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THE QUEST FOR AN AUTHENTIC FEMININE IDENTITY: INNOVATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE BY CLARICE LISPECTOR AND CARMEN BOULLOSA

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Spanish and Portuguese
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The Quest for an Authentic Feminine Identity: Innovations in the Narrative by Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa

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This doctoral dissertation is a study of the narrative techniques utilized by Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa to overcome the socio-cultural bonds of language imposed on women in their respective cultures. In order to do so both authors approach the problematic of writing within a markedly patriarchal environment by subverting traditional narrative discourse. It is within this fluid narrative structure that feminine identity is explored from the philosophical perspective of alterity: to know one’s self one must also know one’s Other. Therefore, dialogue is the instrument through which there is potential for the discovery of identity and it is through a fragmented narrative structure that both Lispector and Boullosa provoke the reader to surpass limitations of pre-judgements, semantic or otherwise.

The main works examined include: Água Viva, A Paixão Segundo G.H., and A Hora da Estrela by Lispector, and Papeles irresponsables, “Blancanieves,” and Isabel by Boullosa. My approach in examining these works has been primarily textual hermeneutics based on the writing of Paul Ricoeur and Mario J. Valdés. As a result, my
hermeneutic inquiry focuses principally on the textual function of narrative and how this influences the text-reader relationship. Part of the text-reader relationship is the recognition that each reader brings with him/her a prefigurative store-house of specific categorical preconceptions. Although the focus of this dissertation is on the process of conscientization of feminine identity it should be clear that both Boullosa’s and Lispector’s work incorporates the universality of the experience with the other and not the isolation of the self. Thus, the overall perspective of this study is not strictly speaking one of feminist criticism but a philosophical investigation of women’s struggle for an authentic identity within a male-dominated environment that rejects self-expression by women outside the prescribed norms.
In loving memory of my brother

José Luis Costa Santos

(1959-1990)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Female Identity and Self-Affirmation in Latin American Literature:
Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa

To have a voice is to be human.
To have something to say is to be a person.
But speaking depends on listening
and being heard; it is an intensely
relational act. (Gilligan xvi)

I. The Context of Latin American Literary History

In this introduction my aim is to situate my work theoretically. In order to do so I would like to identify three premises to my research: first, the texts that I examine in this thesis are a part of Latin American literary culture at the end of the twentieth century, and in my consideration of Latin American literary culture Brazil is as important as Mexico or any other Spanish-speaking Latin American country. Thus, to continue to ignore or marginalize Brazil's contribution to Latin American literary culture reflects only the limitations of the critic. Secondly, I consider literature to be a part of life and thus to always have a socio-cultural context. Third, the search for female identity and self-affirmation by my two authors is part of a world-wide response to centuries of imposed silence, but each author, Lispector in Brazil and Boullosa in Mexico, creates a powerful literary expression of the struggle in her own cultural context.
It is ironic that I should need to explain the inclusion of Brazil in the construction of a Latin American literary culture. Historically, literary history in the nineteenth century tended to contextualize literature based on very specific and limiting models centered on philosophical, religious, aesthetic, and scientific concerns but not on the socio-cultural. Needless to say, in the second half of the twentieth century, these models of literary history have come under scrutiny and increased rejection. Today literary scholars have begun to enter into a symbiotic dialogue with other disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, communications theory, cultural semiotics, hermeneutics, and critical legal theory, which intrinsically manifest the wider socio-cultural contexts in which the literary text is produced and received.¹

Literature is one of a number of expressive modes that not only constitutes a people’s response to life but also shapes their community. And consequently, the foundational premise for this thesis is that literary history is considered to be part of the collective memory of identity. Taking this into account, if literary history is to be effective it should approach the literary past by interpreting it as part of the present, but without the deception of purporting to be the past recaptured. One of the crucial questions for Latin American history, both in the past and today, has been the inclusion or exclusion of Brazil.

Although geographically situated in Latin America, Brazil has often been excluded from Latin American literary culture and scholarship. The reason for Brazil’s exclusion from Latin American literary culture and scholarship. The reason for Brazil’s

¹The ACLS Occasional Paper “Collaborative Historiography: A Comparative Literary History of Latin America” by Linda Hutcheon, Djelal Kadir, and Mario J. Valdés provides a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon.
exclusion, as we shall see, has been primarily linguistic. Whereas Spanish is the principal language in all other Latin American countries, Portuguese is the official language in Brazil. It has been this linguistic difference that has excluded Brazil from Latin American literary history even though, as pointed out by various critics, it has shared many of the same historical events as its Spanish speaking neighbours.

In the 1960 third edition of *Nueva historia de la gran literatura iberoamericana*², Arturo Torres-Rioseco prefaces his sixth chapter, dedicated to Brazilian literature, with the following:

> A riesgo de parecer elemental es necesario iniciar el estudio de la literatura brasileña con una observación escolar: el pueblo brasileño habla *portugués*, idioma latino hermano del español. Desgraciadamente un hecho tan sencillo ha constituido una barrera para el más amplio conocimiento de las letras brasileñas. (211)

Torres-Rioseco goes on to explain that Brazilians pride themselves of their linguistic difference from their Spanish speaking neighbours and refuse to be classified as Hispanic American. Therefore, the use of the term “Latin American” becomes the common denominator when speaking of both the Spanish and Portuguese literatures. Nevertheless, Torres-Rioseco cannot ignore that the term “Latin American” also becomes problematic since it tends to reflect “an arbitrary (and not natural) entity, so named by the French for imperial purposes” (Hutcheon et al. 6), to which the Hispanic Americans voice their own objections. Torres-Rioseco goes so far as to equate the lack of interest on the part of

²First published in 1945 by Emecé Editores, S.A.
Spanish Americans to learn the Portuguese language\(^3\) or to familiarize themselves with the Brazilian culture as analogous to the attitude of Spain towards Portugal (211).

Whereas many of Torres-Rioseco’s contemporaries concentrated on writing literary histories of only Spanish speaking America, he argued that this indifference to the Brazilian culture was both “ilógica y desdichada” (211) since the literary development of Brazil followed almost the same stages as that of its Spanish speaking counterpart. Between 1945 and 1960, the dates of publication of the first and third editions of Torres-Rioseco’s *Nueva historia de la gran literatura iberoamericana*,\(^4\) eleven other literary histories were also published dealing with Hispanic America, which

\(^3\)Although these data may have been representative of the Latin America of Torres-Rioseco’s time, it is important to note that, at the end of the twentieth century, this has changed somewhat. Recently, due to Brazil’s growing economic influence in Latin America, Portuguese has been introduced as the third language in most Spanish American school systems in Latin America. Whereas French and Spanish had been the core languages taught within the Spanish American school system, learning Portuguese has not only been met with acceptance but is viewed as advantageous.

\(^4\)Torres-Rioseco’s contemporary, Luis Monguíó, was another critic to recognize Brazil’s contribution to Latin American literature in his own 1957 work entitled *La cultura y la literatura iberoamericana*.
excluded Brazil or only made brief mention of it.5 During these same years one finds that twelve literary histories were published dedicated solely to Brazil.6

Interestingly, it is in 1959 that Joaquim de Montezuma de Carvalho publishes, in Angola, his four-volume work entitled Panorama das literaturas das Américas, de 1900 à actualidade, a work dedicated not only to Latin American literature but also Canadian and English speaking North American literature. In his introduction to this work, José A. Mora makes it explicit that it was necessary at the time to:

promover uma maior aproximação entre as quatro principais culturas do Novo Mundo–a anglo-americana, a franco-americana, a hispano-

5These literary histories consist of the works compiled by the following authors: Enrique Anderson Imbert’s Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (1954); Charles Vincent Aubrun’s Histoire des lettres hispano-américaines (1954); Crispin Ayala Durante’s Resumen histórico crítico de la literatura hispanoamericana (1945); Robert Bazin Histoire de la littérature américaine de langue espagnole (1953) and Historia de la literatura americana en lengua española (1954); Giuseppe Bellini’s La letteratura hispanoamericana (1959); Carlos Hamilton Depassier’s Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (1960); Pedro Henriquez Ureña’s Historia de la cultura en América Hispánica (1947) and Literary Currents in Hispanic America (1945); Julio A. Leguizamón’s Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (1945); and Ramón Domingo Perés y Perés’s Historia de la literatura española e hispano-americana (1947).

6These twelve literary histories consist of the following works: António Soares Amora’s História da literatura Brasileira (Séculos XVI-XX) (1955); Manuel Carneiro de Sousa Bandeira’s Brief History of Brazilian Literature (1958 translation by Ralph Edward Dimmick); Luís da Câmara Cascudo’s História da literatura Brasileira (1952); Luís Pinto Ferreira’s Petite Histoire de la littérature Brésilienne (1960); Alceu Amoroso Lima’s Quadro Sintético da literatura Brasileira (1956); Mário R. Martins’s A evolução da literatura Brasileira (1945); Lúcia Miguel-Pereira’s História da literatura Brasileira (1950); Arthur Motta’s História da literatura Brasileira (1930); José Osório de Oliveira’s Historia breve de la literatura brasileña (1958); Samuel Putnam’s Marvelous Journey: A Survey of Four Centuries of Brazilian Writing (1948); Silvio Romero’s História da literatura Brasileira (1943); and Erico Veríssimo’s Brazilian Literature: An Outline (1945).
Just as Torres-Rioseco proposed to bridge the linguistic differences between the Spanish and Portuguese sectors of Latin America, Carvalho recognizes in his own *Panorama* the need to overcome this same linguistic barrier in order to provide a complete literary history of "the Americas." It is also important to mention that, in his *Nueva historia de la literatura americana* (1944), Luis Alberto Sánchez also attempted to cover the literary history of all the Latin American nations, Canada, and the United States from the conquest to the present day. Unfortunately, the earlier editions of his texts were criticized for being too broad, which tended to lead often into a mere cataloguing of names. However, such shortcomings were partially corrected in subsequent editions.

It is interesting to mention that one of the earliest literary histories to be written about "Latin America," as opposed to Hispanic or Spanish America, was Pedro Henríquez Ureña's *Historia de la cultura en la América Hispánica*, first published in 1947 and to later appear in 1966 in its English translation, *A Concise History of Latin American Culture*. Gilbert Chase, the translator for the English edition, makes it clear in his introduction that although Henríquez Ureña, from his own humanistic perspective, found it appropriate to have "América Hispánica" refer to both the Portuguese and Spanish sectors, the use of "Latin American" became crucial in the later English edition.

Yet, it cannot be ignored that apart from their linguistic differences, both the Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries of Latin America have experienced some
similar cultural developments, especially with respect to their European ties. One must remember that Latin America is essentially a cultural product of over five hundred years of intercultural exchange. It can be said that, for both the Portuguese and Spanish sectors, a new culture was formed by either a voluntary or involuntary blend of ethnic and intercultural contact.

One must also keep in mind that the cultural centres of all of Latin America have become more and more the crossroads in which ideas, images, and concepts converge and reveal themselves in the dynamics of that centre’s social relations and cultural production. And, needless to say, one of the major influences has been that of the world market place and how it has shown itself in the complex reality of a continent whose wealth, for the most part, is not shared by the majority of its population. It must be noted, however, that there has also been a largely unrecorded history of cultural formations that has generated transnational zones of cultural interaction. At the same time we must also keep in mind that these transnational zones are not synonymous with political zones, which tend to stress an association with ethnic differences and cultural nationalism.  

It is also important to add that in recent years Latin American cultural studies have debated the concept of transculturation as an approach to the heterogeneity of Latin America. This debate is far from running its course. The dynamic nature of literary culture and the discursive response to institutional structures have become the central focus in the debate. Consequently, literary histories in the future will have to reflect this

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7Some examples in this case would be the differences one encounters between the indigenous south of Mexico and the mestizo centre and north, not to mention the differences that exist between Brazil’s northeast and southern regions.
distinct and internal cultural development, which is no longer limited by a difference of languages, ethnicity, and gender but which gives full attention to the individual's nature of the cultural imaginary.

In their 1996 publication, *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*, Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker state in their preface that:

> Literature creates its own historical fictions, its own history being one of them. Our *History*, while being as concrete and factual as possible, reflects the fullness and influence of that fiction. In this sense, too, ours is a history of Latin American literature. (I, xv)

This admission of the circularity of writing this literary history is significant not only because it reiterates the paramount status of literature in the creation of a cultural identity but also because it stresses the crossing of cultural and national boundaries. But González Echevarría still finds it necessary to add this footnote in the first chapter in volume one, stating that when he writes “Latin America” he does include Brazil (I, 7), whereas in writing Spanish America or Hispanic America he refers only to the Spanish speaking sector of the Americas.

In addition, the editors of *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* dedicate one half of the third volume to Brazilian literature but unfortunately in isolation from Spanish America; it is not seen as an intrinsic part of “Latin American” literature. The rationale for such a division is that although Brazil has shared some experiences with its Spanish speaking counterparts, there have been key differences. In this particular case, special attention is brought to the fact that by 1960 the Spanish-speaking world had
a larger reading public and enough "educated and sophisticated" readers (González Echevarría II, 9) not only to support the authors of the *Boom* but also to project outwards onto the world scene. In contrast, Brazil had yet to develop a market for its own fiction, which is the case, amongst others, for their best modern novelists: Clarice Lispector and Nélida Piñón. The editors to this history conclude that:

This volume... is the fullest and most detailed account of the whole development of Brazilian literature available in English. While its chief purpose is to assist both scholars and general readers, it also possesses, for both Brazilians and Brazilianists, a symbolic value that transcends its utility. It may not be entirely true that, as the Parnassian poet Olavo Bilac asserted, the Portuguese language is "the cemetery of literature," but the language has undeniably served as a barrier, limiting international recognition of the richness and originality of Brazilian literature and of its great writers. The publication of this collection of essays is an important step in achieving that recognition. (González Echevarría II, 10-11)

Just as Torres-Rioseco stated in his *Nueva historia de la gran literatura iberoamericana*, González Echevarría and Pupo-Walker—fifty-one years later—are of the opinion that, in the end, language is the great dividing force which separates Brazil from its Spanish-speaking neighbours. But should language be such a dividing force?

In an attempt to accommodate the linguistic difference which seems to be the prevalent barrier between Brazil and its Spanish speaking counterparts, literary historians and critics have entertained such terms as: Hispanic America, Ibero America, and Latin
America. Yet, there is no question that there is a cultural imaginary shared in part by Brazil and Spanish-speaking America, and the difference in languages should not prevent a comparative study of Latin American literature in both Spanish and Portuguese.

II. “Writing as Women”: Women Writing

As early as 1791 with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1759–1797) “Vindication of the Rights of Women” attention has been brought to the social conditions of women’s lives. Wollstonecraft argued that the place given to women in society was not a natural phenomenon but a social construct: “But the private or public virtue of a woman is very problematical, for Rousseau, and a numerous list of male authors, insist that she should all her life be subjected to a severe restraint, that of propriety” (444). This concept of gender was more than a biological difference; it was above all a socio-culturally predetermined subservient role. Within this role women were expected to be both servant and child-bearer, a restrictive criterion which is still affecting many women in our present day society. Wollstonecraft concludes her ground-breaking essay on women’s role in society by affirming that:

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish disobedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers—in a word, better citizens. (448)
Wollstonecraft and other courageous women have fought for a just society in which women would have lives fulfilled with dignity and freedom. Literature provides works in which one can examine examples of such feminine struggles for self-expression and realization. In the last half of the twentieth century, literature written by women has become a focal point not only in the area of Women's Studies but in the study of literature itself. Unfortunately, sometimes the study of this feminine literary canon has been limited in scope and oversimplified under the label of "feminist literature," which more often than not isolates women's writing in an "essentialist" pseudo-world. In order to best capture Clarice Lispector's (1925-1977) and Carmen Boullosa's (1954-) texts, or any woman's text for that matter, one must set aside all such restrictive labels and exclusions. By doing so one can better examine how both authors, each in her own way, explore the idea of feminine identity through their characterization of their female protagonists.

