is viewing” (221). This is a conclusion that, according to Toolan, is made on the premise that it is Faulkner (and not some textual character) who sees and reports the action in the passage, and that the subordination is especially indicative of changes in evaluation and perspective. For Radmoski, Toolan writes, reading Faulkner is re-creative since “Faulkner’s subordination indicates a tendency on the part of the author to think in ‘causal chains’ dependent on past history or preceding events or ideas, which are often unspecified or revealed only in future narrative, sometimes even in other works” (222). Toolan stresses that fuller scrutiny is needed to support the claim that a textual pattern should be treated as a tendency on the part of the author.

Toolan argues that the studies cited above, despite their accomplishments, reveal “a pervasive tendency to move from concrete but intractable descriptions and frequencies to abstract and suggestive interpretive verdicts, without benefit of an adequate account of why these syntactic patterns have just the particular literary effects claimed” (222). Toolan

clarifies that one does not require some kind conclusive proof that a certain grammatical pattern is charged with the ascribed effect or value, since the very idea of conclusive proof, in relation to the changing values and meanings of human language, reveals subjection to a myth that thinks of language as static (222). Instead, Toolan argues that an adequate account of a linguistic description must be “a matter of persuasiveness and appropriacy of the interpretive steps taken in a commentary, including the persuasiveness of the steps taken at the outset, in the adoption of a particular descriptive grammatical apparatus” (222). In other words, Toolan suggests that there are no immutable criteria for validating a stylistic interpretation, but that the criteria always depend on the very context of that interpretation and the very goals that are set from it.

In *Rethinking Language, Text and Context: Interdisciplinary Research in Stylistics in Honour of Michael Toolan* (2019), there is a statistical-based study entitled “Investigating Syntactic Simplicity in Popular Fiction: A Corpus Stylistics Approach,” in which Rocío Montoro approaches the question of parataxis and hypotaxis from a different angle: no longer in the analysis of the style of any particular author, but rather in the larger analysis of the distinction between popular fiction and serious fiction. Montoro first cites authors who identify alleged linguistic differences based on this distinction, and she argues that their accounts do not include rigorous descriptions of these differences (64). In particular, Montoro reports having investigated Moretti’s claims that, since subordination projects complexity, it should be more common in serious fiction (65). After analyzing instances of subordinating conjunctions in both types of fiction statistically, Montoro reports her conclusion that there is no greater syntactic complexity in serious fiction than in popular fiction based on degrees of subordination (74).

Here concludes the first part of this literature review section, which has focused on the literary studies addressing coordination and subordination from a linguistic orientation. In

the following part, I present two accounts to parataxis from a philosophical angle; that of Adorno as he approaches Hölderlin's later lyric, and that of Rancière when he describes his category of the aesthetic regime of art. Both inspire me to interpret the particular function that parataxis acquires in Lispector's work, which I seek to understand within its context and not as an independent determinant of meaning.

In *Noten zur Literatur*, Adorno's "Parataxis" reads both as a defense of a philosophical interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry and as a rebuttal of Heidegger's reading of it. The truth of a poem, Adorno writes, does not exist without its structure understood as the totality of its moments, whose configuration is particularly significant (451). As the archetype of Hölderlin's late poetry, Adorno identifies "Große Musik [als] begriffslose Synthesis" (471) (great music as a conceptual synthesis) (Nicholsen 130), and he argues that, in these poems, "fallen als kunstvolle Störungen Parataxen auf, welche der logischen Hierarchie subordinierender Syntax ausweichen" (471) (the parataxis are striking –artificial disturbances that evade the logical hierarchy of subordinating syntax) (Nicholsen 131).

To what did this paratactic orientation of Hölderlin's late poetry follow? According to Adorno, it followed an indictment "gegen die Gewalttat des sich zum Unendlichen gewordenen und sich vergottenden Geistes" (472) (against the violence of spirit, which has deified itself and become something infinite) (Nicholsen 131), seeking a linguistic form that would have escaped the dictates of this rational, synthesizing principle. "Die Form reflektiert nochmals den Gedanken" (473) (Once again, form reflects thought) (Nicholsen 132), writes Adorno, stressing then that by parataxis one should not only think of "die mikrologischen Gestalten reihenden Übergangs" (473) (the micrological forms of serial transition) (Nicholsen 132), because this paratactic tendency also encompasses larger structures beyond mere syntactic clauses. Following this idea, Adorno states "Hölderlin kennt Formen, die, in erweitertem Sinn, insgesamt parataktisch heißen dürften" (473) (In Hölderlin there are forms

that could as a whole be called paratactical in the broader sense) (Nicholsen 132) These greater forms, writes Adorno, work to descend back into the pre or antilogical, for “[d]er Logos hatte diesem Entgleitenden des Berichts um dessen Objektivation willen entgegengewirkt; die späte dichterische Selbstreflexion Hölderlins ruft es herauf” (473) (the logos had worked against the slippery quality of narrative for the sake of its objectification, the self-reflection in Hölderlin’s later poetry, in contrast, evokes it) (Nicholsen 134).

For Adorno, a key character of the paratactic phrase in Hölderlin lies in the “Gewaltlosigkeit” (nonviolence) that characterizes the principle of passivity which Benjamin had identified in the poet’s metaphysical stance (489). In Hölderlin’s own words, Adorno points out, we find a reflection that sheds light on the poetic function of the paratactic procedure by opposition to the hypotactic one:

Man hat Inversionen der Worte in der Periode. Größer und wirksamer muß aber dann auch die Inversion der Perioden selbst sein. Die logische Stellung der Perioden, wo dem Grunde (der Grundperiode) das Werden, dem Werden das Ziel, dem Ziele der Zweck folgt, und die Nebensätze immer nur hinten angehängt sind an die Hauptsätze, worauf sie sich zunächst beziehen, – ist dem Dichter gewiß nur höchst selten brauchbar (476).

(In the periodic sentence one finds inversions of words. Inversions of the periods themselves, then, must be greater and more effective. The logical placement of the periods, where the development follows the basis [the fundamental period], the goal follows the development, and the purpose follows the goal, and the subordinate propositions are merely appended to the main propositions to which they refer –that of course it something the poet can only very seldom use) (Nicholsen 135)

Adorno emphasizes Hölderlin’s rejection of a Ciceronian-type complex syntax as useless for poetry. He also points out that Hölderlin designates the complicity of the logic of ordering and structuring consciousness with “das Praktische” (the practical) and “das Brauchbare” (the useful) which is no longer reconcilable with “das Heilige” (the sacred), to whose level he elevates poetry (476). Thus, Adorno writes:

Der Logik dicht geschlossener und notwendig ins Nächste mündender Perioden eignet eben jenes Zwangshafte, Gewalttätige, von dem die Dichtung heilen soll und das von der Hölderlinschen unmißverständlich negiert wird. Sprachliche Synthesis widerspricht dem, was er zum Sprechen bringen will (476).

(The logic of tightly bounded periods, each moving rigorously on to the next, is characterized by precisely that compulsive and violent quality for which poetry is to provide healing and which Hölderlin's poetry unambiguously negates. Linguistic synthesis contradicts what Hölderlin wants to express in language.) (Nicholsen 135)

Adorno points out that the Hölderlinian sudden references to ancient and modern settings and figures are in the deepest relation to the paratactic procedure. This paratactic formal principle, Adorno contends, is commensurable with the content of Hölderlin's late lyric. Adorno argues that for this content, synthesis or identity is equivalent to the mastery of nature. He thus ventures that, if all poetry raises by its own means a protest against this synthesis, in Hölderlin this protest is awakened to self-consciousness, whereby the poet takes sides with nature against the dominant logos (470). In chapter two, after rehearsing Adorno's reading of Hölderlin, I will argue that paratactic moments in Lispector's fiction bespeak the experience of immanence as incompatible with any kind of conceptual synthesis, while hypotactic passages often go in the opposite way of attempting to synthesize mystical union and ultimately failing to do so.

As I mentioned earlier, the last thinker whose conception of parataxis I will address is Rancière. His ideas do not relate to the particular use of syntax in a particular author, but rather, to a whole special form of conceiving art itself. In *Le destin des images*, Rancière proposes a division of art into three regimes: the ethical, the representational, and the aesthetic. Parataxis is taken as a relevant concept for the last one, the aesthetic regime, which began with romanticism, continued with realism, and includes abstract art along with the avant-gardes. Below I will outline Rancière's theorizing of parataxis as the underlying structural principle of art in the aesthetic regime, while in chapter two, I will mainly refer to Timothy Bewes' commentary on it, for it allows me to point out an important discrepancy in how parataxis is configured in *Água viva* as opposed to how it is conceived by Bewes.

Rancière argues that the aesthetic regime distances itself "d'une certaine forme de commune mesure, celle qu'exprimait le concept de l'histoire" (33) (from a certain form of

common measure, that which expressed the concept of the story). The story is referred to by Rancière as that “assemblage d’actions” (assembly of actions) which, starting with Aristotle, defined the rationality of the poem. Rancière argues that this ancient measure which followed a scheme of ideal causality implied an enchainment to attain a certain form of intelligibility of human actions (33). This measure, Rancière points out, constituted a relation of subordination between the directing function of intelligibility, and an imaginative function placed at its service (33-34). Under such a measure, to form images meant to bring to their maximum sensible expression the thoughts and feelings through which the causal enchainment was manifested (34). This subordination of the image to the text in the thought of the poem founded the correspondence of the arts under the legislation of the representational regime.

According to Rancière, this hierarchical order has been abolished under the aesthetic regime of art, so that the power of words and that of the visible have been freed from this common measure. The most common effect, Rancière observes, is called the autonomy of the art of words. He calls the underlying structure of the aesthetic regime “la grande parataxe” (37) (the great parataxis.) For Flaubert’s time, Rancière writes, the great parataxis can be understood as:

[L]’effondrement de tous les systèmes de raisons des sentiments et des actions au profit de l’aléa des brassages indifférents d’atomes. Un peu de poussière qui brille dans le soleil, une goutte de neige fondue tombant sur la moire d’une ombrelle, un brin de feuillage au museau d’un âne sont les tropes de la matière qui inventent des amours en égalant leur raison à la grande absence de raison des choses (37).

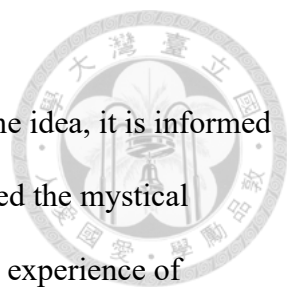
(The crumbling of all systems of reasons for feelings and actions to the benefit of the randomness of indifferent mixtures of atoms. A bit of dust shining in the sun, a drop of melted snow falling on the moiré of an umbrella, a blade of foliage on the muzzle of a donkey are the tropes of matter that invent loves equaling their reason to the great absence of reason of things.)

The new common measure of the aesthetic regime is identified as “celle du rythme, de l’élément vital de chaque atome sensible délié qui fait passer l’image dans le mot, le mot dans

la touche, la touche dans la vibration de la lumière ou du mouvement” (37) (that of rhythm, that of the vital element of each detached sensitive atom that makes the image pass into the word, the word into the brushstroke, the brushstroke into the vibration of light or movement.) Rancière also calls the law of parataxis “la loi du «profond aujourd’hui»” (38) (the law of the ‘profound today’) and defines it as an absence of measure, as a commonality of immoderation or chaos that gives art its power. He notes that this paratactic procedure had its beginning in the writers of the nineteenth century, “qui ont découvert, derrière les histoires, la force nue des tournolements de poussière, des moiteurs oppressives, des cascades de marchandises ou des intensités en folie [et] ont aussi inventé le montage comme mesure du sans-mesure ou discipline du chaos” (40) (who discovered, behind stories, the naked force of the swirls of dust, of the oppressive humidity, of the cascades of commodities or of mad intensities and have also invented the montage as a measure of the measureless or discipline of chaos.) From then on, the great parataxis as an underlying non-subordinating structure came to constitute an inherent logic of the aesthetic regime.

These reflections by Adorno and Rancière inform my interpretation of the thematic functions reflected in the paratactic formal structure of certain passages in Lispector’s work. Specifically, I argue that the enunciating voices in *Água viva* (often) and *A hora da estrela* (almost always) follow a similar non-conceptualizing revindication of nature against the domination of the synthetizing logos that Adorno attributes to Hölderlin, and, in the case of *Água viva*, that her flow of consciousness jumps between different images incessantly while insisting on the immanence of the present moment is reminiscent of the “law of the profound today” that Rancière names as the principle of the great parataxis. This non-subordinating way of experiencing reality is also observed as the main characteristic of Macabéa in *A hora da estrela*, where the narrator no longer attempts to conceptualize the state of grace and thus narrates in a more paratactic way.

3. The Idea and the Word



Time has come to synthesize my project for this thesis. At the level of the idea, it is informed by the readings of Moser, Ribeiro de Oliveira, Nunes who have identified the mystical orientation of Lispector's work and its ultimate aim: the thing itself, the experience of divinity in all matter, which obtains with the state of grace. I understand the state of grace as a depersonalizing experience of immanence which cannot be mediated. This is why the narrative voices in Lispector fiction tend to be suspicious of any words by which one might attempt to apprehend this experience. In the following chapters, my thesis grounds the following interpretations: In *A paixão segundo G.H.*, the narrator attempts to make sense of the state of grace which she experienced during her encounter with the cockroach in the maid's room. In *Água viva*, the state of grace motivates the seemingly disconnected enunciations of the narrative/poetic voice, who now experiences the world in a more intimate and profound way. Finally, *A hora da estrela*, the narrator-character Rodrigo S.M. explores the closeness of his protagonist Macabéa to this state of grace by virtue of her primordial way of living, and by means of a mimetic relation with her, approaches himself the experience of immanence. Thus, the state of grace occupies a central thematic position in the structure of these works.

At the level of the word, this thesis contains a stylistic analysis that foregrounds the changing syntactic structuring of sentences in relation to the position of the narrative voice towards the state of grace. Following Toolan, I do not seek to see reflected in syntax the presumed worldview or psychology of Clarice Lispector as its author (in this aspect, the thesis does not follow Spitzer's conception of stylistics), but rather to investigate how they function, what they are working towards, based on what they are *affording* in their given context. Informed by the previous studies of Hayes, Gibson and Wells, as well as Toolan's critiques of them, I have first carried out an accounting of all sentences in the three texts,

cataloging each sentence according to their paratactic or hypotactic structure. This was not intended to produce any statistical conclusions as final proofs, but it was done to illuminate and correct my initial intuitions. It has been a helpful guide to illuminate syntactic tendencies at different points in the text, but it has at least the following five limitations:

1. It does not distinguish between adverbial, adjectival, and nominal types of subordination.
2. It does not distinguish between different levels of subordination. If a sentence is complex or compound complex because there is only one subordinating link in it, it is categorized in the hypotactic field in the same way as if it had ten or twenty.
3. There is no consideration of the semantic dependency or “psychological subordination” that may exist between clauses of coordinated sentences. They are all categorized in the pole of paratactic structure regardless of the nonverbalized dependent relations that may exist between them.
4. I rely on a personal criterion for special cases. When Fitz calls Lispector’s syntax “unorthodox” and her punctuation “unusual”, he is probably referring to the abundance of noun phrases that appear to have been severed from a larger sentence by a period. These often include several subordinate clauses without any verbal predicate constituting the independent clause. In these cases, I usually categorize them as hypotactic.
5. In *A hora da estrela*, the dialogue sentences are not divided by which character enunciates them.

I found the counting system productive in that it provides reference marks within the texts (particularly in *A paixão segundo G.H.*) and it has helped me to make visible at which moments a tendency to syntactic or paratactic structuring emerges in the texts. It also allows me to compare the final frequency percentages of each syntactic structure’s tendency in a text

given by the sum of its sentences. As I mentioned above, I do not take these percentages as any kind of conclusive signals, but rather as general clues by which my interpretation of these texts can be guided. As my thesis advances, the references to the percentages become less predominant for reasons that will become evident. The outlines for the three body chapters follow below.

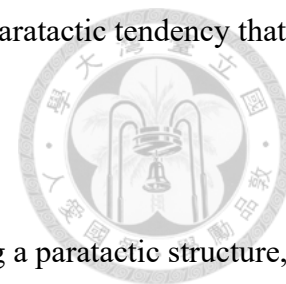
- **Chapter One: The Spiral Fall**

This chapter approaches *A paixão segundo G.H.* With a total percentage of 57.92% of sentences showing a hypotactic structure, this is the text with the most syntactic subordination of the three. In this chapter, I argue that hypotaxis often works in correspondence to the narrator protagonist G.H.'s anguished attempts to make sense of her special encounter with the cockroach, and to decipher the truths that were be unveiled to her consciousness by this experience. The configuration of subordination structured on a principle of repetition deepens the sensation of a vertiginous spiral fall. This formal construction, I argue, corresponds on a thematic level with the idea of the G.H's experience as a descent into hell. I interpret this anguished descent as the disaggregation she must go through in order to reach a state of grace, a disaggregation by which the several socialized constructs of morality and the idea of an individual personality are to be undone. In contrast to those attempts of the narrator's consciousness to understand and describe this violent descent, in which the sentences tend towards hypotactic structuring, there are moments in the text where the immanence of the materiality of the cockroach becomes prominent, or where supposedly revealed truths that do not require logical or empirical demonstration are forcefully manifested. Both in the former, where she is positioned in face of the instance of materiality that lead her to the experience of immanence, and in the latter moments, where this experience is alluded to by means of pulsating, disconnected statements, the sentences tend to show a paratactic syntax that shuns logical connectors and verbal hierarchization,

affording immediacy, forcefulness and a sense of revelation. It is this paratactic tendency that will manifest itself most predominantly in *Água viva*.

● Chapter Two: Primordial Pulsations

This chapter approaches *Água viva*. With 62.12% of sentences showing a paratactic structure, this is the text with the least syntactic subordination of the three. As both Ribeiro de Oliveira and Edgar César Nolasco point out, Lispector carried out the writing of *Água viva* by reworking published fragments of her chronicles and other texts, resulting in what became her most experimental work. In *Água viva*, there is no defined plot or characters. Instead, the unnamed female narrative voice lets flow a series of images, ideas, sensations, reflections that insist, both in the level of content and of syntactic form, on logical discontinuity, on the sheer experience of the present moment, and on the unfathomable presence of an original vital pulsation that beats and breaths in everything that exists. I show how the evocation of primitive forms of life in *Água viva*, as it was the case with the cockroach in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, are presented in a paratactic form that instantiates that vital pulsation. I refer to Adorno's account of Hölderlin's late poetry, for the critic sees parataxis as opposing linguistic synthesis understood as an attempt of domination of nature by human reason, and a comparison between his description of the German poet and my observation of the paratactical forms in *Água viva* allows us to enlighten the latter. I also refer to Timothy Bewes' commentary on Rancière's ideas on parataxis, for it allows us to better understand how instantiation can be understood as connecting principle behind parataxis, and how hypotaxis affords to illuminate instantiation in the text. Hypotactic passages here tend to explain metalinguistically what the text is doing, and it is precisely in *Água viva* where the so-called state of grace is explicitly explained, after the narrating voice reveals to have entered it. Through an examination of this moment, I show how hypotactic structuring predominates when the nature of this state of grace is elucidated through language. This



observation leads me to question the critics who have insisted that this text's purport is a dissemination of meaning which prevents any totalizing reading of itself.



- **Chapter Three: The Last Cry**

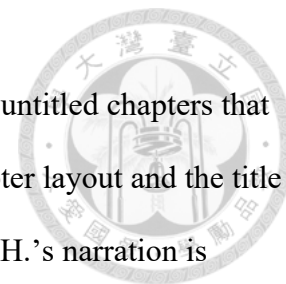
This chapter approaches *A hora da estrela*. In this work, Lispector's writing gestures towards a more traditional novel, with defined times, places, characters, and plot. It also shows the particularity that its narrative voice is no longer feminine but masculine. In Rodrigo S.M.'s narrative prose there is a greater balance between both poles of syntactic structure than in the previous texts, with 48.76% of his sentences displaying subordination and 51.24% of them without subordination. However, in this chapter I argue that parataxis, understood after Adorno and Rancière as a larger arrangement that goes against synthesis, governs the text at the level of the paragraph. As Cixous notes, the narration is full of leaps and bounds that convey a strong fragmentary character which in turn gives more ambiguity and indeterminacy to its passages. I see here a formal correspondence with the idea Rodrigo S.M. gains proximity to the state of grace through a mimetic relation of his character, Macabéa, who experiences the state of grace given her proclivity to identification with matter and her sensuous way of experiencing reality. Rodrigo S.M. shows how the socialization process has not completely individualized Macabéa, as it is the case with the rest of the characters. Thus, the narrator indirectly manifests a material-panteistic worldview according to which Macabéa can have access to the experience of the divine virtue of her almost unconscious way of living, feeling, and thinking. In Macabéa I identify a non-subordinating way of experiencing the world similar to that of the narrative voice in *Água viva* in that it inhabits the present, and as it assumes many different forms structured by pulsation rather than by logical linkage or hierarchization of ideas. I show that this paratactic sensibility is reflected in Macabéa's fondness for "Rádio Relógio", which points to a special way of inhabiting time and language in a pulsating way that is both fluid (in its way of experiencing the immanence

of things) and discontinuous (in its opposition to the ordering and synthesizing force of logos). My argument leads to a reading of Macabéa's death not as a mere sociopolitical denunciation, but above Rodrigo S.M.'s way of becoming one with the mystical insight which sees socialized life as insubstantial, blinding human beings from the divine character. When Macabéa starts harboring hope for the future, she becomes a socialized individual with ambitions and thoughts similar to those of the rest of the characters, characterized by their selfishness and their instrumentalization of word and matter to carry out their inner pretensions. When she dies, the narrator leads to an affirmation of nature in its deepest immanence, suggesting that the precepts and values imposed by the socialized world are but vain efforts of a poor limited human conscience that are revealed as insubstantial in face of mystical truth.

Above were the main arguments of this thesis. At the beginning of this introduction, I privileged the metaphor of the two legs to refer to the coordinated interpretations to be done at the level of linguistic phenomena and textual signification. I did so because I have conceived this thesis as a wandering through Lispector's fiction, one that, hopefully, will lead us towards a better understanding of her work. I am grateful for the reader's company and for their valuable indications and corrections when they notice the missteps, stumbles, and deviations in which my wandering may have fallen.

Note: All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Chapter One: The Spiral Fall

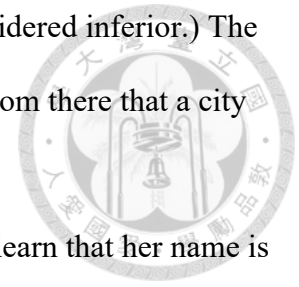


It is a popular belief that Jesus Christ was crucified at thirty-three. The untitled chapters that make up *A paixão segundo G.H.* add up to the same number. This chapter layout and the title of the novel are both indexes of Christian religiosity, towards which G.H.'s narration is potentially articulated as a response, or perhaps even a subversion of its values. In this chapter, I refer to each chapter numbering it by its order of appearance. In the original text, however, the chapters are only distinguished by a page break and by a consistent structuring device: the last phrase of one chapter is repeated at the beginning of the following one.

In chapter one, G.H. begins the narration by exposing her urgent need to give form to an experience she just had. We learn from her that, for a few hours in the morning of the previous day, G.H. experienced a profound disorganization of her personality, and she now seeks to understand this experience through a verbal articulation of it. To attain some kind of form, G.H. feels that she must try to convey her experience to someone, and so she decides to invent the presence of an unnamed man who can hold her hand. The autodiegetic narrator proclaims that creation is her way of understanding, and that she will have to create what happened to her. Yet she will create without lying, G.H. assures: she is in the search for truth. In this way, the novel's narration is framed as a recreation by G.H. of the event that occurred in her apartment, which her consciousness is still trying to process.

We soon learn that G.H. is a sculptor who lives in the penthouse of an apartment building in Rio de Janeiro. Because of her gender, G.H.'s artistic work has been qualified as dilatory, yet this does not mean that she occupies a marginal position in society. G.H. recognizes herself as an elegant woman with a talent for giving shape to things, as she states that she has molded her apartment in a way that reflects her aesthetic sophistication. Solange de Ribeiro notes that "G.H. em sua cobertura, experimenta o complexo de atlas, a sensação de, do alto, observar seres considerados inferiores" (70) (G.H., in her penthouse, experiences

the complex of atlas, the feeling of, from above, observing beings considered inferior.) The narrating sculptor says she enjoys living on the highest floor, for it is from there that a city can be dominated.



One day before the fateful encounter, G.H.'s maid had left. We learn that her name is Janair and that she is of African origin. G.H. sets out to enter the room where Janair had slept and leave it clean for the upcoming maid. The sculptor imagines it dirty and messy, full of rags and old junk, yet to her surprise, she finds the room spotless and practically empty. On the walls, however, there are three figures drawn with charcoal: a man, a woman, and a dog. Only the silhouettes are drawn, as if the content of the represented beings had been emptied and nothing more remains but their outlines. G.H. imagines that Janair's act of artistic creation is meant as a censure of the way of life she leads, and she thinks that her once employee must have secretly hated her. Soon, G.H. realizes that her deep discomfort in the room stems from its neutrality and its silence. She wonders if it was not herself who hated Janair without realizing it. In a burst of determination, G.H. sets out to bring moisture to the desert neatness in the room, and to pour water into the closet so that its wood would rot. The urge to kill something takes hold of her. Then, as she opens the closet, a cockroach emerges from its darkness. She begins to feel trapped and is seized with fear. G.H. slams the closet door and thinks she has slaughtered the cockroach, but it is still alive. She observes the cockroach's gaze and contemplates a white matter expelled from its body. With this encounter, the sculptor enters an ecstatic state in which the roots of her own identity unravel. Then, a series of revelations manifest in her consciousness.

The underlying premise for my thesis is that some relationships of correspondence between linguistic form and thematic content can be persuasively demonstrated by focusing on relevant stylistic phenomena and their affordances to support a particular interpretation of the text. Regarding Lispector's work, it is important to note one study which performs a

similar analysis. In *O drama da linguagem*, Benedito Nunes carries out a stylistic study of Lispector's work, observing in the particular use of certain linguistic features an expression of a mystical conception of the world. This conjunction of an interpretation of ideas and an observation of how stylistic figures can point to these ideas make *O drama da linguagem* one of the most direct precedents for this work, particularly in my study of *A paixão segundo G.H.* in the present chapter. The major difference is that my thesis assumes syntactic structure as its object of study, and not the rhetorical figures that Nunes has already examined. I now present a summary of Nunes' ideas on G.H.'s mysticism and on its expression in the stylistic features of the work, in order to highlight the main similarities and differences with my own work. Then, I present the sections comprising this chapter.

Nunes identifies a mystical path taken by G.H., through her contact with the cockroach, in the images of spatial displacement, the trope of a desert full of solitude and silence, and the contradictory vision of the ineffable. According to Nunes, these elements have characterized different expressions of mystical thought, as in Teresa of Ávila and Meister Eckhart (66). Nunes points out that the mystical experience lived by G.H. is markedly "immanentist" (68), since the sculptor ends up assimilating living matter with divine life. In Nunes's view, the immanentist vision of the protagonist narrator is superimposed on Christian thought by placing God on the same ontological plane as its creation. Nunes calls G.H.'s realization that God exists in all instants and that we can come to feel like an intimate part of it in moments when we experience a consuming lack, as she herself did, "atualismo místico" (70) (mystical actualism.) According to Nunes, the way to this realization follows a process of meditation on the white matter expelled from the cockroach's body, a substance which G.H. later names "lama" (mud), "plasma seco" (dry plasma), "vida" (life), "materia prima" (raw material), "o úmido" (the humid), "o seco" (the dry), "o cru" (the raw), "o insosso" (the tasteless), "o inexpressivo" (the inexpressive) (Nunes

71). This errant use of language points to the insufficiency of its representation, due to the elusive and transcendental meaning to which words cannot provide any access. Nunes points out that the deeper G.H. goes in his meditation on the ineffable, the more the process of deindividuation of the subject is completed, annulling her human effort to reach transcendence and entering in turn into the impersonal state of immanence, which he identifies as both the initial and final point of G. H.'s narration. The sentences enunciated by G.H. are threatened at every moment by that silence from which her use of language has departed and towards which it is inevitably directed, thus forming a circular movement between silence and word that Nunes sees present in all of Lispector's works (144).

Nunes argues that this movement from word to silence and from silence to word finds stylistic correspondences, and he devotes a chapter of his work to exploring the set of characteristic traits in Lispector's writing that both actualize and reflect this movement. The most far-reaching trait that Nunes identifies is repetition (136). According to the Brazilian philosopher, the reiterative use of nouns, verbs, adverbs, phrases, and even sets of phrases that characterizes Lispector's style not only performs an expressive and emphatic function which creates an insistent and obsessive rhythm, charged with an emotional force and an evocative aura (136). Repetition as a figure in Lispector's fiction, writes Nunes, often involves the interplay between word and the named thing, thus focusing on the irreducible presence of an object and the distance that is opened between itself and the word (138). Examining *A paixão segundo G.H.*, Nunes states that it is a text possessing a circular reiterative structure where repetition dominates as a procedure that organizes words, clauses and sentences, such as the phrases that conclude a chapter and are reiterated at the beginning of the following chapter. For Nunes, repetition in this work points to the very unrepresentability of things, subverting the logic of understanding discourse as a set of ordered representations.

Nunes makes the case that oxymoron, antithesis, and paradox are the other figures of Lispector's writing style that are also part of the central movement between word and silence. He asserts that these figures of speech insist on the irreparable inadequacy of language to contain mystical truth, so that the meaning of the expressions wanders between the expressiveness of the signifiers and the inexpressiveness of the signified (143). Nunes insists that silence is both the origin and destiny of the work, which he finds sustained in a wandering of meaning that can only be pointed out through the reiterative and paradoxical expression of the ecstatic experience crossed by G.H. Nunes also affirms that a leakage of meaning takes place when the signifiers chained together do not manage to embrace that which is not enunciable and that which is not decipherable (144). This originary and final silence, related to the word in a circuit, serves for an ascetic stripping in which, Nunes points out, words are worn out and language is emptied before the mystical presence of materiality, which makes Lispector's style conflictive and self-lacerating, a manifestation of what he calls the drama of language (145, 150).

For my interpretation of the latent mysticism in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, this chapter is mainly informed by the readings of Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira and David Moser, yet it also finds great affinity with the ideas that Nunes developed, especially with regard to immanence as a vehicle for obtaining mystical truths, the process of depersonalization that G.H. in her contact with immanence, and her skeptical position towards language that supposedly undermines its expressive capacities. As for the stylistic study part, while my own analysis concentrates on the syntactic tendencies found in the work, the figure of repetition also forms an important part of my object of study, especially in the first section, where it is examined next to hypotaxis. However, my observations on the use of repetition in the text do not overlap with Nunes' ideas, since I observe distinct functions and effects that are not mutually exclusive. Ultimately, although my reading of *A paixão segundo G.H.* will coincide

to some extent with Nunes' study, it will not focus on the idea of a movement from word to silence and from silence to word, and it will rather concentrate on another movement within the composition of Lispector's texts: that between hypotaxis and parataxis.