A common point of departure in both authors' writing can be identified as the desire to give voice to both feminine identity and experience. What arises within this process is an exploration of the problematics of either recovering or attaining a sense of self within a social context that expects selfless female subjects. Neither author professes to be a feminist writer. On the contrary, both make a point in several interviews of

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One cannot ignore the negative connotations that are sometimes associated with the term "feminist," from insinuations of women as "man-haters" to lesbianism. What needs to be emphasized is feminism as a celebration of what is feminine and not a negation of what is masculine. Moreover, the same value judgments and predetermined roles that affect women can also affect men. For example, a Latin male who displayed characteristics of tenderness and emotion would be considered, by both men and women, effeminate and not sufficiently "macho."
stipulating that they are simply writers who also happen to be women. In a letter to “Fernando P.” dated October 12, 1977, Lispector writes: “Pelo amor de Deus, não me considere ‘uma escritora’ e sim uma pessoa” (qtd. in Gotlib 407). Meanwhile, in an interview with Katherine Ibsen, Boullosa explains her position as a woman writer in Mexico:

Y digo: ¿qué es “lo femenino”? . . . Pero para no entrar en complicaciones, simplemente yo digo que yo no soy una escritora mujer. Yo no escribo novelas rosas, yo no escribo novelas en que lo importante sea el ámbito doméstico, para mí lo importante es el lenguaje, es la literatura, es el diálogo entre los libros, y no el mundo doméstico, aun cuando mis dos primeras novelas tratan de niños, ninguna de las dos son novelas tradicionales con narradores-niños y con un mundo tradicional de niños, sino de ahí una apuesta distinta que no tiene nada que ver con una novela rosa o con una novela en que los protagonistas sean mamás, papás o mujeres de una manera o de otra convencionales, y que vayan enfocadas a lectoras mujeres. (Ibsen 53)

As both Lispector and Boullosa insinuate, being identified as a feminist in Latin American culture is not an entirely positive identification. Neither Lispector nor Boullosa is an anti-feminist, nor are they feminists. In an interview entitled “Panorama especial” with the Brazilian television program, “TV-2 Cultura,” Lispector expresses her desire not to be limited by such labels:
Panorama – Normalmente, que tipo de problema a Clarice Lispector-escritora traz a você?

Clarice – Às vezes o fato de me considerar escritora me isola.

P. – Por qual razão?

C. L. – Me põem um rótulo.

P. – E você acredita que as pessoas olhem para você através do rótulo?

C. L. – Às vezes só através desse rótulo. Tudo que eu digo, ou não, é uma bobagem... Ou então é considerada como ou uma coisa linda, ou uma coisa boba. Tudo na base de ser escritora. É por isso que eu não ligo muito para essa coisa de ser escritora e dar entrevista e tudo. É porque eu não sou isso. (qtd. in Gotlib 459)

Both Lispector and Bouilosa share a common belief in a philosophical liberation of consciousness, which also connotes a freedom from labels and restrictive classifications based on their gender as writers. Although both address the problems faced by women in the Latin American socio-cultural context, they do so without dismissing the same socio-political issues that can also be applicable to men.

Both Lispector and Bouilosa have, at some point in their respective careers, emphasized that they write about the human condition and its representative key life experiences—a subject matter that should not be circumscribed by any one label. Taking this into consideration, one can investigate how these authors have chosen to give voice in their writing to the struggle and paradox of women striving to affirm themselves as individuals. Irony does not escape either writer; on occasion their protagonists recognize
that at times a woman’s choice not to speak has been a method of self-protection. This choice to be silent is presented as being motivated not only by her concern for the feelings of others but, more importantly, by an awareness of the repercussions for herself and others if she were to break this silence. As authors, both Lispector and Boullosa break this invisible curtain of silence in the characterization of their protagonists, thereby breaking the cycle that intrinsically perpetuates a patriarchal hierarchy in which women are disconnected not only from their selves but from their very voices. In order to secure self-expression both authors depict a process of self-realization in the development of their protagonists. First the protagonist recognizes not only the value of language but also the control it exercises over her life and only then is it followed by their appropriation of it as their own self-expression.

One cannot discount that, historically, men’s experience has stood as the measuring stick for all human experience—a factor that undermines not only genuine feminine experience but also feminine expression. In her “Letter to Readers, 1993” Carol Gilligan explains that in her own investigations into the psychological processes and theory, she noticed that men would normally leave out women in their assessment of life experience, while women would tend to exclude themselves (xiii). In other words, men would separate themselves from such categorization while women would suffer a process of dissociation “that required the creation of an inner division or psychic split” (Gilligan xiii). The narratives of both Lispector and Boullosa reproduce this struggle to overcome the sense of female alienation not only from her environment but from her very self. By developing their works with an innovative poetic language both authors attempt to
institute a literary correlative of the feminine struggle not only for consciousness but also for an authentic enunciation of the self. Authentic in the sense that the protagonist is able to overcome the sense of self-dissociation—even though it may not always imply a newfound freedom, it does entail an affirmation of the self.

For both Boullosa and Lispector it is important to address this issue of feminine identity in conjunction with alterity. Charles Taylor expands on the natural relationship between language and the attaining of a sense of self through alterity:

A language only exists and is maintained within a language community.
And this indicates another crucial feature of a self. One is a self among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it. . . . There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into language. . . . This is the sense in which one cannot be a self on one’s own. I am self only in relation to certain interlocuters: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who are essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding. (35-36)

Language, therefore, is not only the key to self-expression but also instrumental in realizing self-definition. Taking this into consideration, it is also through language that the female protagonist is portrayed as having to separate her self from a sense of sameness. In his Oneself as Another Ricoeur emphasizes the following distinction between selfhood and sameness:
Character, we said, is the self under the appearances of sameness. In the opposite direction, the corporeal criterion is not by nature foreign to the problematic of selfhood, to the extent that my body's belonging to myself constitutes the most overwhelming testimony in favor of the irreducibility of selfhood to sameness. (128)

Consequently, an important component to achieve a sense of self is the abandoning of the prescribed role of sameness women occupy within their communities. It is only in sacrificing this acquiescent role that woman can attempt to achieve a sense of self.

That is to say, in order for a woman to truly know her self not only must she know her Other but she must also recognize how her surroundings affect her. Gilligan identifies the effects of women's socio-cultural environment as a two-fold paradigm: "the lie in psychology theories which have taken men as representing all humans, and the lie in women's psychological development in which girls and women alter their voices to fit themselves into images of relationship and goodness carried by false feminine voices" (xxvi). Both Boullosa and Lispector are aware of the restrictions and limitations placed on the realization and enunciation of a feminine consciousness. They both realize that their writing should attempt to mirror plausible feminine experiences. Ricoeur also iterates a similar philosophy of the author's role in writing: "By narrating a life of which I am not the author as to existence, I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning" (Oneself as Another 162). In order to succeed in doing so both writers find it necessary to abandon the constraints of traditional literary genres for a more fluid method of writing. Therefore, along with their innovation in writing style comes the necessity to adopt a
more authentic language to better articulate the journey towards feminine self-realization and self-expression.

This quest for an individual consciousness embodies in Boullosa’s and in Lispector’s narrative a dialogic of self-definition in which women confront their socially prescribed roles. In both cases this dialogic exchange between self and Other is crucial in the construction of an all-encompassing identity of the self. In order to do so, both authors re-invent the narrative genre and apply multiple voices in their innovatively poetic narrative styles. That is to say, they manipulate a language charged with a patriarchal prefigurative in order to better encapsulate women’s quest for consciousness, which encompasses both a sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

My approach to the issues of self-expression and the subversion of the socio-linguistic usage in a male dominated society, as outlined in this thesis, is primarily textual hermeneutics following the work of Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Mario J. Valdés. These issues can, of course, be profitably examined from other critical approaches as distinct as semiotics, psychoanalytic criticism, or stylistics. While I do not question the validity of these approaches, I cannot attempt to incorporate them into my thesis, nor can I develop an eclectic synthesis of the methods most active today. Textual hermeneutics, as I understand it, includes the consideration of figurative usage, but this analysis is subordinate to the hermeneutic inquiry which focuses on the textual function this usage performs in the making of the text-reader relationship.9

9For example see “Hermeneutical Commentary” by Mario J. Valdés in Shadows in the Cave where he examines poetry by Octavio Paz, José Juan Tablada and Pablo Neruda (124-34).
It is of some significance to my thesis that there be no misunderstanding on my position with respect to the socio-cultural bonds of language which these authors strive to overcome through a liberation of narrative technique. In both Brazil and Mexico the language of everyday living is markedly patriarchal, but it would be nevertheless quite untenable, philosophically, to hold that there is an outer limit to language as if thought and self-expression were somehow irretrievably locked within a prison-house of language. Anyone, including distinguished critics, who takes this position overlooks the fact that all language usage derives from dialogue and to confuse discourse with speech is reductive. Although our thoughts and desires for expression sometimes exceed our capacity to communicate the same, we overcome these limitations through the power of language to create new dimensions of the world while also keeping in mind that this aspect of language can be unlimited. As long as we have the capacity to engage in dialogue we have the potential for discovery of something new, and as long as the literary text provokes the reader to surpass the semantic impertinence of discourse we can imagine what was before unimaginable. As a result, I have put some emphasis on the feature of Lispector's and Boullosa's use of narrative technique in making the case for literature as thought that breaks the preestablished limits.

In his Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics Jean Grondin draws the following conclusion:

To limit language once and for all to an écriture with nothing behind it is positively to truncate the reach of the logos—"as if," Gadamer responds to Derrida, "all discourse consisted in propositional judgments." ... If one understands logos to mean talking with one another and thus mutual interdependence, then the hermeneutical logos has its real place in conversation and, above all, in the conversation of the soul with itself, as Plato liked to describe thought. (138-39)
To begin, language should be perceived as a habitat in which there are multiple manifestations of its all-encompassing power. Ironically, the same language that confines and limits also liberates. In reading the narrative by both Lispector and Boullosa one comes to note that it is crucial to live in language and to appropriate it for one’s own enunciation of self. Moreover, language is the construct through which narrativity is attained and it is also the method by which reality is produced. More importantly language is not only the medium through which individuals establish themselves as subjects, but also the basis on which reality is founded. Thus, through language these subjects search to establish themselves in their own reality. When describing her own use of language in her literary works Boullosa comments as follows:

... lo que yo considero que es el estilo literario, el diálogo del lenguaje con la anécdota, el lenguaje impregnado por los personajes y por la atmósfera, un lenguaje que es víctima de lo que está abarcando, que es actor de lo que va ocurriendo, y que no es algo frío y ascéptico, que se ensucia con lo que va diciendo. (Ibsen 59)

Although language is adopted and manipulated to embody the authentic personal experience of each protagonist, one cannot ignore that language is inherently enclosed in a gendered structure. This gendered quality to language that both Boullosa and Lispector try to avoid not only reflects the socio-cultural constructs but also how one ultimately perceives reality. That is to say, that in speaking the speaker automatically encodes his/her message with a specific prefigurative. Meanwhile, the language used inscribes the object into the symbolic structure, such as a sexual hierarchy. Consequently, it is often
the case that women tend to be restricted and limited by a language that, although they are speakers of the same, they have been treated as objects within its patriarchal construct.

It is important however to distinguish that language as a social construct carries sexual preconceptions that are symbolically represented in the use of grammatically gendered language. That is to say, a hierarchy of sexual difference is inscribed onto language within which:

Las mujeres son fácilmente relacionadas con su cuerpo y con la sexualidad, y más usualmente reprimidas y sancionadas por su transgresión . . . El lenguaje se funda en el cuerpo y sexualidad de la mujer y a la vez presiona y controla socialmente su sexualidad.

(Fernández Poncela 220)

It is within this framework that some women writers have chosen certain linguistic alternatives as a form of indirect resistance. This type of resistance may seem at first as passive resistance, but it is resistance all the same. Overall, what must be emphasized is that any undertones of sexism go beyond the language in which it is inscribed—it is a cultural construct not only in society but also in the mentality of its people. Going against the patriarchy is a risk because it challenges foundational preconceptions of the female body, the same female body which "is often the text upon which men mark their fears and desires" (Wehling 58). By questioning the identity assigned to them, these female protagonists symbolize a threat to the foundations of patriarchal order—something which
must be protected even if it entails the protagonist’s sacrifice of identity and self-consciousness.

Notwithstanding, let us recall that language does not exist on its own. Not only is it representative of a specific individual or social group, it is also a reflection of prescribed methods of thinking, being, and acting. In investigating the implicit reality of literature one must keep in mind that the term “language” is multi-faceted. Language not only refers to the use of words to express an idea; “language” as in lengua also alludes to the body of words used by a given community in speaking and writing for the purpose of communication. Speech (or habla), on the other hand, denotes an individual act of will and faculty of expressing thoughts through words. Nevertheless, it is in writing that language can become an instrument for both objectification and legitimization of reality, in which, at times, the everyday quotidian can be a crucial point of reference. It is through language that an author’s idea takes form, but, as Boullosa confirms: “El libro cobra forma cuando no es el manuscrito del autor, cuando no es materia personal sino exposición” (“Destrucción” 219). Consequently, it is in reading that the text achieves immortality and

Si es cierto que la escritura es destrucción, la lectura muestra otra cara de los libros. Por mi parte, me reconstruyo leyendo, me vuelvo a hacer, cada vez, en la vitalidad de los autores que nos han precedido. Por ellos puedo

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11Antonio Quilis and Joseph A. Fernández further emphasize the difference between lengua and habla in stating that lengua is a social phenomenon in that it is “el sistema supraindividual, una abstracción que determina el proceso de comunicación humana” (3) and that habla is an individual manifestation of language.

12This topic of the author renouncing his/her creation so that it may take on a life of its own is taken up in more detail with the discussion of Papeles irresponsables.
escribir, por ellos no he terminado conmigo misma en mi obsesión por la destrucción. (Boullosa, “Destrucción” 219)

Furthermore, both Boullosa and Lispector tend to foreground in their literary works the important question of language and literature existing in a symbiotic relationship through which a fruitful dialogue is achieved.

It can also be said that both Boullosa’s and Lispector’s writing not only reveals a unique exploration of its female characters but also delves into the construction and articulation of the female psyche. Similar to Lispector, Boullosa’s literature is not to be simply classified as “feminist;” on the contrary, the author herself makes a point of declaring that “la literatura es un diálogo muy profundo con la sociedad; es una revisión crítica de nuestra actitud como comunidad y como individuos” (Ibsen 54). In the same interview Boullosa goes on to say that:

el mundo femenino no ha sido dueño del espacio exterior, de la vida comunitaria, no ha regido, no ha sido la ley, y hay una fe profunda y ciega—que yo comparto—en el mundo... de lo que hemos llamado lo femenino, si lo dejamos andar por las calles y lo dejamos ser ley, ser obra, podemos cambiar nuestra manera de ser seres humanos. (Ibsen 55)

In order to encompass a full meaning of the text in his/her reading experience the reader must constantly be aware of the multiple narrative layers to Boullosa’s and Lispector’s works. The reader must also keep in mind that there exists a fusion of these multiple layers into a unique narrative of identity that results in the formation of the basis for a sense of consciousness. It is in the interweaving of these multiple narrative layers that the
reader is able to recognize and reconstruct the various pre-established cultural patterns and other socio-political paradigms involved in the development of a feminine identity in the fictional characters. That is to say, reading brings the reader into a dialectic exchange with a multi-levelled text that can result in his/her refiguration of his/her own lived world.\textsuperscript{13}

Above all, it is important not to enclose either Boullosa’s or Lispector’s literature within any restrictive normative category or to limit it with simplistic feminist interpretations. Boullosa’s transient quality as a writer is underscored in her own admission that: “en la realidad yo soy escritor y no escritora, y tal vez nunca he podido acceder a mi mundo de mujer, no sé... pero puede ser que en lo hondo de mí misma sea un hombre que no ha podido acceder al cuerpo de mujer” (Ibsen 62). Both Lispector’s and Boullosa’s writings address a subject matter larger than feminist issues, although these cannot be dismissed. Hence, the larger subject matter of their writing can be perceived as either a definite presence or absence of female identity within the particular constraints of the socio-cultural prison of language. Even though both writers present their female protagonists as contradiction of what is socially acceptable these same protagonists also represent the more universal meaning of human nature in itself. And in portraying their female protagonists, both writers do so within the complexities of human relations, of how both men and women at times fall victim to the same restrictions of predetermined social roles and values.