In section **1. The Nature of G.H.'s Quest**, I propose to understand the governing structure of the novel as spiral fall, in which each revolution gravitates around a distinct central point. I argue that this structure is not only observable in the transitions between chapters, but in the configuration of a recurring syntax that is predominantly hypotactic and tends to be organized through the figure of repetition. I build the argument of how this syntactic form can be thought of as corresponding on the thematic plane with the dizzying process of arrangement through which the narrator seeks to make sense of her experience. Informed by the readings of Solange Ribeiro and Moser, I also seek to establish the defining features of G.H.'s mystical exploration.

In section **2. Approaches to Immanence**, I examine two types of moments in which the syntax of the narration becomes predominantly paratactic: the passages of description of the cockroach and the reenactments of a profound experience of the present moment. I argue that the syntactic coincidence corresponds with the thematic idea that the encounter with the materiality of the cockroach allowed G.H. to enter immanence and experience unmediated reality. I then relate this argument to a reading of the figure of the cockroach which moves away from the symbolic interpretations developed by Solange de Ribeiro and Moser, and I make the case for observing this figure from the angle of instantiation rather than allegory.

In section **3. Disaggregation of G.H.'s Personality**, I leave for a moment the syntactic descriptions to further substantiate my interpretation of the text. In particular, I analyze G.H.'s process of depersonalization triggered by her encounter with the cockroach. I identify the thematic function of the unnamed man to whom G.H.'s narration is addressed. I also connect her undoing of social constructs to discuss the ethical readings that have been

made of the novel, and I make the case that an attentive reading of the text undermines the assumptions behind the approaches that avow some forms of ethical value in the novel's narrative. I advance the idea that the mystical stance that it assumes through G.H.'s narration does not point toward a possible reconciliation with otherness, but rather dismisses the very idea of reconciliation as unsubstantial.

Finally, in section **4. The Failure of Language**, I return to the angle of syntax to show one more function that parataxis acquires in the narrative: the presentation of revealed truths that come from the mystical ecstasy through which G.H. has lived an immediate experience of reality. I argue that this paratactic presentation of mystical revelations affords the sensation of immediacy and forcefulness of these affirmations, as they do not come from a logical argumentation. Approaching G.H.'s position towards language following Ortega y Gasset's conception of mysticism, I contend that the narrator's insistence on the impossibility of transmitting the essence of her experience denotes a an emphasis on the limits of language and logic for accessing transcendental truths, an emphasis which does not put an end to the attempts of expressing mystical thought by means of language itself, since the only alternative is a practice of mutism which the mystics may preach but not actually follow, as they remain eager to convince us of the veracity of their experiences. Thus, I conclude the first chapter and proceed to analyze *Água viva*, where I develop further discussions on the ideas that potentially substantiate the distribution of functions between parataxis and hypotaxis that we find in the works of Lispector.

1. The Nature of G.H.'s Quest

Like Nunes, Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira also perceives a cyclical structure in *A paixão segundo G.H.* She refers to the repetition of sentences as a transition between chapters, and

to the symmetry of six dashes in both the narrator's opening sentence and its final one.

Ribeiro de Oliveira postulates that the text, through this series of correspondences,

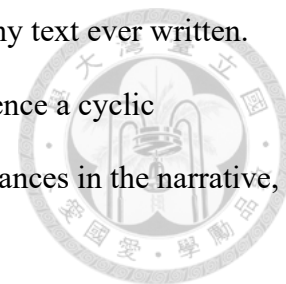
adota uma estrutura extremamente clara. A última frase de cada capítulo é a primeira do seguinte, num movimento cíclico, sem princípio nem fim (...) O texto termina como começa, sem ponto-final, com uma série de travessões, assinalando a impossibilidade de conclusão, incompatível com os vários níveis do real em que se engaja a protagonista, a escultora G.H (61).

(adopts an extremely clear structure. The last sentence of each chapter is also the first sentence of the next one, inside a cyclical movement, without beginning or end [...] The text ends as it begins, without a period, with a series of dashes, signaling the impossibility of conclusion, which would be incompatible with the various levels of reality on which the protagonist, the sculptor G.H., engages.)

Ribeiro de Oliveira locates in the cyclical structure of *A paixão segundo G.H.* an index of the narrative voice's reluctance to conclude its narration. This posture, Ribeiro de Oliveira notes, follows the complex relationship of dimensions of reality that G.H., as its narrator, traverses. Ribeiro de Oliveira thus suggests that the narration interweaves a web of complexity that cannot be reconciled in conclusive terms, so that G.H. would not be able to reach a space of resolution, and instead enters into a cyclical movement that knows no beginning and no end. Her and Nunes' arguments for a supposed cyclical circularity, however, may falter upon closer examination. As I will show below, we need a different way of conceiving *A paixão segundo G.H.*'s structure so that we can attempt a more adequate interpretation of the relationship between its content and form.

I agree with Ribeiro de Oliveira that the repetitions in the chapter transitions seem to point to a governing structure of the text. However, this correspondence between annexed chapters and the symmetry of punctuation at the beginning and end of the text do not follow a cyclical motion. If this were the case, the text should emulate some kind of return to a given starting point. Such a course would be a necessary condition to prove the existence of a cycle, yet the structure of the text, unlike that of *A hora da estrela*, does not follow such course. Nunes, as we have discussed above, sees in the work's ending a return to the initial silence

from which it departed, but this same argument could be made about any text ever written. The specific repetitions pointed out by Ribeiro de Oliveira do not evidence a cyclic movement. On the contrary, I will argue that they are used to mark advances in the narrative, which G.H. transits towards new discoveries and realizations.



Instead of the figure of a circle, I would like to propose the figure of a falling spiral with changing axes as the governing structure of the text. This figure I propose demarcates semicircular movements, yet not cyclical ones: the repetitions mark a partial circularities that continually propel the narrative forwards, resembling the turns of a spiral that revolves around different central points in each rotation. This spiral movement, I argue, is not only visible in the transitions between chapters, but also in the internal syntactic composition of many sentences throughout the text in which repetitions have a structuring role. To describe how this movement takes place at the syntactic level, let us first look at the following paragraph, in which G.H. describes the room where the cockroach has emerged:

Então abri de uma só vez os olhos, e vi em cheio a vastidão indelimitada do quarto, aquele quarto que vibrava em silêncio, laboratório de inferno. O quarto, o quarto desconhecido. Minha entrada nele se fizera enfim. A entrada para este quarto só tinha uma passagem, e estreita: pela barata. A barata que enchia o quarto de vibração enfim aberta, as vibrações de seus guizos de cascavel no deserto (57-58).

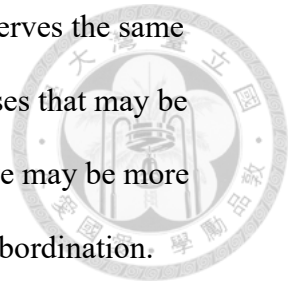
(Then I opened my eyes at once, and saw fully on the boundless vastness of the room, that room that vibrated in silence, laboratory of hell. The room, the unknown room. My entrance into it had finally been made. The entrance to this room had only one narrow passage: through the cockroach. The cockroach that filled the room with vibration finally opened, the vibrations of its rattlesnake rattles in the desert.)

G.H. begins by describing what she saw after opening her eyes. The grammatical subject of the clauses changes constantly, yet their appearances as subjects are often actually repetitions, for the same word had appeared in the previous clause. We can point to the shifting focal points intertwined in this passage: “quarto” (room), “entrada” (entrance), “barata” (cockroach), and “vibração” (vibration). Each clause is connected to the previous one by the correspondent shifting focal point. The repetition brings these elements into focus as the

narration explores their attributes, and in the same clause the narrative voice already finds the next element that it will then bring into focus in the following clause. Sometimes the last word of a preceding clause is repeated in the beginning following clause (...pela barata. A barata...) When this happens, we can say that the clauses are linked by the figure of anadiplosis. At the macro-structural level, the repetitions of a whole clause at the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next can be thought of as instances of anadiplosis. However, the word marking the focal point can also be repeated through its substitution by a pronoun (*O quarto, o quarto* desconhecido. Minha entrada *nele* se fizera enfim) or it can be located in any given position between the two clauses (Minha *entrada* nele se fizera enfim. *A entrada* para este quarto só tinha uma passagem.) Therefore, anadiplosis is but one among several forms through which the repetitions that structure the narrative are actualized. The repeated word may constitute the same grammatical subject of multiple clauses, while in other cases, the predicate of one clause contains the subject of the next clause, which in turn may contain in its predicate the subject of the consecutive clause, and so on.

The spiral movement advances through repetitions that constitute small circularities which do not inaugurate a cycle or circuit, but rather continually orient the development of the narrative towards new discoveries. Although each repetition can be thought of as a return to a particular point, the narration does not actually come back to some previous configuration that would imply a new beginning in a cyclical process. On the contrary, each repetition in G.H.'s narration tends to drive the following sentence towards the deepening examination of the object or concept contained by that repetition (a given focal point), which will be then connected to another focal point. The repetition of sentences in between chapters explicitly denotes this chaining of ideas, observations, and sensations by which the plot of the novel progresses. When each chapter begins with the sentence that ended the previous one, the repetition of that sentence resembles a propellant that pushes the narrative following

G.H.'s articulation of thoughts. On the syntactic scale, this movement serves the same deepening and chaining function. These repetitions occur between clauses that may be organized either in a coordinated or subordinate way. The passage above may be more paratactic, but there is, however, an observable tendency to syntactic subordination.



Throughout *A paixão segundo G.H.*, it is common to find relatively long sentences with multiple subordinate clauses, as in the following example in which G.H. is contrasting the nature of the room to her personal traits:

O quarto era o oposto do que eu criara em minha casa, o oposto da suave beleza que resultara de meu talento de arrumar, de meu talento de viver, o oposto de minha ironia serena, de minha doce e isenta ironia: era uma violentação das minhas aspas, das aspas que faziam de mim uma citação de mim (40).

(The room was the opposite of what I had created in my house, the opposite of the soft beauty that had resulted from my talent for arranging, my talent for living, the opposite of my serene irony, my sweet and exempt irony: it was a violation of my quotation marks, of the quotation marks that made me a quotation of myself.)

In this hypotactic sentence, G.H. is opposing her constructed self to the raw nature of the maid's room where the cockroach has emerged and found the protagonist. With each repetition of each element brought to light (the opposition of the room, G.H.'s talent, her irony, her quotation marks), G.H. deepens the idea of a contrast between the crudeness of the room and the constructedness of the components of her identity. We notice semi clauses separated by commas that develop the same theme, that is, they expand on the same predicate (o oposto da suave beleza que resultara de meu talento de arrumar, de meu talento de viver, o oposto de minha ironia serena...), increasing the sense of repetition and semicircle on the same axis (focal point: *o oposto*). In this way, the clauses are linked by a repetition, figuring a consciousness in motion: G.H.'s narration advances by bringing one element to the foreground and then connecting it to a following element. As Cixous observes, "*In The Passion according to G.H.*, each sentence is the continuation of the previous one" (117). With the predominantly hypotactic structure of sentences, subordinate clauses open spaces to

illuminate any component in the same sentence, thus condensing the spiraling movement in a more accelerated manner and often provoking a sense of vertigo. Creating a sense of rushing and dizziness, the shifting focal points of G.H.'s consciousness pivot her toward a deeper understanding of her experience. In the following example, the protagonist has just seen the multiple eyes of the cockroach, and in each of them she recognized what she called "a vida me olhando" (55) (life itself looking at me.)

Como chamar de outro modo aquilo horrível e cru, matéria prima e plasma seco, que ali estava, enquanto eu recuava para dentro de mim em náusea seca, eu caindo séculos e séculos dentro de uma lama – era lama, e nem sequer lama já seca mas lama ainda úmida e ainda viva, era uma lama onde se remexiam com lentidão insuportável as raízes de minha identidade (55).

(How else to call that horrible and raw thing, primary material and dry plasma, which lay there, as I receded into myself in dry nausea, I falling centuries and centuries into a mud – it was mud, and not even mud already dried, but mud still wet and still alive, it was a mud where the roots of my identity were stirring with unbearable slowness.)

In this sentence, we can observe the same spiral movement instantiated in a hypotactic configuration of clauses connected by repetition. In this case, the shifting points indicated by repetition are: "aquilo horrível e cru" (that horrible and raw thing), "eu" (I), and "lama" (mud). Through these points of focalization, the narrator explores the inherent primordial materiality she shares with the cockroach as an organism, and is absolutely terrified by the crudeness of reality. This recognition, the narrator tells us, throws her back centuries to the very roots of her identity. It is also in this paragraph that we encounter a key term for my interpretation of the spiral form in the text: the word *caindo* (falling).

We can understand the narration in *A paixão segundo G.H.* as a spiraling descent of the protagonist's consciousness. Each new thought and idea precipitates her further down, forming a vertiginous plunge into the depths of hell. This wording is not a personal exaggeration. Throughout the text we find multiple explicit references of G.H.'s experience as an infernal one. Here are just some of them: "talvez até o fim deste relato impossível talvez eu entenda, oh talvez pelo caminho do inferno eu chegue a encontrar o que nós precisamos"

(55) (perhaps by the end of this impossible story I will perhaps understand, oh perhaps by the road to hell I will find what we need.) “Pois em mim mesma eu vi como é o inferno” (119) (For in myself I have seen what hell is like.) “Estou de novo indo para a mais primária vida divina, estou indo para um inferno de vida crua” (58) (I am again going to the most primary divine life, I am going to an inferno of raw life.) “Minha grandeza, à procura da grandeza do Deus, levara-me à grandeza do inferno” (96) (My greatness, seeking the greatness of God, led me to the greatness of hell.)

G.H.’s consciousness has fallen to hell. The consistent chaining of clauses, sentences, and chapters through repetitions, often in a hypotactic configuration, seems to mirror the vertigo and anguish inherent in G.H.’s infernal quest for meaning. By structuring her narrative as a spiral fall, G.H. gestures how her consciousness attempts to organize the reality of her experience and plunges her deeper and deeper into the abyss, where she will discover the roots of her identity and its nature. The narrative transit is therefore one of discovery and the search for meaning. Let us leave for a moment the analysis of the formal structure of the work and explore its thematic direction, so that we can observe how the interaction between these two operate in the text.

The quest for meaning as a thematic principle is suggested by the very opening of the narration, where we find the following two sentences: “— — — — — estou procurando, estou procurando. Estou tentando entender” (9) (— — — — — I am searching, I am searching. I am trying to understand.) If we pass immediately to the novel’s ending, we can confirm that this search for meaning has not inaugurated any cyclical movement, for it does not return to its initial point. Ribeiro de Oliveira refers to the punctuation symmetry in both beginning and end (the repeated use of six dashes) to assert the presence of a cyclical movement in the governing structure of *A paixão segundo G.H.* However, in the ending, what we find are the following two sentences: “A vida se me é, e eu não entendo o que digo. E então adoro. — — —

— — —” (181). (*A vida se me é* [see pages 87-8 for a discussion on the meaning of this expression], and I do not understand what I am saying. And then I adore. — — — — —) There is no return to the initial point, as a cyclical conception of the work would necessarily have it. On the contrary, the narrative has only moved away from the beginning: G.H. is no longer searching for meaning, she is no longer trying to understand. This observation leads us to the following questions: Why do we find this correspondence of the six dashes? Did G.H. find what she was looking for? What is she looking for in the first place?

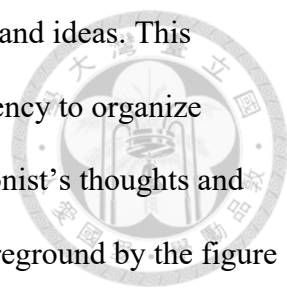
We shall come to answering each of these questions in this section of the chapter. For the moment, let us concentrate on what G.H. is looking for. It might seem to be the case that G.H.’s quest is to make sense of her encounter with the cockroach. However, Ribeiro de Oliveira proposes that G.H.’s search for a form of transcendental meaning had probably already begun even before she encountered this insect. The critic suggests that the sculptor’s mystical inquiries could be observed in her sculptural projects. In Ribeiro de Oliveira’s view, since G.H. is a visual artist with a special fixation on the question of form, this fixation could potentially reveal her mystical orientation, which she possessed long before she entered the maid’s room. While we do not find in the text a clear image of what the sculptures of the narrator artist look like, there are some indications that her sculptures followed a geometric abstractionism. Ribeiro de Oliveira refers to a particular moment in G.H.’s narration, a point before she entered the maid’s room, when she was sitting at the breakfast table. The sculptor entertains herself by using breadcrumbs to produce triangles made of their opposite shapes, which seem to fascinate her: “eu ia formando uma pirâmide curiosa que me satisfazia: um triângulo reto feito de formas redondas, uma forma que é feita de suas formas opostas. Se isso me tinha um sentido, miolo de pão e meus dedos provavelmente sabiam” (28) (I was forming a curious pyramid that satisfied me: a right triangle made of round shapes, a shape that is made of its opposite forms. If this had a meaning to me, the breadcrumbs and my fingers

probably knew it.) Drawing on French anthropologist Gilbert Durand's observations about the circle and the square embedded in buddhist mandalas, Ribeiro de Oliveira argues that forms elaborated by their opposite shapes, like G.H.s bread figures, can be thought of as geometric creations that stand for "imagens do absoluto e da conciliação de contrários que os místicos apontam em Deus" (67) (images of the absolute and the reconciliation of opposites that the mystics point to in God.)

In the words of Ribeiro de Oliveira, G.H.'s looking for something "simples, permanente" (simple, permanent), "uma forma que se forme sozinha, como uma crosta que por si mesma endurece" (68) (a form that forms itself, like a crust that hardens by itself.) "Visa, em suma, aproximar-se da imanência, da realidade não mediada" (68) (She aims, in short, to approach immanence, the unmediated reality.) Following Ribeiro de Oliveira's interpretation, G.H.'s mystical quest could have begun before her encounter with the cockroach, which might have only propelled G.H. toward what she was already searching for. Ribeiro de Oliveira summarizes the series of events narrated in the novel as this: "A contemplação de uma barata esmagada contra a porta do guarda-roupa conduz a escultora à um encontro com o Outro, consigo própria e, finalmente, a comunhão mística, a ingestão da massa expelida pelo corpo do inseto" (63). (The contemplation of a cockroach smashed against the closet door leads the sculptor to an encounter with the Other, with herself, and finally to mystical communion, to the ingestion of the mass expelled by the insect's body.) That is, the encounter with the cockroach leads G.H. to a true connection with otherness in its material immanence, which in turn leads the protagonist to mystical communion. Thus, following Ribeiro de Oliveira's interpretation, G.H. effectively ends her quest within the narration, which does come at odds with her conception of a cyclical movement as its governing structure.

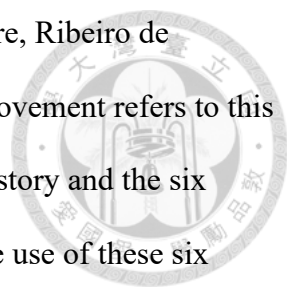
Attaining mystical communion through an approach to immanence: is that what G.H.'s quest is about? Besides Nunes, David Moser also agrees with this point. He suggests that G.H. is looking for "the thing itself", a search that Lispector declared to be her own project (Moser 267). Moser highlights how G.H. refers to thing-in-itself by terms such as the neutral, the inexpressive, the insipid, the colorless, the unsalted (267-268). Yet no term can be definitive, because, as Moser points out, "no matter how many words she uses to describe it, it remains unfathomable" (267). There is an obvious reason: if, in order to reach mystical communion, G.H. must approach immanence, that is, unmediated reality, this cannot be apprehended through any words at all, for all language is itself a form of mediation. That may be why the G.H. writes about her mystical experience as follows: "Vou agora te contar como entrei no inexpressivo que sempre foi a minha busca cega e secreta" (96) (I will now tell you how I entered the inexpressive which has always been my blind and secret search.) Through her narration, G.H. recreates her experience, piecing it together clause by clause, trying to illuminate with words the transcendental meaning of her mystical encounter, which in this passage she confesses to have been the object of her search before meeting the cockroach. Following her own conceptualization of transcendence, the account of her experience can only constitute an approximation to it, since the mystical contact with immanence cannot be apprehended by words and can only be alluded to through its mediation. As we shall see later on, the very failure to verbalize the mystical experience is made explicit towards the end of the novel.

With these observations at hand, we can attempt an interpretation of the work's form and its syntactic tendencies in relation to its thematic content. G.H.'s turbulent exploration for a mystical meaning formally translates into a governing structure which figures in the narrative as a spiraling fall with shifting focal points. The dizzying narration tells the plummeting of the protagonist's consciousness into the depths of hell, where she will discover



the truth about her identity elaborated through her enchaining of words and ideas. This structure is realized at the syntactic level through the predominant tendency to organize sentences through repetitions that string together and propel the protagonist's thoughts and narration around shifting ideas and objects, which are brought to the foreground by the figure of repetition. This structure is also observable in the repetition of sentences in chapter transitions. The figure of repetition thus serves in the work to interweave shifting focal points, an interweaving that tends to be coupled with syntactic subordination. Such conjunction affords the complex interlocking of ideas and often creates a sense of vertigo. G.H.'s consciousness organizes the reality of her experience by making visible the connections between the elements she examines with her thoughts. The organization of reality by her consciousness probably shows a hypotactic tendency because subordination affords illustrations of the underlying order between the different elements, that is to say, it permits to illuminate attributes of causation and correlation, bifurcations and convergences, complements of time and space of the shifting focal points. Through the repetitions, G.H.'s narration formally stresses her mind's capacity to find relationships between things in her pursuit of a transcendental meaning. Indeed, G.H. says of herself: "Sempre gostei de arrumar. (...) Ordenando as coisas, eu crio e entendo ao mesmo tempo. (...) Arrumar é achar a melhor forma" (31) ("I always liked arranging. [...] By ordering things, I create and understand at the same time. [...] Arranging means finding the best form.") This way, G.H. declares to have a special talent for the arrangement of things, which potentially motivated her previous sculptural projects, and which she now mobilizes to shape her narration in the essentially connecting way I have described in this chapter in order to make sense of her mystic encounter.

Before moving on to the next section, I will now provide an answer to the remaining question that I posited above: Why is there an unusual correspondence in the punctuation



marks used at the beginning and end of the work? As I have noted before, Ribeiro de Oliveira's reading of the structure of the work as a supposed cyclical movement refers to this correspondence of the six dashes that open the opening sentence of the story and the six dashes that conclude its final sentence as evidence of its circularity. The use of these six dashes instead of the period in the last sentence, Ribeiro de Oliveira writes, points to an impossibility of concluding the narrative. While I do not share a cyclical conception of *A paixão segundo G.H.*, I agree with Ribeiro de Oliveira that the use of six dashes seems to deny the idea of a definitive beginning and end to the narrative. Since all the chapters begin by repeating the sentence with which the previous chapter had ended, I venture that the six hyphens before the opening sentence suggest that this beginning is actually a repetition of a previous sentence, with some possible silence between them that could be the space for the mystic experience of immanence. The hyphens following the last sentence also suggest that it will be repeated in a subsequent sentence outside of the textual narration. In this way, G.H.'s narrative is marked by an inherent continuity materialized through repetition. What such a construction underlines is *the incessant march of the mind, which simply cannot stop finding relations between things and enunciating them*. Each enunciation of a thought contains within itself a doorway to the next one, whether or not the repetition of the linking element is made explicit. This way, what G.H.'s narration structure ultimately affords is to formally highlight the process through which her consciousness is always connecting one thing to another. The six final dashes suggest the impossibility of stopping this process, since it will continue as long as the consciousness is alive and active. The mind simply cannot stop it because that would be to stop human language and reach total silence. While G.H. will not stop the linguistic passage of her consciousness during her narration, she will mobilize language and its unstoppable weaving of relations to allude to her inexpressible mystical experience, the

overcoming of the mental mediation of reality. And, to achieve this allusion, G.H. will sometimes resort to parataxis as the governing form of syntactic structure.



2. Approaches to Immanence

In the previous section I have proposed to understand the structure of *A paixão segundo G.H.* as a spiraling fall in which G.H.'s consciousness plunges into the depths of hell. I have argued that such a structure mirrors her anguished quest of consciousness to make sense of her mystical experience that the encounter of the cockroach has triggered. This quest is propelled by repetitions that highlight the shifting focal points on which G.H. finds connecting relations, which at the syntactic level is reflected in a preference for hypotaxis.

The first five chapters of the novel show higher percentages of sentences with syntactic subordination: 64.38%, 59.04%, 54.39%, 66.16%, and 52.62% respectively. These sentences are often structured in the way I have described with the examples from the previous section, that is, by using repetitions that allow for deepening examination on ideas and objects as the narrator illuminates the connections between these elements. Such syntactic structure seems to correspond the dominant structure of the work, based on connection and repetition. However, within this governing structure, a paratactic tendency emerges at given key points, perhaps revealing a particular conception of the mystical experience that G.H. has encountered.

There is an evident shift of syntactic tendency in chapter six. Sentences with subordination here account for only 28.57%. In this chapter, G.H. tries to kill the cockroach by smashing it with the closet door, yet the cockroach remains still alive after the blow. It is then that the narrator looks at the cockroach's "face," and her impressions are then presented in a predominantly paratactic manner:

Era uma cara sem contorno. As antenas saíam em bigodes dos lados da boca. A boca marrom era bem delineada. Os finos e longos bigodes mexiam-se lentos e secos. Seus

olhos pretos facetados olhavam. Era uma barata tão velha como um peixe fossilizado. Era uma barata tão velha como salamandras e quimeras e grifos e leviatãs. Ela era antiga como uma lenda (53).

(It was a face with no outline. The antennae came out in whiskers on the sides of the mouth. The brown mouth was well outlined. The thin, long whiskers moved slowly and dryly. Its faceted black eyes stared. It was a cockroach as old as a fossilized fish. She was a cockroach as old as salamanders and chimeras and griffins and leviathans. She was as old as a legend.)

The descriptions of the cockroach found in this chapter comprise mostly short, monoclausal sentences, as observed in this example. This rhythm of this syntactic coordination contrasts with the accumulation of subordinate clauses we had previously found. However, we still find that repetitions guide the development of the narrative. In addition to the words repeated in distinct sentences (*boca* and *bigodes*), we see how the last three sentences also repeat a same grammatical and thematic pattern to highlight the primordial antiquity of the cockroach through the rhetoric of comparison. These formal features suggest that G.H.'s narrative continues to advance through the interweaving of focal points foregrounded by repetition. However, her mind is no longer organizing reality in terms of subordinating relationships, that is, it no longer establishes as many grammatical hierarchies among the elements of the sentence to evidence causality or to define the specific functions of different attributes, or to illuminate the significance of time and place complements. Instead, we find, for the first time in the narration, a succession of primary impressions which, through the brevity and simplicity of the sentences, become blunter and more forceful. The presence of the cockroach thus acquires a sense of immediacy, as the narrative reconstructs a concrete image of the cockroach piece by piece, impression after impression. The scaffolding of G.H.'s mind does not stop its construction work and elaborates a series of similes that associate the cockroach with creatures emerged from the depths of time. Parataxis also seems to give force to these comparisons through the forcefulness of their enunciation, since they do not depend on an argumentative construction. These comparisons are only possible because her mind has

already found relations between distinct elements, so their enunciation may diminish the sense of immediacy. Yet it is important to underline that this direct observation of the cockroach is the first time in the narrative that we encounter a series of descriptions expressed mostly through paratactic structures. Despite being a diegetic recreation of a past event, and having all the verbs in the past tense, this recreation is formalized as an experience of consecutive primary impressions, highlighting the experience of the present moment that G.H. lived during this passage.

This first paratactic moment leads G.H. to several recognitions of the artificiality and redundancy of human feelings. Thus begins her process of depersonalization which I will discuss in the following section. In chapters seven, eight and nine, a slight predominance of a hypotactic tendency resumes (53.97%, 59.1%, 51%,) by which G.H.'s reflections on the destitution of individuality tend to be organized. However, in the meantime, a white matter continues to be expelled from the cockroach's body. After noticing it, the protagonist's attention returns to the cockroach's face in chapter eleven. This chapter also shows a clear paratactic tendency, with only 37.14% of its sentences having any syntactic subordination. We now return to a sense of immediacy as G.H. describes the cockroach's own vivid gaze:

A barata é um ser feio e brilhante. A barata é pelo avesso. Não, não, ela mesma não tem lado direito nem avesso: ela é aquilo. O que nela é exposto fiz o meu avesso ignorado. Ela me olhava. E não era um rosto. Era uma máscara. Uma máscara de escafandrista. Aquela gema preciosa ferruginosa. Os dois olhos eram vivos como dois ovários. Ela me olhava com a fertilidade cega de seu olhar (77).

(The cockroach is an ugly, shiny being. The cockroach is inside out. No, no, she herself has neither right side nor reverse side: she is it. What is exposed in her undid my inside out. She looked at me. And it was not a face. It was a mask. A mask of a scavenger. That ferruginous precious gem. The two eyes were alive like two ovaries. She looked at me with the blind fertility of her gaze.)

At this point, the cockroach is seen by G.H. in its living, neutral nature. The neutrality of its existence is summed up in the use of the word “aquilo” (it) which will become central in *Água viva*. G.H. now finds in the cockroach something which also belongs to herself, but

which had remained hidden until that moment. In this way, a complementarity is attained where G.H. and the cockroach have the same weight as living beings that are gazing back at that which is looking at them. With this realization, something extraordinary happens.

The narrator reports that, in that moment of seeing deeply into the gaze of the cockroach and the white matter expelled from its body, for the first time she succumbed to the absoluteness of the present moment. In her own words, something which she had never experienced before finally happened to her: “o choque com o momento chamado ‘já’” (76) (the clash with the moment called “now”.) Chapter eleven then ends as follows: “Finalmente, meu amor, eu sucumbi. E tornou-se um agora.” (77) (Finally, my love, I succumbed. And it became a now.) And so we move to chapter twelve, in which the narrator fully mobilizes the resource of parataxis to recreate a sensation of immediacy much more intense than in the previous passages:

Era finalmente agora. Era simplesmente agora. Era assim: o país estava em onze horas da manhã. Superficialmente como um quintal que é verde, da mais delicada superficialidade. Verde, verde – verde é um quintal. Entre mim e o verde, a água do ar. A verde água do ar. Vejo tudo através de um copo cheio. Nada se ouve. No resto da casa a sombra está toda inchada. A superficialidade madura. São onze horas da manhã no Brasil. É agora. Trata-se exatamente de agora (78).

(It was finally now. It was simply now. It was like this: the country was at eleven o'clock in the morning. Superficially like a backyard that is green, of the most delicate superficiality. Green, green – green is a yard. Between me and the green, the water of the air. The green water of the air. I see everything through a full glass. Nothing can be heard. In the rest of the house the shade is all swollen. The ripe superficiality. It is eleven o'clock in the morning in Brazil. It is now. It is exactly now.)

Let us notice how the verbs in this passage suddenly transit from the past tense to the present tense, completing its recreation of instantaneity. G.H.'s impressions here are articulated exclusively in paratactic form. In this passage, the narration seems to have completely entered “la loi du «profond aujourd'hui»” (38) (the law of the ‘profound today’) that Rancière names as the underlying logic behind parataxis. But unlike its usage in the works of European realism in the nineteenth century, where the paratactic configuration of elements (not

necessarily materialized in a paratactic syntax) highlighted the presence of the forces of nature and bore an endearing implicit relationship to the feelings of the characters in the novel, here parataxis acquires the function to capture the very fleetingness of time in the very instant it goes by. Let us also note in this passage that the use of repetitions has acquired a new function: they no longer highlight the focal points that guide the narrative, but now deepen the sense of the present in an accelerated rhythm, resembling the pulsation of seconds in their instantaneous passing. The language of this passage seeks to adhere as closely as possible to a sense of immediacy in order to recreate the protagonist's deep experience of the now. This coincidence of the paratactic configuration both in the descriptions of the cockroach and in this experience of the present moment reflects a fundamental idea in the work (which Nunes has also illuminated in his analysis): the encounter with the cockroach and with its inner materiality has led G.H. to experience, for the first time in her life, the immanence of things. This is why G.H. affirms that, in that moment, she stepped for the first time on "o nucleo, o seio da natureza" (79) (the nucleus, the heart of nature.)

As I have previously noted, my conception of G.H.'s mystical quest is largely informed by the readings of Nunes, Ribeiro de Oliveira and Moser. These authors point to mystical union through an approach to immanence as the ultimate purpose towards which G.H. navigates in her narration. Yet there is one common point in Ribeiro de Oliveira's and Moser's analysis that I want to call into question here: their discussions of the cockroach's symbolism. Both authors identify in G.H.'s encounter with the cockroach an approximation to immanence, that is, to reality unmediated by the constructs of human consciousness. However, they also develop their interpretations of this encounter through the lenses of allegory. In the case of Ribeiro de Oliveira, the cockroach is seen as an avatar of the black maid Janair, as both beings are thought of as representing otherness. Ribeiro de Oliveira then argues that the mystical communion which G.H. reaches through her identification with the

cockroach anticipates revolution in the social order in favor of the excluded (76-77). In Moser's case, his interpretation tends toward a psychologizing reading of the author. He sees the cockroach as an uncanny symbol of the Lispector's mother (266), thus developing one of the main theses of his biography: that the trauma caused by her mother's death motivates much of Lispector's writing. For both interpretations, the cockroach is meant to stand for something beyond itself. The textual presence of the cockroach is thus taken by Moser and Ribeiro de Oliveira as a figure loaded with symbolic meaning that can be elucidated according to certain clues provided by the text itself or by the author's personal life.

I am not interested here in refuting the specific arguments on which these authors rely to restore the allegorical meaning of the cockroach, but rather in suggesting a different way of reading its role in the novel. I argue that it is more productive and pertinent to understand the cockroach from the lenses of instantiation and not of allegory. From this non-allegorical point of view, the cockroach is not considered to stand for something else beyond itself, but is rather observed as an instance of living materiality that provides a pivotal function for G.H.'s mystical quest. Her encounter with the cockroach has the primary consequence of leading the sculptor to identify herself as merely another instance of the same materiality on which all life is grounded. Through this realization, G.H. recognizes that immanence can only be experienced when one is in contact with the deep materiality in which reality is manifested. Thus, at the end of chapter twelve, G.H. affirms:

O que sai do ventre da barata não é transcendável – ah, não quero dizer que é o contrário da beleza, “contrário de beleza” nem faz sentido, o que sai da barata é: “hoje”, bendito o fruto de teu ventre – eu quero a atualidade sem enfeitá-la com um futuro que a redima, nem com uma esperança – até agora o que a esperança queria em mim era apenas escamotear a atualidade (81).

(What comes out of the cockroach's womb is not transcendable – ah, I don't want to say that it is the opposite of beauty, “opposite of beauty” nor does it make sense, what comes out of the cockroach is: “today”, blessed is the fruit of your womb – I want actuality without adorning it with a future that redeems it, nor with a hope – until now what hope wanted in me was only to conceal actuality.)

G.H. is referring to the white material oozed from the cockroach's body. It is through the contact with this materiality that she has experienced immanence: the present moment in which things just are. To this experience of pure actuality, G.H. contrasts the mental constructions of a future time that seek to redeem the present moment through the vain efforts of hope. In this way, G.H. has come to the realization that hope only seeks to deny the present moment to offer the illusion of a possible salvation in the future. Hope is thought of as a deceitful ornament that does not allow her to experience reality as it is. Consequently, in order to live the pure actuality, G.H. must abandon all hope. For this reason, G.H. goes on to say: “quero encontrar a alegria neste instante – quero o Deus naquilo que sai do ventre da barata – mesmo que isto, em meus antigos termos humanos, signifique o pior, e, em termos humanos, o infernal” (82) (I want to find joy in this instant – I want the God in what comes out of the cockroach's womb – even if this, in my old human terms, means the worst, and, in human terms, the infernal.)

This is a point of no return. G.H.'s consciousness can only go deeper and deeper into her infernal experience. The direction of her descent is now clear: G.H. seeks to attain pure immanence, of which she has found a particular instance through the materiality of the cockroach. As a form of mediation, parataxis also cannot apprehend pure immanence. Yet although it is not an experience that can be represented in language, G.H. will continue with her narration, now directed towards an elimination of all forms of mediations that prevent her consciousness from experiencing itself as an instance of immanent materiality. Chapter twelve thus ends with this realization: “Também a beleza do sal e a beleza das lágrimas eu teria de abandonar. Também isso, pois o que eu estava vendo era ainda anterior ao humano” (82) (The beauty of salt and the beauty of tears too I would have to abandon. That too, for what I was seeing was previous to the human). While it is obvious that the cockroach is a biological creature prior to human beings, I think this may not be what G.H. is referring to.

The narrator rather seems to suggest that she will have to abandon her hope, her convictions, her aesthetic conceptions and even her way of feeling the world because she has found something more real and true that precedes all these constructs coming from her own humanity, and which can only be experienced after G.H. undoes them. Only then will G.H. be able to experience herself fully as an instance of pure materiality, which we can equal with a divine experience: mystical union. The way forward has been now illuminated, and it is the path of depersonalization. In G.H.'s words: "só por uma anomalia da natureza, é que, em vez de sermos o Deus, assim como os outros seres O são, em vez de O sermos, nós queríamos vê-Lo" (126) (It is only by an anomaly of nature that, instead of being God, as other beings are Him, we wanted to see Him, instead of being Him ourselves.) To be God herself, to be one with God as animals are, G.H. must stop wanting to see him outside of herself.

3. Disaggregation of G.H.'s Personality

In the previous section, I have pointed out that parataxis as a principle of syntactic structure appears both in the moments when G.H. makes descriptions of the cockroach and when she profoundly experiences the present moment. Parataxis affords the narrative at both moments to acquire a vivid sense of immediacy. This formal coincidence of paratactical instances reinforces the idea that it has been the experience of the materiality of the cockroach that leads G.H. toward immanence, a path to mystical union. G.H.'s recognition of herself as an instance of living matter on a par with the cockroach precipitates her into a process of depersonalization whose implications I explore with more depth in this section. G.H. eventually names depersonalization as the way she has taken with her mystical experience:

Antigamente purificar-me significaria uma crueldade contra o que eu chamava de beleza, e contra o que eu chamava de "eu", sem saber que "eu" era um acréscimo de mim. Mas agora, através de meu mais difícil espanto – estou enfim caminhando em

direção ao caminho inverso. Caminho em direção à destruição do que construí, caminho para a despersonalização (174).

(Previously, purifying me would have meant a cruelty against what I called beauty, and against what I called “I,” without knowing that “I” was an addition to me. But now, through my most difficult amazement – I am finally walking towards the opposite path. I am moving towards the destruction of what I have built, I am moving towards depersonalization.)

After the encounter with the cockroach, G.H. gradually begins to observe her personality as the product of a principle of individuation constructed around aesthetic and moral norms. This principle of individuation is now denounced as an addition to the actual self, a supplement that needs to be gotten rid of through a process of depersonalization. The principle of individuation is to be undermined because it obscures the ultimate truth that any living being is only a mere instance of living materiality, that is, a particular manifestation of matter bound by a divine omnipresent vital element, “elemento vital que liga as coisas” (98) (the vital element that binds things together.) Therefore, for G.H. to fully recognize herself as an instance of this fundamental materiality bound together by constituent vital principle, she will go through a process of personality disaggregation that will undo the veil of reality produced by the principle of individuation. In the words of the protagonist, what she now seeks is “despersonalização como a destituição do individual inútil – a perda de tudo o que se possa perder e, ainda assim, ser” (175) (depersonalization as the destitution of useless individuality – the loss of everything that can be lost and still be.) That which individualizes her is branded by G.H. as useless, for she now aims to get rid of it all until only the most fundamental remains. The protagonist also calls this process a “despojamento inicial do humano construído” (126) (an initial stripping of the constructed humanity.) We find in her a new conception which sees human constructs as superfluous aggregates that have to be undermined in order to reach the essentiality of things.

G.H. goes through a spiraling fall into the abyss of existence, and the further she falls, the more constructions of her personality are undone. G.H. eventually recognizes the

direction of her fall: “Agora aquilo que me apela e me chama é o neutro. Não tenho palavras para exprimir, e falo então em neutro” (161) (Now what appeals to me and calls me is the neutral. I have no words to express, and so I speak in the neutral.) The omnipresent vital element is called neutral because it lacks a determinate value following the scales constructed by the human mind. As we will confirm while examining *A hora da estrela*, it is simply not conceivable in terms of value. We are dealing here with a form apophatic mysticism, for the immanent cannot be addressed but in negative terms.

G.H. senses her process of depersonalization as a particularly violent experience, as everything that had sustained her individuality is being undone. Hence her affirmation “O neutro era o inferno” (83) (The neutral was hell.) To be in communion with the omnipresent vital element, she must shed her personality and abandon all hope of individual salvation. The protagonist explains further why hope prevents human beings from distinguishing divinity in the present moment:

A esperança não existe porque ela não é mais um futuro adiado, é hoje. Porque o Deus não promete. Ele é muito maior que isso: Ele é, e nunca pára de ser. Somos nós que não agüentamos esta luz sempre atual, e então a prometemos para depois, somente para não senti-la hoje mesmo e já (147).

(Hope does not exist because it is no longer a postponed future, it is today. Because God does not promise. He is much bigger than that: He is, and never stops being. It is we who cannot stand this ever present light, and so we promise it for later, only not to feel it today and right now.)

Hope is understood by G.H. as a form of postponement of the divine born of the human reluctance to see the ever-present light of God. It is an expression of the reluctance to undo all that which individuals believe that constitutes them, and so they cling to their constructed personalities as well. The process of recognition by which G.H. understands the emptiness of human constructs, especially of the hope of a deferred divinity, is a violent one because it goes directly against the accustomed conception of the self, and it extinguishes the illusions that kept it alive:

Sei que se eu abandonar o que foi uma vida toda organizada pela esperança, sei que abandonar tudo isso – em prol dessa coisa mais ampla que é estar vivo – abandonar tudo isso dói como separar-se de um filho ainda não nascido. A esperança é um filho ainda não nascido, só prometido, e isso machuca (147).

(I know that if I abandon what has been a whole life organized by hope, I know that abandoning all that – for the sake of this larger thing that is being alive – abandoning all that hurts like parting with an unborn child. Hope is an unborn child, only promised, and that hurts.)

This analogy of hope as a child dead before birth derives part of its dramatic force from a subplot in G.H.'s narration: at some previous time, she had decided to have an abortion. The encounter with the cockroach revives memories of when G.H. had made the decision to part with her unborn child. The sculptor's comparison of herself at the time of the abortion with the crushed cockroach reinforces the idea that both are just two instances of a neutral organic materiality:

Durante as intermináveis horas em que andara pelas ruas resolvendo sobre o aborto, que no entanto já estava resolvido com o senhor, doutor, durante essas horas meus olhos também deviam estar insossos. Na rua eu também não passava de milhares de cílios de protozoário neutro batendo, eu já conhecia em mim mesma o olhar brilhante de uma barata que foi tomada pela cintura (90).

(During the endless hours I had walked the streets resolving the abortion, which however was already resolved with him, the doctor, during those hours my eyes must also have been dull. In the street I was also nothing but a thousand neutral protozoan batting cilia, I already knew in myself the glowing gaze of a cockroach that was taken by the waist.)

Another subplot potentially related to the abortion story is inscribed in the multiple references to a botched affair with the unnamed man to whom G.H. addresses her narration, and which she declares at the beginning of her narration to have invented herself. In several moments, it becomes evident that the use of the second person does not refer generically to the reader, but to a specific male character with whom G.H. affirms to share a common past: “Lembrei-me de ti, quando beijara teu rosto de homem, devagar, devagar beijara (...)” (87) (I remembered you, when I had kissed your man's face, as I slowly, slowly kissed [...]) This structuring of

the narrative with a defined addressee becomes especially significant in the light of the process of depersonalization that G.H. goes through.

The narrator will call out to the unnamed man multiple times throughout the whole novel; a common theme is G.H.'s imploring him to stay by her side. It is not that she gives signs of desiring to resume their love affair, but rather that G.H. pleads his imagined presence as a form of solace at the prospect of losing her personality altogether. G.H. asks him often to hold her hand, and to not let go of her: "Segura a minha mão, porque sinto que estou indo. Dá-me a tua mão, não me abandones, juro que também eu não queria: eu também vivia bem, eu era uma mulher de quem se poderia dizer 'vida e amores de G.H.'" (160) (Hold my hand, for I feel that I am going. Give me your hand, don't abandon me, I swear I didn't want to either: I too lived well, I was a woman of whom one could say "life and loves of G.H.") This imploration illuminates the special connection to the socialized world represented by the unnamed man. By holding his hand, G.H. attempts to cling to a vestige of her past life, to the human personality built on hope: "Não me deixes ver porque estou perto de ver o núcleo da vida – e, através da barata que mesmo agora revejo, através dessa amostra de calmo horror vivo, tenho medo de que nesse núcleo eu não saiba mais o que é esperança" (58) (Don't let me see because I am close to seeing the core of life – and through the cockroach that I now again see, through that sample of quiet living horror, I am afraid that in that core I will no longer know what hope is.)

In such passages, G.H. seems to believe that the accompaniment of this unnamed man may save her from losing hope and losing herself. The unnamed man is thus seen by her as a last remaining connection to the socialized world, in which the constructs that maintain individuality have not been undone, and thus the neutral core of life remains veiled by the principle of individuation. G.H. asks the man to wait for her, for she intuits that she will not be able to renounce this socialized world completely: "Espera por mim, espera: sei que

depois saberei como encaixar tudo isso na praticidade diária, não esqueças que também eu preciso da vida diária!” (145) (Wait for me, wait: I know that later I will know how to put all this into daily practice, don't forget that I also need daily life!) To continue with practical life, it is necessary for G.H. to maintain the principle of individuation, and therefore, not to break with the link with the socialized world that unnamed man provides to her. One intuites that the way for G.H. to adhere to this bond, in addition to the gesture of handholding, is to address her narration to him, that is, to put into words her mystical experience.

“The socialized world” is the term I use to refer to the set of constructs that G.H.’s individual consciousness must renounce in order to reach the state of grace. With this term, I want to point to the collective, social nature behind these constructs: they are constructed by the countless molds of culture and society to set in motion the projects of survival and domination of the human species. In the third chapter, I will seek to demonstrate that *A hora da estrelha* can be read as an undoing of the sum of values that seem to sustain the socialized world. The set of constructs includes the notions of personality, status, identity (that is, everything that constitutes the principle of individuation), as well as moral conceptions of the world, mythical and religious worldviews, and even language itself. Since entering the state of grace presupposes a renunciation of all constructs of the socialized world, G.H. states that the vital element she is looking for is in “no pólo oposto ao pólo do sentimento-humano-cristão” (101) (at the pole opposite to the Christian-human-feeling pole.) My use of the word ‘socialized’ follows my own insistence that these are the product of a socialization process. In Lispector’s works, however, the terms we find more often refer to the sum constructions are “o humano” (the human), or “o humanizado” (the humanized.) This wording underscores the uniqueness of our species as it is governed by a myriad of constructs that distance us from the primordial vital element. It bespeaks the conception that these constructs are part of the veil that blinds us to our inherent divinity precisely because it makes us want to see it in an

external point, leading us to religions and other beliefs, instead of living it in an unconscious way as, according to G.H., the rest of living beings do. Facing the unnamed man in whom she finds the final link with the socialized world which she is abandoning, G.H. enunciates her mystic realizations:

Escuta, diante da barata viva, a pior descoberta foi a de que o mundo não é humano, e de que não somos humanos. Não, não te assustes! certamente o que me havia salvo até aquele momento da vida sentimentalizada de que eu vivia, é que o inumano é o melhor nosso, é a coisa, a parte coisa da gente (67).

(Listen, in the face of the living cockroach, the worst discovery was that the world is not human, and that we are not human. No, don't be scared! Certainly what had saved me until that moment from the sentimental life I was living, is that the inhuman is the best of us, it is the thing, the thing-part of us.)

“Humano” in Portuguese can refer to human, humane and human-like. G.H.’s discovery seems to reveal that that all what is known as humanity, a term intrinsically related to a moral vision of the world and loaded with values reaffirmed by countless doctrines and schools of thought, has only been annexed to us by our own consciousness, but it is not constituent of our essence, nor is it part of an a priori scheme in the existence of things. From the very first chapter a constant affirmation made by the protagonist is that her life before the cockroach encounter used to be humanized: “Eu antes vivia de um mundo humanizado, mas o puramente vivo derrubou a moralidade que eu tinha?” (20) (I used to live in a humanized world, but that which is purely living has broken down the morality I had?) When G.H. addresses the question of morality, she also seems to sense that the process of depersonalization necessarily implies a process of dehumanization and demoralization. To express this great rupture with the moral order that such a transformation represents, G.H. does not hesitate to resort to religious vocabulary: “É pecado entrar na matéria divina. E esse pecado tem uma punição irremediável: a pessoa que ousa entrar neste segredo, ao perder sua vida individual, desorganiza o mundo humano” (143) (It is a sin to enter the divine matter.

And this sin has an irremediable punishment: the person who dares to enter this secret, by losing their individual life, disrupts the human world.)

G.H. suggests that the vital element is amoral, so that human consciousness will have to get rid of all moral conceptions to enter into communion with it. Then, it is pertinent to address the question of whether an ethical reading of the novel can be persuasive. As we have seen in the introduction, reconciliation with otherness has been a value constantly underlined and celebrated in previous ethical readings of Lispector's works. Regarding *A paixão segundo G.H.*, the assessment of its ethical substance is not limited to approaches from poststructuralist frameworks. We find arguments for an ethical reading of the work not only in Fritz and Nascimento, but also in Ribeiro de Oliveira's interpretation. We will now look at a review of the ethical assessments of *A paixão segundo G.H.* coming from these authors, and I will point out why these readings seem inadequate to me.

Nascimento underlines the objectification of G.H. as a central process in the novel, a process which he already sees insinuated from the use of the protagonist's initials to replace her name (113). With this objectification, Nascimento argues, Lispector casts G.H. as acquiring a plurality of masks that opens the door to a differential insertion into the narrative (113). Nascimento also argues that the objectification of G.H. allows Lispector to deal with the "instancia da Coisa" (instance of the Thing), which, through its openness to the multiplicity of objects, appeals to an experience of "convivencia, solidariedade, compartilhamento com a diferenca" (114) (coexistence, solidarity, fellowship with difference). Interestingly, the critic also mentions Cixous as one of the authors who elaborates a vision similar to Lispector's (114), perhaps referring to her poststructural project of undoing the constructed differentiation between subject and object. For Nascimento, G.H. narration shows that "a verdadeira paixão está em ser ou tornar-se o outro" (291) (the true passion lies in being or becoming the other.) G.H.'s ingestion of the amorphous white mass of

the cockroach represents, Nascimento contends, “a comunhão com o imundo” (291) (communion with the abject), an expression he relates to the Freudian concept of *das Unheimliche*. Nascimento seems to suggest that, if both G.H. and the cockroach are instances of the thing, there is no reason why they should seek to replace or eliminate each other, so that coexistence with difference is drawn in the horizon of possibilities imagined by this fictional work.

Fritz develops an ethical reading that is largely based on the framework of poststructuralist thought, as he calls G.H. “a poststructural hero” (36). The object of the narrating protagonist's quest is described in the following terms: G.H. is in pursuit of “an ultimate beginning, a clear, stable meaning, Logos itself” (38). This ultimate goal will be barred to her, Fritz writes, by the self-referentiality of language. Fritz seems to find this condition of self-referentiality of language in G.H.’s impossibility to embody and find in language his object of search. For this reason, Fritz argues that this work exemplifies the Derridean concepts of “espacement” or “spacing” (38), and “différance,” which, as Fritz recalls, illuminate the semiotic interplay of words that characterizes human language, given that the meaning of a word can only be derived from other words (39). Fritz proceeds to assert that this interplay, through a self-conscious and critical perspective on language, ultimately dissolves the power structures and hierarchies that appear in the text, potentially referring to the subordinate relationship between G.H. and Janair (or between the sculptor and the cockroach?) that seems to be established at the beginning of the novel. In this way, Fritz supports his thesis that Lispector's texts profoundly undermine, decenter, and desacralize hierarchical power structures as they are revealed to be mere functions of language use (124-125).

Riberio de Oliveira’s own ethical reading of *A paixão segundo G.H.* seems to agree with the arguments of Fritz and Nascimento in her own interpretation, which does

acknowledge the latent mysticism in the experience of G.H. As I noted in the previous section of this chapter, the cockroach is seen by Ribeiro e Oliveira as an allegorical figure of the maid Janair, since both beings stand for otherness. Ribeiro de Oliveira speculates that the hatred expressed by G.H. for Janair at the beginning of the narration is due the protagonist's association of the poverty of the maid's room with the suffering of the historically excluded, and that G.H. sees in the conditions of the room a censure of her way of life, oblivious of social injustices (75-76). In the same way as Nascimento, Ribeiro de Oliveira observes in the act of ingesting the white mass of the cockroach a sign of communion with difference, pointing towards a space of reconciliation with the other. Identifying this possibility of reconciliation, Ribeiro de Oliveira also agrees with Fritz that the narration points toward a decentralization of social hierarchies. As textual evidence, Ribeiro de Oliveira cites a where G.H. seems to foresee the imminent ruin of the social order represented by the thirteen floors of the building she lives in:

edifício onde de noite todos dormem tranquilos, sem saber que os alicerces vergam e que, num instante não anunciado pela tranquilidade, as vigas vão ceder porque a força de coesão está lentamente se dissociando um milímetro por século. E então, quando menos se espera, (...) o fragor do sólido que subitamente se torna friável numa derrocada (67).

(building where at night everyone sleeps peacefully, unaware that the foundations are bowing and that, in an instant unheralded by tranquility, the beams will collapse because the cohesive force is slowly dissociating one millimeter per century. And then, when least expected, (...) the shattering of the solid suddenly becomes brittle in a landslide)

Ribeiro de Oliveira concludes her reading of the work by affirming that, in this passage, “os anseios místicos de G.H. fundem-se, pois, com o sonho de uma revolução que traga ao mundo uma ordem menos injusta” (77) (G.H.'s mystical yearnings merge with the dream of a revolution that will bring a less unjust order to the world.) The collapse of the building foreseen by G.H. is thus interpreted as the demise of the social order in which the sculptor occupied a position of domination. Ribeiro de Oliveira seems to assume that the end of this

order will make it possible to reimagine a world with less injustice, which also seems to be Fritz' assumption as he celebrates the supposed undermining of hierarchies. However, if we continue reading the very same passage quoted by Ribeiro de Oliveira, we find a landscape that has little (or rather nothing) to do with the promise of a new social order:

E quando eu, G.H. até nas valises, eu, uma das pessoas, abri os olhos, estava – não sobre escombros pois até os escombros já haviam sido deglutidos pelas areias – estava numa planície tranqüila, quilômetros e quilômetros abaixo do que fora uma grande cidade. As coisas haviam voltado a ser o que eram. O mundo havia reivindicado a sua própria realidade, e, como depois de uma catástrofe, a minha civilização acabara: eu era apenas um dado histórico. Tudo em mim fora reivindicado pelo começo dos tempos e pelo meu próprio começo. Eu passara a um primeiro plano primário, estava no silêncio dos ventos e na era de estanho e cobre – na era primeira da vida.

Escuta, diante da barata viva, a pior descoberta foi a de que o mundo não é humano, e de que não somos humanos (67).

(And when I, G.H. even on my luggage, I, one of the people, opened my eyes, I was – not on rubble because even the rubble had already been swallowed by the sands – I was on a quiet plain, miles and miles below what had been a big city. Things had returned to the way they were. The world had claimed its own reality, and, as after a catastrophe, my civilization was over: I was just a historical fact. Everything in me had been claimed by the beginning of time and by my own beginning. I had passed into a primary foreground, I was in the silence of the winds and in the age of tin and copper – in the first age of life.

Listen, in the face of the living cockroach, the worst discovery was that the world is not human, and that we are not human.)

G.H. is sharing her vision with the unnamed man, her last link to the socialized world. The vision has transported her to a primordial landscape, that of the beginning of life, completely alien to all the constructs that have been the inheritance and sustenance of civilization. The building has collapsed, and there seems to be no intention to build one again. After her vision, G.H. not only discovers that human constructions are superfluous to the scheme of things, but that they can also be alien to G.H. herself, that is, they can be undone, and she would then exist in a deeper and more essential form. While I agree with Nascimento in his interpretation that G.H. and the cockroach are both instances of 'the thing', a discovery that points her toward the possibility of mystical communion, I also think that this possibility does

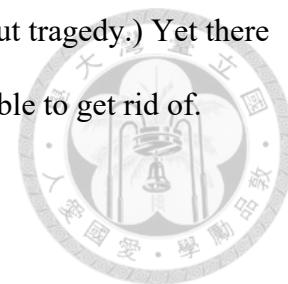
not actually seem to be charged with the ethical value of reconciliation with difference that Nascimento attributes to it. The ethical readings of Nascimento, Fritz and Ribeiro de Oliveira all suggest that G.H.'s communion with the cockroach represents a value for reimagining our way of interacting with otherness. Yet what new possibilities for interaction with the other can emerge from the mystical communion to which G.H. is heading? How are we to act when the human constructs of good and evil are stripped of their supposed intrinsic value and considered an obstacle to mystical union? To better think about these questions, let us see how G.H. imagines the cockroach would act if it were in her place:

Pois a barata não sabia de esperança ou piedade. Se ela não estivesse presa e se fosse maior que eu, com neutro prazer ocupado ela me mataria. Assim como o violento neutro de sua vida admitia que eu, por não estar presa e por ser maior que ela, que eu a matasse. Essa era a espécie de tranqüila ferocidade neutra do deserto onde estávamos (84).

(For the cockroach knew no hope or pity. If she were not trapped and if she were bigger than me, with a busy neutral pleasure she would kill me. Just as the violent neutral of its life admitted that I, because it was not trapped and because I was bigger than it, I could kill it. Such was the kind of quiet neutral ferocity of the desert where we were.)

So much for a more just ethical order. Here G.H. is clearly not aiming at reimagining more just ways of interacting with otherness, but rather at obliterating the concepts of just and unjust, as she discovers that everything is inhabited by a neutral ferocity. Seen from this neutrality, reconciliation is not an objective towards which one could possibly struggle, for there is actually nothing to reconcile in the first place. It might be for this reason that G.H. states bluntly: “Deus é o que existe, e todos os contraditórios são dentro do Deus, e por isso não O contradizem” (160) (God is what exists, and all contradictories are within God, and therefore do not contradict Him.) We have thus arrived at the expression of the materialist-pantheistic vision that G.H. has acquired with her mystical experience, and which Renata Wasserman calls “misticismo da matéria” (90) (mysticism of matter). Within this vision, G.H. gradually overcomes the mediation of human morality: “Estava me liberando de minha moralidade, e isso era uma catástrofe sem fragor e sem tragédia” (84) (I was freeing myself

from my morality, and this was a catastrophe without drama and without tragedy.) Yet there will remain another important layer of mediation that G.H. may be unable to get rid of.



4. The Failure of Language

Chapter twenty-seven is one in which hypotaxis occupies one of the highest percentages in the whole novel, with 76.79% of its sentences having syntactic subordination. In these sentences, G.H. attempts to explain the implications of what she learned with her mystical experience. Let us look at just one sentence extracted from it. Here, G.H. speculates about the occasion when the mystic discoveries, to which her experience with the cockroach has led her, will be shared by the rest of humanity:

Daí a alguns séculos ou daí a alguns minutos talvez digamos espantados: e dizer que Deus sempre esteve! quem esteve pouco fui eu – assim como diríamos do petróleo de que a gente finalmente precisou a ponto de saber como tirá-lo da terra, assim como um dia lamentaremos os que morreram de câncer sem usar o remédio que está (151).

(In a few centuries or in a few minutes we might say in amazement: and to think that God had always been there! It was I who had been too little – just as we would say about oil that we finally needed it to the point of learning how to get it out of the earth, just as one day we will mourn those who died of cancer without using the medicine that is now there.)

In this sentence, G.H. employs two technological analogies to illustrate the idea that communion with divinity will be a revolutionary discovery with the potential to profoundly change the human way of being. The narrator first compares God's omnipresence to the subterranean presence of oil, which lay beneath the earth long before the dawn of humanity, yet it was not discovered and harnessed by it until the nineteenth century of our era. In the next subordinate clause, G.H. immediately points to an unknown future where cancer is already a treatable condition and people can mourn for all the people of past centuries who had the misfortune to have been born before its cure was discovered. In this way, G.H. links her mystical discovery with both historical and future discoveries, finding a relation of similarity in the profound impact they can have for the human condition. Everything occurs

in the same sentence, running on the central idea of divine omnipresence. In this way, the relations that G.H. elaborates parting from an idea are usually configured by means of a hypotactic syntax, with each clause illuminating the connections that figure her thought (in this case, with analogy as a binding principle). But now let me go back for a second and ask: How does G.H. even *know* that God had always been with us in the first place?