\textsuperscript{13}For a more detailed study see Mario J. Valdés’ chapter entitled “Text and Self: Memory, the Other, the Community” in \textit{Hermeneutics of Poetic Sense}. 
It becomes apparent that both Lispector and Boulosa are clearly a product of the twentieth century when their own subversion of the prison-house of patriarchal discourse has also grown in intensity throughout Latin America. It is important to emphasize that the path they have chosen is not that of the creation of an imaginary language for women only, but rather to forcefully break down the constraints on self-expression outside the prescribed socio-linguistic norms.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}For an interesting study on the male domination in the creation of “imaginary” languages and their “ghettos” see Yaguello’s Lunatic Lovers of Language. In one instance Yaguello makes the following observation:

Through the history of imaginary languages, a tale of exclusion can thus be read: the exclusion of women from the field of theoretical reflection and creation, even if the end-products defy reason; their confinement to the domain imposed on them by culture masquerading as nature; that of affective response, emotion, intuition, that of practice too—ideas set against praxis. (27-28)
CHAPTER 1: Innovations in the Use of the Narrative Voice in Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa

"El misterio de la escritura empieza, pues, con el escritor mismo, que no sabe sus símbolos, pero conoce sus palabras."
(Rodriguez Monegal 236)

I: Abandoning the Constraints of the Established Literary Tradition

In her study of Àgua Viva, Elizabeth Lowe develops the idea that the military takeover in Brazil in 1964 marked a change in the area of contemporary women’s fiction and that with it came the introduction of the themes of power and women’s powerlessness in both the public and personal arenas. Lowe also adds that since then literature has become one of the media that women have chosen to decisively confront the issue of their traditional role as “passive creatures” (80). Within this socio-political context literature begins to provide a venue in which contemporary authors attempt to understand themselves and the forces that shape their lives as women. Although Lispector fits into this redefined criterion of the contemporary Brazilian woman writer, one must keep in mind that Lispector never thought of herself as a feminist. Instead, she
often explains that her writing centers more on the investigation of the human condition and how the individual exists within his/her specific environment.¹

Contrary to the previously established literary tradition, Lispector chooses to reject the concept of clarity of thought in an attempt to capture the essence of the self. In doing so, she tries in her writing to isolate the self and integrate experience into a reality that has not been socially prescribed. It is under such premises and after three years of editing that Lispector finally decides to publish her novel Água Viva in 1973.² In an interview prior to its publication Lispector herself had already foreseen that Água Viva would not necessarily be favourably received: “Mais ce livre, Água Viva, j’ai passé trois ans sans avoir le courage de le publier, croyant que ce serait mauvais, que c’était mauvais. Parce qu’il n’avait pas d’histoire, pas d’intrigue” (Varin 97). In another interview granted to the Brazilian newspaper “Correio da Manhã” on the sixth of March 1972, Lispector also revealed that:

Le livre est déjà prêt, mais je crois que je le publierai seulement l’an prochain. Vous savez je suis tres sensible depuis quelque temps. Tout ce

¹Lowe describes the political state of Brazil as one of “malaise” fostered by a rapidly urbanizing, class-conscious society governed by an imposed notion of “progress” projected by military technocrats in Brasilia. Thus, topics of poverty and social class not only permeate Lispector’s works but the Brazilian literature of this period.

²The editing process of Água Viva consisted of Olga Borelli typing a text from Lispector’s notes which Lispector would then rewrite. Not only did Lispector remove any traces of personal references, for example changing the protagonist’s profession from writer to painter, but also the overall structure of chapters (Ferreira 257). Aside from Olga Borelli, Lispector also asked other friends for their opinions on the text: Nélida Piñón (1937-), for example, focused more on pointing out the repetition of sentences or paragraphs throughout the fragmentary text (Ferreira 257).
qu'on dit de moi me blesse. «Objeto Gritante» est un livre qui devra être très critiqué; ce n'est pas une nouvelle ni un roman, ni une biographie, ni un livre de voyage non plus. Et, en ce moment, je ne suis pas disposée à écouter des effronteries. Vous savez, «Objeto Gritante» c’est une personne qui parle tout le temps. . . (Varin 181)

Água Viva from its inception was a text which did not have either story or plot, and could not be easily categorized as a traditional novel, biography, or even travel account. Instead, it consisted of a character who spoke constantly, reflecting a process of acute self-awareness as both a writer and an individual. It is the suspension of narrative linearity in Água Viva’s fragmented text that makes it possible for Lispector to shift to a syntax of introspection. This syntax of introspection focuses on writing what Lispector terms the “instante já” as a method of revealing, through words, a life submersed beneath the facts of quotidian life at the exact moment in which they occur. As a result, language becomes the medium by which reality is captured. By focusing on the self, which is inherently entwined in language, it becomes apparent that it is through language that this individual is able to enunciate herself.

It is important to note here that Lispector’s main concern is writing about the individual and her language as a critical component in expressing her consciousness.

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3“Objeto Gritante” was the original title for Água Viva (Varin 181), and initially consisted of two hundred and eighty pages (Sá, Escritura 205). But even before being entitled “Objeto Gritante” Lispector had entitled it “Atrás do pensamento: monólogo com a vida” (Ferreira 257), a title which reflects the importance placed on the interior monologue as a mode for expressing the individual’s consciousness.
Furthermore, Lispector's writing also carries both metaphorical and metaphysical characteristics embodied in the constant questioning of the relationship between existing and writing, and between reason and feeling. This unique questioning of language within the narrative construct of the text consequently causes the author, narrator, characters, and the reader to become fictional elements in the reading process itself. In effect, reading *Água Viva* becomes what Iser termed a process of re-creative dialectics. That is, since the author, narrator, characters, and reader become fictionalized components of the text the aesthetic response to the text occurs via the dialectic relationship between the text and reader. This interaction at the same time calls upon the reader's active imagination and perception throughout the entire reading process (Iser x).

The fragmentary structure of the text ultimately lends itself to an interior monologue reading. By creating a text not regulated by linear plot and mimetic characterization, Lispector has produced instead a text consisting of (textual) fragments of thoughts and reflections. Each thought is developed individually in a paragraph, thereby creating the different sections of the text. Although they are fragments, each fragment has its special function and purpose within the text as a whole. Just as this "fragmentary" writing style is a break from the Brazilian narrative convention, it also, interestingly enough, represents a culmination of the development of Lispector's unique writing style from her first work, *Perto do Coração Selvagem*, published in 1944.4

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4In his essay "Os Detrocôs da Introspecção" Benedito Nunes stipulates that there existed three distinct stages of reception to Lispector's work. Her first book, *Perto do Coração Selvagem* (1944) had almost no recognition from critics and writers alike. Later with the publication of *Lacos de Familia* (1960) there is a new found interest in her work by a university audience which in turn awakens interest in her other novels: *O Lustre* (1946), *A
In conjunction with her innovative perception of language in her literary creation, Lispector's narrative style, especially in her later works, is characterized by a highly concentrated form of introspection. Her sentences are succinct and the deepest meaning is at times expressed in the shortest sentence. In *Água Viva* this technique gives the reader the impression that the narrator is aware of being limited by time and, as a result, is striving to relate all her thoughts and experiences before said time expires. Therefore, as one's reading of the text progresses, one becomes aware of the narrator's obsessive desire for capturing the "purity of the instant" in her writing by constantly focusing on the present. Hence, the narrative becomes not only the narrator's attempt to capture her consciousness but also to give it, in written form, a sense of validation.

It is in this quest to express an individual consciousness that Lispector not only pushes the limits of (each) words, but applies them to a narrative structure that holds the literary creation to be parallel to a quotidian human existence. Instead of disguising the first person narrative voice, there is a distinct intention to emphasize the direct discourse of the interior monologue of the text. What occurs, therefore, is a dramatization of the experience being relayed since there is no distance between the narrating subject and the narratee. It is for this reason that the narrator is seen as the utmost authority in narrating her experiences. Nevertheless, the narration is also at times difficult for the reader to

comprehend since it closely mirrors the narrator’s ever changing emotional and psychological state.

Just as the author and narrator are fictionalized into active roles in the text, it is also important to note that the reader also becomes an active participant in the reading experience of Água Viva. Although some critics have interpreted the “tu” as the ex-lover to whom the narrator dedicates her letters, others have also interpreted it as being Lispector’s own voice addressing her reader. In fact, one could construe it as a relationship between both. That is to say, Lispector’s reader becomes her “lover” since the reader is now sharing and becoming part of the intimate creation that is her writing. Nevertheless, in either case there is an implicit importance placed not only on the act of writing, but on the writing of the self and the projecting of the new self in order to be understood and accepted by this elusive “you.”

The reading of Água Viva can be further contemplated if one applies Paul Ricoeur’s tripartite concept of mimesis. Mimesis, is defined as the prefigurative stage in which the discursive experience of the individual is not a fixed catalogue but consists of the total sum of ideas, images, discursive modes of writing and expressing oneself. One can also include narrativity within the prefigurative in addition to the discursive relativity

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5Telma Maria Vieira, Sonia Salomão Khêde (in her introduction to Água Viva), Keith H. Brower (in his study of the narratee), and Bella Jozef (in “Recuperación”) all develop the role of the narrator within the context that she is addressing her ex-lover in her writing. But other critics, such as: Olga de Sá (Travessia), Benedito Nunes (“Detroços”), and Lucia Helena (“Problematização” and Nem Musa), to name a few, have expanded their commentary to include the possibility that the narrator could be also be Lispector’s alter ego speaking from within the text.
of an oral experience as fragments of stories. What then follows the prefigurative stage is mimesis, or the configurative stage, which is the controlled and disciplined use of imagination, a concretization of a story impossible without a previous repertoire (the prefigurative). Finally, the refiguration (mimesis) is the attempt to communicate the reading experience of the story (see Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*; see Valdés, *Ricoeur Reader*). Therefore, if one is to believe that the "you" Lispector addresses can be the reader, then one must keep in mind that each reader's own prefigurative prejudices and preconceptions will determine his/her reading experience in both the configurative and refigurative stages.

Although consisting of short sections with quick short paragraphs, it should not be assumed that the structure of the text is easy to follow. If read too quickly the meaning can escape the reader: "Vou fazer um adaggio. Leia devagar e com paz. É um largo afresco" (47). Although one tends to read quickly what one deems as a familiar pattern, Lispector denies the reader this convenience to fall back on. Instead, she forces the reader to read each word carefully and search in between the lines for the deeper meaning. Consequently, the empty spaces in the text function both as areas of communication and of interaction between the text and reader. Within these same empty spaces the reader then elaborates his/her own projections during the configurative process of his/her reading experience. There are also empty spaces that will not yield to the reader's efforts; these indeterminate passages in *Água Viva* require some retrospection from the reader in order to be partially understood and appreciated. Such indeterminacies in the text are Lispector's uncanny manipulations of both language and
narrative structure in order to be able to best express, for the reader, the extent of her narrator’s inner turmoil.

Accordingly, Lispector uses this fictionalized “eu” to mirror the fragmentary structure of the text by fragmentizing it into various discursive representations throughout the development of the text: “Antes de me organizar, tenho que me desorganizar internamente. Para experimentar o primeiro e passageiro estado primário de liberdade. Da liberdade de errar, cair e levantar-me” (73). This process of internal disorganization is integral in order to experience the first fleeting moment of freedom and can be interpreted not only as referring to the narrator’s own experience but can also be understood as a metaphor for the text of Água Viva itself. That is, in order for the text to have the freedom to mirror the reality of existence it must negate the pre-established narrative formulas for a more introspective, even “disorganized,” narrative style. Within this new found openness both the narrator and the narrative become one and the same. Consequently, the reader becomes a fictionalized element of the text since he/she must now also respond to the same challenges as the narrator throughout the multi-dimensional and multi-linear path of the narrative.
Interestingly, the text of *Água Viva* (1978) begins with the narrator’s mystical declaration: “É com uma alegria tão profunda. É uma tal aleluia” (13) linking this new sense of freedom to the pain of separation. However, at the same time it is also a shout of “felicidade diabólica” (13) since she is no longer limited by the predefined role to which she had previously acquiesced. There is a distinct sense of an abandoning of the preconceived and of the rational for the more basic consciousness attained by the narrator nourishing herself directly from the placenta of self. Yet, there is an admission of fear because “o próximo instante é o desconhecido” (13). The narrator now appeals directly to the reader: “Fazemo-lo juntos com a respiração” (13).

Yet, before being able to undertake the task of writing her self with the Other’s active participation, the narrator finds it imperative to return to the moment of prediscursive experience. Similar to Irigaray’s writings, Lispector purports a return to the primordial by questioning all that is predetermined within the cultural imaginary. At times throughout the text the narrator emphasizes the source of the new self as feminine in nature:

Nasci assim: tirando do útero de minha mãe a vida que sempre foi eterna. (39)

Mas eu me alimentei com minha própria placenta. (48)
Eu agüento porque sou forte: comi minha própria placenta. . . . Terei que morrer de novo para de novo nascer? Aceito. (50)

The emphasis on the maternal, the amniotic, and the placental tissues represent the pure primordial substances that first enveloped and nurtured the individual within the mother’s womb. It is this regression into the womb-like state which embodies the renunciation of the pre-established cultural imaginary for a new imaginary which now has a new direction aimed at the valuation of the authenticity of the individual:

Vou voltar para o desconhecido de mim mesma e quando nasce falarei em “ele” ou “ela”. Por enquanto o que me sustenta é o “aquilo” que é um “it”. Criar de si próprio um ser é muito grave. Estou me criando. E andar na escuridão completa à procura de nós mesmos é o que fazemos. Dói.

Mas é dor de parto: nasce uma coisa que é. É-se. (50)

In being re-born the narrator leaves behind not only her inhibitions but also the limitations of her past identity and replaces it with the ecstasy of the pure element of being. It is within this non-gendered world that Lispector wishes to establish a “monosexual” language (Irigaray 177) that allows the narrator to freely express herself without recurring to the linguistic predeterminism of a patriarchally patterned language system.

However, although the birth imagery denotes a new found authenticity of selfhood for the narrator, it also betrays a process imbued with harsher images of separation and eventual loss:
Dobrei-me de repente em dois e para a frente como em profunda dor de parto — e vi que a menina em mim morria. Nunca esquecerei este domingo sangrento. Para cicatrizar levará tempo. E esí-me aqui dura e silenciosa e heroica. Sem menina dentro de mim. (71-72)

In rejecting her previous naiveté, the narrator feels that she is also losing her inner child by coming to terms with her new existence. The “bloody Sunday” reference only enforces the violent undertones to the entire experience of rebirth. Unfortunately, although there is a need to negate the socio-culturally predefined prefigurative self, this in turn results in a rupturing of the narrator’s persona by creating in its place a more stoic and silent version of the self. With the narrator’s rebirth has come the knowledge of the stark reality of her existence not only within her cultural imaginary but also in relation to her Other.

Nevertheless, it is within this same environment that the narrator must not only enunciate, but also affirm her new self as the “I” who is writing the text in relation to her Other. In order to attain and develop this new sense of self the narrator searches to enter into dialogue with her Other while at the same time attempting to remain true to herself:

A criação me escapa. E nem quero saber tanto. . . . Basta-me o impossível vivo do it. . . . É a reivindicação porque nas últimas frases andei pensando somente à ton a de mim. Então o fundo da existência se manifesta para banhar e apagar os traços do pensamento. . . . A garantia única é que eu nasci. Tu és uma forma de ser eu, e eu uma forma de te ser: eis os limites de minha possibilidade. (72)
Although the narrator wishes to distance herself from the “tu” she is addressing, be it the reader or an ex-lover, it is not possible. Without the Other there can be no self. One is self in relation to the Other, not in negation of the Other. Therefore, in order to continue to express her consciousness the narrator must continue writing as a form of dialoguing with this “you” so that she may also grow and develop within the narrative process. But the narrator also finds it necessary to retrieve the essence of her beginning as a person. In order to do so she feels that she must return to the beginning, not of the narrative, but of her life in the mother’s womb.

This desire to return to the womb is of course far richer than a simply feminist reading, as explored by Irigaray, might imply. But on a metaphorical level it also reveals the narrator’s recognition of the limitations of words and that these same words represent the threshold into the womb from which she is created. That is to say, writing is, from the onset of the narrative text, associated with living and how the narrator’s rebirth is intrinsically linked to her ability to begin to express herself: “Como te explicar? Vou tentar. É que estou percebendo uma realidade enviesada. Vista por um corte obliquo” (74). As a result, one will notice that in Àgua Viva the narrator’s desire to free herself from the Other is also mirrored in Lispector’s own determination to break away from the pre-established pattern of writing and, by extension, reading.

The narrator’s direct address to the reader in the second section: “Eu te digo” (13) clearly brings the reader into the text as an active participant and away from the

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*Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) describes a similar theory in some of his essays by using the term “desnacer.”*
traditionally prescribed passive role. In describing her desire to capture her authentic "é," her being, she needs to capture the atoms of time, of the instant:

Cada coisa tem um instante em que ela é. Quero apossar-me do é da coisa.

... E quero capturar o presente que pela sua própria natureza me é interdito: o presente me foge, a atualidade me escapa, a atualidade sou eu sempre no já. ... a vida é esse instante incontável, maior que o acontecimento em si... alegria é matéria de tempo e é por excelência o instante. E no instante está o é dele mesmo. Quero captar o meu é. (13-14)

It is the narrator's aspiration to capture the "fourth dimension" (13), the essential purity of the originating instant, which seems to escape her. Although she wishes to express her thoughts and experiences as part of the present, as soon as she utters the words they become part of the past and no longer part of the living present. In the same manner that Henri Bergson defines "pure duration" as "the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states" (100) so does Lispector struggle to imbue her narrative language with the essential simplicity of the instant in which all time unites. In addition to the essential instant, Lispector attempts to invent and apply a non-sexed language in order to allow her fictional ego to exist in the essential instant, encompassing all and excluding nothing. It is this literary strategy which permits Lispector, as author, to instil in her text a greater degree of possibilities of different readings leading ultimately to diverse significations.
In the third section of *Água Viva* Lispector further develops her concept of the fragmentary structure of the text and its relationship to the notion of time. The narrator speaks of herself as "fragmentária que sou" (14) just as the text she has created. The narrator divides herself into just as many instants and moments because she only "me comprometo com vida que nasça com o tempo e com ele cresça: só no tempo há espaço para mim" (14). Therefore, time is seen as the basic category for human experience in which not only is it constituent of the physical world but also how individuals experience time and regulate their lives by it. In order for time to endure, according to both Lispector and Bergson, it does so in all time: past, present, and future, forming in itself an "organic whole" (Bergson 100). It becomes evident therefore, that contrary to common practice, Lispector does not interpret time as either unidirectional nor as an irreversible flow. Time for her is "água viva," it lives and moves freely like the living stream because not only is the object of experience in a constant state of flux, but so is, more importantly, the experiencing subject.⁷

Lispector also emphasizes the importance in experiencing the moment as it is recalled and not necessarily in a chronological order. Just as lyric poetry abounds in the exploration of the moment in breaking with linear time, so does Lispector graft experiential time to narrative time in ignoring traditional narrative prose temporality.⁸

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⁷The English translation of *Água Viva, Stream of Life,* picks up on this same metaphor. Yet, as Michelle Collins points out, "Água viva" can also be a jellyfish "soft and gelatinous yet unyielding, with a sting – beautiful and dangerous" (22).

⁸It is interesting to mention that Antonio Machado’s (1875-1939) poetry was also influenced by Bergson’s definition of temporality and for this reason López-Morillas remarks “that modern poetic expression is often difficult and occasionally enigmatic”
Furthermore, it is through innovative narrative form that Lispector pursues the objective of the exploration of consciousness. To better understand Lispector’s sense of time as being able to flow freely let us recall that Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* discussed time as a constitutive factor of both story and text and is not just an aspect of the world. *Água Viva* plays with this notion of narrative time by not permitting the text to be limited by the traditional notion of linear time. Even though its verbal narrative time still consists of both the means of representation (language) and the object represented (the incidents of the story), Lispector’s writing subverts this basic order of narrative prose by grafting onto it experiences similar to the most introspective lyrical poetry. Consequently, the traditional concept of narrative time is seen as a convention and a pragmatic construct of convenience which is questioned and challenged.

Just as Lispector questions the concept of prose as bound to a one-directional and irreversible temporality, she is also questioning language since language is traditionally believed to be prescribed to a linear figuration of signs and hence a linear presentation of information about things. Therefore, *Água Viva* provides the example that the

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(161). Similar to Lispector’s view of narrative, Machado also believed that poetry should be a dialogue between man and his time and it was this dialogue that characterized the individual’s “eternal quest for an ultimate and absolute reality” (López-Morillas 163). Coinciding with Lispector’s emphasis on the consciousness of the reality of the “instante já,” Machado also believed that time could only be truly perceived intuitively since “intuition alone (never the intellect) is able to glimpse the endless flow of reality” (López-Morillas 165).

Fitz in his article “A Discourse of Silence: The Postmodernism of Clarice Lispector” goes as far as to call *Água Viva* “a lyrical novel par excellence” (432) and “the most complete lyrical novel Lispector ever wrote” (434).
destruction of the linear characteristic of reading does not necessarily destroy the intelligibility of the text but rather forces the reader to read carefully and be willing to enter the text as the fictionalized "you" the narrator addresses. If the fragmentary structure of *Água Viva* is to be called a stream of consciousness it would not be one with chronological unity but one that emphasized the fluidity of its moments of both turbulence and calm. Lispector's narrative succeeds in projecting the narrator's intimate reality through this fluidity of narrative time and not by conventional characterization:

Quand j'écris, je ne pense à personne, ni même à moi. L'unique chose qui me préoccupe, c'est d'accepter la réalité intime des choses et la magie du moment. Mes romans et mes nouvelles me viennent par morceaux – des notes sur des personnages, le thème, le scénario que par la suite j'ordonne peu à peu, mais qui naissent d'une réalité intérieure vécue ou imaginée mais toujours très personnelle. Je ne me préoccupe jamais de la structure de l'oeuvre. L'unie structure que j'admet est la structure osseuse.

(Varin 199)

It is this fragmentary stream of thoughts that enforces the idea that prose which is inescapably linear cannot correspond to the multilinearity of the "real" narrative. And it is precisely this reality that Lispector's narrative presents in "moments" and in the découpage of fragments which deviate from recreating a verisimilitude of chronological time duration.

Within the concept of multilinear temporality Lispector employs the free indirect discourse as a method to incorporate the narrator's voice not only as source but, more
importantly, as character of the text. By doing so she further dramatizes the problematic relationship between the textual utterances and their origins. Furthermore, when free indirect discourse is used in conjunction with Lispector’s notion of time, both literary techniques are no longer comprised of outside factors but instead become linked to the characters: “Esta palavra a ti é promíscua? Gostaria que não fosse, eu não sou promíscua. Mas sou caleidoscópica: fascinam-me as minhas mutações faiscantes que aqui caleidoscópicamente registro” (38).

This same free indirect discourse becomes a convenient vehicle to express the stream of consciousness (the indirect interior monologue) because of its capacity to reproduce the narrator’s speech and thoughts without ignoring her sensations, be they visual, auditory, or tactile. Free indirect discourse also aids the reader in attempting to grasp the prefigurative repertoire of the narrator’s utterances. Such techniques reinforce the fluidity of the narrative prose since they allow Lispector to create a unique rhythm within the text. This internal rhythm in Água Viva is stressed by the use of a more functional and not necessarily grammatical punctuation in conjunction with the repetition of certain vocabulary, such as “promíscua” and “caleidoscópica,” in order to increase the intensity of the language.

In focusing on writing temporal presence Lispector uses the temporal fluidity of the text to express the sensation of both past and future in the present moment. In Lispector’s text, reading, writing, and narrating all occur in the present instant, uniting time so that the reality of the moment of existence is experienced by the reader. Contrary to narrative reality, in experiential reality one’s personality and the series of experiences,
attitudes, and emotions that constitute the individual are never a coherent or continuously conscious whole, but rather fragmentary, disjointed, and with their own internal order. Thus, Lispector has opted to write a kaleidoscope of fragments in order to reflect the reality of the pure instant of being.

Another key element to this multi-linear fragmentary structure is the first person narrative voice. This narrative voice infuses the various sections of the text with a chaotic order which tends to reflect the narrator’s emotional and psychological status in which language alone has the power to speak the truth of experience. Since the text is characterized by a narrator addressing an undefined “you,” most of the narration consists of homodiegetic, although at times also heterodiegetic analepsis. In describing her memories, fears, hopes, and passions as she remembers them from the past the narrator is, at times, complementing these memories with internal analepses to help fill in the gap created in her previous narration.

Narrative gaps within the text are used to enhance the reader’s interest in the narrative as well as to contribute to dynamic participation in the text. As a result, the hermeneutic aspect of reading then consists of detecting such gaps and searching for clues to aid the reader in forming a hypothesis of what is missing. This, in turn, permits the reader to form his/her own interpretation of the narrator’s quest for consciousness: “Vou agora parar um pouco para me aprofundar mais. Depois eu volto. Voltei. Fui existindo” (38). Yet, most gaps in Água Viva tend to be temporary and either proleptic where the gap is formed by having omitted various stages between the narrative and the predicted future; or analeptic, in which the narrator fills in anterior gaps, while at the
same time creating a new gap. These new gaps are created when the narrator gives a
different perspective on an already narrated topic, hence, making it difficult to reconcile
new impressions with already established ones:

A coragem de viver: deixo oculto o que precisa ser oculto e precisa
irradiar-se em segredo.

Calo-me.

Porque não sei qual é o meu segredo. . .

Penso que agora terei que pedir licença para morrer um pouco.


por um ato voluntário? Ainda não.

Estou transfigurando a realidade – o que é que está me

escapando? (70)

However, more permanent gaps of information also exist and are never fully revealed by
the narrator, especially those related to uniting memories that clarify her secret of living
and the role that writing plays in her acquiring a consciousness of an authentic self.

Nevertheless, it is in her memories that the narrator looks to relive her conscious
experience and which then, by their very nature, bind her to such experiences and how
they have affected her (Warnock 15, 20). It is in writing that she wishes, not so much to
retell her story, as to write consciously about experience:

Então escrever é o modo de quem tem a palavra como isca: a palavra

pescando o que não é palavra. Quando essa não palavra – a entrelinha –
morde a isca, alguma coisa se escreveu. Uma vez que se pescou a
entrelinha, poder-se-ia com alívio jogar a palavra fora. Mas ai cessa a
analogia: a não-palavra, ao morder a isca incorporou-a. O que salva então
é escrever distraidamente. (25)

As a writer, the narrator uses words as her bait while at the same time having an innate
desire to be outside of language ("não palavra"). Nonetheless, the desire that language
reflect the same essence of experience is impossible since, once written, experience takes
the shape of words and discourse which is loaded with pre-established significations. In
an attempt to escape the prefigurative, the narrator, instead of rational development, opts
for a form of instinctive writing: "Agora vou escrever ao correr da mão: não mexo no que
ela escrever. Esse é o modo de não haver defasagem entre o instante e o eu: ajo no âmago
do próprio instante. Mas de qualquer modo há alguma defasagem" (58). By avoiding
sequential emplotment Lispector creates an indeterminate text open to a variety of
interpretations which must depend on the reader's own prefigurative repertoire; the
narrator will not impose meaning, this is the task of the reader.

Upon a close examination of the narrative voice in Água Viva one notices that
Lispector is not only focusing on the problems and questions of identity as part of the
theory of alterity, but also on the problematics of literary creation in postmodernity:

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10In discussing Machado's interpretation of time in his poetry, López-Morilla calls
attention to the fact that:
The poet, on the other hand, transmutes time into temporality, that is,
qualitative time into quantitative time. Machado expresses it in a
somewhat bizarre metaphor by saying that the poet is a fisherman of live
fish, that is, of fish that can live out of the water. (166)
Some critics have at times identified feminist ideas in Lispector’s writing. It is interesting to note that Lispector, as is the case with many successful women writers of her generation, denied that she was a feminist. One can clearly understand the resistance of being classified within such a limited scope and especially with a movement that has connotations of being fashionable at times and which has adherents who cannot look beyond the fashion. Lispector consistently said in interviews that she was more concerned with her characters’ trials and tribulations as human beings: “La femme doit être femme. Et doit avoir des droits comme personne. C’est un être humain” (Varin 69).¹¹ Hélène Cixous has interpreted Lispector’s texts from a feminist perspective as being explorations of what she terms “libidinal economies.”¹² “Escrevo-te toda inteira” and “com o corpo todo pinto” are key concepts that link Lispector’s work to Cixous’s own study of sexual difference and how these libidinal economies are formed intrinsically by the ways “the body” dialogues with its social world.

¹¹Luisa Josefina Hernández (Mexico, 1928- ) and Carmen Boulosa have also stated clearly that, much like Clarice Lispector, they are not to be labelled as “feminist writers” since their writings encompass a wider scope of reality.

¹²In her introduction to Cixous’s book Reading with Clarice Lispector, Conley reveals that Cixous only began her reading with Lispector’s Água Viva, the penultimate book in the Brazilian author’s literary repertoire (vii).
It is Lispector’s use of such corporeal language which lends her work to Cixous’s use of *écriture féminine*. According to Cixous *écriture féminine* embodies a literature which concerns itself with writing that is based on encounters with the Other, which then result in a questioning and dissolving of pre-established socio-cultural hierarchies that have traditionally limited the female psyche. Lispector does practice what Cixous has studied and theorized as *écriture féminine* in that she focuses on language as incorporating a “corporeality” which reflects her characters’ existential plight to forge an individual consciousness in “a living relation with language and experience” (Conley viii). It is in her painting and in her writing that the narrator in *Água Viva* explores her own body and her own consciousness in the attempt to find her own language to voice not merely the thoughts, but also the sensations linked to her own sense of consciousness:

Verifico que estou escrevendo como se estivesse entre o sono e a vigilia. . .

. . 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 uma sensação atrás do pensamento. (52-53)

Although she is able to attain a new sense of reality which is a truer reflection of herself, a paradox arises: neither thoughts themselves nor the words that enunciate them can represent the initial sensations behind these very thoughts. Trapped within this paradigm the narrator also reflects that: “Minha aura é de mistério de vida. Eu me ultrapasso
abdicando de meu nome, e então sou o mundo. Sigo a voz do mundo com voz única”

(53).

Interestingly, in the analysis of Lispector’s writing in 1977, Bella Jozef remarks that her work “rompe con el mundo referencial, asumiéndose como libertación, através de la destrucción de la escritura: el arte mata y resucita la realidad para hacerse significar” (“Transgresión” 231). This concept of death and rebirth in order to attain a new and more authentic sense of self through language are aspects which not only characterize Lispector’s work but also coincide with the theories of Irigaray and Cixous. Language is the medium by which one gains access to our world and by which one can attain a new sense of freedom and of self through a discursive process of rebirth that begins with the lyrical return to the womb. Subsequently, the eating of the plasma provides the inspiration required for this journey through consciousness: “limiar de entrada de ancestral caverna que é o útero do mundo e dele vou nascer” (19). In this regression to a primitive corporeality the narrator declares: “sou orgânica” (27) and that life is “crua e sangrenta e cheia de saliva” (29) and that she has a “selvagem intuição de mim mesma. Mas o meu principal está sempre escondido. Sou implícita. E quando vou me explicitar perco a úmida intimidade” (29). Upon taking the shape of written words her writing paradoxically loses its experiential unity. In a similar manner, upon inscribing her experiences and consciousness in the written text she sacrifices her innate sense of “humid intimacy.”

As an inherent part of the narrator’s attempt to write her “body,” she finds it necessary to encompass her natural surroundings and to use animal imagery. In order to
best describe both the psychological and emotional aspects of writing, the narrator reverts to a quasi-fantastical lexicon and reveals the following:

Um mundo fantástico me rodeia e me é. . . Exorbito-me então para ser. Sou em transe. . . não consigo parar de viver. Nesta densa selva de palavras que envolvem espessamente o que sinto e penso e vivo e transforma tudo o que sou em alguma coisa minha que no entanto fica inteiramente fora de mim. . . Escrevo-te tudo isto pois é um desafio que sou obrigada com humildade a aceitar. Sou assombrada pelos meus fantasmas, pelo que é mítico e fantástico – a vida é sobrenatural. E eu caminho em corda bamba até o limite do meu sonho. As vísceras torturadas pela voluptuosidade me guiam, fúria dos impulsos. (72-73)

In writing the narrator not only gives shape to her consciousness but at the same time she becomes what she is writing. “Não consigo parar de viver” could very well read “não consigo parar de escrever,” that is, writing and living become one and the same.

Nevertheless, the narrator also undertakes the task of writing not just to give shape to her consciousness for herself, but also does so in response to a challenge she has been forced to accept with humility, a characteristic that runs against her desire for self-vindication.

But then there is also a tone of retaliation in her admission that her narrative is not guided by rationality but rather by an internal fury of visceral impulses. Her humility is then disguised within the realms of the mystical, fantastic, and supernatural. In exalting

13In an interview Lispector remarked on her being a witch after her attendance at a Witchcraft Conference in Colombia:

Un critique – je ne me rapelle plus de quel pays latino-américain – a dit
these spiritual forces Lispector moves away from literary models based on mimetic, verisimilar narrative prose in order to produce in Água Viva an expression of unbridled self consciousness. Consequently, the reader must endeavour to follow the flow of the text just as its narrator walks the tightrope between material reality and experiential dreams. Whereas thoughts are presented as rational or at the very least causal, experience, on the other hand, tends to be represented as non-rational (which is not the equivalent of "irrational"). Lispector then implies that in transposing experience into rational thought experience loses its power of authentically representing the "unexpressable." Consequently, as part of discourse, experience is no longer "neutral" but rather a reflection which will be somewhat, if not wholly, rational. 

It is in painting that the narrator believes she is able to fully express the images that precede her ideas, just as music is able to envelop the universe of sensations: "O que pintei nessa tela é passível de ser fraseado em palavras? Tanto quanto possa ser implicita a palavra muda no som musical" (15). There is a sense that painting is more likely to

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"Que je n'étais pas un écrivain. Que j'utilisais mots non pas comme un écrivain mais comme une sorcellerie. D'où peut-être, l'invitation à participer au congrès de sorcellerie de la Colombie. Ils m'ont invitée et j'y suis allée. (Varin 111)"

14Since all models by definition are predetermined, in seeking non-mimetic open prose Clarice Lispector is moving a long way towards mystical poetry (for example, that of Santa Teresa de Jesús, 1515-1582).