A part of my central thesis is that the moments of syntactic subordination in Lispector's three works tend to appear when the narrative gestures at diverse attempts to explain or verbally elucidate the state of grace. In the case of *A paixão segundo G.H.*, hypotaxis is predominant throughout the whole narration because it dramatizes the very same process by which G.H. seeks to understand her experience of immanence. Her consciousness associates idea after idea, trying to make sense of what she has lived through after the fateful encounter with the cockroach. The linkages between subordinate clauses illuminate the connections that G.H.'s consciousness finds in its dizzying plunge into the depths of being, described as a hell because of its crudeness and inhumanity. The repetition of sentences at the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next one underscores this process of connection by which her consciousness assembles its discourse. In turn, the dashes at the beginning and end of the novel suggest that this process has neither begun nor ended within the narration, but is the intrinsic *modus operandi* by which a consciousness processes reality. However, as we have seen, there are moments where the experience of this reality is narratively conveyed through another syntactic configuration.

The other part of the central thesis is that syntactic coordination tends to appear in Lispector's writing with two functions: 1) to recreate the sense of immediacy of the present moment, and 2) to enunciate truths revealed by this approach to the state of grace. In section two of this chapter, I have shown how parataxis is employed to perform the first function, observing how G.H. experiences immanence through her contact with the materiality of the

cockroach. The second function is seen in a series of assertions by which G.H. enunciates the revealed truths to which her consciousness has arrived. I treat them as revealed truths because they come from the mystical ecstasy produced by G.H.'s encounter with the cockroach's materiality, and not from a logical construction that arrives at knowledge claims through the elaboration of deductive or inductive arguments, as it occurs in philosophical discourse.

Rationality is employed by G.H. to try to illuminate under different lights the discoveries to which her mystical experience has led her (by means of a predominantly hypotactic syntax), but not to substantiate them with a logical or empirical argumentation, nor to try to prove or disprove their validity as knowledge claims. Referring to the sentence I quoted at the beginning of this section, the statement "Deus sempre esteve!" (God had always been there!) is a truth revealed by G.H.'s approach to the state of grace, and not a thesis to be proved by her use of reason. The connections that G.H.'s consciousness assembles (in that example, the analogies with oil and the cure with cancer) start from this assertion as a certainty, and explore how to better understand and conceptualize them in human language. Fundamental assertions such as "Deus sempre esteve!" usually appear in the text under a paratactic form in the latter chapters since they are not the result of an argumentative process but of a mystical ecstasy. When announced in this isolated form, they acquire the forcefulness proper to their revelatory nature.

"O presente é a face hoje do Deus" (148) (The present is the face of God today.)
"Deus não promete. Ele é muito maior que isso: Ele é, e nunca pára de ser" (147). ([...] God does not promise. He is much greater than that: He is, and never stops being.) "Antes eu esperava. Mas o Deus é hoje: seu reino já começou" (148) (Before, I hoped. But God is today: his kingdom has already begun.) "Ah perdi a timidez: Deus já é" (153) (Ah I lost my shyness: God is already.) "Ele deixa. (Ele não nasceu para nós, nem nós nascemos para Ele, nós e Ele somos ao mesmo tempo.)" (27) (He lets. [He was not born for us, nor are we born

for Him, we and He are at the same time.]) “O estado de graça existe permanentemente: nós estamos sempre salvos” (146) (The state of grace exists permanently: we are always saved.) “Deus é o que existe” (160) (God is what exists.) This type of assertions presented in a paratactic form constitute the *revealed truths* discovered by G.H. through her contact with immanence. In addition to a paratactic configuration, they sometimes appear behind a colon, further accentuating the unequivocal vehemence with which they are affirmed. One finds in them a very particular sense of immediacy, similar to the moments in which G.H. describes the cockroach, or when she affirms to have entered the profound experience of the present moment. There is no need for further arguments, no need for sustaining proofs.

While these revealed truths do not necessarily defy logic and reason, which can be used by G.H. to better understand their profound implications, they certainly do not derive from them. This point is better illuminated in David M. Mittelman’s thesis “Skepticism and the Limits of Knowledge in Modern Brazilian Narrative.” Mittelman argues that, in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, Lispector elaborates a form of skeptical fideism that engages with Pascal’s philosophy while transfiguring its original Christian dimension, which pointed towards the transcendence of the human soul, to an iconoclast religious thought based on a direct contact with the materiality of the universe. Mittelman understands G.H. submission to the state of grace as an act of faith, pointing to an idea that is homogenous with Pascal’s thought: “that faith is not contrary to reason, but provides something valuable or perhaps essential for life and which rational secularism cannot offer” (224). Mittelman’s account of Pascal’s influence on the novel has also the merit of elucidating its particular appropriation of religious vocabulary for mystical content, an appropriation which is significant in this and other works by Lispector so that we may affirm it to be part of her writing style.

We can now summarize the major tendencies of syntax in *A paixão segundo G.H.* in the following way. Parataxis usually emerges as a dominating principle of syntactic structure

when the narrator positions herself in great proximity to the state of grace, both 1) recreating with verbal forcefulness and a sense of immediacy G.H.'s experiences of an immanent presence that leads her towards mystical union, and 2) expressing the revealed truths that she has discovered with this experience with an unequivocal tone. On the other hand, when the narrator articulates her narration as a discursive exploration with the purpose of making sense of her mystical experience, connecting different nuances, analogies, comparisons, contradictions, and implications through the figure of repetition, the syntactic structure tends to become hypotactic, affording her to link the shifting focal points that her narrating thoughts bring to the foreground and deepening her examination on them, often with a sensation of vertigo that mirrors the sculptor's fall into the abyss of existence.

The functions of each syntactic configuration are the product of their specific employments found in the novel. Hypotaxis and parataxis may carry within themselves a boundless ocean of uses and effects, and the ones that I am describing here only account for a specific configuration among those possibilities. My thesis seeks to demonstrate the functions that both syntactic configurations tend to assume in three of Lispector's works, and I devote each chapter to pointing out how they are manifested in each text. I am not claiming that parataxis and hypotaxis follow these tendencies of labor division in other authors. In the case of *A paixão segundo G.H.*, parataxis and hypotaxis appear in G.H.'s narration forming the tendencies I have described, but I also do not intend to make these tendencies a universal description of all the sentences in the novel. Thus, I have used the percentages of hypotactic and syntactic sentences in certain chapters only as references, and not as some kind of empirical statistical test. As I will address in the following chapters, behind this observed usage of both syntactic tendencies lie particular ideas about mystical union which we need to examine to better understand Lispector's works. Following Adorno and Rancière's use of the term, I will also argue that there are moments in Lispector's work that reflect in spirit a larger

parataxis (affording feelings of immediacy and pulsation that do not synthesize reality into a concept) even if the sentences contain some degree of syntactic subordination.

G.H. narrates in both hypothetical and paratactic ways her mystical experience. However, none of these ways manages to really convey her contact with immanence. As she herself assures in a moment of revelation: “O nome é um acréscimo e impede o contato com a coisa. O nome da coisa é um intervalo para a coisa” (140) (The name is an addition and prevents contact with the thing. The name of the thing is an interval for the thing.) Like the other constructs of the socialized world, language is also seen by G.H. as an addition to be “unadded” in order to complete the process of dehumanization. Here, it seems pertinent to refer to Ortega y Gasset’s observations on mysticism and its relation to language, so that we can have a better grasp of G.H.’s stance towards her own narration.

In *¿Qué es filosofía?*, the Spanish philosopher excludes from the philosophical sphere any pretension to reach a superior knowledge of reality that transcends language as a means of expression. Ortega y Gasset asserts that

lo que no se puede decir, lo indecible o inefable no es concepto, y un conocimiento que consista en visión inefable del objeto será todo lo que ustedes quieran, inclusive será, si ustedes lo quieren, la forma suprema de conocimiento, pero no es lo que intentamos bajo el nombre de filosofía (61).

(what cannot be said, the unsayable or ineffable is not a concept, and any knowledge consisting in ineffable vision of the object could be anything you want, it could even be, if you want it, the supreme form of knowledge, but it cannot be what we intend under the name of philosophy.)

Ortega y Gasset thus excludes from the category of philosophy the moments of mystical trance found in the systems of thought developed by Plotinus and Bergson (61). The philosopher contends that, if a philosophical system seeks to demonstrate through concepts that only an ecstasy of consciousness can make immediate contact with reality, thereby overcoming the mediation or intermediary of the concept, then this system ceases to be philosophy in the very moment it plunges into the immersion of the mystical trance, and it

can only be said to be philosophical when it attempts to prove the necessity of ecstasy by means of other concepts (61). From this perspective, when someone tries to describe the trance that has given them a superior knowledge, they become a mystical thinker and not a philosopher. Ortega y Gasset also calls mystics “los más formidables técnicos de la palabra” (62) (the most formidable technicians of the word,) and assures that they will always claim that their experience has brought them into contact with something uncountable, unspeakable, ineffable (62). Mystical knowledge is non-transferable and, by essence, silent, writes Ortega y Gasset.

I hope that the textual and critical evidence I have presented so far has made it clear that G.H. is a mystic narrator. She communicates revelations that point to a materialistic-pantheistic view of the universe, but she is not content with her expressions. These realizations are the fruit of her contact with immanence, and G.H. seeks to exhaust language in ways that this experience can be expressed, perhaps even to apprehend its most inner essence. Predictably, her attempts to verbalize the most inner part of her mystical experience fail, yet she does not consider them to have been fruitless.

A linguagem é o meu esforço humano. Por destino tenho que ir buscar e por destino volto com as mãos vazias. Mas – volto com o indizível. O indizível só me poderá ser dado através do fracasso de minha linguagem. Só quando falha a construção, é que obtenho o que ela não conseguiu (177).

(Language is my human endeavor. By fate I have to go and by fate I come back empty-handed. Yet – I come back with the unspeakable. The unspeakable can only be given to me through the failure of my language. Only when the construction fails, do I get what it failed to get.)

G.H. not only sees her adventure with language as part of her destiny: she also sees it as a necessary condition to be able to truly obtain that which remains ineffable. The construction she refers to is the whole narration she has elaborated of her mystical experience, the uneven verbalization, at once continuous and fragmented, that she has dedicated to the unnamed man in order to find the adequate expression that will allow her to approach and learn the whole of

mystical union. Towards the end of her narration, G.H. discovers that the most important thing is to be found in between lines:

E também o milagre se pede, e se tem, pois a continuidade tem interstícios que não a descontinuum, o milagre é a nota que fica entre duas notas de música, é o número que fica entre o número um e o número dois (170).

(And one also asks for the miracle, and one gets it, because continuity has interstices that do not discontinue it, the miracle is the note that lies between two notes of music, it is the number that lies between number one and number two.)

The miracle is the unspeakable: that which is found in the interstices of thought. G.H. has realized that, for there to be interstices, there must be thought, just as for there to be silence, there must be words. Immediately after, G.H. speaks to the unnamed man:

E agora não estou tomando tua mão para mim. Sou eu quem está te dando a mão. Agora preciso de tua mão, não para que eu não tenha medo, mas para que tu não tenhas medo. sei que acreditar em tudo isso será, no começo, a tua grande solidão. Mas chegará o instante em que me darás a mão, não mais por solidão, mas como eu agora: por amor. Como eu, não terás medo de agregar-te à extrema doçura enérgica do Deus (171).

(And now I am not taking your hand for myself. It is I who am taking your hand. Now I need your hand, not so that I won't be afraid, but so that you won't be afraid. I know that believing in all this will be, in the beginning, your great loneliness. But the moment will come when you will take my hand, no longer out of loneliness, but like me now: out of love. Like me, you will not be afraid to add yourself to the extreme energetic sweetness of God.)

The role attributed to the unnamed man has now changed. G.H. no longer expects to find in him the solace of a remaining link with the socialized world, now it is she who expects to provide him with the solace for the harsh transformation that the man himself will have to go through before reaching the same place of revelation from where the protagonist now speaks. G.H. has understood that the essential lies in the intervals of her words, in the ineffable thought between her thoughts. The sentence that ends the penultimate and begins the last chapter reads as following: “A desistência é uma revelação” (178). (Desistance is a revelation.) G.H. announces in the present tense, desisto (I desist). Failure itself becomes her final triumph, she explains:

Nem todos chegam a fracassar porque é tão trabalhoso, é preciso antes subir penosamente até enfim atingir a altura de poder cair – só posso alcançar a despersonalidade da mudez se eu antes tiver construído toda uma voz. Minhas civilizações eram necessárias para que eu subisse a ponto de ter de onde descer (176).

(Not everyone fails because doing so is very laborious, one must first climb painfully until one finally reaches the height to be able to fall – I can only reach the depersonality of muteness if I have first built an entire voice. My civilizations were necessary for me to rise to the point of having somewhere to fall from.)

The attempt to verbalize her experience has not been in vain. G.H. has constructed and then undermined her own voice and personality just to be able to complete the process of dehumanization, and to be able to give up her search for the expression that could perfectly and definitively frame her communion with immanence. Thus ends her vertiginous collapse. As if she had freed himself from the overwhelming weight of needing rational thought to inform her beliefs, G.H. celebrates a supposed absence of meaning in her words:

O mundo independia de mim – esta era a confiança a que eu tinha chegado: o mundo independia de mim, e não estou entendendo o que estou dizendo, nunca! nunca mais compreenderei o que eu disser (181).

(The world was independent of me – this was the confidence I had come to: the world was independent of me, and I am not understanding what I am saying, never! never again will I understand what I say.)

This inaugurates a tendency that we observe in Lispector's subsequent texts: the insistence on meaninglessness, illogicality, irrationality. This tendency will be particularly significant in the whole of *Água viva* and the ending of *A hora da estrela*, yet it is by reading *A paixão segundo G.H.* that we understand its origin. Despite this celebration of non-understanding, G.H.'s voice still makes a final attempt to put into words the fruits of her experience. Only this time, there will be no further attempt to make sense of them. Her quest for meaning comes to an end, and does her whole narration, with the following sentences:

Pois como poderia eu dizer sem que a palavra mentisse por mim? como poderei dizer senão timidamente assim: a vida se me é. A vida se me é, e eu não entendo o que digo. E então adoro. – – – – – (333).

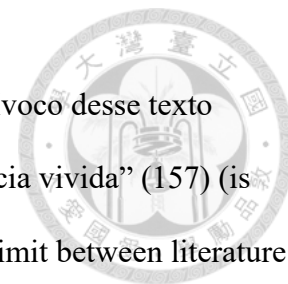
(For how could I say it without the word lying for me? How could I say it if not timidly like this: a vida se me é. A vida se me é, and I don't understand what I am saying. And then I adore. — — — — —)

Translating “A vida se me é” into English represents a major challenge. Idra Novey translates it as “Life just is for me” (192), opting for a rather bland interpretation of this grammatical anomaly. Roland Sousa chooses “Life is itself for me” (170), effectively transposing the use of the reflexive pronoun “se”, but still adding the proposition “for” to the personal pronoun “me”, as Novey has done. As a result, both interpretations seem either 1) to suggest that life is as it is *for the sake* of the narrator’s experience, that is to say, with her experiencing it as its ultimate purpose, or 2) to emphasize the *individual perspective* from which G.H. experiences life, asserting that life is as it is from her particular point of view. However, I think that there is another, more complex way of interpreting this phrase, which corresponds better with G.H.’s mystical vision as we have explored it in this chapter.

“Ser” (to be) is an intransitive verb, but here G.H. has not only turned it into a transitive one; she has also given it two objects, thus treating it effectively as a ditransitive verb. Let us explore the implications of each object separately, and then arrive at a synthesis. First, the reflexivity in “a vida se é” seems to imply an unfolding of life itself. Life’s being does not occur on an immutable and transcendent plane, but rather carries out its being at the moment it acts upon itself, in the particular instance where it unfolds. The reflexivity of the expression thus implies a form of present continuous where life manifests itself. Second, we have the personal object complement “me” that replaces G.H. We can read this pronoun as a direct object, unlike the two translators cited above. This is a decision which we can ground on previous passages in the novel: “Aquilo que eu chamava de ‘nada’ era no entanto tão colado a mim que me era...eu?” (77) (What I called “nothing” was, however, so glued to me that it was... myself?), and “somos a vida que está em nós” (115) (we are the life that is in ourselves.) In “a vida me é,” the self is expressed as a way of being for life itself, which is the

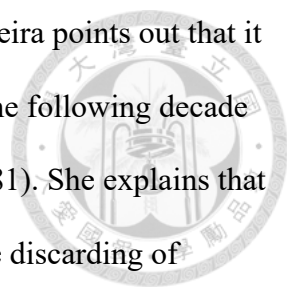
grammatical subject of the phrase. This may be close to affirming that it is not the self who lives life, but it is rather life that lives the self. Now, putting both objects back to the verb, we can arrive at a new interpretation of the original expression. “A vida se me é” can effectively mean: *the self is but a particular instance through which life manifests itself in the present moment and pursues its being as a continuous process*. G.H. has thus arrived at a phrase that summarizes her mystical experience in an extremely concise and forceful way, showing her mastery of the possibilities of expression allowed by the Portuguese language. Ironically, G.H. immediately assures that she no longer understands what she is saying, since her mystical stance also leads her to underscore the inherent limitedness of language and reason to grasp the ultimate essence of reality. No expression can truly apprehend the experience of immanence. However, if we agree with Ortega y Gasset, we might remember that mystics usually have an exceptional command of language, an asset which may also lead them to some disarming temptations. The mystics’ actual adherence to mutism might not last very long.

Chapter Two: Primordial Pulsations



Água viva is not easy to classify. Fiction, writes Nunes, “é o nome equívoco desse texto fronteiriço inclassificável, que está no limite entre literatura e experiência vivida” (157) (is the equivocal name for this unclassifiable border text, which is on the limit between literature and lived experience) and he conceives its content as a flow of meditation on certain general themes (157). The enunciations on the text, often made in the first person, are framed as belonging to a painter who has decided to sit down and write. Ribeiro de Oliveira calls it “um grande poema em prosa” (79) (a great poem in prose) and she points out that the epigraph of the work invites us to read it as a literary version of abstract art (80), as it has been done by Brazilian critics and authors Hélio Pólvora, Alberto Dines, and Álvaro Pacheco (80).

Regarding its process of composition, Ribeiro de Oliveira notes that Lispector gathered fragments of her chronicles and annotations, forming an unpublished work entitled *Objeto gritante*, from which *Água viva* would later emerge (80). Some scholars consider that such a patchwork practice of writing produces an absence of meaning that invites readers to create one. That is also the case of Edgar César Nolasco, who, starting from a critical framework informed by Barthes, argues that the fragments of writing in *Água viva* play (jogam) with the reader by disseminating a meaning that does not previously exist, since one cannot speak of original meaning in this text (196-197). Nolasco affirms that in *Água viva* there is no text, but only relations between texts (199), which, through such fragmentary procedure, express the chaos, rhythm, and interval of writing to keep away “the monster of totality” (o monstro da totalidade) as Omar Calabrese called it (239). In this chapter, however, I treat *Água viva* as a single, unitary text, as Ribeiro de Oliveira does, and I show how it can be read as an articulation of the same mystical thought I have analyzed in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, and how it displays the same syntactic tendencies we have observed in the previous chapter.



In her overview of abstractionism in art history, Ribeiro de Oliveira points out that it was born with the European avant-gardes of the 1910s and became in the following decade one of the central axes of artistic production for the twentieth century (81). She explains that abstract art embraced the simplification of form, new uses of colors, the discarding of perspective and modeling techniques, and the rejection of conventional playing of shadow and light (81). Ribeiro de Oliveira distinguishes two major strands among the range of directions assumed by abstract art: geometric abstractionism, which seduces the sculptor in *A paixão segundo G.H.* (82) and lyrical abstractionism, so named by Georges Mathieu, which accentuates the singularity of artistic expression, and which inspires the writing painter in *Água viva* (82). This lyrical dimension, Ribeiro de Oliveira points out, motivates an artistic conception according to which the new art should create autonomous forms with its own means and free itself from the representational function. However, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, abstract composition does not always eliminate the figurative, as it often continues to represent illusions of volume and recognizable objects. Resorting to a simplified representation of visible reality, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, abstract art extends its poetics to an expressive lyricism with a spiritual orientation (83).

Ribeiro de Oliveira makes the case that *Água viva*, as a literary version of lyrical abstractionism, does not completely renounce figuration, since it contains sketches of a narrator, characters and micro-facts (84), in addition to an abundance of images, scenes, cinematographic flashes, and kaleidoscopic figures (84). As for the verbal abstraction, Ribeiro de Oliveira points out that it is realized by interweaving synesthetic perceptions, amalgamations of references to the art of words, music, and painting, in an apparent celebration of things without nexus and an absence of construction (84). However, stresses Ribeiro de Oliveira, there are important moments in which the poetic voice speaks of the underlying order to the organic disorder she evokes in her narration, and of the thread that

guides the steps of her words. Ribeiro de Oliveira identifies the invisible core of reality as the ultimate goal of the narratorial voice, asserting that this text continues the search for “a coisa em si” (the thing in itself) that characterizes Lispector's work (81). Thus, for Ribeiro de Oliveira, the mystery of being and the ineffable motivates the artistic abstraction of *Água viva* (86). Unlike Nolasco, Ribeiro de Oliveira has found global meaning in this work, and her analysis largely informs my interpretation of it.

In section **1. After the Cockroach**, I establish the thematic connection between *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva*. I intend to demonstrate that the latter becomes much more intelligible when we are familiar with the ideas and vocabulary developed in the former. For this purpose, I compare the enunciating voices in both texts and highlight the parallels between the two. I argue that the difference in syntactic predominance between the two texts is due to a difference in their positions with respect to the quest for mystical truth, and that the principle of syntactic distribution that I have observed in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, is still present in *Água viva*.

In section **2. Near to the Beating Heart**, I examine parataxis as the dominant syntactic structure in *Água viva*. After showing how the tendencies we observed in the earlier novel are still present in this text, I rely on Ribeiro de Oliveira's interpretation to conceive of *Água viva* as a series of images, relating to originary life, which instantiate, in the manner of pulsations, the material divinity that constitutes ultimate reality. I then examine Adorno's and Rancière's ideas on parataxis to better understand a relation of instantiation enabled by the paratactic procedure of the narration to better glimpse the functions of the paratactic form in *Água viva* and its relation to hypotaxis.

Finally, in section **3. The State of Grace**, I show that hypotaxis becomes the predominant syntax in the moments in which the painter tries to explain the reasons and conditions of the incommunicability of her contact with ultimate reality. In particular, I focus

on the moment where she explicitly names the state of grace and seeks to formulate a synthetical explanation that feeds on constructions with syntactic subordination. I interpret these moments as evidence of a belief in a transcendent truth that motivates the writing of this text, and I oppose this idea to the interpretations of those critics who, starting from a poststructuralist framework, insist on a self-evident deconstructive quality of the text.

1. After the Cockroach

As the epigraph of *Água viva*, we find the following quote from Michel Seuphor, which suggests understanding the purpose of the text as an artistic creation close to abstract painting:

Tinha que existir uma pintura totalmente livre da dependência da figura – o objeto – que, como a música, não ilustra coisa alguma, não conta uma história e não lança um mito. Tal pintura contenta-se em evocar os reinos incomunicáveis do espírito, onde o sonho se torna pensamento, onde o traço se torna existência (6).

(There must be a painting totally free from dependence on the figure – or the object – which, like music, does not illustrate anything, does not tell a story, and does not launch a myth. Such a painting would simply evoke the incommunicable realms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where stroke becomes existence.)

An autonomous piece of art, liberated from the subordination to a representational function, that evokes a deep realm of reality which cannot be communicated; is the reader supposed to find here the artistic aspiration of *Água viva*? Its narrator/poetic voice will insist so. She seems to share her aesthetic conception with the narrating sculptor from the previous novel, who states: “quando a arte é boa é porque tocou no inexpressivo, a pior arte é a expressiva” (Lispector, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, 143) (when art is good it is because it touches the inexpressive, the worst art is the expressive one.)

Nunes sees *Água viva* as the “continuação da experiência de esvaziamento consumada em *A paixão segundo G.H.*; esvaziamento do sujeito narrador, que se desagrega, e da narrativa, que conta a errância desse mesmo sujeito” (156) (continuation of the hollowing

experience consummated in *A paixão segundo G.H.* a hollowing of the narrating subject, who disaggregates herself, and of the narrative, which tells the errancy of that same subject.) The painter herself in *Água viva* suggests this link of continuance between the two texts by her choice of words: “Mas não há paixão sofrida em dor e amor a que não se siga uma aleluia” (10) (But there is no passion suffered in pain and love that is not followed by a hallelujah.) Here, passion may refer to the transforming experience that G.H. has lived, while hallelujah is the religious interjection that the painter writes in the opening lines of this text and prefigures the ecstatic tone that will characterize it. To what extent then may one consider that the painter and the sculptor constitute one and the same subject? A comparison between the enunciating voices of *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva* helps to better understand the difference in the composition of this second work with respect to the first. We can also better understand the content of certain enunciations of the painter, I argue, if we acknowledge the mystic vocabulary previously developed by G.H.

A major difference between the two voices is that, while the sculptor articulates her narrative as the process of understanding her mystical experience (a quest for meaning), the painter is aware of the truths revealed by a mystical union from the beginning. In the first paragraph of *Água viva*, we find the following lines:

É com uma alegria tão profunda. É uma tal aleluia. Aleluia, grito eu, aleluia que se funde com o mais escuro uivo humano da dor de separação mas é grito de felicidade diabólica. Porque ninguém me prende mais. Continuo com capacidade de raciocínio – já estudei matemática que é a loucura do raciocínio – mas agora quero o plasma, quero me alimentar diretamente da placenta (8).

(It is with such deep joy. It is such a hallelujah. Hallelujah, I cry, hallelujah that merges with the darkest human howl of the pain of separation but is a cry of diabolical happiness. Because no one holds me back anymore. I still have the capacity to reason – I have studied mathematics which is the madness of reasoning – but now I want the plasma, I want to feed directly from the placenta.)

If we remember that G.H., after her encounter with the cockroach, came to the understanding that “o inferno é a dor como gozo da matéria, e como riso do gozo, as lágrimas escorrem de

dor” (120) (hell is pain as the enjoyment of matter, and as the laughter of enjoyment, tears flow from pain), we can then relate the oxymorons of both passages to read them as similar expressions of the same mystical thought. These opening lines thus point to the idea that the approach to immanence needs to go through a liberation from the constructs of the socialized world, a process that is painful and liberating at the same time, and that leads to a state in which reason is no longer the necessary means to understand reality, for one can enter a direct and immediate contact with it. With the epigraph and these opening lines, the text signals that the purport of the painter’s writing is her direct experience of immanence. We later learn that her painting also has the same mystical orientation:

Evola-se de minha pintura e destas minhas palavras acotoveladas um silêncio que também é como o substrato dos olhos. Há uma coisa que me escapa o tempo todo. Quando não escapa, ganho uma certeza: a vida é outra (148).

(From my painting and these jostled words evolves a silence that is also like the substrate of the eyes. There is something that escapes me all the time. When it doesn’t escape, I gain a certainty: life is other.)

The painter is aware that her artistic creations, including the text she writes, cannot in themselves have a direct contact with ultimate reality, but she suggests that there are moments in which they come to allude to it. While the sculptor narrated her tortuous journey to formulate in words this realization, the painter of *Água viva* already knows these truths from the beginning. Thus, the starting position of both voices in respect to mystical truth is different. While G.H.’s narration was about trying to make sense of her mystical experience (which ultimately leads her to celebrate incomprehension), the painter’s writing presents the same vision G.H. arrived at from the opening lines of her text, which is almost free of factual narration. Even so, as Ribeiro de Oliveira has pointed out, we can still find diffuse traces of a story, particularly with a character to whom the painter dedicates her writing:

É tão difícil falar e dizer coisas que não podem ser ditas. É tão silencioso. Como traduzir o silêncio do encontro real entre nós dois? Dificílimo contar: olhei para você fixamente por uns instantes. Tais momentos são meu segredo. Houve o que se chama de comunhão perfeita. Eu chamo isto de estado agudo de felicidade. Estou

terrivelmente lúcida e parece que alcanço um plano mais alto de humanidade. Ou da desumanidade – o it (106).

(It's so hard to talk and say things that can't be said. It is so silent. How to translate the silence of the real encounter between the two of us? Hard to tell: I stared at you for a few moments. Such moments are my secret. There was what is called perfect communion. I call this an acute state of bliss. I am terribly lucid, and I seem to reach a higher plane of humanity. Or of inhumanity – the 'it'.)

There are two aspects in this paragraph that I want to explore: the use of the second person for an unnamed male character to whom the painter is writing, and the use of the English neutral pronoun 'it'. I will start here with the latter. Ribeiro de Oliveira points out that the 'it' in *Água viva* can be taken as a synonym for "o insosso" (the tasteless), "o neutro" (the neutral), "a coisa" (the thing), "o plasma" (the plasma), "o amago" (the core), and "o centro" (the center) (97); and she argues that all of Lispector's work testifies to a movement in the direction of this 'it', which indicates something mystical, inexplicable by rational thought, underlying the relationship between life, the subject, and ultimate reality (97). Yet so far, I have not been able to locate any scholar who has pointed out that this 'it' in *Água viva* is actually also *an intertextual reference to another account of mystical experience*. To trace back this reference, we need to refer to the very epigraph of *A paixão segundo G.H.*

"A complete life may be one ending in so full identification with the nonself that there is no self to die" (Lispector, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, 7). This sentence, which the novelist originally leaves in English, is a quote taken from *Sketch for a Self Portrait*, an autobiographical text by Bernard Brenson. In his book, the American art critic affirms that his moments of greatest happiness were "the moments when I lost myself all but completely in some instant of perfect harmony. In consciousness this was due not to me but to the not-me, of which I was scarcely more than the subject in the grammatical sense" (18). Brenson then describes an ecstatic experience he had when he was five or six years old, which influence his entire life:

It was a morning in early summer. A silver haze shimmered and trembled over the lime trees. The air was laden with their fragrance. The temperature was like a caress. I remember – I need not recall – that I climbed up a tree stump and felt suddenly immersed in Itness. I did not call it by that name. I had no need for words. It and I were one (18).