15López-Morilla reveals a similar concern in Machado's depiction of reality in that: At the moment of creation, he [Machado] asserts, "we coincide with the stream of life, in which are suspended virtual realities which may never become actual, but which we feel to be infinitely possible." (165-66; italics mine)
suggest sensations which escape an intellectual capturing than the written word can express:

O que te escrivo não tem começo: é uma continuação. Das palavras deste canto, canto que é meu e teu, evola-se um halo que transcende as frases você sente? Minha experiência vem de que eu já consegui pintar o halo das coisas. O halo é mais importante que as coisas e que as palavras. . . O halo é o it. (53)

Even though the narrator has had success in capturing her experiential presence in painting, she still finds it necessary to write since writing provides her with the fourth dimension that translates experience into ideas:

Quando vieres a me ler perguntarás por que não me restrinjo à pintura e às minhas exposições, já que escrevo tosco e sem ordem. É que agora sinto necessidade de palavras – e é novo para mim o que escrevo porque minha verdadeira palavra foi até agora intocada. A palavra é a minha quarta dimensão. (14)

The narrator proposes that both her painting and writing are reflective of her most intimate feelings, but admitting at the same time that: “... sou caleidoscópica; fascinam-me as minhas mutações fascinantes que aqui caleidoscopicamente registro” (38).16 The constant use of the kaleidoscope metaphor not only reflects the fragmentary structure of

16Although the kaleidoscope metaphor denotes a certain fragmentation, it is a fragmentation in which fragments work together in a harmonized order.
the text but also insinuates that, as a living being, she herself is ever-changing and consequently, her writing must manifest this aspect of the lived experience.

In both its structure and prose *Água Viva* breaks with dominant literary formulas; the plot is replaced by a narrator’s discourse in which: “O que me guia apenas é um senso de descoberta. Atrás do atrás do pensamento” (71). Using interior monologue Lispector emphasizes the dichotomies central to *Água Viva*: the desire to live and scrutinize life, the obsession with living fully and losing oneself in one’s creation. Such is the case when the narrator recognizes that in order to be more like painting and music, writing must capture and reveal the fragmentary instants of life and in turn give expression to this meaning:

\[
E \text{ eis que percebo que quero para mim o substrato vibrante da palavra repetida em canto gregoriano. Estou consciente de que tudo o que sei não posso dizer, só sei pintando ou pronunciando, sílabas cegas de sentido. E se tenho aqui que usar-te palavras, elas têm que fazer um sentido quase que só corpóreo, estou em luta com a vibração última. Para te dizer o meu substrato faço uma frase de palavras feitas apenas dos instantes-já. (15)}
\]

The necessity to break away from the pre-established meaning of words (“palavras feitas apenas dos instantes-já”) immanently threatens to cause a crisis of identity. Let us recall that part of the Brazilian Modernist aesthetics was to create new configurations of the world, which at times, were more complex and fragmentary than existing norms.

Although Lispector’s work differs from the established literary tradition, she seems to be

\[^{17}\text{One can find a similar rupture in plot in works by Samuel Beckett.}\]
drawn into the modernist stream in its highly effective rupturing of the mimetic illusion as demonstrated by *Água Viva*’s auto-referentiality.

But, Lispector’s writing also escapes such clear literary classification as a Brazilian Modernista. One could argue that her work is post-modern since it tends to manipulate signs in order to create a radical indeterminacy. Such is the case when the narrator recognizes that the words she must use are the same words that form not only the language system that entraps her within a predefined role, but also represent the threshold from which her enunciated self is born. Her writing becomes her living and her ultimate rebirth in being able to express herself: “escrevo por profundamente querer falar” (16). Language becomes the instinctive source of existential questioning, which is self-expression. Paradoxically, the negation of language is then part of the sign of individuality since only someone who is alive can reject life or someone who is language reject language. Just as time is multi-linear and multi-dimensional, Lispector multiplies the uses of language so that language becomes, for the protagonist, an instrument of the conscientization of reality. By extension, as part of the literary tradition, language is the medium through which one suffers to write one’s experiences. Overall, language is the means by which an individual can express herself to herself and also to her Others. But in order to function in this mediating capacity both the narrator and the narrator’s Others (readers) have to be in language.

It is not unexpected that the narrator finds that she is constrained “à severidade de uma linguagem tensa” (18) to which she is liminally situated. It is with this sentiment of powerlessness that the narrator makes the following paradigmatic juxtaposition: “Minhas
desequilibradas palavras são o luxo do meu silêncio. . . . Embora escrever só esteja me dando a grande medida do silêncio” (16). Even though silence is the absence of the spoken language, this same silence also shows that all the possibilities of language are implicit in the absence. The world cannot be perceived without language, yet all language exists because of its silences (Irigaray 182). Silence permits the narrator to attain a state in which: “Recuso-me a dividi-lo em palavras – e o que não posso e não quero exprimir fica sendo o mais secreto dos meus segredos” (76). This is the primordial state behind her thoughts, a state that escapes expression into words, and becomes the pregnant silence that envelopes her sense of individuality. To leave this unsaid is to exercise a certain power over knowledge of both self and of the Other. The unsaid is somewhat empowering for the narrator, it threatens, it preserves the possessor:

Minha verdade espantada é que eu sempre estive só de ti e não sabia.


Silence can be defined as the absence of sound. But silence in the context of Lispector’s use of speech becomes a multi-faceted concept. Lispector uses silence to communicate the paradox of the narrator’s process of conscientization. Before her rebirth into her new dialectic of enunciation the narrator existed in a liminal state in which her silence placed her outside the language community of her Others. Yet, as a narrator she succeeds in
achieving the freedom of speech. Nevertheless, this is freedom to be exercised in solitude; she speaks but is not spoken to by the readers. Consciousness of self thereby becomes a solitary internal experience which is given a reality in the pain of silence where the unsaid is the instrument which keeps the narrator alive.18

As mentioned earlier there are elements within the text which direct the reader in his/her reading toward an interpretation of the text. Such is the case when, instead of narrating an event, Lispector chooses to develop a series of reflections on the absent event. Accordingly, the reader must first interpret these reflections before taking up the narrative thread when the narrator decides to continue. It is in the subsequent narration that the narrator reveals the events which preceded the reflections. In essence, the narrative voice first reveals the refigurative reflectionary stage without providing the reader the privilege of knowing the details of the prefigurative stage. Such is the case with section eleven of the text where the reader comes across the following declaration: “E se eu digo ‘eu’ é porque não ouso dizer ‘tu’ ou ‘nós’ ou ‘uma pessoa’. Sou obrigada à humildade de me personalizar me apegueando mas sou o és-tu” (17). It is this short and concise personal reflection that leads the reader into the theme of the narrator’s questioning of her identity. And it is only after this interrogation that the narrator describes her thoughts about the mysteries of the origin of the being:

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18In her essay, Elizabeth Lowe describes Água Viva as constitutive of a political statement in which “Clarice’s silence communicates devastating emotional violence in answer to conventional political violence. Her characters are created in a vacuum and so they are revealed in their terrifying solitude” (84).
Estou lidando com a matéria-prima. Estou atrás do que fica atrás do pensamento. Inútil querer me classificar. eu simplesmente escapulo não deixando, gênero não me pega mais. Estou num estado muito novo e verdadeiro, curioso de si mesmo, tão atraente e pessoal a ponto de não poder pintá-lo ou escrevê-lo. (17)

Just as the narrator herself textualizes and self analyses and self constructs within the metalinguistic process, in reading, readers can undertake their own reflections about their lives or even parallel it to Lispector’s own self-analysis and self-construction.19

However, it is important to note that this process precedes that of rebirth and focuses now on the articulation of the self within the new configurative stage.

It is this interaction of text and reader which is the pre-condition to establishing a communication between the two, which then leads to the aforementioned act of interpretation. Nevertheless, the narrator/Lispector again challenges the reader:

pode-se perguntar sempre por que e sempre continuar sem resposta: será que consigo me entregar ao expectante silêncio que se seque a uma pergunta sem resposta? Embora adivinhe que em algum lugar ou em algum tempo existe a grande resposta para mim. (18)

Within these moments of silence the narrator provides the reader with an opportunity to project his/her own ideas into the text thereby allowing the reader to freely interpret what he/she reads. Nonetheless, it is not a totally open interpretation since these same silences

19In an interview Lispector revealed that: “J’écris pour mieux comprendre le monde. Je crois qu’en écrivant je comprends un petit peu plus qu’en n’écrivant pas. C’est une lucidité plutôt nébuleuse parce que je n’en ai pas directement conscience. (Varin 181)
still regulate one’s projections. They do so by indicating to the reader which text fragments to connect in order to construct the narrative that the narrator desires. It becomes imperative, therefore, that these readers respond to the injunctions of what is being presented in the text. But in order to do so they must also set aside, as much as possible, previous prejudices of their prefigurative repertoire. Doing so enables these readers to go beyond the writing and read between the lines, that is, to read the silence. Reading Lispector is to be able to read the subtext that is not expressed in words but that is the crux of her writing: “E depois saberei como pintar e escrever, depois da estranha mas íntima resposta. Ouve-me, ouve o silêncio. O que te falo nunca é o que eu te falo e sim outra coisa” (18). Hence, it is in the reader’s interaction with the narrator that he/she is able to construct the subtext and better comprehend the text.

As discussed above, the nature of Água Viva lends to the fictionalization of not only the narrator but also of the implied reader and of the implied author. Throughout the text the fictionalized narrator is developed to an extent that some critics have claimed that the narrative voice could be an embodiment of Clarice Lispector’s own personality. But such reductive critical simplicity has abounded in many great writers whose texts openly took details from the author’s life. One of the most notable was Marcel Proust. It is interesting to point out that in the same manner that Água Viva’s narrator admits that: “Não é confortável o que te escrevo” (20), Lispector herself admitted in an interview that:

écrite, pour moi, est une chose naturelle, quoique extrêmement angoissant et difficile. Je suis une femme qui écrit parce que pour moi écrire est
comme respirer, nécessaire pour survivre. Peut-être à cause de ça, je
n'aime pas parler de mis livres. J'y trouve ce que j'avais à dire et ça a été si
difficile de les écrire. . . (Varin 195)

It is in writing that both the historical Lispector and the fictional narrator have found
freedom to express themselves, no matter how uncomfortable writing may be. Just as the
task of writing is something to be endured and suffered through, the narrator also
juxtaposes the idea of the freedom gained as: “Liberdade? É o meu último refúgio,
forcei-me à liberdade e agüento-a não como um dom mas com heroísmo: sou
heroicamente livre. E quero o fluxo” (20). Hence, the passing of time can be seen as both
augmenting and decreasing.

Paradoxically, the state of flux that the narrator so desires to attain is one in
which she imposes order: “Construo algo isento de mim e de ti – eis a minha liberdade
que leva à morte” (21). Once again the narrator focuses on the need to recreate the self in
relation to the “you” of the text. This concept of alterity is basic to existence itself. One
cannot have a concept of self without the Other, and the narrative voice recognizes this.
Unfortunately, she also recognizes that this new sense of dialectic freedom also
represents a metaphorical death of her old self in order to be reborn in “um jardim todo
maduro de perfumes, jardim e sombras que invento já e agora e que são o meio concreto
de falar neste meu instante de vida. Meu estado é o de jardim com água correndo” (21).
Once again Lispector reverts to nature metaphors to embody the most intimate
revelations, fears, and apprehensions that the narrator wishes to conceal, not only from
the reader but also from herself. Água Viva reinforces the nature metaphors in the
narrator’s own writing since the original state is only found in nature. The narrator finds that she needs to alienate herself from her surroundings so that she may empty herself of her old self (the preordained elements of her prefigurative) and make room for the new reconstructed self of the refigurative that will result from the configurative encounter with the Other.

Consequently, the narrator’s dilemma in achieving a coherent sense of self is inherent in the context of attachment and affiliation with her Other that she either develops or fails to develop. It is through this complicated process of retrospection that the narrator attempts to answer the question “Who am I?” while the narrative text is in dialogue with the fictionalized reader. In both cases roles are defined by the narrator’s relationship with each interlocutor: the possibility of the mysterious “you” being both the ex-lover and the reader:

Para me refazer e te refazer volto a meu estado de jardim e sombra, fresca realidade, mal existo e se existo é com delicado cuidado. . . . Estou viva. Mas sinto que ainda não alcancei os meus limites, fronteiras com o quê? sem fronteiras, a aventura da liberdade perigosa. Mas arrisco, vivo arriscando. . . . Eu sou antes, eu sou quase, eu sou nunca. E tudo isso ganhei ao deixar de te amar. (22)

In accepting the risk of living without limits, the narrator attempts to use both her painting and writing as the “artificio por meio do qual surge uma realidade delicadíssima que passa a existir em mim: a transfiguração me aconteceu” (24-25). It is this transfiguration that incites the narrator to question: “Mas sou o quê? a resposta é apenas:
sou o que. Embora às vezes grite: não quero mais ser eu!! Mas eu me grudo a mim e
inextricavelmente forma-se uma tessitura de vida” (25). By creating this unique “texture
of life” the narrator is essentially transfiguring herself and her reality to incorporate
another, more authentic, reality. This redefined reality has an invisible nucleus in which
one finds a true manifestation of the reality only in the natural and the symbolic.

Nevertheless, the narrator’s transfiguration is a volatile secret of which “Ninguém
saberá de nada: o que sei é tão volátil e quase inexistentque fica entre mim e eu” (25).
The narrator knows that this journey to reclaim a new and stronger self must be
unspoken, enveloped in a subtle silence. It is not because she is embarrassed by it, but
because she is aware of the socio-cultural complications that may arise in her redefining
herself outside the accepted social norm. Yet, the narrator is prepared to invent a reality
for herself because she does not want to live within the limitations of the socio-political
construct that has been imposed on her from birth:

Não quero ter a terrível limitação de quem vive apenas do que é passível
de fazer sentido. Eu não: quero é uma verdade inventada. . . . À duração
de minha existência dou uma significação oculta que me ultrapassa. Sou
um ser concomitante: reúno em mim o tempo passado, o presente e o
futuro. . . Para me interpretar e formular-me preciso de novos sinais e
articulações. . . Transfiguro a realidade e então outra realidade sonhadora
e sonâmbula, me cria. . . eu, obra anônima de uma realidade anônima só
justificável enquanto dura a minha vida. (26)
There is an innate desire in the narrator not only to find a language which better reflects her individuality but there is also, paradoxically, an ingrained craving to achieve a universal and timeless understanding of reality. To write means to bring her consciousness into existence: past, present, and future. It is being able to experience across time that gives unity not only to her fragmentary self but to the written text overall. And just as time can be both constructive and destructive, love can be both a destructive and constructive force within this process of self-realization. Yet, the narrator's personal growth across time does not necessarily imply a destruction of her Other but rather a coming to a consciousness of this Other across time.

Yet, there exists a silence and a solitude that dominates the narrator's writings:

"Luto por conquistar mais profundamente a minha liberdade de sensações e pensamentos, sem nenhum sentido utilitário: sou sozinha, eu e minha liberdade" (27). At such moments as this the reader almost feels that what he/she is reading is not a letter to an ex-lover or a puzzling text that addresses him/her personally but, instead, cryptic diary entries.20 If one assumes that the narratee is, in fact, the ex-lover, in addressing the absent lover the narrator invokes and creates the illusion of the ex-lover reading the feminine

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20In his book, Clarice Lispector, Fitz expands on the idea of Água Viva being both diary-like and confessional (84).
text she has created. Like other works in the epistolary tradition, the narrator imbues her text with her desire, and it is this same desire that keeps the text alive. However, it is important to note that Lispector does not rely on the ex-lover/male narratee to give meaning to the narrator’s text. Meaning is achieved through the process of the narrator’s self-realization.

Be it interpreted as a diary entry or as a letter, in both instances the narrator uses the textual fragments to ensure herself that the experiences that she has had are real and that they were not a dream. In writing them down she is giving them substance and rendering them concrete and permanent so that they may never fade. It then becomes an integral part to the reader’s reading experience to question what is part of the narrator’s memory and what are fragments of her imagination without being mislead by the confessional tone that the text takes on at times.

21 Fitz also is of the opinion that Água Viva is a “long letter narrated by a woman who feels it necessary to terminate an unsatisfactory love affair” (“Discourse of Silence” 434). Nevertheless, I do not believe that the letter’s sole impetus is a need to end a love affair, but rather a method by which the narrator attempts to reexamine both her life and her self in the past and present so as to refigure herself for the future.