Brenson underlines that the use of the term ‘Itness’ responds to the later need to put his experience into words. In that instant of mystical communion, language had become superfluous. After this passage, Brenson always capitalizes the word ‘IT’ to indicate when he refers to an experience of communion with the world. The art critic places communion with ‘IT’ behind his aesthetic experiences during his career. He claims to profess in it a faith in ‘IT’ of the same importance as his faith in humanity (150). In the following passage, Brenson makes clear the mystical character of the ‘IT’:

IT accepts what is as if what is were a work of art in which the qualities so outweighed the faults that these could be ignored. IT is incapable of analysis, requires no explanations and no apology, is self-evident and right. One may sing about it but not discuss it. IT is the most immediate and mystical way (150).

The painter of *Água viva* seems to borrow this word use from Brenson and employ it as an index for the material, living, and immanent nucleus of reality to which G.H. also referred in her narration. To convey that she has already come into direct contact with this living nucleus, the painter writes: “E eu estava comendo o it vivo. O it vivo é o Deus. Vou parar um pouco porque sei que o Deus é o mundo. É o que existe” (54) (And I was eating the living it. The living it is the God. I'm going to stop for a moment because I know that the God is the world. It is what exists.) The use of the verb “comer” (to eat) recalls her statement at the beginning of the text about wanting to feed directly from the placenta, and echoes at the same time the consumption of the cockroach’s white matter to which G.H. obliged herself as a ritual of mystical communion. We should also notice that the painter does not hesitate to define the ‘it’ in simple and forceful phrases, which is only conceivable due to her intimate position to the state of grace. She already knows what the ‘it’ is.

Let us now turn to the use of the second person. Nunes claims that in *Água viva*, as in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, the narrator always speaks directly to the reader (157). In the previous chapter, I have argued that this is not an adequate description of the use of the second person in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, although my interpretation does not exclude that the reader may feel personally interpellated by the narration as an effect of it. I previously argued that G.H.'s narration is articulated with a particular recipient, an unnamed man whom the sculptor sees as her remaining link to the socialized world from which she gradually distances herself until she breaks off completely. Let us also recall that, towards the end of her narration, G.H. suggests that it is now she who shall give solace to this unnamed man, for she has already reached a higher level of (un)consciousness and invites him to follow in her footsteps. Here I want to make the case that we find a similar relationship in *Água viva*, between the painter and a person to whom she dedicates her writing.

Ribeiro de Oliveira points out that in *Objeto gritante*, there were originally several recipients who were reduced to only one in *Água viva*. This second person, insistently invoked, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, is a man with whom the painter needs to share her words. Ribeiro de Oliveira deduces that he is a writer with whom the painter has had an affair. Among the textual evidence Ribeiro de Oliveira presents, we find the following passage:

Hoje acabei a tela de que te falei: linhas redondas que se interpenetram em traços finos e negros, e tu, que tens o hábito de querer saber por quê – e porque não me interessa, a causa é matéria de passado – perguntarás por que os traços negros e finos? é por causa do mesmo segredo que me faz escrever agora como se fosse a ti, escrevo redondo, enovelado e tépido, mas às vezes frígido como os instantes frescos, água do riacho que treme sempre por si mesma (10-11).

(Today I finished the canvas I told you about: round lines that interpenetrate into thin black lines, and you, who are in the habit of wanting to know why – I don't care about the why, the cause is a matter of the past – will ask why the black and thin lines? It is because of the same secret that makes me write now as if I were writing to you, I write in a round, tangled and tepid way, but sometimes frigid, like fresh instants, water from the stream that always trembles by itself.)

This paragraph establishes an opposition of character between the painter and the writer to whom she writes. While the writer engages in discursive practices and tends to look for the logical reasons for things to support his interpretations, the painter claims that she is doing something quite different with her writing, following a procedure similar to the one she observes when she paints. At this point, it is reasonable to assume that the secret she refers to is mystical in nature. And, while it is a secret, her writing repeatedly urges the analytical writer to discover it as well: “Ouve-me, ouve o silêncio. O que te falo nunca é o que eu te falo e sim outra coisa. Capta essa coisa que me escapa e no entanto vivo dela e estou à tona de brilhante escuridão” (20) (Listen to me, listen to the silence. What I speak to you is never what I speak to you but something else. Catch this thing that escapes me and yet I live from it and I am afloat in brilliant darkness.) With this prescription, the painter seems to believe that the analytical writer could come into contact with the ineffable if the relationship he establishes with her text goes the way she urges him to follow.

Here we can locate another echo of the cockroach narrative. In chapter nineteen of the novel, G.H. urges the unnamed man to learn from her own experience, should her language ever allow her to transmit the mystic revelations that she has attained:

Se tu puderes saber através de mim, sem antes precisar ser torturado, sem antes teres que ser bipartido pela porta de um guarda-roupa, sem antes ter quebrados os teus invólucros de medo que com o tempo foram secando em invólucros de pedra, assim como os meus tiveram que ser quebrados sob a força de uma tenaz até que eu chegasse ao tenro neutro de mim – se tu puderes saber através de mim... então aprende de mim, que tive que ficar toda exposta e perder todas as minhas malas com suas iniciais gravadas (114).

(If you can know through me, without first having to be tortured, without first having to be bipartitioned through a closet door, without first having broken your casings of fear which in time have dried into casings of stone, just as mine had to be broken under the force of tongs until I reached the tender neutral of me – if you can know through me... then learn from me, who had to be all exposed and lose all my bags with the initials engraved on them.)

The tone and figures of speech highlight the torment that the narrator has gone through in her depersonalizing process. This emphasis on the hellish torture of depersonalization is no

longer found in *Água viva*, where the painter does not narrate a fall into the abyss nor the undoing of social constructs. However, what we do find are indications that the painter is experiencing immanence:

Parece-me que o mais provável é que não entendo porque o que vejo agora é difícil: estou entrando sorrateiramente em contato com uma realidade nova para mim que ainda não tem pensamentos correspondentes e muito menos ainda alguma palavra que a signifique. É mais uma sensação atrás do pensamento (92).

(It seems to me that I most likely don't understand because what I see now is difficult: I am sneaking into a new reality for me that has no corresponding thoughts yet, let alone any word that signifies it. It is more a sensation behind thought.)

Before *Objeto gritante*, Lispector's text was to be called *Atrás do pensamento: Monólogo com a vida* (Behind Thought: Monologue with Life). The writer's enunciations seem to stem from her proximity to this 'behind thought,' which G.H. came to formulate only at the end of her narration. From this position of intimacy with mystical truth, the painter issues a series of prescriptions about how to approach her text, so that its recipient, the analytical writer, may also come into contact with this unknown dimension. As we shall see in the third section, the painter eventually elucidates the state of grace that has led her to this zone 'behind thought'.

In "Água Viva, um salmo clariciano," David Mittelman argues that the text can be read as an example of what Joshua Landy calls "formative fictions," texts intended to sharpen our mental capacities through awareness-raising exercises rather than to provide us directly knowledge (60). As a formative text, argues Mittelman, *Água viva* rescues the experience of an encounter with the sacred as an attitude that can be preserved and shared (61). According to Mittelman, the poetic voice of the text, whom he calls "Clarice*" (62), "se esforça não só para se aproximar a um Deus que reside na apreensão imediata de cada instante, mas para se tornar parte da imediaticidade de que a divindade consiste" (67) (strives not only to approach a God who resides in the immediate appreciation of each instant, but to become part of the immediacy of which divinity consists.) In surrendering to the immediate experience of the moment, Mittelman writes, "Clarice* se dissolve dentro de Deus, que por sua vez está

dissolvido em tudo. E nos implora a segui-la nessa transformação” (67) (Clarice* dissolves into God, who in turn is dissolved in everything. And she implores us to follow her in this transformation.)

Mittelman concludes that *Água viva*, understood as a formative text, “nos ensina a procurar uma ligação com o universo e com os outros seres humanos” (68) (teaches us to seek a connection with the universe and with other human beings.) Whether the text *actually teaches us that* is another matter, for what I seek to ascertain here is merely that the text is formulated as a series of enunciations intended for a second person, whose analytical character is attested by the narrator/poetic voice, in an attempt to make him perceive the ineffable and imminent reality that lies behind thought. This spiritual didacticism is observed in the frequent imperatives issued by the painter to the writer: “Não se compreende música: ouve-se. Ouve-me então com teu corpo inteiro” (10) (You don’t understand music: you listen to it. Listen to me then with your whole body.) “Ouve apenas superficialmente o que digo e da falta de sentido nascerá um sentido como de mim nasce inexplicavelmente vida alta e leve” (42). (Listen only superficially to what I say and from the lack of meaning will emerge a meaning as high and light life inexplicably emerges from me.) “Capta essa outra coisa de que na verdade falo porque eu mesma não posso. Lê a energia que está no meu silêncio” (52) (Capture that other thing that I actually talk about because I myself cannot. Read the energy that is in my silence.)

These reading prescriptions can only be enunciated because the author of the text assumes herself to be the possessor of the truths revealed by a mystical experience, equipped with a faith in their veracity despite the incapacity of language to apprehend it. As I have established, the main difference between the sculptor and the painter lies in the positioning that each assumes in respect to the mystical truth at the beginning of each text. From there derives both the journey that G.H. traverses in her narration, and the painter’s seemingly

disconnected utterances This difference, I argue, may also help to understand the diverging proportions of the syntactic tendencies that we find in both texts.

Here I recall my main thesis. On the one hand, hypotaxis tends to become predominant in Lispector's writing style in the moments where there a rational approach to the state of grace is formulated, that is, when a voice discourses on its nature, how to understand it, and how to make sense of the truths that this state of grace reveals. In the previous chapter, I have argued that *A paixão segundo G.H.* dramatizes the mental process by which G.H. attempts to make sense of her mystical experience. It is a quest for meaning that, in formal terms, finds correspondence with the binding configuration that dominates the work through repetition and syntactic subordination. On the other hand, parataxis tends to appear when the voice recreates the feeling of immediacy experienced in the state of grace, as well as when it enunciates the truths revealed by its mystical experience. I have thus shown how syntactic coordination becomes predominant in the moments when G.H. describes the cockroach, when she reports having entered a deep contact with the present moment, as well as when she affirms her realizations about the nature of God and the world.

In contrast to *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva* is the text with the highest proportion of sentences showing syntactic coordination among the three works: paratactic sentences amount to 62.12% of all. From my conception of Lispector's style, this can be accounted for by the difference in positions that the painter as narrator/poetic voice assumes with respect to the state of grace at the beginning of the text. Much of *Água viva* can be read, as I show in the next section, as instances in which language seeks to recreate the experience of immanence that the state of grace makes possible, as well as moments where language points toward the mystical truths the state of grace reveals. In the following section, I seek to delve deeper into the conceptions of the world and of language that motivate this paratactic

predominance, which is not limited to expressions exclusively formulated through clauses with syntactic coordination.



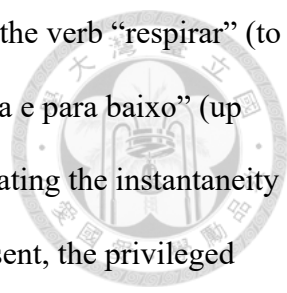
2. Near to the Beating Heart

It has been noted that the experience of reading *Água viva* can often produce feelings of disorientation or frustration. Critics such as Nolasco even assert that the sum of the writing in this text points to no other meaning than the chaos of writing. This confusion seems to be further enhanced by the paratactic configurations in the text:

Estou respirando. Para cima e para baixo. Para cima e para baixo. Como é que a ostra nua respira? Se respira não vejo. O que não vejo não existe? O que mais me emociona é que o que não vejo contudo existe. Porque então tenho aos meus pés todo um mundo desconhecido que existe pleno e cheio de rica saliva. A verdade está em alguma parte: mas inútil pensar. Não a descobrirei e no entanto vivo dela (56).

(I am breathing. Up and down. Up and down. How does the naked oyster breathe? If it breathes I don't see it. What I don't see doesn't exist? What thrills me the most is that what I don't see nevertheless exists. Because then I have at my feet a whole unknown world that exists full and full of rich saliva. The truth is somewhere: but it is useless to think about it. I will not discover it, and yet I live by it.)

Parataxis in this fragment seems to afford an absence of direction beyond a loose association of ideas in a rather strange stream of consciousness. It is difficult to guess what direction the next sentence might take, and while we can still find certain links of association in this passage, it is even more challenging to determine its overall purpose of being, especially if we are not familiar with the forms of expression of mystical thought recurrent in Lispector's works. We can therefore understand why the text itself claims to celebrate “‘coisas sem nexo’, desordem, ausência de construção” (Solange Ribeiro 84) (‘unconnected things’, disorder, lack of construction.) However, now that we are acquainted with the ideas of mysticism present in Lispector's texts, we can notice that all the paratactic tendencies we have examined in the previous chapter are also present in this fragment.



First, the painter locates herself in the present moment by using the verb “respirar” (to breath) in the present continuous. The paratactic repetition of “para cima e para baixo” (up and down) evokes the expansion and relaxation of the diaphragm, recreating the instantaneity of breathing. The painter is thus approaching the immanence of the present, the privileged place for the state of grace. Once she has come into direct contact with the instant, her consciousness faces an instance of primitive materiality, the naked oyster. Parataxis makes its appearance sudden, suggesting that it is related to the painter’s approach to immanence. Observing this primitive form of life, the painter seems aware that both herself and the oyster are but material instances of life, and this leads her to question the true nature of reality. Her enunciations flow in a paratactic way, with few logical connectors, and so we intuit that they feed directly from her experience of unmediated reality. Somehow, through a contemplation of primitive life, the enunciating voice has ascertained the richness of the invisible world (but not immaterial; the word ‘saliva’ can be read as an index of its materiality,) and an experience of communion with it as inexpressible by language. In short, I take this fragment as an illustration of my thesis about parataxis in Lispector’s writing, namely, that it is often linked to moments of profound experience of the present moment, observations of different instances of material vitality, and the enunciation of discoveries revealed through mystical experiences of immanence.

The painter recurrently expresses that she is aware of her paratactic procedure and of the apparent lack of connection between the figures she evokes in her writing: “Um instante me leva insensivelmente a outro e o tema atemático vai se desenrolando sem plano mais geométrico como as figuras sucessivas em um caleidoscópio” (20) (One instant leads me insensitively to another and the athematic theme unfolds without a more geometric plan than the successive figures in a kaleidoscope.) Let us also notice how she refers to an athematic theme guiding her writing, a thread that may give some kind of consistency to its seemingly

disconnected successive figures. Recalling that abstract painting does not dispense with formal structuring, Ribeiro de Oliveira describes *Água viva* as a composition based on the recurrence of related and emblematic images of the origins of life that evoke a contact with an ultimate reality (85). The organization of these images, argues Ribeiro de Oliveira, reflects a form of what she calls “pensamento fantasioso” (fantasy thinking) (90), which, instead of presenting a causal sequence of events, displays:

secuencias de imagens que brotam umas das outras, como num devaneio. Imagem empilha-se sobre imagem, sensação sobre sensação, embaralhando e dispondo as coisas, não como se encontram no mundo visível, mas numa espécie de sonhar acordado. Abertas a diferentes possibilidades de interpretação, imagens típicas do pensar fantasioso respondem a uma necessidade interna, uma vontade compulsiva de expressar algo indefinível, a qual, uma vez satisfeita, conduz a calma e ao equilíbrio físico (90).

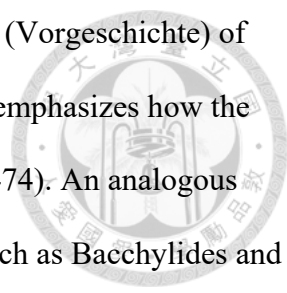
(sequences of images that spring one from the other, as in a reverie. Image piles on image, sensation on sensation, shuffling and arranging things, not as they are in the visible world, but in a kind of daydreaming. Open to different possibilities of interpretation, images typical of fantasy thinking respond to an inner need, a compulsive urge to express something indefinable, which, once satisfied, leads to calm and physical equilibrium.)

Other forms of fantasy thinking, Ribeiro de Oliveira notes, is found in the surrealist paintings of Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy, René Magritte or Paul Delvaux (91). In *Água viva*, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, its configuration gives a glimpse of the kind of thought that the narrator seeks, a beatitude that, according to the painter, begins when “o pensar-sentir ultrapassou a necessidade de pensar” (91) (thinking-feeling has overcome the need to think.) Without entering discussions on psychology, it is enough here to note that in *Água viva* we find a series of evocative images of the primitive organized in a paratactic configuration that articulates them as an immediate approach to the experience of immanence. In order to understand in greater depth what these paratactic configurations are doing, beyond the stylistic effects of immediacy and forcefulness that I mentioned in the previous chapter, I find it useful here to bring in Adorno’s and Rancière’s ideas on parataxis. In Adorno’s case, his ideas refer to the paratactic forms he observes in Hölderlin’s late poetry.

In “Parataxis: zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins,” Adorno argues that the truth of a poem does not exist without its structure (Gefüge), understood as the totality of its moments, but at the same time, that it transcends it, since the configuration of the moments means more than the structure intends (451). What philosophy can hope to do for poetry, writes Adorno, is to illuminate the relation between the intellectual content and the form of the poem (469). For Adorno, the mere assertion of an inarticulate unity of form and content is not adequate; one should ask instead what form itself, as sedimented content (sedimentierter Inhalt), achieves (469). For it is only through the hiatus of form that content (Inhalt) becomes substance (Gehalt) (470).

Adorno cites Benjamin’s observations that in Hölderlin’s poetry we often find a serial ordering of human beings, divinities and princes, which appear as if they were catapulted from their old orders (471). This transformation of language into a serial order manifests itself in constructions of paratactic syntax. Adorno notes that, while Steiger pointed out that Hölderlin’s technique is not devoid of hypotactic constructions due to the influence of Greek constructions, artificial disturbances that appear in his poetry in paratactic form stand as they evade the logical hierarchy of subordinating syntax (471). These linguistic forms, Adorno argues, seek to escape the dictates of the synthesizing principle of the spirit that has been self-divinized (472).

For Adorno, language in Hölderlin’s elegies hopes to achieve a bodily presence through a constellation of words that is not satisfied with the form of logical judgment (480). The poet links one word to the other in a way that reworks the strangeness of their own and makes them an expression of alienation as opposed to synthesis. These constellations, Adorno writes, are paratactic, even when parataxis does not fully emerge in grammatical form (480). Adorno thus asserts that in Hölderlin’s poetry there are larger forms that can be called paratactic in a broader sense than mere syntactic configuration.



Pindar's poetic work is seen by Adorno as part of the prehistory (Vorgeschichte) of the paratactical tendency found in Hölderlin. Citing Gerhard Wirth, he emphasizes how the constructions in the Greek poet stand in a loose relation to each other (474). An analogous tendency, writes Adorno, has been noted in other choral lyric writers such as Bacchylides and Alcman, where the narrative moment in language eludes subsumption under an idea, forming what has been called in classical philology a "strömende[s] Kontinuum von Bildern") (474). (flowing continuum of images) (Nicholsen 134). However, Adorno argues, Hölderlin's serial arrangements probably derive not from Pindar, but from a mode of proceeding embedded in the depths of his spirit (475). Adorno considers that Hölderlin opposes linguistic synthesis because of his profound disavowal of the logic of the purpose (Zweck), which orders and manipulates everything according to the use (Brauch) that can be found for it (476). According to the philosopher of negative dialectics, synthesis is equivalent to the domination of nature by the Logos (476). To this complicity, Hölderlin counterposes poetry with a non-metaphorical sacred status, thus taking the side of fallen nature against the dominant, self-divinizing Logos (476).

Adorno sees Hölderlin as attempting to rescue language from the logic of use by elevating it above the subject through subjective freedom itself (478). This drive to make language itself speak, Adorno points out, is a romantic impulse (478). He argues that Hölderlin's paratactic procedure makes visible the fact that the subject, which is believed to be something immediate and ultimate, is in reality something mediated, and that Hölderlin's ideal is that of revealed language. Adorno writes:

Nur als zum Ideal verhält seine Dichtung sich zur Theologie, surrogiert sie nicht. Die Distanz von ihr ist das eminent Moderne an ihm. Der idealische Hölderlin inauguriert jenen Prozess, der in die sinleeren Protokollsätze Becketts mündet. Das wohl gestattet, Hölderlin heute so unvergleichlich viel weiter zu begreifen als ehemals (479).

(The relation of his poetry to theology is the relation to an ideal; the poetry is not a surrogate for theology. The distance from theology is what is eminently modern in him. The idealistic Hölderlin inaugurates the process that leads to Beckett's protocol

sentences, empty of meaning. This allows us an incomparably broader understanding of Hölderlin than was formerly possible) (Nicholsen 137).

When Hölderlin, writes Adorno, employs the paratactic method to make sudden connections between ancient and modern scenes and figures, these historical names become allegories of the absolute, which cannot be exhausted by any single name (479). Thus, Adorno emphasizes, the formal principle of parataxis is commensurable with the intelligible content of Hölderlin's late lyric (481). Adorno argues that the law of poetry for Hölderlin is “das Gesetz des Gegenwärtigen” (483) (the law of the present,) which effects a prohibition of abstract utopias, “den alle Syntehsis – keiner wusste das besser als Kant – geschieht wider die reine Gegenwart” (483) (for as Kant knew well, every synthesis occurs in opposition to the pure present) (Nicholsen 142).

After examining these arguments, we can now find interesting parallels and differences between Adorno's description of paratactic procedure in Hölderlin's poetry with our observation of parataxis in *Água viva*. In both instances we find serial constructions of diverse elements, which through their paratactic linkage, acquire a relation to a totality that language cannot exhaust. In the case of Hölderlin, Adorno points out that it is a relation of allegory with the absolute, while in *Água viva*, we may say that it is a relation of instantiation of the ‘it’, understood as the original core of life in its material divinity (like the cockroach in *A paixão segundo G.H.*). The paratactic configuration in Hölderlin's later poetry, Adorno writes, follows an opposition to the synthesis, understood as the expression of the domination of nature by the self-divinized spirit. In our case, we may say that attaining a linguistic synthesis of mystical experience was the project that G.H. undertook in her narration, which ended with the celebration of her failure to do so. No expression, not even “a vida se me é”, would suffice for her to truly embrace the experience of mystical union, and just at the moment she realizes this, the sculptor self-divinizes, or rather, recognizes divinity that was always in herself. While the dominant structure in *A paixão segundo G.H.*, guided by

hypotaxis and repetition, emphasizes the linking of ideas in a quest for meaning, the governing structure of *Água viva*, which we may call paratactic in the moments it refuses a synthesis of its ideas, seems to emphasize the apparently liberated flow of language that lets the different instantiations emerge in a serial fashion. And yet, as we shall see in the next section, the painter will also take up G.H.'s project of arriving at a synthesis of her mystical experience through language. Then, hypotaxis will become dominant.

Hölderlin, Adorno argues, elevates poetry to a sacred status in which language seeks to free itself from the subordination to utility to which the self-divinized spirit has subjected it. In *Água viva* we do not find at all a sacralizing celebration of poetry as such. We do find, however certain assertions by the painter make us think that she seeks to liberate language from expressing something, so that it can simply express:

Meu corpo incógnito te diz: dinossauros, ictiossauros e plessiossauros, com sentido apenas auditivo, sem que por isso se tornem palha seca, e sim úmida. Não pinto idéias, pinto o mais inatingível “para sempre”. Ou “para nunca”, é o mesmo. Antes de mais nada, pinto pintura. E antes de mais nada te escrevo dura escritura (14).

(My incognito body tells you: dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs and plessiosaurs, with only an auditory sense, without becoming dry straw, but humid. I don't paint ideas, I paint the most unattainable “forever”. Or “for never”, it is the same. First of all, I paint painting. And before anything else I write hard writing.)

One could argue, however, that what the painter actually does by freeing language from its subordination to a coherent narrative is to subordinate it again to another principle; a more corporal one, as the grammatical subject of the first sentence suggests. It is no longer that of telling a story; what she now seeks to cause through her language is a special attention to its capacity to be perceived as a sensation. If language can approach immanence, it is not so much for its semantic content as for its sensitive quality, its auditory sense, the material effects provoked by the evocations of images that emerge and submerge, as beating of the primordial heart of things: “Esta é a vida vista pela vida. Posso não ter sentido mas é a mesma falta de sentido que tem a veia que pulsa. Quero escrever-te como quem aprende.

Fotografo cada instante” (18) (This is life as seen through life. I may not make sense but it is the same absence of sense that has the pulsating vein. I want to write to you as one who learns. I photograph every instant.) The paratactic form corresponds then to the figuration of intermittent beats, which through their interstices denote both instant presence and persistent vitality.

To dive deep into the realm of sensations, the painter makes use of a particular literary figure: synesthesia. Ribeiro de Oliveira argues that the synesthetic locutions in *Água viva* comprise the evocation of visual and auditory images: (“cristais tilintam e faíscam” (crystals tinkle and sparkle); fusions of the visual with the auditory (“fotografar o perfume” (photographing the scent,) combinations between the olfactory and the haptic (“almíscar pesado”) (heavy mussel,) between the auditory and the olfactory (“som odorante do jasmin”) (smelling sound of jasmine,) and between the tactile and the visual (“mãos também olham”) (hands also see) (Ribeiro de Oliveira 94). The critic points out that these synesthetic expressions are inscribed in a particular tradition of literary history that notably developed during the nineteenth century, when poets and writers sought new forms of consciousness and perception through the consumption of drugs and hallucinogens (94). Ribeiro de Oliveira notes that both Cixous and Barthes also sought to rehabilitate sensory perception, which, according to them, had been repudiated and marginalized by Platonic conceptions of thought (95). The synesthetic paradigms, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, which these two authors mobilized to reverse the Platonic epistemological stance are a way of reaching the sensory apprehension of things through writing (95).

According to Ribeiro de Oliveira, Cixous identifies in Lispector’s writing a quest for a direct contact of the world through sensory perception, rejecting rational mechanisms (96). For Cixous, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, synesthetic experiences perform their fundamental role of the recovery of an original link between human beings and nature, a reflection

between sensory perception and a superior reality (96). Ribeiro de Oliveira finds in the very title of Lispector's text an index of this privileging of sensory perception, since "água-viva" in Brazilian Portuguese means jellyfish (91). Ribeiro de Oliveira recalls that the existence of this primordial being dates back six hundred and fifty million years (91). The jelly fish, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, is a relative of corals and anemones; it has no bones, brain, nor heart, and is oriented only by sensory nerves at the base of its tentacles (91).

To conclude our comparison between the abstract painter and the Romantic poet, we may note that Adorno's formulation of a law of the present, the legislator of poetry according to Hölderlin, also resonates with *Água viva*'s insistence on touching with what the painter calls "o instante-já" (8) (the now-instant.) It even becomes something close to an obsession. Moser states that "her [Lispector's] ability to arrest time, which itself has no beginning or end, is the most uncanny aspect of the book" (321), and cites this fragment as an example: "Agora é um instante. Já é outro agora. E outro" (52) (Now is an instant. Already another one now. And another.) To appreciate the paratactic, beating procedure employed when the text emulates an apprehension of time in its transience, we can also refer to these moments: "Mas a palavra mais importante da língua tem uma única letra: é. É. Estou no seu âmago. Ainda estou. Estou no centro vivo e mole. Ainda" (48) (But the most important word in language has only one letter: é [is]. É. I am at its core. I still am. I am at its living, soft center. Still.) "Eu, viva e tremeluzente como os instantes, acendo-me e me apago, acendo e apago, acendo e apago, acendo e apago" (22) (I, alive and flickering like the instants, turn on and off, turn on and off, turn on and off.)

Adorno's formulation of *das Gesetz des Gegenwärtigen* may have inspired Rancière to call the logic underlying parataxis the "loi du profond aujourd'hui" (38) (the law of the profound now.) However, these expressions are inscribed in rather different projects. While Adorno refers to Hölderlin's disavowal of conceptual synthesis in his poetic language,

Rancière attempts to give an account of the relationality manifest in an entire historical conception of art, namely, the procedure discovered by the aesthetic regime. Examining his ideas on parataxis as an underlying principle, and Bewe's commentary on these ideas, will help us understand how the elements coordinated by parataxis might be instantiating an unsaid idea behind a text, and whether this is also the case in Lispector's text.

The aesthetic regime, as we have seen before, begins with nineteenth-century realism. Before this, Bewes notes, we find the ethical regime, associated with Plato, and the representative regime, associated with Aristotle. According to Bewes, the aesthetic regime is

the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres. The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It establishes the autonomy of art (238).

Bewes writes that the narrative mode of the aesthetic regime is the “paratactical linking of simple perceptions” (27). He points out that Rancière illustrates this idea by comparing a passage from Robert Antelme's memoir *The Human Race*, dealing with toilet rituals in a concentration camp, to a passage in *Madame Bovary*, where Emma sews in silence while Charles contemplates the movement of dust and the distant sound of a laying hen (235). According to Bewes, Rancière observes the “paratactic” quality of both passages, which arrange “‘small perceptions . . . side by side’, thus foreclosing in themselves any possibility of reference to some larger idea, even while the ‘nocturnal silence’ that prevails in both passages solicits a readerly interpretation predicated on its existence” (235). Bewes identifies the ideational affirmation in both passages; in the case of Antelme, he notes the suggested “‘fundamental membership in the human race’ despite the inhumanity of the circumstances he depicts” (235), while in Flaubert's passage, he locates the “implication of an incipient mutual attraction between Charles and Emma” (235). The suggestion of these ideas, writes Bewes, only takes place under the condition of their literal absence (235).

The parataxis to which Rancière refers is clearly not limited to the mere linguistic fact of syntactic coordination, but is rather understood in the broader sense of figures and elements in series that are not synthesized in the expression of an idea. Bewes defines parataxis as “a distinct type of relation in which the ‘whole’ (or idea) of the text is present solely and exclusively in its ‘parts’” (235), and as “the formal organization of the work around a ‘mute middle point through which each word seeks to be refracted and which it must express’” (235). He also articulates the historical shift from the representational to the aesthetic regime as something inherent to novels:

a transition from representation (a mode in which the connection is visible, speakable) to instantiation is a logic that is inherent to the novel form, according to which an entity (a person, an object, a linguistic sign, an encounter, a fictional description, a character trait) is asserted as a case or instance of a larger category, property, or concept, to whose reality it attests (188).

There is a connection between this description of parataxis in the aesthetic regime and my account of the paratactic procedure carried out in *Água viva*: the relation of instantiation with parataxis. Yet there is also an important divergence in how the text works as a whole, for the ideas instantiated in it are, at certain moments, made verbally explicit by the painter.