22 Elena Poniatowska’s (1933- ) Querido Diego, te abraza Quiela (1978) is a contemporary example of the epistolary novel in Latin America. In it Poniatowska takes the real relationship of Angelina Beloff with the famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera and creates a series of fictional letters that the abandoned Beloff could have written to Rivera. Much like Lispector’s Água Viva, there is an exploration of the feminine psyche and the process of self-identification through a questioning of pre-established socio-cultural definitions. But, whereas Lispector’s text tends to have a broader literary scope, Poniatowska tends to focus on the workings of Beloff’s psychological and emotional struggles. A similar epistolary style can be read in the love letter transcribed in section sixteen of Bourlosa’s Papeles irresponsables (101), in which another female narrative voice addresses her absent lover in a reflective monologue that tends to focus on identity and self-realization.
But the narrator’s thoughts are dominated by an “expectativa estupefaciente” (21) which tends to prevail within the text: “Escuta: eu te deixo ser, deixa-me ser então” (30). Yet, letting go of the Other does not help her to define her own life because life “é aérea, é o meu leve hálito” (31), and the only way to glimpse a semblance of order in both her life and her written text is to interpret both as being essentially “uma onomatopéia, convulsão da linguagem” (31). As a result, meaning is not only transmitted through its sound, but it also becomes a complex orchestration that constitutes the narrator’s recounting of her experiences and her life story. It is in this convulsion of language that the most important word becomes “é.” The only reason why the narrator writes this text is because she does not yet fully understand her self. Ironically, she does comprehend the paradox of her existence: the realization that the only thing that limits her is her identity:

Escrevo-te em desordem, bem sei. . . . Mas escrever para mim é frustrador: ao escrever lido com o impossível. . . . sou inopinadamente fragmentária. Sou aos poucos. Minha história é viver. . . . Isto não é história porque não conheço história assim, mas só sei ir dizendo e fazendo: é história de instantes que fogem com os trilhos fugitivos que se veem da janela do trem. . . . É quando eu tiver anotado o meu segredo de ser – jogarei fora como se fosse ao mar. Escrevo-te porque não chegás a aceitar o que sou. (78-79)

It becomes evident that by writing the narrator attempts to come to an understanding of herself in relation to her Other, wherein she undergoes a metamorphosis in which “fui deixando meus corpos pelos caminhos” (79) in order to be reborn from the “escuridões,
impessoal, eu que sou it" (79). Yet, above all, her writing is her secret source of being, which aside from being a painful experience, is a state in which she exists, held prisoner, threatened by the ever present possibility of losing herself.

However, there also exists a larger, more imminent threat to the narrator writing her text, and this is death itself. Throughout her narrative there are numerous references to the imposing threat of death and of her text coming to an inevitable end. Towards the end of the text this impending fear is developed by using the mirror metaphor. While looking in the mirror the narrator does not see her own physical reflection but instead the reflection is of silence, a silence which not only abounds in herself but also in Others. The mirror therefore becomes the deepest space that exists with magical undertones: a small piece of mirror still reflects all; and if you remove the mirror from its frame it expands like water. Such is the case with Agua Viva: in one of its fragments one is able to perceive the text as a whole and since it is not limited by the traditional narratological frame, it is able to expand in various narrative directions. Yet, one is able to see one's image in the text because of the mirror-text's innate emptiness—it is empty until one fills it, and yet, when one leaves there is no trace of oneself. Consequently, it is this emptiness which awaits filling that allows for creation.

Nevertheless, the silence, the empty mirror, and the unspoken reinforce the overall solitude of her life, which becomes so unbearable that her body threatens to explode. Even though she has sought “disarticulation” (88) to enforce her place in the world, the narrator still needs to clarify that:
Só não te contaria agora uma história porque no caso seria prostituição. E
não escrevo para te agradar. Principalmente a mim mesma. Tenho que
seguir linha pura e manter não contaminado o meu it . . . vai começar:

vou pegar o presente em cada frase que morre. (89)

Under the threat of ending her narration the narrator instinctively defends her reason for
writing: although she has been addressing the "you" she finds it necessary to emphasize
that she wrote for herself without compromising or "prostituting" herself. Nevertheless,
the end becomes unavoidable and:

Voltei. Agora tentarei me atualizar de novo com o que no momento me
ocorre – e assim criarei a mim mesma . . . . Eu estou encontrando comigo
mesma: é mortal porque só a morte me conclui. Mas eu agüento até o fim.
Vou lhe contar um segredo: a vida é mortal . . . . Nós mantemos este
segredo em mutismo para esconder que cada instante é mortal . . . . Tenho
que falar porque falar salva. Mas não tenho nenhuma palavra a dizer. (89-
90)

One may say that in reading Água Viva the reader participates in the narrator’s quest to
attain the meaning of the fragmentary nature of the instant. In searching for the pure
instant, the simple origin, the narrator intrinsically searches for the authentic and to
articulate this experience she writes in gaps and fragments. Fragments that have used
language to describe the fragmentary process not only of writing but of life in general. In
attempting to write the unspoken that she has for so long hidden in her silence, the
narrator realizes that it is in writing that she has been able to enter into dialogue not only
with her Other but with her own sense of self as an individual. Through a vicarious relationship with its narrator, *Água Viva* becomes for the reader an example of how the writing process is linked to the very epitome of freedom in living, but unfortunately it is a freedom which is discerned as both temporary and at times dangerous. Thus, the threat of death is embodied in the narrator’s lack of words to continue, even though she still wishes to continue her narration. In words lie her salvation, the continuation of her narration, but none remain to continue.

Nevertheless, just as the original title (*Objeto Gritante*) insinuates, the narrator is not passive in the face of death and neither is the experience of having written this text without its revelatory purpose:

O que sou neste instante? Sou uma máquina de escrever fazendo ecoar as teclas secas na úmida e escura madrugada. Há muito já não sou gente. Quiseram que eu fosse um objeto. Sou um objeto. Que cria outros objetos e a máquina cria a nós todos. Ela exige. O mecanicismo exige e exige a minha vida. Mas eu não obedeço 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 . . . . 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. (91-92)
In her struggle for self identity the narrator ironically embraces the same restrictive role socio-culturally pre-assigned to her but manipulates it into her own instrument of self-expression. That is to say, she is able to work within the socially established repertoire of discourse at the prefigurative stage while also questioning its patriarchal preconceptions and its devaluation of women as objects. In the end, the narrator is able to subvert the established discursive patterns and patriarchal ideas on gender, not only in questioning them within the conventions of literature but also within the quotidian reality of life itself.

Lispector has produced in Água Viva a self-conscious text, that, through its self-reflexive narrator, proposes to be a text in a constant process of figuration. On one level, one can conclude that the narrator is summarizing for herself the experience of having written this self-conscious text of personal self-discovery. However, on a different level, it may also be interpreted as Lispector's conscious effort to emphasize the importance of this stream of conscience as a journey through self-identification. But this text does not stop there, in the reflective refigurative stage. Lispector leaves the reader uncomfortable and still questioning:

Tudo acaba mas o que te escrevo continua. O que é bom, muito bom. O melhor ainda não foi escrito. O melhor está nas entrelinhas . . . Aquilo que ainda vai ser depois—é agora. Agora é o domínio de agora. E enquanto dura a improvisão eu nasço . . . Simplesmente eu sou eu. E você é você. É vasto, vai durar.... O que te escrevo continua e estou enfeitiçada. (100-101)
Lispector does not provide a closed text but one that is open to various readings and rereadings, each different since the prefigurative is different with each reader and also keeps changing as the reader's personal repertoire changes. The open-endedness and inconclusive project of the narrator's sense of self-realization are, of course, above all open-ended projects due to their ever-changing viewpoint and reader interpretation.

Lispector creates in Água Viva a narrative in which she maximizes the role of the fictionalized narratee as an intermediary for the reader. The narratee is a pseudo-character who, at times, acts like a sounding board for the narrator's questions and thoughts and at other times comes to merge with the reader. Contrary to Brower's statement that: "the narratee, though an obvious presence in the work, never has the opportunity to speak or to perform any action" (112), one can argue that although the narratee does not perform any obvious physical action within the text, he/she is essentially the impetus for movement in the reading experience. Therefore, within the narrator's unspoken memory this narratee has committed some action that has caused her to react, break off her love affair and reflect on herself by way of writing her experience of consciousness.

It is this concentration on the narrative process and the role of language within it that takes precedence in Lispector's narrative as a whole, unlike the tendency to focus on action or world, which is found in more traditional narrative prose. The fragments of Água Viva center on a different dimension of reading, in which social criticism, metafictional strategies, philosophical reflections, and a sense of intertextuality are
combined to create a text that “speaks” to the reader. It is this unique active dialogue that enriches the overall experience of the text on multiple levels.

III: Deviations from Authorial Authority: Reading Between the Lines in Boullosa’s *Papeles irresponsables*

Like Lispector in *Água Viva*, in *Papeles irresponsables* (1989) Carmen Boullosa also delves into the idea of the act of reading as a communicative interaction between the reader and the text. Once again, the reader is presented with a fragmentary text consisting of a collection of loose, and purportedly forgotten and discarded papers which appear mysteriously at the narrator’s house. These papers are described as literary “texts” for which no one is willing to take authorial responsibility. Just as in *Água Viva*, it is through the combined efforts of the implied author and reader that the text will be realized both in its material textuality and its imaginary dimension. In order to do so Boullosa, like Lispector, abandons the traditional reader-text relationship as observer and object and replaces it with the wandering viewpoint. It is this same wandering viewpoint that Iser has described as a point which the reader must apprehend as existing and moving freely within the narrative text (129).

From the beginning of the text there is a declaration by the narrator/author that she is only transcribing, re-writing, and at times translating the texts that appear at her door: “Practicaré un buen ejercicio de escritura, corrigiéndolos, transcribiéndolos,
fantaseando quién puede ser el autor de qué: pretendiendo para mi uso una especie de diario de escritura ajena” (41). Therefore, in addition to having to decide if the text is giving an accurate description of the account, the reader must also build the object/text for him/herself. That is to say, the reader must read between the lines and attempt to draw his/her own conclusions on the “anonymous” material presented throughout the text. Consequently, intuitive to this process is a constant questioning of the veracity of the reality presented in the text. Just as in Água Viva, the reader becomes an active component of the text, at times paralleling the narrator’s/author’s own thoughts and doubts and at other times questioning the truth claims presented by the narrator of the text.

Before reading the first entry, the reader discovers opposite the first page of the text the first of many footnotes distributed throughout Papeles irresponsables. This particular footnote introduces, however subtly, the question of authorial authority by giving credit to Adolfo Castañón’s Fajad Falerno as an inspiration for the text one is about to read. Nevertheless, special importance should be given to the opening of the footnote: “el único juego que no lo es en este libro es adjudicar un texto a Adolfo Castañón” (6). Adolfo Castañón is not a fictional character but an editor of the Mexican publishing company Fondo de Cultura Económica and a writer in his own right, who has published mainly with Era Publishers of Mexico City. This in itself insinuates to the reader the possibility of the authorial persona entering into a discussion with a historical
Moreover, it also implies that the authorial persona in this text is able to operate between both the textual and historical world. Therefore, the barriers between the two separate worlds are dropped and the reader is presented with a text constructed around metafictional textuality in which fictionality and historicity all become one in writing.

Unlike Lispector’s “grito de alegría” the narrator in Papeles irresponsables begins her text with a shout of frustration (“con el único objeto de molestarme” [7]):

Con este grito, o uno similar, el destino, el hado, la huella del paso del tiempo aquel otro que no sé cómo nombrar, se ha dedicado con fervor a entregarme hojas con palabras escritas o impresas, hojas que alguien a quien no conozco decidió desechar . . . Y que digo hojas, suena demasiado elegante. Pero voy a explicar cómo ha sido toda la historia desde que empezó. (7)

23For example, Miguel de Unamuno’s historical persona debates with his fictional characters Victor Goti and Augusto Pérez in Niebla (1914):

—No, no existes más que como ente de ficción; no eres, pobre Augusto, más que un producto de mi fantasía y de las de aquellos mis lectores que lean el relato que de tus fingidas venturas y malandanzas he escrito yo; tú no eres más que un personaje de novela. (279)

To which Augusto replies:

—Mire usted bien, don Miguel . . ., no sea que esté usted equivocado y que ocurra precisamente todo lo contrario de lo que usted se cree y me dice.

—Y ¿qué es lo contrario?—le pregunté, alarmado de verle recobrar vida propia.

—No sea, mi querido don Miguel—añadió—, que sea usted y no yo el ente de ficción, el que no existe en realidad, ni vivo ni muerto . . . No sea que usted no pase de ser un pretexto para que mi historia llegue al mundo. (279)
From the beginning of the text it is important to differentiate between the various participants in the reading process. First, and most importantly, it is crucial to keep in mind that the narrator/author of Papeles irresponsables is essentially the first reader of the papers and what we as readers are presented with is a text which has been already filtered through the narrator's/author's own reading and interpretation. Taking this into consideration, one could qualify the narrator as the implied author since the narrator tends to be the governing consciousness of the work as a whole as well as the main source of the norms embodied in the text. Rimmon-Kenan defines the implied author as "voiceless and silent" (87) as is usually the case, and the narrator as the narrative voice or speaker of the text. Boullosa, however, innovatively combines the two in her construct of the narrator in Papeles irresponsables. Therefore, one may think of the narrator/author as the principal stable identity within the thematic paradigm of the diminished authorial authority that tends to characterize this text.

Whereas in Água Viva the confessional tone of diary entries and letters was paired with an introspective mode of narration, in Papeles irresponsables one encounters a narrator who proposes to explain how the entire story began, thereby attributing to herself a sense of "'higher' narratorial authority responsible for 'quoting' the dialogue or 'transcribing' the written records" (Rimmon-Kenan 88). The narrator's method in Água Viva of coming to a new more authentic level of the consciousness of self was to enter into dialogue with an implied reader, who could be thought of as her ex-lover but who

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24 One antecedent for this dual capacity is Unamuno's own persona as narrator in the last pages of San Manuel Bueno, mártir (1933).
could also be the reader of the narrative text. In contrast, in *Papeles irresponsables* the reader is presented with a narrator/author who is, to a certain degree, truthful about her involvement in the compilation of the fragmented papers while, at the same time, insinuating in the opening footnote that the only element not part of the "game" is the citation to the literary work by Adolfo Castaños.

The attentive reader becomes aware of the narrator’s game and follows her narration more as a puzzle constituted by a series of personal commentaries and reflections than as a story. Interestingly, aside from providing information about the papers themselves the narrator also inadvertently reveals characteristics about herself:

[los papeles] habían sido producidos en varios lugares y por diferentes autores, ya que nada parecía agruparlos más que convivir aventados en la puerta de mi casa... Pero no fue así, varias claves más me fueron dadas en poco tiempo... y pude darme cuenta de que la entrega diaria correspondía, casi con precisión, a la entrega que yo habría hecho el día anterior al venerable basurero o sus molestos sucedáneos... Tantos papeles que uno escribe sin conciencia alguna, como se respira, se habla o se mastica. (8)

Such revelations emphasize the mysterious connection between the scattered appearance of the papers and the declarations of the narrator’s/author’s own opinion regarding the origin of the papers. That is to say, her own commentary about the irony that the very same papers she throws out keep coming back to her. At this point of the narration there also seems to be a non sequitur between narrator/author and her own writing. She admits
to writing without paying much attention to the content, but the unexplained reappearance of her previously discarded papers now causes her to re-examine them.

In spite of the fact that some of these texts do not belong to her, the narrator/author takes it upon herself to publish the papers “con la única intención de encontrar a sus verdaderos autores” (9). In another footnote the narrator/author reveals that the first entries of Papeles irresponsables were actually published in 1988 in the journal La orquesta. This use of the footnote, aside from being unusual in works of fiction\textsuperscript{25}, automatically draws attention to the presence of the narrator/author reflecting on her own narration. In this case it also undermines the information given in the text, thereby undermining not only the claim to narrative privilege of the narrator/author but also her reliability. The narrator/author seems to recognize this and, in an attempt to retrieve some credibility, addresses her colleagues and readers:

Espero, compañeros escritores, colegas, lectores, gente en general, que alguno de ustedes reclame sus hojas de basura y que a mí vez pueda, o recuperar mis defectos volantes (porque siento un peligro en las espaldas, temo que sea Adolfo Castañón quien guarde mi basura en su casa identifique mi letra, me haga la ruindad de editarlo en libro – escogiendo, claro lo peor de lo peor – y arruine el poquitito nombre que me he ganado con tantísimo trabajo. (9)

\textsuperscript{25}Let us recall that Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1985) also used footnotes in his literary works at times misrepresenting historical facts with fictitious re-elaborations; but it is perhaps Roa Bastos (1917–) who has most extensively used notes and marginalia to metafictionalize the narrative voices (Yo el Supremo 1974).
Although a narrator's/author's unreliability can stem from his/her limited knowledge, this particular narrator's reliability is questionable due to her personal involvement in the text. Since the narrator's/author's own work also forms part of the "papeles irresponsables" it raises suspicion on two levels: (1) the narrator/author wants the reader to believe that she really has had nothing to do with the appearance of these papers and that she wants to be taken as a victim; and (2) she wants to strengthen her claim as compiler and transcriber that she hopes to find the other authors. However, such disclaimers as, "fuera del título no le agregué una sola palabra, ni siquiera le cambié una coma, está tal como venía anotado" (9), only serve to emphasize the status of this text as an artifice. This in turn, provokes reflections about fictionality and textuality typical of self-conscious narratives (Rimmon-Kenan 100).

Although at first sight the collection of miscellaneous texts seems to lack a common denominator, they do have the following points in common: (1) the narrator/author after first reading transcribes all the papers; (2) the narrator/author has, in her act of reading, instinctively appropriated her reading; and (3) yet, she is not sure that what she transcribes is what she receives. Consequently, the focus tends to be on the narrator's/author's obsession with these papers and with discovering who the other authors are. Writing is presented as belonging to the writer, but as susceptible to being taken over by the reader. The fear is that in revealing one's writing someone else will usurp it. Hence, each excerpt and meta-text included in the Papeles irresponsables reveals a pattern of literary creation and the exercise of writing and reading much like the narrator's experience of consciousness in Água Viva.
A process of questioning surfaces reflects on the idea that, although what you write is yours, what is borrowed can not really be yours since you have taken someone else’s words. The immediate implication is that someone else can “borrow” your writing in the same way you have borrowed from others. Since each sentence correlate prefigures a particular end, this then becomes the background for the next correlate, and so on and so forth. In Ricoeurian terms, the prefigurative is modified or “borrowed” by the writer’s configurative process and this in turn becomes available for further appropriation by others in the refigurative, which, by its cyclical nature, becomes a newly defined prefigurative. In order to construct meaning the reader must also then link the figuration intrinsic to each stage in order to come to an overall construction of the text, keeping in mind that one’s figurative expectations can be frustrated at times.

Such is the case if one were to examine the second entry in Papeles irresponsables as the continuation to the argument of authorial ownership of the “papeles irresponsables”:

. . . habían llamado alarmados por creer que papeles irresponsables de ellos anduvieran perdidos entre mis papeles irresponsables. Exigian a la redacción de la orquesta la pronta devolución de ellos.

Los tranquilicé, era fácil saber que papeles de esos no había entre los míos (¿por qué míos?, en realidad no soy su dueña, ni su destinataria siquiera. Es pura casualidad que estén conmigo). . .

Pero los escritores se equivocan al no temer el material que ha llegado a mí. Si su prestigio profesional les importa un bledo, no creo que
les dé igual su casa y su fortuna... ¡Den gracias de que sea yo la
portadora del contenido de sus basureros! Algún otro sería capaz de
venderlos o de ejercer sus venganzas haciendo llegar papeles a las manos
apropiadas!

¡Vaya que tengo conmigo papeles peligrosos! (13-14)

What begins as a reiteration of the source of the papers, then seems to take on an
accusatory and even threatening tone. The narrator/author defends the authorship and
ownership of the material submitted to the journal as her compilation, but not as her
writing. Therefore, she claims that she has not stolen the materials but compiled them
into a readable form. Yet, she also recognizes the power that comes along with having
possession of such papers and that, in the fourth text she transcribed, she actually rewrote
it to some extent: “sólo procuré vestirlo un poco” (14). Yet, at the end of the second
section the narrator/author reiterates: “si alguno de ustedes tienen algún papel
irresponsable mio en su escritorio, devuélvamelo” (16). Such revelations lead the reader
to further question the motives that lie behind the narrator’s/author’s intentions in
publishing the material every two months (17) without seeking the authorization of the
unknown authors. Her double standard is evident, as a writer she expects property rights,
respect, and consideration—all of which she fails to give to other writers.

Within this puzzling framework writing and authorship are presented as venues
not only for fame, but most often for deceit. Once ideas are given written form they are
imbued with power and take on a life of their own:
... ¿no todo queda en entredicho en la escritura? Uno mismo, uno mismo tiene que tener valor para saber qué tipo de monstruo es el que aparece en el autorretrato...

... La llegada de los papeles irresponsables a la puerta de mi casa y el viaje de mis papeles irresponsables por las casas de ustedes, me ha hecho saber que lo que se escribe no se puede borrar y lo que no se borra puede ser leído y un texto leído muestra su peligro. Escribir es como contar secretos a voces, secretos que no se atrevería nadie a contarse a sí mismo.

(21)

Similar to her previous declaration of writing as comparable to breathing, the narrator/author now recognizes the power behind the written word and that it cannot be ignored. Like Lispector, she considers writing equivalent to revealing secrets that one would not even admit to oneself. This intimate act of writing, although self-empowering at times, can subject the writer to criticism.

Subsequently it is through memory that the connections between the textual fragments can be made so as to assemble a unified reading experience. Just as in Água Viva, Papeles irresponsables is also characterized by a continual interplay between the reader’s modified expectations and transformed memories throughout the reading experience (Iser 111). Even though the information imposes upon the reader a successive perception of information, such bits of information are understood by the reader as simultaneous within the story. These fragments are then able to direct and control the
reader's comprehension and attitude not only towards the narrator/author but also to the overall understanding of the text.

Just as footnotes draw attention to the textuality and authorial presence, so do the use of asides and parenthesis. For example, at the end of the third section she explains: "abre paréntesis que traté de evitar, pero que se me impuso en la versión final de esta tercera entrega" (21). In this aside the reader is given a personal insight into the implied author's prefigurative act of writing; then it is further developed:

Puedo escribir y diré – con una afirmación digna de un charlatán – que me alivia, que me da vigor, que aunque arruine mi salud con los desvelos y se acabe mi piel con los malos tratos de horario, me hace bien. Me da la vida. Me ayuda a soportar a Carmen Boullosa y me hace olvidar que llegará, inevitable, la muerte. (21-22)

Once again the implied author focuses on the paradigm of writing and the importance that it carries for her being. Yet, the last sentence of the quote is somewhat metafictional.

Is the implied author Carmen Boullosa using the third person to refer to herself? Or is the implied author another persona who cannot deal with Carmen Boullosa? If one is to interpret it as the implied author referring to herself in the third person the writing takes on a playful self-reflective journey into the consciousness of a writer in the manner of Borges in his short story "Borges y yo." The dialectic of writing as creation and the embodiment of the writer's trials and tribulations in expressing herself is bifurcated into

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26The italics are not my own, but have been used in the text to visually differentiate the implied author's commentary from the body of the text being transcribed.
public and private persona. Interestingly, both Lispector and Boullosa in their respective
texts depict writing as an activity that must be suffered while also giving meaning to life.

The narrator/author does not immediately return to the task of compiling the
papers but instead prolongs the aside in order to delve into a philosophical contemplation
on the meaning of writing for her:

Yo cuando escribo lo hago con todas mis prisiones, con mis obsesiones,
con mis dolores, con lo que más cercano tengo. Es raro imaginar al pintor
cortándose las venas para contagiar de rojo el lienzo. . . Un escritor
“pinta”, en cambio, con esos elementos. (22)

Similar to the narrator in Lispector’s Água Viva, the implied author of Papeles
irresponsables also believes writing to be an all-encompassing exercise: body, mind, and
spirit are all involved. As with Lispector an analogy to the painter is also suggested, but
whereas painting in Água Viva was superior to writing in expressing the unsaid, the
narrator/author in this case believes that only a writer can truly “paint.” The blood
imagery enforces the concept of writing as a painful yet passionate exercise for the
writer: “sé que esas pasiones surgen con toda la violencia porque escribo y escribir
vuelve carne de cañón a mi espíritu” (22). Just as the narrator in Água Viva equated her
writing to the life-sustaining exercise of breathing, a corporeality to language and writing
is also insinuated in Papeles irresponsables. Through writing language becomes the “net”
which the writer believes she controls, but in fact it controls her and forces her to face
her passions, obsessions, and fears of rejection.
Due to the reflexive nature of the text the utterances of appropriation circle back to the speaker, the implied author herself. The textual message is also reflexive in that it reflects back onto the one who writes it and the one who reads it (Irigaray 135). It is this textual self-consciousness that the reader must decipher in order to attempt to construct an overall meaning that coincides with the truth-claims of the text as a whole. Moreover, towards the end of the aside the narrator/author appeals once again to her colleagues, and even to the reader, for understanding of the true scope that writing has within her existence:

Nosotros no nos alejamos de nuestros temores, los escritores

*vamos hacia nuestros temores*, nuestro trabajo es la enajenación y la desdicha. Es volver a poner el dedo en la llaga, volver a poner el dedo en la llaga... En ello radica también el placer del escritor, un placer terreno, poco espiritual, casi carnal, porque lo nuestro son sólo verdades, son hombres (o mujeres, lo que usted, lector, prefiera). (22)

Interestingly, narrator/author chooses to group herself in the collective identity of “writers” in general, seemingly attempting to display a sense of authorial credibility so that the reader does not challenge the truth-claims expressed in the text she is compiling. Then she closes the aside, using italics to differentiate the instructions from the rest of the text: “*aquí cierra el paréntesis que abrí unos párrafos arriba*” (22). But the section concludes with an entreaty to the reader in general that all the anonymous authors retrieve all their papers because José María Espinasa at the magazine has threatened to burn the papers for to lack of storage space. Nonetheless, the overall emphasis of the
aside has been on the corporeality of writing and almost carnality of the world of "truths" described therein. Just as writing must be a totally lived experience, so must reading.

By the end of the third section it becomes obvious that *Papeles irresponsables* is divided into numbered sections which are not chapters but which carry the number given to the submissions. Hence, the numbers heading each section do not represent the traditional chapter numbers, but are only the reference categories assigned to magazine submissions. Consequently, the reader is faced not with a temporal configuration but a spatial one, since the category numbers are not chronological. Accordingly, the time flow of the reading experience as a whole is similar to that of *Água Viva*.  

Both Boullosa and Lispector have created texts in which time is present time, the now is the now of reading and not the time of the writing or of the textual referents (this literary technique is also used in the second volume of *Don Quixote*). Each experience or moment is not an isolated incident but is linked to every other: the past is the necessary prefigurative of the cultural imaginary for the present and the present can influence the future while at the same time modifying itself. It is this sense of wavering temporality which is integral to the issue of transcribing the readings and the implication that these "texts" are objects within writing in which traditional materiality is not assumed.

Reading, just as time, is not perceived as uni-directional, but as a constant process of reflection and reevaluation of what has been read in order to continually attempt to

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27 Julio Cortázar's (1914–) *Rayuela* (1967) is another example of a fragmented text. However, unlike Lispector and Boullosa, Cortázar indicates to the reader the sequence the segments are to be read in if one chooses not to follow the traditional chronological order.
attain the comprehensive meaning of the text. Boullosa, as a writer, is more than aware of the possibility of a tripartite process of mimesis of the reading experience. She remarks as follows about the novelist and her relationship with both her text and reader:

Su [el novelista] error será sobre todo literario, porque lo más probable es que no consiga “revivir” lo que ya ocurrió sin dejar en la novela la marca de su propio presente, su óptica, la huella de su entorno, y que sin alcanzar su pretensión –la reconstrucción del pasado –, el novelista atropelle la difícil y delicada construcción imaginaria de la vitalidad de su novela, la que permitiría a un lector habitarla, poblarla en la lectura, abandonar su propia realidad para calzar la de la novela e infundir su propia sangre al vampiresco cadáver ficticio del texto. (“Historiar” 6)

Just as discussed with Água Viva, one finds in reading Papeles irresponsables that both past and future continually converge in the present instant and the use of the wandering view-point allows the text to become an expanding network of connections leading to a variety of possible interpretations (Iser 116). It is this combination of an all-encompassing time and multiple perspectives that creates the impression for the reader that each “paper” has its own unity aside from its link to the narrative text as a whole.  

28 In a paper delivered at a LASA Conference Boullosa comments on the historical novel: Historiar y novelar son labores completamente opuestos. No se puede dudar de que la novela se alimenta de bocados de realidad, tampoco de que el presente se convierte un segundo después en pasado, y por lo tanto de que la novela se conforma del pasado sin poderlo evitar. (“Historiar” 5)

29 In the same conference paper Boullosa also expands on her view of the role of the reader:

... la novela no es propiamente pasado: en el momento de la lectura,
Nevertheless, the personal involvement of the reader in the text is attainable via the author’s creation of both a multi-directional temporality and spatiality.

It is important to keep in mind that each reading experience is unique in itself since it is influenced by the subjective factors as delineated by Iser: memory, interest, attention, and overall mental capacity (118). These factors will vary from reader to reader and so will the perceptions that arise from the encounter between text and reader.

In the case of *Papeles irresponsables* this concept is dichotomized since the narrator/author is essentially the first reader of the papers and as such her text becomes the text that the reader is reading. Consequently, the dialectic of narrator/author as transcriber, translator, and interpreter creates a unique second level of narrativity in which the narrator/author herself explores the pains of writing and the joys and aporias of reading.

The reader must attempt to decipher the miscellaneous collection of papers in conjunction with the narrator’s/author’s attempts to organize these same papers. Midway through the text the narrator/author reveals to the reader that the magazine is no longer accepting her entries but that she has continued to write in the same numerically catalogued fashion because of the importance that these texts have taken in her own writing. Therefore, the idea of publishing in a magazine which originally gave a superficial premise and veneer of materiality to the acts of transcription and compilation...
has now been lost. It is later revealed that the compilation has been the
narrator’s/author’s own quest for personal identity as a writer. When the magazine
subsequently ceases publication the initial objective of writing as compilation and
transcription now becomes secondary to the primary objective of writing.

Section five of *Papeles irresponsables* takes up the question of the underlying
objectives to the random papers as well as to the narrator’s/author’s own credibility as
their compiler. Within this section the narrator/author applies a variety of literary
techniques in order to encompass multiple perspectives within the creative process of
writing. This five page section contains not only four extensive footnotes but these
footnotes are then subdivided to include the comments by the editorial staff, the
magazine itself and the “author.” What occurs is a dialogue between the three entities
where the focus of the communication tends to revolve around the idea of authorial
credibility:

"Nota de la redacción: la autora miente. La conocemos hace más de
una década y nunca – pobre ella – la hemos visto en estado de ebriedad.

Nota de la orquesta a esta nota: la autora miente dos veces, ya que
las notas de la redacción de esta nota fueron escritas por ella. (29)"

In addition to drawing attention to the self-reflexivity of the text and the questioning of
authorial credibility, such footnotes also highlight the different individuals involved in
the writing, editing, and publication of texts. Although these concepts are discussed in
relation to the narrator’s/author’s own writing process, one should keep in mind that
these same concepts of editing and transcribing are juxtaposed to the narrative’s self-reflexivity, thereby expanding on the notion of textual and authorial reliability.

The following footnote from the editorial staff simply accuses the narrator/author of lying about playing dominoes. But the sixth footnote incorporates clarifications from both the editorial staff and the magazine regarding the occurrences around the clash between the “author” and López Velarde. Interestingly, in the reply from the magazine to the confrontation between López Velarde, Carmen Boullosa is identified as the implied author. This revelation is crucial since now the fictionalized implied author is clearly identified with the authorial persona of Carmen Boullosa. The magazine ends its footnote aside by directly addressing Boullosa with a warning: “Carmen, mejor midete con tus mentiras” (29).

Taking this into account, how reliable is the narrator/author in *Papeles irresponsables*? And how does this affect the believability of the truth-claims presented in the narrative text? In a paper delivered in 1998 at a LASA conference in Chicago Boullosa made the following distinction with respect to the novel form:

. . . la novela debe respetarse a sí misma como la única verdad posible, desde el momento de su edificación. Es cierto, devora del pasado cuanto puede, utiliza todo aquello que la ayude a sustentar su propia historia, su propia materia histórica. Pero su materia prima no puede estar atormentada de necesidad de testimonio. No puede haberse fijado en otra arqueología que no sea la construcción, con bocados de realidad, de su sí mismo inflexible.
No puede obedecer más que a sí misma. Debe serse fiel. Ésa es su moral.

("Historia" 6)

The narrative text must remain truthful to itself and in so doing it is not implicit that it be limited to any generic predisposition. The novel, and specifically, the narrative text, which concerns us here, is a flexible creation that requires reader participation but is also open to an unlimited number of interpretations since: "La novela es cierta. Ella es verdad. Lo que la conforma, aquello que llamamos bocados de pasado, más imaginación y la combinación de anécdotas, se disuelve en su cuerpo autóctono" (Boullosa, "Historia" 6).\(^{30}\) Just as time is an all-encompassing present so must the process of reading be captured in its essential ontology of experience.

It is significant to reiterate that the implied author creates her text within a context she deems "habitable" (Boullosa, "Historia" 7). This text has its own order, its own autonomous identity, although it is fragmented into categories of magazine submissions. Yet, one must keep in mind that this narrative world is based both on excerpts of material reality as well as personal fantasy. It is up to the reader’s metaphoric imagination and deductive reasoning to be able to decode the text and negotiate the differences between fictionality and historicity. But Boullosa, following the Cervantes example, complicates the reading experience with the constant undermining of authorial credibility. In section five the narrator/author recapitulates that "ellos también mienten" and that "las notas a pie de la página sí son de ellos" (30).