According to Bewes’ description and Rancière’s conception, authors since realism have discovered, through the *loi du profond aujourd’hui*, the expressive force of the montage of images that do not subsume an idea, but instantiate it in the absence of its enunciation. In the case of *Água viva*, however, the very *relation of instantiation* of the paratactic elements is made explicit by the text itself, and so is *the very same idea which these elements instantiate*. That is to say, *Água viva* is brimming with metalinguistic considerations of its own procedure and purpose. The living beings evoked by the painter are meant to be read as instances of the pulsating ‘it’, the beating heart of all things, as the painter herself tells us: “Preciso sentir de novo o it dos animais” (94) (I need to feel again the it of the animals.) The immediate experience of materiality is the source of her writing, following the aesthetic conception

presented by the painter. It is not that there is an absent idea in *Água viva* that is only instantiated by its paratactic elements, since the text makes it explicit that they are meant to instantiate the omnipresent existence of it. What remains ineffable, the painter insists, is the mystical experience of the 'it', but the idea of its ineffability is communicated again and again. Precisely when the voice insists on the ineffability of this experience, we find the moments where the hypotaxis tends to become syntactically predominant in the text.

3. The State of Grace

Perhaps the reader has already remarked that, in some quotations I have previously inserted, we find instances of hypotactic syntax employed for metalinguistic reflections on what the painter is trying to do with her writing. Just to examine one of them, I reproduce it here:

Parece-me que o mais provável é que não entendo porque o que vejo agora é difícil: estou entrando sorrateiramente em contato com uma realidade nova para mim e que ainda não tem pensamentos correspondentes, e muito menos ainda alguma palavra que a signifique. É mais uma sensação atrás do pensamento (138).

(It seems to me that I most likely don't understand because what I see now is difficult: I am sneaking into a new reality for me that has no corresponding thoughts yet, let alone any word that signifies it. It is more a sensation behind thought.)

We find in the complex sentence an adverbial clause relating to the reason for state of incomprehension experienced by the painter, and two adjectival clauses, one within the other, both pointing towards the inexpressible quality of the dimension of the reality she has come into direct contact with. The general tone of this passage is explanatory, although the content of the explanation is precisely the inexplicable character of her experience. The hypotactic sentence seems thus to obey an impulse to communicate the reasons and conditions of the intrinsic incommunicability of mystical union, an impulse that underflows in *Água viva* and which constantly emerges to the surface.

The painter seems to be aware of the paradoxical nature of her desire to elucidate her direct contact with reality. At one point she writes: "E não adiantaria explicar porque a

explicação exige uma outra explicação que exigiria uma outra explicação e que se abriria de novo para o mistério” (56) (And there would be no point in explaining because the explanation requires another explanation that would require another explanation and that would open up the mystery again.) Yet this awareness does not prevent her from elaborating a long explanation of the state of grace towards the end of the text. G.H. had already made mention of the state of grace, but it is in *Água viva* that we find a long, open exposition on the matter. This might follow her mystical impulse of wanting to exhaust language, be it in a lively or explanatory tone, be it in a paratactic or hypotactic form, to underline the irremediable inadequacy of language when facing the ultimate nature of reality.

Few pages before the end of her writing, the painter reveals that “as cinco da madrugada de hoje, 25 de julho, caí em estado de graça” (180) (at five in the morning today, July 25th, I fell into a state of grace.) For Mittelman, the use of this religious term can be read as an appropriation of the vocabulary present in the Psalms to preserve the poetic voice’s own spiritual experience. In thematic terms, writes Mittelman, “Clarice compartilha com o Salmista bíblico o anseio pela comunhão e pela salvação, o problema do medo, o desejo de se entregar a algo maior, e o impulso de cantar a glória e a graça divina” (66) (Clarice shares with the biblical Psalmist the longing for communion and salvation, the problem of fear, the desire to surrender to something greater, and the impulse to sing of divine glory and grace.) However, the experience of this divine grace is mostly mystical in character, and the painter insists that she is free from “religiosidade” (184) (religiosity.)

The painter calls her experience “indizível” (unspeakable) and asks her interlocutor to try to feel with her: “Sinta comigo. Era uma felicidade suprema” (180) (Feel it with me. It was a supreme happiness.) The painter assures that it was not a trance and prefers the word ecstasy. She adds that she is not fond of the definition of “beatitude” she finds in the dictionary: “de quem se absorve em contemplação mística” (182) (of one who is absorbed in

mystical contemplation.) The painter then insists on the veracity of her experience, and even clarifies not having consumed any type of substances that could have induced it, for she was just finishing a cup of coffee when it happened. She assures that the state of grace allows her to see and understand the nature of authentic existence:

O estado de graça de que falo não é usado para nada. É como se viesse apenas para que se soubesse que realmente se existe e existe o mundo. Nesse estado, além da tranqüila felicidade que se irradia de pessoas e coisas, há uma lucidez que só chamo de leve porque na graça tudo é tão leve. É uma lucidez de quem não precisa mais adivinhar: sem esforço, sabe. Apenas isto: sabe. Não me pergunte o quê, porque só posso responder do mesmo modo: sabe-se (180).

(The state of grace I speak of is not used for anything. It is as if it comes only to let one know that one really exists and the world exists. In this state, besides the quiet happiness that radiates from people and things, there is a lucidity that I only call light because in grace everything is so light. It is a lucidity of one who no longer needs to guess: without effort, one knows. Just this: one knows. Don't ask me what, because I can only answer in the same way: one knows.)

The state of grace thus seems to be a state of profound connection that cannot be articulated in words. The painter is not satisfied with this description, and she announces: “Mas agora quero ver se consigo prender o que me aconteceu usando palavras. Ao usá-las estarie destruindo um pouco o que senti – mas é fatal. Vou chamar o que se segue de ‘a margem da beatitude” (184) (But now I want to see if I can arrest what happened to me using words. By using them I will be destroying a little of what I felt – but it is fatal. I will call what follows as “at the edge of beatitude.”) Thus begins her long explanation by means of which the painter will try to elucidate the state of grace, and in which hypotaxis becomes notoriously predominant.

The painter refers to the state of grace as a kind of ineffable perception that the painter calls freedom, true thought, or a thought that has no form. Let us note the learned, almost scholastic tone with which she seeks to cast light on this special form of perception:

E como o verdadeiro pensamento se pensa a si mesmo, essa espécie de pensamento atinge seu objetivo no próprio ato de pensar. Não quero dizer com isso que é vagamente ou gratuitamente. Acontece que o pensamento primário – enquanto ato de pensamento – já tem forma e é mais facilmente transmissível a si mesmo, ou melhor, à própria

pessoa que o está pensando; e tem por isso – por ter forma – um alcance limitado. Enquanto o pensamento dito “liberdade” é livre como ato de pensamento. É livre a um ponto que ao próprio pensador esse pensamento parece sem autor (184-186).

(And since the true thought thinks itself, this kind of thought achieves its goal in the very act of thinking. I don't mean by this that it is vaguely or gratuitously so. It just happens that primary thought – as an act of thought – already has form and is most easily transmissible to itself, or rather to the very person who is thinking it; and has therefore – because it has form – a limited scope. Whereas the thought called "freedom" is free as an act of thought. It is free to a point that to the thinker himself this thought seems authorless.)

In this passage, from which I quote a few excerpts, we are clearly no longer on the pulsating plane of immediacy that we have seen in the previous section, that is, in the moments where parataxis predominates as the arrangement of instances of primitive life. Now language is organized with forms of rational demonstration and illustration, regardless of whether its content seems coherent or persuasive to its reader. Interestingly, the idea of a thought without form or author had already been mentioned by G.H. towards the end of her narrative: “Minha voz é o modo como vou buscar a realidade; a realidade, antes de minha linguagem, existe como um pensamento que não se pensa, mas por fatalidade fui e sou impelida a precisar saber o que o pensamento pensa” (177) (My voice is the way I search for reality; reality, before my language, exists as a thought that is not thought, but by fatality I was and am impelled to need to know what that thought thinks.) The painter now employs a similar vocabulary to try to explain the state of grace, and even insists that the nature of this thought without form or author should not be seen through the lens of sophistry or paradox:

E tudo isso não implica necessariamente no problema da existência ou não existência de um Deus. Estou falando é que o pensamento do homem e o modo como esse pensar-sentir pode chegar a um grau extremo de incomunicabilidade – que, sem sofisma ou paradoxo, é ao mesmo tempo, para esse homem, o ponto de comunicabilidade maior. Ele se comunica com ele mesmo (186).

(And all this does not necessarily imply the problem of the existence or non-existence of a God. What I am saying is that the thought of a human and the way in which this thinking-feeling can reach an extreme degree of incommunicability – which, without sophistry or paradox, is at the same time, for this human, the point of greatest communicability. He communicates with himself.)

That is how the painter synthetizes her mystical experience. After her explanation, she assures that she has now left the state of grace, but the lingering effects have allowed her to enter a state of creativity endowed with a complete freedom of imagination. With this, the painter effectively positions all her previous utterances in the text as standing in close proximity to the state of grace. In my conception of the work, this hypotactic passage serves to communicate the belief in the transcendent truth that motivates the writing of *Água viva*. It is also precisely this conception, however, that stands in opposition to certain critics who approach *Água viva* from a post-structural framework.

Along the same lines as Nolasco, for whom the writing of *Água viva* ultimately points only to the chaos of writing and the dissemination of meaning, we can locate both Fritz's and Nascimento's interpretations of the text. The former also reads it, together with the whole of Lispector's work written after 1961, as exemplifying Barthesian theory:

This casting of language itself as the primary focus, as the *élan vital* of existence (and therefore of identity), reaches its zenith in *The Stream of Life* [*Água viva*], a text that, as we have seen, is essentially about writing, understood, again, as *écriture*. Thus, for Clarice Lispector (as for the later Barthes), language—and not some external reality—was simultaneously both the subject and object of her work, which, after *The Apple in the Dark* (1961), can easily be read as exemplifying Barthes's theory about those texts in which there is no single, definitive meaning and which are structured around semantically inexhaustible webs of signifiers, signified, codes, and constantly realigning fragments of codes (27).

The interpretation I have advanced in this chapter, informed particularly by readings of Ribeiro de Oliveira and Mittelman, is that *Água viva* is not about writing itself, but about an exploration of the possible approaches of writing as a sensible artistic means to get in touch with ultimate reality, whose experience is understood and portrayed as unspeakable. One does not see how it can be easily read as exemplifying Barthes' idea of writerly texts. But following a similar line to Fritz, Nascimento writes:

Todo *Água viva* pode ser lido nessa clave do que chamaria também de loucura da frase, sua exuberância vocabular, luxuosa, mas de um luxo impregnado de lixo, tal um famoso poema de Augusto de Campos. (...) Virar o vernáculo ao avesso, arrevesá-lo, eis uma das tarefas dessa lúcida e louca escrita assinada C.L. A frase-Clarice é uma

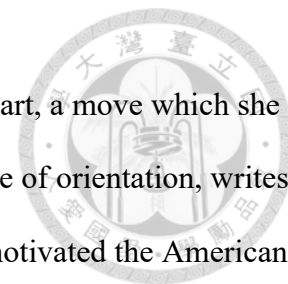
plataforma para a disseminação do sentido e não para sua convergência ontológica ou sua unificação semântica, pois, como diz, “escrevo tosco e sem ordem” (146).

(All *Água viva* can be read in this key of what I would also call the madness of the phrase, its vocabulary exuberance, luxurious, but of a luxury impregnated with trash, like formulated a famous poem by Augusto de Campos. (...) To turn the vernacular inside out, to evade it, is one of the tasks of this lucid and mad writing signed C. L. The Clarice-phrase is a platform for the dissemination of meaning and not for its ontological convergence or semantic unification, because, as she says, “escrevo tosco e sem ordem” [I write crude and without order.])

If there is a dissemination of meaning in *Água viva*, I argue, it follows the principle of instantiation whereby language frees itself from its submission to the representational function in order to instantiate the beating of the omnipresent and eternal divine materiality; a reality that the authorial voice of the text repeatedly insist on having known directly through the state of grace, and whose explicit understanding presented by the voice might be considered as “the ontological convergence” of the text. Ultimately, what these critics seem to be doing is celebrating a supposedly inherent deconstructive quality of *Água viva*. For them, its writing demonstrates by itself that any meaning is always in a state of flux and indeterminacy, revealing the aporia or gaps that undermine any claim to coherence and unity. I suggest that their celebration may be too hasty, for *Água viva*, just like *A paixão segundo G.H.*, explicitly articulates the transcendent truth it attempts to communicate, and provides an explanation for the utter inadequacy of language to communicate the experience of one particular transcendent truth, and not just any meaning whatsoever. In my view, these critics perhaps need to first elaborate a deconstructive reading of the textual articulations of this latent mystical thought, making visible its internal contradictions, revealing and subverting its underlying assumptions and self-referential instability, instead of proclaiming that the text alone make its deconstructive quality self-evident, and thus effectively prevents any totalizing reading of itself.

As I noted in the introduction, my thesis considers *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva*, and *A hora da estrela* as comprising a unitary literary project. This unity derives from the consistency in the mystical thought expressed and developed in each of them, as well as in the conformity of my observations about syntactical tendencies, which, as I have suggested in this chapter, derive from underlying ideas about the (in)communicability of mystical union, the roles that reason and logic can play in illuminating its conditions and content, the limits of conceptual synthesis for explaining its experience, the belief in a pulsating core in the materiality of life, and the ways in which paratactic language can evoke a sense sensual immediacy, given its impossibility of ever embodying immanence itself. In the next chapter, I examine *A hora da estrela* where, unlike the previous two texts, the state of grace is no longer explained. I aim to show how we can still find the central presence of this mystical thought and relate it not only to the linguistic forms found in the text, but also to the characterization of its protagonists, including the first male narrator we encounter in our exploration of Lispector's work.

Chapter Three: The Last Cry



Ribeiro de Oliveira observes in *A hora da estrela* a return to figurative art, a move which she formulates as Lispector's renunciation of abstract art (102). This change of orientation, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, is comparable to the rejection of abstract art that motivated the American painter Philip Guston to adopt "um figurativismo de extraordinária força expressiva" (102) (a figurativism of extraordinary expressive strength,) where political issues were openly addressed. According to Ribeiro de Oliveira, the novel *A hora da estrela* grants a wider space for the social in its narrative (101), which in turn is intertwined with the theme of artistic creation (102). Ribeiro de Oliveira particularly analyzes the artistic propensities of Macabéa and Olímpico, two characters of the novel who belong to the migrant class of northeastern Brazil, and live marginalized in Rio de Janeiro. In Olímpico's creativity, Ribeiro de Oliveira identifies a direct engagement with the realm of popular art (103), including sacred sculpture and political caricature. Olímpico's artistic endeavor, writes the critic, "é fruto da empatia de Clarice com os sentimentos dos excluídos" (108) (is the fruit of Clarice's empathy with the feelings of the excluded.)

A hora da estrela is narrated by Rodrigo S.M., an eccentric writer who comes from the northeast of the country. The narrator declares in the Dedication to have lived in poverty himself before (7). Her main character Macabéa, notes Rodrigo S.M., was born when he observed the eyes of a Northeastern girl at the Sunday fair in Rio de Janeiro. Since then, the writer is obsessed with his character, no longer interacts with anyone in the world and follows a strict routine to get spiritually close to her (17), she who lives in extreme precariousness. The Northeastern girl is a typist, lives in a room shared with four other girls, and has few skills for survival in the big city. Mariângela Alonso emphasizes Rodrigo S.M.'s reflexive position, pointing out that, much more than a mere fictional invention, the narration in the novel assumes the obligation to narrate Macabéa's social exclusion (159). This is also the

interpretation of José Miguel Wisnik, who sees in the novel an amplification of the social malaise that the author discovered and was dismayed during her childhood in Recife. The novel is thus often recognized as one of Lispector's most politically conscious texts, as Fitz points out (41).

The presence of mystical thought in *A hora da estrela* is identified both by Yudith Rosenbaum and Moser. Rosenbaum directs her attention to the vocabulary which Rodrigo S.M. uses to describe his character: “melado pegajoso” (sticky molasses), “lama negra” (black slime), “personagem buliçoso” (buzzing character) (479), among other expressions referring to images of an amorphous body (480). This vocabulary, Rosenbaum writes, refers to “um terreno complexo e inominável da vida que pulsa sem limite e sem continência. O que está vivo resiste a qualquer delimitação” (480) (a complex and unnamable terrain of life that pulsates without limit and without continence. What is alive resists any delimitation.) In Rodrigo's narration of Macabéa, Rosenbaum identifies a continuation of G.H.'s quest for the neutral, or “do que está antes da existência social e histórica e coincide, em alguns pontos, com o que penso ser a pulsão não capturada pela rede simbólica” (484) (of what lies before social and historical existence and coincides at some points with what I think is the drive non captured by the symbolic network.) For Rosenbaum, when Rodrigo writes that Macabéa is “vida primária que respira” (breathing primary life,) and the reader may find through her the cockroach that G.H. encountered (485). Citing Berta Waldman, Rosenbaum suggests that *A hora da estrela* continues with the search “para a anterioridade da forma, para o orgânico, para o estágio primeiro da vida, que ainda não é letra nem lei, apenas o mistério do impessoal, inabordável pela palavra” (486) (for the anteriority of form, for the organic, for the first stage of life, which is not yet letter nor law, only the mystery of the impersonal, unapproachable by words.)

For Moser, *A hora da estrela* brings together the concerns about religious and linguistic issues that characterize Lispector's work, her life experiences in the northeast and in Rio de Janeiro, and exhibits explicitly Jewish and Brazilian components (372). The name of the protagonist comes from the Maccabees, the historical people who resisted the repression against the Jewish religion launched by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In this regard, Moser writes:

The suggestion of the Maccabees' manly and warlike valor is even more ironic when applied to their namesake, Macabéa, a smelly, dirty, starving typist living with four other girls in a cheap boarding house in a scummy part of downtown Rio, the Rua do Acre (373).

Moser notes that the narrative of *A hora da estrela*, despite this irony, presents Macabéa as a kind of saint who meditates on nothingness and empties her soul without being aware of it (377). According to the biographer, Lispector herself wrote that she identifies with Macabéa in her reduction of herself to enter into contact with the divine (379). When the novel was published, Moser writes, Lispector personally sent a copy to the Catholic writer Alceu Amoroso on which was the inscription: "I know that God exists" (380).

The interpretation in this chapter is informed by the readings of Rosenbaum and Moser, and it seeks to illuminate how its mystical thought relates to the explicitly social content. In this chapter, I argue that Macabéa is for Rodrigo S.M. a way of approaching an instance of life which is more primitive and with more unconsciousness than himself. The Northeastern girl is portrayed as sometimes experiencing the state of grace, since the process of socialization in her has not consolidated a strong personal identity and has not banished her from the experience of immanence in which the individual self is undone and one lives in communion with nothingness, as Rodrigo S.M. phrase it. Through the process of writing his character, the narrator also comes in intimate contact with the ego-effacing mystical truth that every living being is but an instance of a neutral and blind material divinity. It is here that my interpretation enters a certain tension with readings that claim a social denunciation of

marginalization and poverty. While it seems evident that the conditions of exclusion in which Macabéa lives seek to arouse an indignation and repulsion in readers, I will argue that the novel ultimately decides to carry the logic of mystical thought to its final consequences: the social constructs that constitute the principle of individuation is revealed as the insignificant and insubstantial veil which undoes itself in the face of the experience of immanence, and language is finally exhibited as impotent to express the state of grace, given the dissolution of consciousness akin to the death of the individual that it entails. The description of the social conditions in which Macabéa lives, then, serve Rodrigo S.M. primarily to contrast his character's experience of the divine with the calculating and instrumentalizing thought that dominates the members of a society when their lives follow the principle of individualization, that is, when they are blinded to their status as instances of divine matter.

In terms of language, one notices that, although the same syntactic tendencies that we have seen in the previous works are present in the novel, there is a clear preference at the level of the paragraph for large paratactic forms, understood as a sequence of elements which do not subsume an idea, and thus are not synthesized or do not arrive at an explicit expression of that which they instantiate. This tendency towards large parataxis is not directly observable in the counting of sentences with or without syntactic coordination, so it must be extrapolated through the observation of the forms that the passages acquire, and through an exercise of interpretation of the ideas that are instantiated without being explicitly announced. In other words, what we observe in *A hora da estrela* is a movement towards parataxis at the level of the narrative and not of the sentence, which demands a greater work of interpretation than in the previous works. Correspondingly, this chapter will devote more effort to content analysis and less to syntactic description than in the previous chapters.

In **1. Rádio Relógio**, I show how Rodrigo S.M.'s narrative assumes paratactic forms best visible at the level of paragraphs. For this, I refer to the observations of Cixous, who

describes the novel as a text full of leaps and bounds that run through it like cuts, giving it an even more fragmentary form than what was previously found in *Água viva*. I argue that this new form corresponds with the proximity of Rodrigo S.M. with the state of grace, found through the writing of his character. This proximity, I argue, eludes synthesis of ideas, and is realized by his personal engagement with the novel's protagonist, the Northeastern girl. Through an analysis of Macabéa's characterization, I show how she represents a more primitive way of life with a very weak self-consciousness, which allows her to relate to the world in a way that is more attuned to the vital and divine pulse that permeates everything, given that she lives in the deep experience of the present moment.

In **2. Mimesis and Mimeticism**, I address the mechanism of exchange through which Rodrigo S.M. ensures his mystic transformation by representing his character and 'mimetizing' with her. Referring to Cixous's interpretation of *A hora da estrela* as an exercise in devalorization in opposition to the ideas of use-value and exchange-value, I argue how an exchange between Macabéa and Rodrigo S.M. points to the mystical vision of equality of conditions between all instances of material divinity that are manifested in the present moment. Through a comparison of the rest of the characters with Macabéa, I show how they are represented under the domination of a rational and calculating thought, which leads them to seek to instrumentalize things and words to increase their individual value in society. This does not happen with Macabéa, for she has not been blinded to the state of grace by the principle of individuation constituted by the various constructs of the socialized world, so she keeps a privileged proximity to the experience of immanence that undoes any idea of value difference by revealing the general equivalence between things.

Finally, in **3. The Last Cry**, I offer an interpretation of the novel's ending as the culmination of the mystical thought present in Lispector's work, which is here taken to its ultimate consequences. I show how my interpretation differs from the readings of those who

see in Macabéa's death just a denunciation of social exclusion and marginalization by examining the different expressions of mystical union as an experience of immanence that Rodrigo S.M. alludes to in an paratactic way. The inner logic that motivates this ending, I argue, is not so much the mere desire to exhibit the injustice of the social conditions experienced by Macabéa as rather the mystical insight towards which she as a character has led the narrator, namely, that all organic instances of life are equivalent to each other as manifestations of the same divine matter. This is a vision before which all pretensions born of human consciousness become insubstantial and insignificant.

1. Rádio Relógio

In what Moser identifies as an echo of Lispector's early readings of Spinoza as a student (379), on the first page of *A hora da estrela*, we find the affirmation: "Deus é o mundo" (9) (God is the world.) This singular clause easily fits into the category of revealed truths that the enunciating voices tend to formulate paratactically in Lispector's fiction. The narrator announces himself as possessing some mystical knowledge, which we confirm in the vocabulary he uses: Rodrigo S.M. writes that Macabéa sometimes enters the state of grace (57), that to continue the story he depersonalizes himself (64), and that the story "é verdadeira embora inventada" (is true even though made up) (10), for its content presumably reflects a truth of the world. Similar to the enunciating voices of *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva*, Rodrigo S.M.'s language also tends towards hypotaxis when he seeks to explain the incommunicability of the contact with immanence that he seeks to allude to in his narration:

Assim é que esta história será feita de palavras que se agrupam em frases e destas se evola um sentido secreto que ultrapassa palavras e frases (12).

(This is how this story will be made of words that are grouped into sentences and from these a secret meaning that goes beyond words and sentences will emerge.)

Um meio de obter é não procurar, um meio de ter é o de não pedir e somente acreditar que o silêncio que eu creio em mim é resposta a meu — a meu mistério (12).

(One way to obtain is not to seek, one way to have is not to ask, and only to believe that the silence I believe in is the answer to my — my mystery.)

However, as one reads in the novel, one soon notices the dominantly paratactic character that Rodrigo S.M.'s narration assumes. Attempts to illuminate mystical union or the state of grace with the light of reason, are scarce in the text compared to the previous two texts. Instead, indeterminacy and ambiguity seem to pervade his way of narrating. The paratactic character of his narrating procedure can be observed in this parenthetical passage, where Rodrigo S.M. typecasts Macabéa into a special group of people:

(Há os que têm. E há os que não tem. É muito simples: a moça não tinha. Não tinha o que? E apenas isso mesmo: não tinha. Se der para me entenderem, está bem. Se não, também está bem. Mas por que trato dessa moça quando o que mais desejo é trigo puramente maduro e ouro no estio?) (22).

([There are those who have. And there are those who don't. It is very simple: the girl didn't have. Didn't have what? And just that: she didn't have. If you can understand me, that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. But why do I write about this girl when what I most desire is purely ripe and golden wheat in summer?])

This passage is paratactic in a broader sense (as the “pulsating” opposite of the synthesis or subsumption into an idea), even if internally it contains some degree of syntactic subordination. Ribeiro de Oliveira interprets it as pointing to the sociopolitical conflict between the class of the dispossessed and the privileged (100). Cixous seems to read this passage in a similar way, for she uses it to speak of poverty, wealth, and social class, and even sexual marks (153). But what then are we to make of Rodrigo S.M.'s strange desire for ripe, golden summer wheat? And how are we to understand the narrator's abrupt and seemingly inconsequential references to watermelons (24) and strawberries (78)? Rodrigo S.M.'s narration, despite its self-reflexive position and its abundant metalinguistic and extradiegetic comments, no longer explicitly illuminates the relations of instantiation that his language assumes regarding the ideas contained by mystical thought, as it was the case in

Água viva. The work of interpretation becomes necessary to locate this thematic content and its correspondences in the linguistic forms. For now, let us further examine the latter to better understand how they are configured in a paratactic way. Towards the end of the chapter, we shall return to the question of wheat.

The extended use of parentheses of which we see an example in the passage above is recurrent throughout the novel, adding to other narrative devices that afford the fragmentary and seemingly chaotic character to Rodrigo S.M.'s narrative. One such device, noted by Cixous, is when the narrator begins a paragraph with an *esqueci de dizer* (I forgot to say) to suddenly add information about his characters or their circumstances. After all, why does Rodrigo S.M. not simply write in the information, given that all his characters are of his own creation? One could think that, through the use of these metalinguistic, extradiegetic marks, the narrator reminds his readers that everything is his invention while at the same time suggesting that his narrative may be based on truthful revelations that he has accessed through a process of introspection, which he then embeds somewhat haphazardly. Perhaps more important, however, is what Cixous points out: these extradiegetic marks show how the text is made of "leaps and bounds" (158) that visibly interrupt the links between the paragraphs. For Cixous, the novel turns out to be a much more fragmentary text than *Água viva*:

I am struck because in *Água viva*, one could not cut. There were paragraphs but in order to analyze them, one had to go back to the preceding paragraph. Even if one had the illusion of an arrest, the thread of reflection was not absolutely cut. *Água viva* can only be read in one trait. To read it by paragraphs is to do it violence. We had to operate the cuts ourselves. But in *The Hour of the Star* [*A hora da estrela*], that is not so at all. There are constant cuts (158).

The absence of logical connectors between clauses is the formal characteristic of parataxis. As Cixous points out, this form of composition extends to the level of the paragraph, giving to Rodrigo S.M.'s narration style a predominantly paratactic character. Cixous notes that *A hora da estrela* "has an absolutely new form" (161) although, Cixous insists, Lispector's

philosophy is still contained within it. In what way does the new form full of cuts and jumps, that is, predominantly paratactic, correspond to Rodrigo S.M.'s attitude to the state of grace? My reading of the work asserts that, through his writing of Macabéa, Rodrigo S.M. positions himself in proximity to the experience of immanence in which he will no longer attempt a synthesis of mystical truth, that is, he no longer seeks to take rational distance in order to try to make sense of it by composing formulations that define or synthesize it. On this point, Rodrigo S.M. differs significantly with G.H. and the abstract painter of *Água viva*. His narration explores, in a pulsating rather than synthesizing manner, the nature of the state of grace as experienced by Macabéa, grappling with the implications that mystical truth has for the way of conceiving the socialized world which he is about to abandon.

Despite the indeterminate and ambiguous character of his narration, Rodrigo S.M. does elaborate allusions to what he seeks to achieve with his story, suggesting that he conceives Macabéa as an instance of primitive life that we find analogous to G.H.'s cockroach or to the other living beings in *Água viva*. About himself, the narrator writes that with this story “eu vou me sensibilizar” (14) (I will become sensitized), and that he will write with his body (14), since he wants to experience “o insosso do mundo” (17) (the insipid of the world.) About the object of his narration, he says that “é antes de tudo vida primária que respira, respira, respira” (11) (it is before all primal life that breathes, breathes, breathes,) that Macabéa is only “fina matéria orgânica” (fine organic matter) (34), “simplicidade orgânica” (organic simplicity) (56), “quase impessoal” (56) (almost impersonal) and that she “não tinha consciência de si e não reclamava nada” (62) (had no conscience of herself and claimed nothing.). Through her, writes Rodrigo S.M., “toco na santidade” (18). (I touch holiness.)

The principle of individuation, the one that G.H. undid throughout her vertiginous fall, remains from the beginning weak and porous in Macabéa. The social constructs exert less influence in her than in other characters. Rodrigo S.M. writes that “o fato de vir a ser uma

mulher não parecia pertencer à sua vocação” (25) (the fact of becoming a woman did not seem to belong to her vocation,) and that when she prayed, she did without God, because “só estava repetindo o que aprendera na infância” (49) (she was only repeating what he had learned in childhood.) A strong self-consciousness of being an individual: this is exactly what Macabéa does not have, which is why she says: “não acho que sou muito gente. É que não me habituei” (43) (I don’t think I’m much of a person. It’s just that I’m not used to it.) Rodrigo S.M. suggests that she has an unconsciousness like that of animals which, as G.H. had affirmed, allows them to be one with the divine instead of seeking it outside themselves:

Issa moça não sabia que ela era o que era, assim como um cachorro não sabe que é cachorro. A única coisa que queria era viver. Não sabia para que, não se indagava. Ela pensava que a pessoa é obrigada a ser feliz. Então era (24).

(That girl didn’t know that she was what she was, any more than a dog knows that it is a dog. The only thing she wanted was to live. She didn’t know what for, she didn’t ask herself. She thought that one is obligated to be happy. And so she was.)

The narrative posits that Macabéa sometimes manages to enter the state of grace precisely because of this special kind of not-knowing. One such occasion is, in what could be another intertextual reference to Bernard Berenson’s own mystical experience, a passage where Macabéa climbs a very large tree (57). Rodrigo S.M. recounts that she later tried to tell Gloria, her co-worker, about this ecstatic experience, “mas nao tivera jeito, não sabia falar e mesmo contar o quê? O ar? Não se conta tudo porque o tudo é um oco nada” (57) (but she had no way, she did not know how to speak or even tell what? The air? You don’t tell everything because everything is nothing.)

By the end of the novel, as we shall see soon, the principle of individuation will start clinging like an opaque veil over Macabéa, but for much of the novel, it remains tenuous and porous. When she wakes up, Rodrigo S.M. writes, she usually does not know who she is, until she later finds three anchors to define her identity: “sou dactilógrafa e virgem, e gosto de coca-cola” (32) (I am a typist and a virgin, and I like Coca-Cola.) The first is her job

which allows her to subsist on hot dogs and live in a shabby room. However, when she listens to the pulsating tapping of the keys, Macabéa meditates on nothingness (34) and makes so many mistakes that her boss is about to fire her. The second is her sexual condition defined by the constructs of the socialized world, but we sense that it is important to her because, Rodrigo S.M. emphasizes, she is a very libidinous person, full of sexual desires (55). The third is her enormous enjoyment of the world's most popular carbonated soft drink, the same under whose sponsorship Rodrigo S.M. claims to write this story, adding that the soft drink company has actually paid him nothing (20). In this curious reference to Coca-Cola, Ribeiro de Oliveira identifies an ironic twist that points critically to the forms of North American neocolonialism that extend its hegemony throughout the world (100). This reading is indeed possible, and yet we find indications towards another possible interpretation, which does not necessarily exclude the previous one. It is actually provided by Rodrigo S.M. himself, who writes: “Também porque – e vou dizer agora uma coisa difícil que só eu entendo – porque essa bebida que tem coca é hoje. Ela é um meio da pessoa atualizar-se e pisar na hora presente” (20) (Also because – and I’m going to say now a difficult thing that only I understand –because this drink that has coke in it is today. It is a way for someone to actualize themselves and to step into the present time.)

The fondness for Coca-Cola, the sexual pulsations and the meditation on nothingness when listening to the typing on the typewriter: all these are expressions of an essentially sensuous way of living and interacting with the world that entails a special sensitivity to the vital pulses in the fleeting instant; and this is precisely what was sought after by the writing of *Água viva*. Suggestively, Macabéa loves to listen to Radio Rélogio, a radio station that “só pingava em som de gotas que caem cada minuto que passava” (only dripped in the sound of drops falling every minute). This radio channel, writes Rodrigo S.M., “aproveitava intervalos entre as tais gotas de minuto para dar anúncios comerciais – ela adorava anúncios” (33) (used

the intervals between those minute drops to give commercial announcements – she loved announcements.) While commercials and the presence of Coca-Cola are indices of neoliberal capitalism in the global south, which only deepened the marginalization of people like Macabéa and company, the girl’s fondness for commercials and this soft drink, I think, should also be read as an index of her sensitive way of perception and interaction with the world which, after *Água viva*, we may call paratactic. Macabéa accepts everything that happens without questioning, since “é assim porque é assim” (23) (it is that way because it is that way.) In other words, Macabéa lives almost entirely in the law of the deep present.

In *The World Epic*, Moretti had already pointed to a correspondence between paratactic forms of language and the world of advertisements. According to Moretti, in *Ulysses*, Joyce discovers: “the stream of consciousness as the form of the present: the present as the duration of advertisement” (136). The stream of consciousness, writes Moretti offers simple and fragmented sentences “in which the subject withdraws to make room for the invasion of things, paratactical paragraphs, with the door flung wide, and always enough room for one more sentence, and one more stimulus.” (134-135). The paratactic forms of stream of consciousness in *Ulysses* suggest, in Moretti’s account, that absentmindedness as a form is needed to avoid being overwhelmed by the world of the big city and its countless stimuli (137, 156). Evidently, things are very different in *Água viva*, which is not a text with flows of consciousness that reflect on the uncountable stimuli of the big city, but rather contains other paratactic forms that correspond to special ways of feeling which point to a direct contact with the divine in the material. What I want to suggest then is that Macabéa’s fondness for advertisements points to her attunement to the present moment, which in turn allows her to experience the state of grace. As I have suggested above, such a way of experiencing reality was portrayed by the abstract painter of *Água viva* after she entered the state of grace. Macabéa, has an attitude of complete openness towards the presence that

contains in itself the vital pulse. In an explanatory and thus hypotactic passage that clearly points towards the similarity between the sensibilities of the painter of *Água viva* and

Macabéa, Rodrigo S.M. writes:

Esqueci de dizer que era realmente de se espantar que para corpo quase murcho de Macabéa tão vasto fosse o seu sopro de vida quase ilimitado e tão rico como o de uma donzela grávida, engravidada por si mesma, por partenogênese: tinha sonhos esquizóides nos quais apareciam gigantescos animais antediluvianos como se ela tivesse vivido em épocas as mais remotas desta terra sangrenta (54).

(I forgot to say it was really amazing how, in spite of Macabéa's almost withered body, her breath of life was so vast, almost unlimited, and so rich as that of a pregnant maiden, impregnated by herself by parthenogenesis: she had schizoid dreams in which gigantic antediluvian animals appeared, as if she had lived in the most remote times of this bloody land.)

Blood, as we shall briefly see, is an important index of materiality that reappears by the end of the novel. With the vocabulary that Rodrigo S.M. uses to describe Macabéa, and acknowledging the pulsating, paratactic way she has of perceiving the world, we can now understand how his main character represents for the narrator an approximation to a more primitive form of life, one with less self-consciousness, and close to the direct experience of the divine, which allows him to recognize himself as another mere material instance of immanence. Rodrigo S.M. illustrates this point in the following passage:

A dactilógrafa vivia numa espécie de atordoado nimbo, entre céu e inferno. Nunca pensara em “eu sou eu”. Sim, e que são apenas um acaso. Pensando bem: quem não é um acaso na vida? Quando entro em contato com forças interiores minhas, encontro através de mim o vosso Deus (32).

(The typist lived in a kind of stunned nimbus, between heaven and hell. She had never thought about “I am me” Yes, and that they are just a fortuity. Come to think of it: who is not a fortuity in life? When I get in touch with inner forces of my own, I find through me your God.)

Your God: throughout the novel Rodrigo S.M. seems to be addressing his readers in general, unlike what happened in the previous texts. This novel's narrator differentiates himself from his readers through his choice of words, which reveal that he is about to leave the socialized world. We sense that something is transforming him in his process of writing this story.

Rodrigo S.M. announces that both Macabéa and he himself live “exclusively in the present

because it is always and eternally today and tomorrow will be today, eternity is the state of things at this moment”. (16) That is, he too is living a profound experience of the present moment, yet we also notice that he is more self-conscious than Macabéa, and we may deduce that he has not yet freed himself from the principle of individuation. By which mechanism then does the experience of telling the story of the Northeastern girl transform him?

2. Mimesis and Mimetism

Tendo visto que seus comentários sobre bichos não agradavam Olímpico, procurou outro assunto:

–Na Rádio Relógio disseram uma palavra que achei meio esquisita: mimetismo.

Olímpico olhou-a desconfiado:

–Isso é lá coisa para moça virgem falar? (49-50)

(Having seen that her comments about animals did not please Olímpico, she looked for another subject:

“On Rádio Relógio they said a word that I thought was a little strange: mimetism.”

Olímpico looked at her suspiciously:

“Is that something for a virgin to talk about?”)

Olímpico, a worker in a metallurgical factory, becomes Macabéa’s boyfriend for a while.

Soon he will leave her for her co-worker, Gloria. In this conversation, still before the breakup, the sudden mention of the word “mimetismo” deserves our attention. This and the concept of mimesis are significantly twinned in the narration of *A hora da estrela*: Rodrigo S.M.’s representation of his character also implies a transformation of himself, as it becomes evident in the following two passages:

Vejo a nordestina se olhando ao espelho e – um rufar de tambor – no espelho aparece o meu rosto cansado e barbudo. Tanto nós nos intertrocamos. Não há dúvida que ela é uma pessoa física (19).

(I see the Northeastern girl looking at herself in the mirror and – a drum roll – in the mirror appears my tired, bearded face. So much we intertwine. There is no doubt that she is a physical person.)

(Estou passando por um pequeno inferno com esta historia. Queriam os deuses que eu nunca descreva o Lázaro porque senão eu me cobriria de lepra) (35).

([I am going through a little hell with this story. Would to the gods I never describe Lazarus because otherwise I would become covered with leprosy.])

Moser reads in these passages a personal identification between author (Lispector) and character (Macabéa) (367). Fitz, for his part, asserts that in the relationship between Rodrigo and Macabéa there is an evident concern with verisimilitude and mimesis understood as the “truthful representation of reality” (40). The question the novel addresses, according to Fitz, is “how one represents the truth of a character who in so many ways literally embodies Derrida’s concept of ‘différance,’ ‘differing’ from nearly all normative standards of interpretation and, through her narrator, endlessly deferring any definitive judgment about her.” (40). In Fitz’s view, while Rodrigo believes himself qualified to capture the social and psychological truths of his character, to whom alone he could give voice, the narrator also seems unable to transcend class and gender differences, in a way that runs counter to traditional mimesis (41). But the reader, writes Fitz, to the extent that she identifies with the character, may be able to do so. When this occurs, “both sexes com[e] to reveal themselves as hapless human beings ‘engulfed in the brutality of life’” (41).

Nascimundo understands the exchanges referred to in these passages as a device to allow the passage between intergender and interspecies planes of existence (42). Emphasizing the play of masks that subsists the novel from its dedication, where we find in parentheses that the author Rodrigo S.M. is “na verdade Clarice Lispector” (7) (in truth Clarice Lispector,) Nascimundo finds in *A hora da estrela* a series of different becomings: “tornar-se-homem” (becoming-man), “tornar-se-mulher” (becoming-woman), “tornar-se-animal” (becoming animal), “tornar-se-planta” (becoming-plant) and “tornar-se coisa” (becoming-thing) (42). This Deleuzian description seems more in line with the internal logic of the novel that we have explored so far than the Derridian reading Fitz elaborates, for Rodrigo S.M.

himself writes that “a ação desta história terá como resultado minha transfiguração em outrem e minha materialização enfim em objeto” (18) (the action of this story will result in my transfiguration into another and my materialization finally into an object.) Yet it is Cixous who manages to illuminate the entailment of these exchanges, as well as their correspondence with some formal traits of the novel.

A hora da estrela has thirteen titles. Cixous affirms that a single title, which would fix the identity of the work with a proper name, “can barely hold on to a text where it is precisely a question of ‘barely’ a person” (157). However, she finds something even more significant behind the plurality of titles. Given that these succeed one another with the conjunction “or”, one title, writes Cixous, “is like another” pointing to a critique of value (146). Even before the first page of the narrative, Cixous suggests, *A hora da estrela* announces that it is going to work on the “valorization of nothing,” or on “devalorization” (146). Finding similarities in Lispector’s novel with Jean Genet’s plays, Cixous contends that, in these works, non marketability, understood as the withdrawal of the exchange value and of the use value (156), “is operated through a look that produces equivalences” (156). Therefore, what the exchanges alluded to by Rodrigo S.M. point to is an underlying equivalence between all existent entities. Following the vocabulary of mystical thought that we have explored so far, we may then say that a cockroach, an oyster, Rodrigo S.M. and Macabéa are all instances of divine materiality, and therefore, with the same value, which is like saying that they are equally without value; that is, the idea of value is undone through the experiences of immanence. Hence the use of negative vocabulary, with terms such as *the neutral*, *the bland*, *the insipid*, which we find throughout Lispector’s work. Interestingly, Cixous refers to this non-marketability, sought by *A hora da estrela*, as a “feminine economy,” and warns us that she does so with “ten thousand precautions, because the words I use are deceptive” (156). A feminine economy, writes Cixous,

does not refer to women, but perhaps to a trait that comes back to women more often, that of the possibility of accepting what is socially intolerable, for example, general equivalence. We do not accept it; nobody accepts it, in fact. One has to do an extraordinary kind of labor— except in a case of congenital sanctity—to tolerate love of ugliness from equal to equal. We are quite selective, through high or low. But the texts I have chosen here deal with a capacity not to have. It is most difficult and hard to tolerate (156).

For Cixous, no one could truly accept the intolerability of the general equivalence of things, unless she has a congenital sanctity. The choice of words is significant, since the sanctity of Macabéa, so named by Rodrigo S.M. seems to consist precisely in her ability to accept whatever emerges before her just as it is. The narrator then claims to touch sanctity through his character, which seems to lead him to the difficult acceptance that every living being is equivalent to the other as being an instance of the divine. Rodrigo S.M. insists on the violence that such a truth represents for his ego: “Quando penso que eu podia ter nascido ela – e por que não?– estremeco. E parece me cobarde fuga de eu nao ser, sinto culpa como disse num dos títulos” (34) (When I think that I could have been born as her –and why not?– I shudder. And not being seems like a cowardly escape, I feel guilty as I said in one of the titles.) Accordingly, Cixous reads the novel as an acceptance of “the most painful, the most denarcissizing, alteration” (147).

I take this moment to open a parenthesis on the question of gender and sex. At first glance there may seem to be a contradiction between the idea of a general equivalence, and then calling this a feminine form of economy. The contradiction is perhaps best understood when we remember that the possibility of an economy of general equivalence is here a theoretical abstraction. To allude to it, discursive strategies are undoubtedly needed, which may be more or less problematic according to the inner logic underlying general equivalence. Yet to what extent can one speak of a feminine project in the case of Lispector’s fiction? My interpretation holds that the mystical thought present in Lispector’s work ultimately considers all social constructs—what G.H. called the aggregates— blind individuals from their divine

condition, that is, from contact with immanence. The expressions of language and other imagery used to allude to this mystical truth in Lispector's work are often loaded with significant allusions to gender or biological sex, for example, when Rodrigo S.M. states that Macabéa generates life for herself in her dreams as if by parthenogenesis, or when G.H. declares that the cockroach must be feminine, because everything feminine is cut at the waist. The feminine, as the otherness of masculine logical organization and oppression, does seem to offer a privileged gateway towards that way of experiencing the world which has been denied or hidden by the dominating logos governing the principle of individuation. Yet once the door to immanence is open and crossed, everything dissolves, so that we find no programmatic vindications of new ways of organizing society, nor of anything else beyond the sheer experience of immanence. One should also be careful not to essentialize ways of thinking or forms of language: in Lispector's fiction, both female and male voices use parataxis and hypotaxis as ways of approaching mystical truth. Parataxis ends up dissolving the hypotactic attempts to synthesize the experience of immanence, so that the logos (which may not exclusively patriarchal) reveals itself incapable of reaching its goal of elucidating mystical experience. Any character who enters this mystical experience is indeed freed from societal constraints, including, for instance, the gendered norms that oppress G.H., but also Laura, the female protagonist in Lispector's short story "A imitação da rosa." Yet their whole self is effaced as they become one with nothingness. More on this issue and on the approaches to Lispector's work from the concept of *écriture féminine* will be discussed in the conclusions.

The mimetic transformation of Rodrigo S.M., which comes from his representation of Macabéa, points to a devaluation of difference, or rather, to an undoing of the idea of use value and exchange value. This undoing of value becomes more evident with the description of the social conditions in which Macabéa lives immersed, contrasting to her attitude towards

the world. Rodrigo S.M. writes that the girl “[n]em se dava conta de que vivia numa sociedade técnica onde ela era um parafuso dispensável” (26) (didn’t even realize that she lived in a technical society where she was an expendable screw.) The other characters in the novel, who are blinded to their divinity by the force of the social constructs which have shaped them, live dominated by a calculating and selfish thinking, thus seek to increase their own value vis-à-vis others and maximize their personal gains.

Rodrigo S.M.’s narration presents a clear contrast between the personalities of Macabéa and Olímpico, showing how he thinks in terms of instruments while she lives in the realm of sensations. When they both enter a butcher’s shop, the narrator writes that “para ela o cheiro da carne crua era um perfume que a levitava toda como se tivesse comido. Quanto a ele, o que queria ver era o açougueiro e sua faca amolada” (48) (for her, the smell of raw meat was a perfume that levitated her all over as if she had eaten it. As for him, what he wanted to see was the butcher and his sharpened knife.) Olímpico then wonders what he needs to do to become a butcher (48). In another moment, Rodrigo S.M. writes that “Macabéa era na verdade uma figura medieval enquanto Olímpico de Jesus se julgava peça-chave, dessas que abrem qualquer porta” (42) (Macabéa was in fact a medieval figure while Olímpico de Jesus thought he was a key piece, the kind that opens any door.) As Ribeiro de Oliveira points out, Olímpico dreams of becoming a powerful politician, like the ones he satirizes through his political cartoons (109). When Macabéa affirms not to know “o que está dentro do meu nome” (51) (what lies within my name), Olímpico answers her this way: “Quanto a mim, de tanto me chamarem, eu virei eu. No sertão da Paraíba não há quem não saiba quem é Olímpico. E um dia o mundo todo vai saber de mim” (51) (As for me, I became me after being called my name so many times. In the backlands of Paraíba there is no one who doesn’t know who Olímpico is. And one day the whole world will know about me.)

The rest of the characters, male and female, also exhibit calculating thinking, through which they instrumentalize matter and word. Macabéa's co-worker Gloria tells Olímpico that she is carioca through and through, making clear that she belongs to the coveted club of Southern Brazilians, and thus making herself appear more valuable than Macabéa. She paints her hair blonde because she "has class" (53). Macabéa's boss Raimundo Silveira pays Gloria more because she has no problem with the difficult words he likes so much (36), and he wants to fire Macabéa for all the mistakes she makes. The doctor for poor people that Macabéa consults once only uses medicine to make money (61), while the cartomancer Carlota, who is fan of Jesus (66) and who will reveal the poor girl's destiny, tells that she used to run a house of women whom she exploited until she earned enough to buy an apartment, and then left the women's house because "era difícil tomar conta de tantas moças que ó faziam era querer me roubar" (66) (it was hard to take care of so many girls who only wanted to steal from me.) Carlota even charges Macabéa for the advice about putting cotton in her bra to appear to have larger breasts (70).

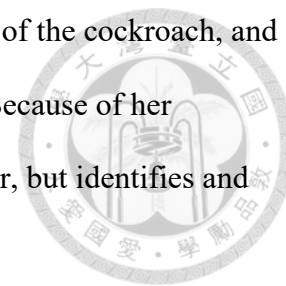
Macabéa, unlike the rest of characters, "tornara-se com o tempo apenas matéria vivente em sua forma primária" (34) (had in time become only living matter in its primary form.) She is "incompetente para a vida" (21) (incompetent for life) in the socialized world, where she lives extremely marginalized. "Sua voz era crua e tão desafinada como ela mesma era" (46) (Her voice was raw and as out of tune as she herself was). However, her actions often reveal a special sensitivity. She weeps when she listens to Caruso's interpretation of "Uma furtiva lágrima" (45). When she receives her salary, she goes and buys a rose (29), and when strolling along the harbor she discovers "uma inesperada felicidade que era inexplicável: no cais do porto viu um arco-íris" (31) (an unexpected happiness that was inexplicable: on the dock she saw a rainbow.) Notably, she does not use all the trivia she learns on Rádio Relógio to accumulate cultural capital, but rather simply believes in it as she

believes in everything (30). She repeats this scattered knowledge in front of Olímpico just as emerging pulsations which do not seeking an ulterior purpose, that is, she does so in the very same paratactic way the radio station presents them, without formulating any construction that would give them a deeper motive beyond that of just being in time.

Rodrigo S.M. represents Macabéa this way and then mimetizes with his own character, thus freeing himself from the calculating thought which dominates the socialized world and is based on the idea of use value and exchange value. In other words, he learns to live and accept, like Macabéa the general equivalence of things. The very possibility of exchange between character and author, asserted by Rodrigo S.M. evidences the condition of equivalence. Thus, the inclusion of a male narrator in *A hora da estrela* is probably meant to be a constatation of the series of mimetic transformations, which trespass not only gender and other social constructs, but also biological species (in the previous works) and the very separation of reality and fiction. These transformations lead towards deindividuation. As noted above, Lispector writes in the Dedication between parentheses that she is the true author of the novel. By doing so, she becomes a character in it, suggesting that the mimetic transformations are also happening to her. After all, within the narrative of the novel, the truth of Macabéa transforms her male narrator trespassing the ontological wall of fiction. One may thus think of Clarice Lispector becoming Rodrigo S.M. becoming Macabéa becoming primitive matter. Mimesis and mimetism allow a form of self-recognition in the other that annihilates the self, and therefore ending in the experience of immanence.

Macabéa is prone to mimetism, especially when understood as “identification à la matière” (identification with matter,) as in Roger Callois’ definition (Lussier 75). Rodrigo S.M. tells us that Macabéa is fascinated by an advertisement which shows an open jar of skin cream. Macabéa does not long to buy it to beautify her skin and increase her aesthetic value in the eyes of society. What she really wants is to eat the whole cream by the spoonful (34).

This shocking passage reminds us of G.H. consuming the white matter of the cockroach, and the desires of the abstract painter who sought to feed on the placenta. Because of her closeness to the state of grace, Macabéa does not instrumentalize matter, but identifies and seeks to merge with it.



“O estado de graça de que falo não é usado para nada. É como se viesse apenas para que se soubesse que realmente se existe e existe o mundo” (180, emphasis added) (The state of grace I speak of is not used for anything. It’s as if it comes only to let you know that you really exist and the world exists.) Thus writes the abstract painter in *Água viva*. In a similar way, in the Dedication of *A hora da estrelha*, the author writes: “Meditar não precisa de ter resultados: a meditação pode ter como fim apenas ela mesma. Eu medito sem palavras e sobre o nada” (8) (Meditation doesn’t need to have results: meditation can have as its end just itself. I meditate without words and on nothingness.) The mimetic rapprochement that has occurred between Clarice Lispector, Rodrigo S.M., and Macabéa formalizes and thematizes this meditation on the nothingness in which every entity present is revealed as a mere contingent instance of the divine. Incidentally, a similar idea is developed in one of Lispector’s short stories, “A imitação da rosa”. According to the interpretation of Marta de Senna, Laura, the protagonist of this story, enters mystical union after contemplating and imitating a rose (164). This state of ecstasy transcends and erases the social constructs where Laura tried to contain her personality. Similarly, with Macabéa’s story, Rodrigo S.M. experiences that “comer a hóstia será sentir o insosso do mundo e banhar-se no não” (eating the host will be to feel the insouciance of the world and to bathe in the no.) In the ‘beatitude of the it’, as the abstract painter from *Água viva* phrases it, the individual enters a special relationship with the absolute of nothingness:

Poderia dizer “tudo”. Mas “tudo” é quantidade, e quantidade tem limite no seu próprio começo. A verdadeira incomensurabilidade é o nada, que não tem barreiras e é onde uma pessoa pode espalhar sem pensar-sentir (Lispector, *Água viva*, 186).

(I could say “everything”. But “everything” is quantity, and quantity has a limit in its own beginning. True incommensurability is nothingness, which has no barriers and is where a person can sprawl without thinking-feeling)

Pure negativity, the total absence of value, the radical neutrality of the itness: such is the apophatic conception of divinity that emerges from the mystical experience which sees immanence in the contingent. Through complete attunement with the present moment, the voices in Lispector’s fiction enter unmediated contact with the divine that is immanent in everything that exists. This experience ‘bathes in the no,’ pointing to the radical acknowledgment of the immanent which is inexpressible and without limits, for the immanent does not exhaust itself in the contingent, and at the same time, this experience is made possible by saying ‘yes’ to all that is in the present moment, by entering into immediate contact with the contingent through its pure unmediated affirmation. It is not a dialectical relation between positivity and negativity, for the two are the same and occur the same time. Macabéa’s attitude towards life when she says “é assim porque é assim” could be called, to borrow an expression from Kundera, a categorical agreement with being. Already at the first lines of the novel, we read: “Tudo no mundo começou com um sim. Uma molécula disse sim a outra molécula e nasceu a vida” (9). Yet since divine being (or God, or it, or the neutral, or nothingness, etc.) is not exhausted in any contingent instance of itself, as it is immanent in everything, the negativity of language allows to free it from any limit or value in which mental schemes want to encapsulate or synthesize it. In other words, negativity asserts the ultimate incommunicability of mystical communion with immanence. Once this experience has taken place, all concepts of value necessarily become insubstantial, since the contingent is revealed as just one of infinite expressions of the same. This is, as we know well by now, conceived in Lispector’s fiction as an experience which cannot be measured in terms of human language. And it is towards this mystical insight, which lies at the core of the three works examined in this thesis, that the mimesis and mimetism in *A hora da estrela* ultimately

point, for they afford Rodrigo S.M. to arrive at the equivalent condition of the contingent instances of the divine.

The characters in the novel that are not Macabéa do not stand in proximity to the state of grace, since they remain blinded to it by the veil of the individuation principle. As I said in the introduction, the circumstances Macabéa goes through easily arouse a feeling of disgust or indignation in the reader. The selfishness and inconstancy of the characters is exposed by Rodrigo S.M. However, he does not demonize any of his characters. Everyone is capable of showing at least some sympathy with Macabéa, pointing to special moments where they can also overcome calculating thought. Olímpico, for example, is kind to Macabéa once: he promises her that he will look for a job for her when she is fired (52). The narrator also says that “desde menino na verdade não passava de um coração solitário pulsando com dificuldade no espaço” (59) (since childhood he was really nothing more than a lonely heart beating with difficulty in space.) Raimundo Silveira is touched by Macabéa’s sensitivity and kindness, and he postpones the dismissal indefinitely (22). Gloria, for her part, gives her aspirins for her pains without demanding money for it (56), and when she wants to make up for having stolen her boyfriend, she invites her for lunch (56), refers her to the cheap doctor (60) and to Carlota, the cartomancer (65). The cheap doctor, in turn, adds that spaghetti is actually not that expensive when he recommends Macabéa to eat more (61), while the cartomancer Carlota offers the girl several effusions of affection, and, even more significantly, gives her for the first time the feeling of hope (69). Yet finally it is precisely because of this last fateful interaction with Carlota that Macabéa finally moves away from the state of grace. After speaking with the cartomancer, the Northeastern girl will begin to become like the other characters: blinded by the principle of individuation and dominated primarily by calculative thought.

3. The Last Cry

Depois, quando eu já estava ficando muito gorda e perdendo os dentes, é que me tornei caftina. Você sabe o que quer dizer caftina? Eu uso essa palavra porque nunca tive medo de palavras. Tem gente que se assusta com o nome das coisas. Vocezinha tem medo de palavras, benzinho?

—Tenho, sim senhora.

—Então vou me cuidar para não escapulir nenhum palavrão, fique sossegada (67-8).

(“Then, when I was getting too fat and losing my teeth, I became a pimp. Do you know what pimp means? I use that word because I’ve never been afraid of words. Some people are frightened by the name of things. Are you afraid of words, dearie?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Then I’ll be careful not to let any swear words slip out, don’t worry.”)

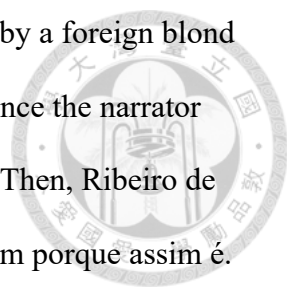
Unlike Carlota, Macabéa is afraid of words. The cartomancer promises to be careful not to say profanities in front of her. Yet it is another type of words uttered by Carlota that will prove fatal, not only because they will lead to her death, but also because they will lead Macabéa away from the state of grace. For, just as G.H. showed that the principle of individuation can be undone when one renounces hope, Rodrigo S.M.’s narrative makes it clear that former can also be reinforced when one begins to harbor the latter.

The cartomancer turns out to be right about Macabéa’s past and present. The girl upon hearing Carlota’s words becomes aware for the first time of the miserable conditions in which she lives (69). Carlota then predicts a radical change in the girl’s life. According to what the cartomancer observes in the crystal ball, Macabéa will finally keep her job, Olímpico will repent and return to her to ask her to marry him, and a huge amount of money will fall on her (69). Finally, Carlota announces that Macabéa will ultimately enjoy plenty of love, money, and prestige, since a blond foreigner with blue, green, brown or dark eyes will marry her to live a dreamy life together. Macabéa will even have a fur coat despite the heat of Rio de Janeiro (69-70). Faced with this prophecy, Macabéa harbors hope for the first time in her life (69) and first can only tremble. Rodrigo S.M. writes that she “sentia se tão desorientada como se se lhe tivesse acontecido uma infelicidade” (70) (she felt as disoriented as if a misfortune

had happened to her.) Indeed, the happiness that accompanied her mimetic and paratactic way of relating to the world will begin to fade.

Rodrigo S.M. points to a transformation of Macabéa, which becomes visible in the words she addresses to Carlota: “E que é que eu faço para ter mais cabelo? ousou perguntar porque já se sentia outra” (71) (And what do I do to get more hair? she dared to ask because she already felt different.) Macabéa is another person, or perhaps she is finally *a socialized person* like the rest: she begins to feed on banal ambitions that sustain the illusion of her own unique and differentiated ego, and she begins to think in an instrumental way instead of accepting things just as they are. As the veil of individuation becomes more opaque, Macabéa loses her closeness to the state of grace while the idea of a better future, that is, hope, grows heavier and takes a hold on her. The girl even stops thinking about what she has sensorially perceived to fantasize about what was promised by the cartomancer: “Esquecera Olímpico e só pensava no gringo: era sorte demais pegar homem de olhos azuis ou verdes ou castanhos ou pretos, não havia como errar, era vasto o campo das possibilidades” (71) (She forgot about Olímpico and only thought about the gringo: it was too lucky to get a man with blue or green or brown or black eyes, there was no way to be wrong, the field of possibilities was vast.) Her life was changed, writes Rodrigo S.M., and “mudada por palavras –desde Moisés se sabe que a palavra é divina” (72) (changed by words –since Moses it is known that the word is divine.) Language, seems to suggest the narrator, has the power to blind the human being from his own divinity the moment it begins to mold and mediate reality.

Macabéa leaves Carlota’s house transformed into another person, anxious to meet her destiny. It arrives very quickly, but not the way Macabéa imagined. Ribeiro de Oliveira remarks that the novel “não tem um final feliz” (109) (does not have a happy ending.) Olímpico achieves his goals, gets himself elected as a congressman and becomes rich, but Macabéa does not find what she was looking for after the session with Carlota. Instead, she



meets her death as she is run over by the yellow Mercedes Benz driven by a foreign blond man. The outcome, Ribeiro de Oliveira writes, could not be different, since the narrator himself states that he “escreve sobre a realidade” (writes about reality.) Then, Ribeiro de Oliveira quotes the following sentence written by Rodrigo S.M.: “é assim porque assim é. Sempre foi? Sempre será” (94) (it is like that because it is like that. Always has been? Always will be.) Ribeiro de Oliveira suggests that the death of Macabéa is a denunciation of the injustices that permeate society, and that “a desolação do narrador evoca a da própria escritora” (the narrator's desolation evokes that of the writer herself.) Readers, writes Ribeiro de Oliveira, will hardly find consoling words in Lispector’s fiction, “a menos que decidam voltar a *A paixão segundo G.H.* para lobrigar uma tênue esperança na alusão à implosão do imponente edifício de treze andares, emblemático da cruel estruturação em classes sociais.” (110) (unless they decide to return to *A paixão segundo G.H.* to glance a faint hope in the allusion to the implosion of the imposing thirteen-story building, emblematic of the cruel structuring of social classes.) However, the same way I argued in chapter one against this interpretation of the collapse of the building as a message of hope for social improvement, here I will argue for reading the novel’s ending not as a mere social denunciation, but rather as the culmination of the inner logic of the mystical thought we have examined so far.

At the beginning of the novel, Rodrigo S.M. writes: “há direito ao grito Então eu grito.” (11) (there is a right to the cry. So I cry.) This phrase makes it into one of the novel’s twelve titles. It is tempting to interpret it as the moral obligation that Rodrigo S.M. feels to denounce the conditions of misery in which Macabéa lives submerged, just like other millions of people that the processes of modernization have left behind in Brazil. Indeed, this is how Mariângela Alonso (158) and Vilma Areas (289) read it. However, to understand the mystical dimension of the cry, which is less explicit than its social connotation, one must

refer to a paragraph back in *Água viva*, just before the abstract painter announces that she had entered the state of grace. There, we read the following lines:

Sou um objeto. Que cria outros objetos e a máquina cria a nós todos. Ela exige. O mecanismo exige e exige a minha vida. Mas eu não obedeco totalmente: se tenho que ser um objeto, que seja um objeto que grita. Há uma coisa dentro de mim que dói. Ah como dói e como grita pedindo socorro. Mas faltam lágrimas na máquina que sou. Sou um objeto sem destino. sou um objeto nas mãos de quem? tal é o meu destino humano. O que me salva é grito. Eu protesto em nome do que está dentro do objeto atrás do atrás do pensamento-sentimento. Sou um objeto urgente (178).

(I am an object. Which creates other objects and the machine creates all of us. It demands. The mechanism demands and demands my life. But I don't totally obey: if I have to be an object, let it be an object that cries. There is something inside me that hurts. Ah, how it hurts and how it cries out for help. But the machine that I am lacks tears. I am an object without a destination. I am an object in whose hands? Such is my human destiny. What saves me is the cry. I protest on behalf of what is inside the object behind the thinking-feeling. I am an urgent object.)

With this passage, we learn why the title of the original work was *Objeto gritante* (Crying Object.) The painter describes an intractable maladjustment to matter which consciousness experiences and that finally gives direct expression through the cry. In this sense, the cry is the most immediate reaction and the least mediated by human language that there can be in the face of pain. It is not a construction, it is not an articulation, but pure sonority squeezed out by a powerful sensation that oppresses body and consciousness. Pain, as Maria Clara Bingemer points out when commenting on this passage, is “a intensificação mais elevada da corporeidade” (339) (the highest intensification of corporeality.) To be in tune with the realm of sensations also means, for the abstract painter, to enter the hell of matter of which G.H. spoke. Significantly, what we find right after to this vindication of the cry is mystical silence:

Agora – silêncio e leve espanto.
Porque às cinco da madrugada de hoje, 25 de julho, caí em estado de graça. (178-180)

(Now – silence and mild astonishment.

Because at five in the morning today, July 25, I fell into the state of grace.)

The cry, both for the abstract painter and for Rodrigo S.M., is an intense experience of the present moment, through which one can enter in contact with immanence. And just as

Macabéa is receptive to the realm of sensations, she also fully experiences the pains of living in her body, because “viver doía” (40) (living hurt). Before beginning the story, Rodrigo S.M. adds that “esta é acompanhada do princípio ao fim por uma levíssima e constante dor de dentes” (21) (it is accompanied from beginning to end by a very slight and constant toothache). Later, he writes that “lhe doíam as costelas” (37) (her ribs hurt). When Gloria asks Macabéa why she asks for so many aspirins, Macabéa answers, “Eu me dão o tempo todo” (56) (I hurt all the time). And after Macabéa has been run over by the Mercedes Benz driven by the blond foreigner, the narrator exclaims: “A vida é um soco no estômago” (75). (Life is a punch in the gut.) It is not that Macabéa has a propensity for pain for biological reasons specific to her physiognomy, but rather that she experiences it with greater intensity because of her spiritual affinity to the present moment and to her own corporeality. One can intuit that, by mimetizing with Macabéa, Rodrigo S.M. also approaches the saving cry that is vindicated in *Água viva*. A sudden incrustation of wild images after Macabéa death points out that it is also the same cry animals make when they die devoured by other animals:

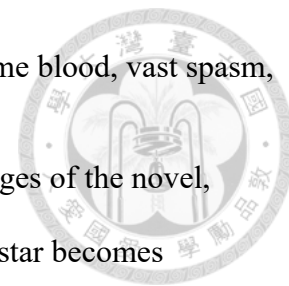
E então – então o súbito gritó estertorado de uma gaivota, de repente a águia voraz erguendo para os altos ares a ovelha tenra, o macio gato estraçalhando um rato sujo e qualquer, a vida come a vida (77).

(And then – then the sudden shrill cry of a seagull, suddenly the voracious eagle lifting the tender sheep into the high air, the soft cat tearing apart some dirty mouse, life eats life.)

These instances of living beings devoured by others suggests a vision of life that understands Macabéa’s ending as only a repetition of the inescapable and necessary moment of death. The hour of the star is the hour of death: the point in the order of things in which an organic instance that was animated by the breath of life dissolves back into inert matter, because life itself requires it so. Death is the closing of a cycle, which Rodrigo S.M. seems even to celebrate like a hallelujah when Macabéa is dying:

O que é que estou vendo agora e que me assusta? Vejo que ela vomitou um pouco de sangue, vasto espasmo, enfim o âmagô tocando no âmagô: vitória (77).

(What am I seeing now that scares me? I see that she vomited some blood, vast spasm, finally the core touching the core: victory.)



Matter meets matter again. And before coming full circle, in the last pages of the novel, something strange happens at the level of narration. As the hour of the star becomes imminent, the language of Rodrigo S.M. seems to run amok. The passages become even more saturated with disorienting cuts and leaps. In this chaos of language, the narrator's own cognitive position often seems to devalue itself, as shown in the following two passages:

Por enquanto Macabéa não passava de um vago sentimento nos paralelepípedos sujos. Eu poderia deixá-la na rua e simplesmente não acabar a história. Mas não: irei até onde o ar termina, irei até onde a grande ventania se solta uivando, irei até onde o vácuo faz uma curva, irei aonde meu fôlego me levar. Meu fôlego me leva a Deus? Estão tão puro que nada sei. Só uma coisa eu sei: não preciso ter piedade de Deus. Ou preciso? (76).

(For now Macabéa was nothing more than a vague feeling on the dirty cobblestones. I could leave her in the street and simply not finish the story. But no: I will go where air ends, I will go where the great gale howls, I will go where the vacuos makes a curve, I will go where my breath takes me. My breath leads me to God? I have become so pure that I know nothing. Only one thing I know: I don't need to have mercy on God. Or do I?)

Intuíra o instante quase dolorido e esfuziante do desmaio do amor. Sim, doloroso reflorescimento tão difícil que ela empregava nele o corpo e a outra coisa que vós chamais de alma e que eu chamo – o quê? (77).

(She had intuited the almost painful and faint instant of love's faint. Yes, painful and difficult re-blooming that she employed in her body and the other thing which you call the soul and which I call – what?)

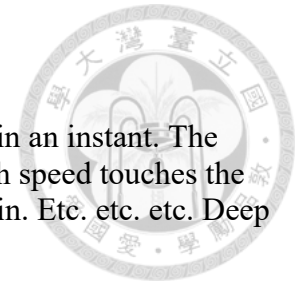
Rodrigo S.M. intends to take the story to its ultimate consequences, and at the same time, his language begins to disavow itself, to unsay things, to lose ground. These passages might seem the most apt to argue for a Bartheasian reading that sees *A hora da estrela* as a writerly text in which meaning remains open and indeterminate and both thematizes and problematizes the process of meaning production. The interpretation I defend here, however, reads these expressions as *the logical consequence of going to the end with the identification of matter*, with the experience of immanence that undoes the principle of deindividuation. This experience is not cognizable, and therefore, it does not allow itself to be apprehended

through language, but rather presupposes a mystical contact that surpasses all mediation. G.H. celebrates her failure to arrive at a synthesis of her mystical experience through language while the whole structure of her narration was based on the search for one, and then she still formulates it while stressing its utter inadequacy. The abstract painter of *Água viva* also affirms that an attempt of synthetizing her mystical experience through words will kill what she felt, but she goes with it anyway. Yet only in *A hora da estrela* does the narrator end by identifying himself to such extent with the mystical experience that his language becomes almost fully distorted, as if it were impossible to even assert a certain cognitive position we had found in the previous works. In other words, Rodrigo S.M. *is so pure that he knows nothing*. This corresponds with the paratactic forms of his language, which depart chaotically in all directions without arriving at a final elaboration that would illuminate the state of grace.

What we find towards the end of the novel may be the final ravings of Rodrigo S.M.'s individual consciousness before dissolving back into nothingness, for, as he says, “Macabéa me matou” (78) (Macabéa killed me.) In what reads as a desperate attempt at ensuring that his critique of valorization has not been lost on the readers, the narrator suddenly exclaims: “Nao me consumam! Não sou vendável!” (77) (Do not consume me! I am not sellable.) Rodrigo S.M. then thinks of his dead body and the religious rites he longs to purify it (77). However, the implicit allusions, though faint and vague, to mystical truth continue, especially in the last paragraphs of the novel. They are formulated with familiar words for the reader who knows *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *Água viva*, yet this time, the narrator also conveys an exasperation with his own language:

Se um dia Deus viver a terra haverá silêncio grande.
O silencio é tal que nem o pensamento pensa.
Morrendo ela virou ar. Ar energético? não sei. Morreu em um instante. O instante é aquele átimo de tempo em que o pneu do carro correndo em alta velocidade toca no chão e depois não toca mais e depois toca de novo. Etc. etc. etc. No fundo ela não passara de uma caixinha de música meio desafinada. (78)

(If one day God lives on earth there will be great silence.
The silence is such that not even thought thinks.
Dying, she turned into air. Energetic air? I don't know. She died in an instant. The instant is that instant of time when the tire of a car running at high speed touches the ground and then doesn't touch it anymore and then touches it again. Etc. etc. etc. Deep down she had been nothing but a little music box out of tune.)



One recognizes the non-thinking thought and silence as allusions to the experience of immanence. The description of the instant that is and then immediately no longer is, here formulated with a metaphor of a pulsating and paratactic form, is evocative of the moments in *Água viva* where the painter sought to apprehend the present moment in its ungraspable passage. Yet the following “etc. etc. etc.” reminds us that Rodrigo S.M. is, as he mentioned before, “absolutamente cansado da literatura” (63) (absolutely tired of literature,) and about to disappear before our eyes. Before ending his narration, he makes a final statement that can be read as an affirmation of the insubstantiality of the individual consciousness:

E agora – agora só me resta acender um cigarro e ir para casa. Meu deus, só agora me lembrei que a gente morre. Mas – mas eu também?!

Não esquecer que por enquanto é tempo de morangos.

Sim (78).

(And now – now all I can do is light a cigarette and go home. My God, I just remembered that people die. But – but me too?!

Don't forget that now it is strawberries session.

Yes.)

Rosenbaum identifies a circular form in the arch of the novel. Everything in the world began with a “sim” (“Tudo no mundo começou com um sim” [9]) while the novel ends with the same affirmation (473). The “sim” is at the same time acceptance of what is and an expression of the demiurgic capacity of matter to give life by itself. The whole narrative is then inscribed between these two affirmations, as if everything had been an interval between two moments of matter affirming itself. To the light of this cyclic vision, we can interpret one of the thirteen titles (the only one which is inscribed in an unusual punctuation.) It reproduces

Macabéa's final words before dying: ".Quanto ao futuro." (6) (.Regarding the future.) This title's double punctuation suggests that all human pretensions, all built on the idea of a future, are contained at the interval between two moments in which immanence is fully experienced. Conversely, it is at the interstice of thoughts that one experiences immanence. At these moments of mystical union, life and things are unveiled before us and experienced just as they are. The banal aspirations and vain dreams of the socialized world, which can only emerge in the interval of the experience of immanence where thought and language are possible, lose their substance in this moment. There is only presence.

The final yes of the novel thus reads as an affirmation and acceptance of the present moment, where immanence is experienced. With the preceding sentence, we can finally understand the sudden incrustations of wheat, watermelons, and strawberries which I mentioned earlier in the chapter. The phrasing 'don't forget' and the reference to the season of strawberries are the components of an essentially paratactic expression whose purpose is to remain fully sensitive to the now. Through this contact with the instant, in which the infinite recursivity of life manifests itself, all organic instances are revealed as equivalent. Therefore, when Rodrigo S.M. affirms that Macabéa "era capim" (27) (was grass,) it is not that he is merely denouncing society, which tramples on her as worthless being, but rather that he is pointing to her spiritual capacity to live herself as she really is, that is, as a fleeting moment in which immanence is instantiated. The authenticity of Macabéa's existence is opposed to any insubstantial pretension of individual value in relation to others, and it lasted as long as long she stayed in closeness to the state of grace. Despite her consciousness' temporal distancing from the experience of immanence through her new hopes for the future, the hour of death finally brings mystical union back to Macabéa, and to her narrator as well.

Conclusions

If we read *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *Água viva* and *A hora da estrela* in their chronological order of publication, we can identify a movement in Lispector's style toward parataxis. Parataxis erupts in *A paixão segundo G.H.* as the cockroach emerges from the depths of the closet. The profound experience of the present moment is then narrated in a paratactical form, the same way that the truths revealed by this mystical experience are enunciated. In *Água viva*, parataxis comes to dominate more the global form of the text, which seeks to convey a more sensual and fluid way of experiencing the world than those of the hierarchical constructions of reason. And it is finally in *A hora da estrela* that this paratactical orientation extends from a syntactic form of clause structuring to a more general organizing procedure in the global structure of the text. In this last novel, that hypotactic project of illuminating the state of grace by means of a conceptual synthesis, which seeks to apprehend it and make it communicable, is finally abandoned. The narration cuts into the paratactic leaps and bounds of the paragraphs, and while it continues to tell a story, it does not so much try to explain its mystery, but rather to portray and experience it through mimesis. Parataxis thus becomes a paradigm of narration, which is reflected in the abrupt cuts that saturate the text.

Among the affordances of hypotaxis, we can name illuminating connections, including attributes of causation and correlation, exploring complements of time and space, and visualizing bifurcations and convergences in the meaning of different things (by constructing analogies and oppositions, for example). In G.H.'s narration, a syntactic structure dominated by hypotaxis is configured with repetition as an anguished quest for understanding that seeks illuminate mystical experience by incessantly connecting the protagonist's thoughts and sensations. In *Água viva*, we find more hypotactic configurations that insist on the incommunicability of communion with immanence, and others that treat it as an object of exposition, essentially using the negative terms that characterize the apophatic

expressions of mysticism in Lispector's work. In *A hora da estrela*, hypotaxis as a paradigm of syntactic structure is no longer employed in configurations that seek to conceptualize mystical union, and so we mostly find instead those that convey the incommunicability of the mystery that motivates writing. Of course, these are only descriptions of observable tendencies, and are not meant to account every sentence in the texts with syntactic subordination in the text. Many are hypotactic for narrative necessity and other reasons not directly related to the position of the enunciating voice in relation to the state of grace.

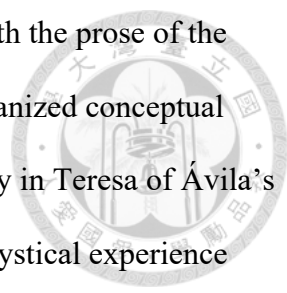
What parataxis affords, among other things, are a sense of immediacy, forcefulness, a sense of openness, loosening of hierarchies, and sometimes, a perceived absence of construction. Parataxis, writes Maebh Long, "steps away from the appearance of a logical, inevitable, necessary progression or system" (12). In a configuration that usually assumes a chaining of short sentences, parataxis is often employed in Lispector's work to formulate a deep experience of the instant, to let primitive instances of organic life emerge, to enunciate, without further explanation or justification, the revealed truths relative to a pantheistic-materialistic worldview whose obtention lies in an incommunicable experience, and also to create a pulsating rhythm, at once fluid and discontinuous, like the beating of a heart, which evokes the primordial breath that animates the cycle of life. This linguistic sense of pulsation corresponds with and helps to constitute a mystical thesis in Lispector: the state of grace can only be experienced in the interstices between thought and word, that is, in the silence that surrounds and contains them.

Affordances are inherent characteristics of forms, but their specific configurations in a text are exclusively the result of its composition. Therefore, the same forms in different works can be oriented in all directions and serve different, even opposite, functions. The correspondence between parataxis and mystical experience is a characteristic of Lispector's style, which, although it may share similarities in other authors, follows an inner principle of

the composition. Other compositions can potentially give parataxis and hypotaxis similar functions, but also radically different ones. It might be enough to recall Moretti's observation of how parataxis in *Ulysses* works towards embodying the openness and looseness that characterize the mental experience of urban stimuli.

Parataxis and hypotaxis as two governing poles of syntactic structure should not be attributed intrinsic functions, but that their affordances should be examined in their specific configurations in each text in order to better understand how they work in context. One of the major ambitions of this thesis is to demonstrate that a linguistic oriented attention to *form as sedimented content*, to use Adorno's expression, can contribute to a better understanding of a literary text in the light of its particular functions. Such is the linguistic-literary stylistic approach proposed by Toolan, which I have followed in this thesis. Of course, the claim of obtaining better understanding entails that the interpretation in this thesis aspires to superior validity over the several readings that have informed my thesis. Since all interpretations are provisional, I can only hope that the stylistic orientation I have followed here appears persuasive and appropriate to the reader.

Another ambition of this thesis has been to contribute to the mapping of the affordances of parataxis and hypotaxis through the study of their configuration in Lispector's work. To go further down this line of research, one could imagine comparative projects that examine authors with similar thematic and stylistic characteristics, in order to better understand the converging and diverging ways in which language forms have been employed, which may give significant insights to better understand the texts. One might, for example, examine how parataxis and hypotaxis as governing poles of syntactic structure are configured in different mystical or religious writers. In "El arte de la coordinación: Funcionalidad y estilo en la prosa teresiana", Patrizia Di Patre examines paratactic style in the writings of Teresa of Ávila. Syntactic coordination in Teresa of Ávila, Di Patre writes, makes possible an



agglutinative series of inquisitive introspections that contrast visibly with the prose of the Dominican friar Louis of Granada, which brims with hierarchically organized conceptual subordinations (453). According to Di Patre, the coordinating synchrony in Teresa of Ávila's style acquires the function of inductive analysis to fabricate a map of mystical experience (455). In reading the excerpts quoted in Di Patre's work, I was struck by the similarities between the writing of Louis of Granada and the moment where the painter of *Água viva* hypotactically explains the state of grace. I have not been able to find studies examining syntax in Meister Eckhart, whose apophatic mysticism might also be productively compared to the mystical vision in Lispector's work. Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* could perhaps also offer interesting points of comparison with Lispector's use of language, given his direct influence on her work. Certainly, there have already been other scattered approaches relating *en passant* paratactic syntax to the expression of a mystical or religious thought in various authors. In his dissertation on Cormac McCarthy, for example, Skyler Latshaw highlights the use of paratactic phrases reminiscent of biblical passages in his fiction. These forms, Latshaw writes, contribute "to the mystical style of McCarthy's writing" (14). Another example is Francisco Javier Pérez Navarro's thesis on the mystical imaginary in Andean poetry. Pérez Navarro analyzes a poem by the Bolivian poet Jaime Saénz, in which parataxis is used to evoke silence through an accumulation of stimuli that make inner emptiness visible (391). This is a negativity, writes Pérez Navarro, that "no es trascendente debido a que pertenece a los estados de la inmanencia" (392) (is not transcendent because it belongs to the states of immanence.) As a final example, in her thesis on George Herbert's *The Temple*, Lillian Myers notes that Herbert's use of parataxis creates a compression symbolic of the potency of prayer (103).

I suspect that one of Lispector's contemporary writers with whom she potentially has close correspondences in terms of both content and style is Spanish mystic philosopher María

Zambrano. To illustrate why I venture this hypothesis, I have allowed myself to reproduce here the first two paragraphs of her work *Claros del bosque*:

El claro del bosque es un centro en el que no siempre es posible entrar; desde la linde se le mira y el aparecer de algunas huellas de animales no ayuda a dar ese paso. Es otro reino que un alma habita y guarda. Algún pájaro avisa y llama a ir hasta donde vaya marcando su voz. Y se la obedece; luego no se encuentra nada, nada que no sea un lugar intacto que parece haberse abierto en ese solo instante y que nunca más se dará así. No hay que buscarlo. No hay que buscar. Es la lección inmediata de los claros del bosque: no hay que ir a buscarlos, ni tampoco a buscar nada de ellos. Nada determinado, prefigurado, consabido. Y la analogía del claro con el templo puede desviar la atención.

Un templo, mas hecho por sí mismo, por «Él», por «Ella» o por «Ello», aunque el hombre con su labor y con su simple paso lo haya ido abriendo o ensanchando. La humana acción no cuenta, y cuando cuenta da entonces algo de plaza, no de templo. Un centro en toda su plenitud, por esto mismo, porque el humano esfuerzo queda borrado, tal como desde siempre se ha pretendido que suceda en el templo edificado por los hombres a su divinidad, que parezca hecho por ella misma, y las imágenes de los dioses y seres sobrehumanos que sean la impronta de esos seres, en los elementos que se conjugan, que juegan según ese ser divino. (11)

(The clearing in the forest is a center that is not always possible to enter; from the edge, one looks at it and the appearance of some animal tracks does not help to take that step. It is another kingdom that a soul inhabits and guards. Some bird warns and calls to go wherever its voice marks. And it is obeyed; then, nothing is found, nothing but an intact place that seems to have opened in that single instant and will never be given that way again. One must not look for it. One must not look for. This is the immediate lesson of the clearings in the forest: one must not look for them, nor anything from them. Nothing determined, prefigured, or established. And the analogy of the clearing with the temple can divert attention.

A temple, yet made by itself, by 'Him,' by 'Her,' or by 'It,' although man with his work and with his simple step has been opening or widening it. Human action does not count, and when it counts, it gives something of a plaza, not a temple. A center in all its fullness, precisely because human effort is erased, as has always been intended to happen in the temple built by men to their divinity, that it appears to have been made by itself, and the images of gods and supernatural beings are the imprint of those beings, in the elements that are combined, that play according to that divine being.)

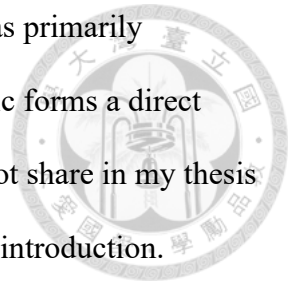
Zambrano's prose is cryptic and mobilizes both forms of syntactic structures in a manner analogous to Lispector. Hypotaxis in this passages works towards an apophatic constation of the impossibility of verbalizing the higher order of mystic experience. Meanwhile, parataxis ensures a space of emergence of ideas and images without clear linkages, and affords the forcefulness to enunciate mystic truths that point to the existence of the mystic

higher order of exiting while opposing it to the rational, logic discourse that cannot mediate an access to it, thus creating an inner, poetic tension with the very conceptual synthesis sought after any philosophical discourse. It is a very similar tension, that between the desire to communicate and the inherent incommunicability of mystical experience, which Nunes identified in Lispector's prose and prompted him to call her writing self-lacerating, and an expression of the drama of language (145, 150).

There is one important female author who also makes extensive use of parataxis and who has identified her own project reflected in Lispector's fiction: Cixous. The question I will now approach here is: To what extent are Lispector and Cixous working toward similar aims? Cixous tends to recognize the mystical content of Lispector's work and her readings found in the essays collected in *Reading with Clarice Lispector* have informed my interpretation: mainly by identifying the role of synesthesia in *Água viva* as a form of feeling that reconnects the individual with the world, and by noticing the critique of value in *A hora da estrela* that leads to an assertion of the general equivalence of things. However, there is another aspect to Cixous' approach to Lispector that goes beyond interpretative work: she formulates a program derived from Lispector based on her own feminist and poststructuralist thought.

First, I want to stress that the extended use of parataxis itself does not reflect a linkage between Cixous and Lispector as feminist writers. Josephine Donovan has argued that the style of female writers often assumes a paratactic syntax, but one should be careful not to draw conclusions too fast. When speculating about the reasons for that stylistic tendency, Donovan argues that it may be 1) because women were not usually trained in the subordinate modes of classical rhetoric, 2) that in their domestic labors they performed tasks sequentially, 3) that their personal epistemology is more integrated with the environment than men's, and finally 4) that such stylistic preference reflects a political resistance to the hierarchical

imposition of subordination (88). This way of understanding parataxis as primarily determined by the social position of women inevitably sees the linguistic forms a direct reflection of the author's worldview, which is an assumption that I do not share in my thesis and that has already been questioned by Toolan, as we have seen in the introduction.



Parataxis being shared by Cixous and Lispector should not be taken as evidence that both are writing from their femininity, but rather we must look at their particular configuration to understand what specific function they assume in their texts.

In “Clarice Lispector: The Approach,” Cixous sees Lispector’s works as offering us preferable ways of interacting with the world, ways that are more in tune with sensitivity and corporality. To use the term that David Mittelman borrows from Joshua Landy, Cixous thinks of Lispector’s oeuvre as *formative texts*, for they are supposed to instruct us about the world and about ourselves. An important point of her ethical celebration of Lispector comes into tension with the understanding of her work that I have elaborated in this thesis. Cixous writes that Lispector’s approach

is political, Clarice’s approach: it is the living space, the between us, that we must take care to keep. Having the humility, the generosity, not to jump over it, not to avoid it. We must save the approach that opens and leaves space for the other (62).

Here, Cixous’s stance on Lispector would be shared by Fitz, Nascimento, Gotlib, among the many others who see in her fiction an ethical valorization of difference. I have argued that, following the inner logic of the mystic vision in Lispector’s work, the self and the other ultimately dissolve back into nothingness once immanence is experienced, and it is difficult to see what political program such a vision could lead to. Let us recall G.H.’s powerful statement that *God is what exists, and all contradictories are within God, and therefore do not contradict Him*. I think this totalizing expression entails that ethics and politics lose substance and relevance when one enters mystical union. That may be why Carol Armbruster argues, as noted by Fritz, that “mysticism can lead to true Otherness, but it can also lead to

the most extreme self-centeredness. Depersonalizing and dehumanizing one-self in order to enter Otherness, take it on, and then speak for it is nothing short of self-deification.” (123). Lispector’s work certainly focuses on the wrecking dissolution of our social constructs, including morality, when one experiences immanence, instead of exploring the ethics of appreciation and respect for the other.

And yet, mystical union is an emancipatory experience. Throughout Lispector’s fiction (including both novels and short stories) we encounter female characters who find themselves trapped in patriarchal and oppressive social formations. Male characters often – but not always– want to keep them enclosed in a particular role, or abandon them. And then, a radical altering experience transforms the female protagonists in a profound way. However, the power of this experience entails depersonalization, the crumbling of all social constructs, the abandonment of the humanized world. Its consequences are thus difficult to grasp. In her interpretation of “A imitação da rosa,” Marta de Senna contends that “superficially feminist” analyses fail to capture what she identifies as “the essential meaning of this short story: the vortex of perfection” (161). According de Senna, the protagonist’s contemplation and imitation of perfection leads her to a mystical experience that frees her from all the social and psychological demarcations in which she was enclosed as she is reborn to the “superhuman life” (162).

Cixous assumes a messianic tone when she writes about a female form of waiting that she intuits in Lispector’s writing: “there must be a wait so powerfully thoughtful, open, toward beings so close, so womanly-familiar that they are forgotten for it, so that the day will come in which the women who have always been there, will at last appear.” (“Clarice Lispector: The Approach” 77) Yet it seems to me that Cixous’s concept of *écriture féminine* has appropriated Lispector’s writing from the outside, for I do not see in it a messianic promise for femineity. Lucia Villares makes a similar point when she argues that Cixous

takes possession of Lispector's work in such a way that "the borders separating Lispector's and Cixous's identities as writers are dissolved" (18). Villares criticizes Cixous's tendency to "essentialize and idealize the feminine, while at the same time romanticizing the so-called pre-Symbolic world" (19), which Cixous insists on celebrating in Lispector's writing. Critics like Marta Peixoto and Elena Carrera, writes Villares, have also criticized Cixous for her celebrative, reductive appropriation of Lispector's texts and voice, which is converted into a fitting presence made to the measure of the philosopher's theory (20).

It is true that Lispector's fiction often portrays stunning flights from that which Fitz calls "meretricious phallogocentrism" (154) (although one does wonder why Fitz uses that adjective to advance a feminist reading, given its patriarchal etymology) and the attempts to contain identity in oppressive, gendered structures. Yet the ultimate, necessary consequence of such flight is the dissolution of all insubstantial constructions made by the logos, including identity. My main concern with the term *écriture féminine* then is that it may obscure the apophatic, dissolving character Lispector's mystic thought, which is central to her work, for the sake of grouping her, on the grounds of perceived formal or thematic similarities, with other writers who may be up to something very different. This personal concern extends as well to viewing Lispector as a Jewish writer.

Moser's biography shows the importance of the personal and historical context to understand Lispector's work, but I do not think it proves that one ought to classify her as a Jewish mystic. Perhaps it would be better to speak, as Mittelman does, of "traço[s] de cultura judaica" ("Água Viva, um salmo clariciano" 57) (traces of Jewish culture) scattered in her work. Although these traces are constitutive of her artistic project, they are appropriated and reconfigured in attempts to "contestar e repensar a religião tradicional" ("Água Viva, um salmo clariciano" 61) (respond to and rethink traditional religion), writes Mittelman. The image of the mystic vision that I have sought to reproduce here is, in my opinion, one specific

to her fiction. Although it clearly shares traits and influences that others have spent valuable effort tracing, the ultimate result of Lispector's composition is a unique literary work with an impressive, original force of expression, which I have analyzed in this thesis in hopes of understanding it better.

É assim que terminam as minhas andanças pela obra de Clarice Lispector. Resta-me agradecer às leitoras e aos leitores pela sua companhia e generosidade, e esperar que a obra de Clarice Lispector continue a chegar a mais leitores, e a inspirar neles uma profusão de pensamentos e sentimentos, quer se acredite ou não que nela reside uma chave para o mistério da existência.

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