\(^{30}\)Therefore, it is in following the creative trajectory of the prefigurative, configurative, and refigurative for both the reader and writer that the critic can produce a hermeneutic interpretation of the text.
What develops is not only a crisis of reliability but a rift between the narrator/author and the unknown authors of the “papeles irresponsables”: “me ha puesto una demanda, alegando que yo no tenía por qué publicar un texto que él había tirado a la basura” (32). The unidentifid author of the paper demands that his work be returned to him but the persona of the narrator/author feels offended by the request. She now sees the work as her own because of the comments she inserted in it before sending it off to be published. Ironically, the narrator/author denies that she has appropriated someone else’s work and appeals to the reader to believe her. She has now become the editor and does not recognize the rights of the author to withhold the text from publication.

As part of her defense she entitles her subsequent submission “Acerca de la red de espionaje entre escritores.” This sixth section is the first not to have a publisher and the narrator/author reveals intentions of possibly publishing it as a book. Ironically, a collection of the narrator’s/author’s own papers have reached Adolfo Castañón and he has decided to return them to her with “indiscretas confesiones que no sé como demonios se atrevió Adolfo a anotar con lápiz en los enveses de las páginas mecanografiadas” (35). Nonetheless, during a telephone conversation it becomes clear that neither Adolfo nor the narrator/author take responsibility for either the original writing or the added commentaries. In the end, the narrator/author decides not to publish this selection of writing because of the risk of unknowingly publishing a piece of her own work she had initially deemed unpublishable. Instead: “Adolfo es tumba de mi libreta verde, yo soy tumba de los apuntes de Adolfo... Sin quererlo ni procurarlo, somos confidentes involuntarios el uno del otro” (36). Consequently, a sense of complicity tends to
permeate this section. Not only is it insinuated that writing is a coordinated creative
dialogue between writers, it is also a dialogue that includes the reader. The reader’s
active participation in the configuration of the text’s discursive flexibility in turn
enforces the overall indeterminacy of the “papeles irresponsables.”

It is also important to note that the text transcribed in this section is one authored
by Fajad Falerno entitled “¿Por qué no me enseñaste a vivir sin ti?” In the footnote at the
beginning of the text Fajad Falerno was revealed to be the pseudonym for Adolfo
Castañón, therefore, this transcribed text could be a real literary work. Nevertheless, one
begins to suspect that the arrival of these “papeles irresponsables” has not been purely
accidental, as proposed by the narrator/author, let alone the narrator’s/author’s choice of
their placement within her compilation. Although writing continues to be depicted as
both a pleasurable and agonizing exercise, much like Lispector’s portrayal of it in Água
Viva, the underlying strategy of the narrative is not an undermining of the authorial
privilege but one of foregrounding authorial authority.

Neither Lispector nor Boullosa are the first authors to develop this paradoxical
situation of authorial privilege without authority. Within this context one cannot but
ignore Cervantes’ epic contribution to literature with his Don Quixote. In its second
volume the reader is drawn into a dream-like sequence at the cave of Montesinos (II,
xxii-xxiv) where Don Quixote courageously enters into the cave to explore its unknown
depths. After his descent Don Quixote reports on the ethereal world of the enchanted
Durandarte and Dulcinea in which the traditional depictions of courtly lovers are
inverted. When Don Quixote comes back up from the cave into daylight and relates his
experiences, no one, including the narrator, the implied author, or Sancho Panza (according to the narrator), believes him. The main point of contention becomes the amount of time spent underground; Don Quixote believes he was gone three days whereas Sancho Panza believes it was only three hours. What occurs is a loss of authority for the narrator (Cide Hamete Benengeli) who claims that this “true” story is unbelievable. With Don Quixote and with the texts examined here by Lispector and Boullosa, indeterminacy and ambiguity within the narrative text are used to not only embody but to emphasize how structure functions to open the text up to the reader while also rejecting the reductive notion that the narrative is an imitation of life.

At the end of the sixth section the narrator/author denies that the text she had transcribed had been a combined effort by herself and Adolfo Castañón:

Al terminar de pasar a máquina este texto, llego a la conclusión de que ni Adolfo ni yo somos autores de él. Quiero decir, si él niega su innegable autoría, entonces quién sabe quién lo escribió. A mí me hubiera gustado escribirlo, o por lo menos recibirlo en mi propia casa como muestra de un papel irresponsable pero en exclusiva, sin que cayera en el otro hogar de ningún escritor. (40)

The narrator/author refuses to give the reader any guidance in moving through the labyrinth of truth-claims, reversals, and subsequent negations, all which undermine the narrator’s/author’s own indications of probable explanations. One cannot ignore the narrator’s/author’s own quote from Madame Bovary: “así debiera ser siempre, una novela debe conducir al lector de la mano, de libro en libro sin que él lo sienta” (112).
Taking this into consideration, the reader should be suspicious in his/her reading of the amount of control the narrator/author reveals that she has in the overall construction of the text. Most importantly, one must keep in mind that the reading experience is not passive, but one concerned more with the expansion of the creative imagination than with a linear narration of action.

Although the text is organized in part around the basic plot of the papers appearing with a convenient randomness at the narrator’s house,\(^3\) it becomes clear that the development of the text is not, in any way, limited to plot. After many threats from other authors for having published the “papeles irresponsables” the narrator/author decides to stop the publication but “dándoles la atención que se merecen, haré una selección para mi propio gusto” (41). Consequently one now discovers a shift in the narrative in this seventh section which concentrates more on the development and discovery of what is defined as “literature.” There seems to be an innate desire to illustrate and discuss various types of literature: epistolary, literary criticism, didactic literature, and autobiographies.

In section nine the narrator/author contemplates a text in the epistolary genre. The transcribed text in itself is a selection of letters from a woman to her lover who at first does not respond to her declarations of love. What is key to this section is the information supplied in the footnotes. Once again the narrator/author undermines any truth-claims the reader may have by playing with the source of these papers. In this case

\(^3\)“Convenient randomness” in that there exists a high degree of coincidence between the appearance of the “papeles irresponsables” and the theme being developed in the narrative text at that particular time.
the narrator/author goes to an ice cream shop and sits down at a recently vacated table and discovers an envelope with the writings inside. She approaches Don Pietro before he leaves to give him his papers but he replies that they must be hers. She observes that the envelope has a return address from the Faculty of Economics from the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) and that: “Podrían decir que era mío pero yo había llegado a la nevería sin ellos” (46). In the end she takes them home and upon reading them concludes that although they appear to be a “noveleta epistolar-amorosa” (46) they seem to be a better example of fantastical literature. However, at the same time something tells her that “no es un texto literario, que tal vez sea la pura verdad” (46).

Although the letters are addressed to an unresponsive lover they tend to embody similar concerns about writing in general: “el mayor engaño en que puede incurrir un ser humano. La reducción del Espíritu en un nombre, en una palabra. . . ” (48) and “voy a escribir a diario, usted será el depositario de mis confidencias” (49). What seems to permeate both Lispector’s and Boullosa’s texts is a language that searches to encompass reality but in the process is deemed inadequate to express unspoken thought. Language must consequently be reconstituted to make it a “living” language that will mirror the writer’s consciousness.

Much like Lispector’s Água Viva, this self-reflexivity in writing seems to take on a characteristic of a “writing in progress” in which the fragments compiled both mirror and refract the fictionality of the work as well as its construction of reality.31 In the

31Ortega views this characteristic as a culmination of the: “juego literario como la forma de una obsesiva puesta a prueba de la palabra que re-vela, que des-dice, que diseña, con su precisión intensa y su fácil habla, la hechura imaginaria del Sujeto” (170).
sixteenth section another set of letters are transcribed, at the end of which the
narrator/author makes the following allusion:

Después de transcribir este texto pienso que papeles irresponsables, más
que parecer borradores de escritores, parecen ser dignos de la más
adorable de todas las novelas rosas... Otra alternativa: con las demás
cartas amorosas que me llegaron, podría armar un muestro y publicarlo
para uso y abuso de quienes necesiten mandarlas. Una especie de Cartas
amorosas para amantes cultos, porque los manuales de correspondencias
afectuosas no son para gente “como uno”... (109)

The narrator/author insinuates not only the possibility that there can be more than one
interpretation to the text but also questions its classification within the literary canon. It
is in the reading experience that the reader configures the meaning of the text. The
writing that has not been read cannot be a text until it is read.

Later in the text, the narrator/author reveals a key component to her narration and
her compilation of the “papeles irresponsables”: “la [persona] que es curiosa no busca
precisamente la verdad, busca saber, saber lo que sea, papalotear sobre los hechos,
bebiendo de ellos con enorme disfrute, aunque no se abra ante ella la realidad” (65). It
should become manifest to the reader that, in her constant subverting of truth-claims, the
narrator/author is enforcing the notion of the text as open to an interpretation that
essentially rests on the reader’s own imaginative configuration.

Ironically, an intrinsic component of the narrator’s/author’s attempt at
verisimilitude is the constant appeal to truth-claims. In the tenth selection the transcribed
text’s title is an example of this obsession: “He aquí la verdadera historia de la mujer del anillo azul” (59). Let us also recall the constant claim in Don Quixote that the narration is a true story. Nonetheless this effort at a truth claim is subsequently undermined in Papeles irresponsables in the following footnote:

. . . Alguien enemigo hizo publicar estas páginas como mías en la revista de Juan García Ponce. Juan se deshizo en disculpas, pero no me creyó que no fueran mías. Pensó que era una broma negarlas. Jamás me negó públicamente la autoría. Ahora que hago orden las pongo aquí, en un lugar que me parece propicio para ellas, con los papeles irresponsables. (59)

The narrator/author now finds herself on the opposite side; her work has been published without her consent and when she attempts to deny authority over it no one believes her.

In section twelve of the compilation the narrator/author writes notes for an elaborate criticism of a draft for a book entitled Cordelia frente al espejo by Silvina Ocampo. In this selection we have the “notes” interspersed with the narrator’s/author’s own commentary written in italics to differentiate it from the transcribed text. As part of her critique the narrator/author makes the following revelatory comments:

. . . la autora parte de hacernos creer que está mintiendo, que lo que el narrador nos cuenta no es verdad, que es, como dice en el primer párrafo, un cuento que ha perdido, irrecuperable y maravilloso. . . (Pero el cuento también en la memoria se va modificando hasta llegar a ser el mejor cuento del mundo. . . .) (66)
For the attentive reader, such commentaries should be interpreted not just as part of this specific fragment but of the overall narrative text that one is in the process of reading. The games of reading and interpreting are the same and in this section the reader is allowed to vicariously experience the narrator's/author's own process of literary perception and criticism of a work that is not her own: "El estilo es su propia carne y su propia máscara entremezcladas" (69). And therein lies the crux of the writer's consciousness: to perceive herself in her writing and to recognize that her identity and consciousness are fundamental to the writing experience.

But with life comes death. Like Lispector's narrator in Água Viva, the narrator/author in Papeles irresponsables does not fear death since, although the body may die, her work will live on. In the intertext entitled "La muerte y los papeles" Silvina Ocampo contemplates the importance of her writing: "No, no morirás esta vez, sino la próxima . . . Dios mío, no tengo valijas, baúles, donde llevar mis manuscritos y prefiero morir mil veces antes que perderlos" (70). The narrator's/author's italicized reply immediately follows: "¡No morirás Silvina! ¡En quien te lea encontraráis corazones afines para que aniden tus papeles, los amores, las miradas! . . . No, no morirás. . . Pero para no morir no podrás llevarte contigo tus papeles cuando mueras, tu máximo deseo" (70). Similar to Lispector's narrator in Água Viva, the narrator/author insinuates in this section, as part of her running commentary of Ocampo's work, that writing incorporates a journey into consciousness and identity. It is within this journey that the writer makes an effort to "emprender un viaje de la pureza hacia la pureza" (71) and that: "Saberla [la
muerte], comprender que está, que es ella quien define el trazo del pintor, las palabras del novelista” (117).

Coinciding with Lispector’s own description of writing in Água Viva, the dream metaphor is also alluded to in this twelfth section of Boulosa’s Papeles irresponsables:

Una sabiduría entre los sueños que extraña y conmueve por lo ‘práctica’, porque situada entre las fantasías y el territorio de la mentira y el olvido habla del amor y de la muerte, reflexiona simulando mascar, piensa mientras platica, no banaliza sino que llena de hondura al introducirse sencilla en las anécdotas y los sueños en que viven las anécdotas. (72)

Comparable to Lispector’s use of silence in Água Viva, dreams provide the ambiance in which one can better reflect one’s authentic self without contamination. That is, within this dream state one is not bound by the limitations prescribed by one’s socio-cultural surroundings. However, the reality of the dream state is not fixed but under constant threat of being forgotten as soon as one awakens.

Again, reminiscent of Lispector’s narrative technique in Água Viva, Papeles irresponsables is a fragmentary novel composed with a variety of literary intertexts as well as criticism. This fragmentary nature of the text is said to be the best manner to reflect the narrator’s/author’s own desire to write authentically about her experiences not only as an individual but also as a writer. Ironically, as part of her commentary on Silvina Ocampo’s work, the narrator/author reveals a futility in “pensar hondo” (73) since this “no levanta un mundo (un cuento, una novela, un poema)” (73). In opposition to the
structure of *Papeles irresponsables*, the narrator/author discusses Ocampo’s fragmentary text as follows:

. . . no permite que dichas frases hundan su narración o la abomben, le quiten fuerza, sino que la levantan, la agilizan, la suavizan al hacer la escritura más honda, la aligeran por su profundidad, me hacen estar totalmente en contra de la escritura fragmentaria, incluso me hace considerarla como la antiliteratura. (73)

Each excerpt is not just a story told for no reason at all, but insinuates something that exists beyond its textual limits: “El infinito es sólo una batalla campal de la imaginación. Lo que cobra cuerpo son las ideas factibles. Se hace posible lo imposible, siempre y cuando así se decrete” (74).

It is the collection of fragments and their inter-relation with the narrator’s/author’s own search for consistency that illustrates the obsession to disclose the discovery and development of the consciousness of the writer. However, the fear of being discovered as the writer of the papers and the question of authorship still remain as the central focus: “los múltiples ejemplos de la literatura fragmentaria, muestra también de los escritores que se niegan a forjar el todo en el que sus ideas podrían sin dificultad vivir” (75). Nevertheless, the narrator/author refuses authorial responsibility, “La idea no es mía. Me la dio la autora [Silvina Ocampo]” (75). In essence, she has criticised the fragmentary nature of the “papeles irresponsables” even though these are the same texts that compile her own literary creation. Once again the reader is left with a sense of
uncertainty of the narrator’s/author’s true opinion of the fragmentary writing and how this influences her own writing.

As for reading, the narrator/author reveals that “el que lee es poseído. El que pasa los ojos por las palabras ajenas, cambia su corazón por el del escritor, su estilo, su ritmo, sus ideas por las del autor del libro que tiene en las manos” (78). The narrator/author herself reveals that writers should not read while they write because of the danger of becoming actively involved in the same text they are reading. Then she emphasizes again that her impulse in compiling the collection of papers is pure curiosity and a desire to discover the real identity of the various authors. But she also recognizes that her own work is being read at the same time and confides in her own reader that: “Este reconocimiento, esta amorosa entrega, esta simpatía es el acto de la lectura; como en toda entrega, simpatía y amor, también la inteligencia, la razón, la intuición y los conocimientos se ponen en juego” (78). It is this repeated opposition of frame versus content that continues to incorporate a level of indeterminacy and questioning of earlier truth-claims the narrator/author has previously raised. In the end, all that is written becomes the transcribed work of Carmen Boullosa and it is this frame that suggests the possibility of putting all truth-claims into doubt and intrinsically placing the text itself into an indeterminate area of interpretation.

The implied author herself questions her own work:

¿Será que éstos son papeles irresponsables? . . . Nunca supe quién me los envió y ahora me pregunto si son o no son papeles irresponsables, traídos por la misma marea que hoy se presenta con mayor intensidad aquí. . . .
son *papeles irresponsables*, en 1980 me hicieron creer que eran papeles aventados para ofenderme o para halagar a Alejandro, pero con el tino de siempre enojarlo y siempre divertirme a mí, sobre todo porque hasta la fecha él está convencido de que yo soy la autora de esos textos. Eran muchos más y si acaso no fueron parte de *papeles irresponsables* sino envíos responsables... (81)

Taking into consideration the confessional tone of the aforementioned quote, one should question whose narrative voice is narrating in this excerpt. Is it the narrator/author, or could it possibly be a fictionalized persona of Carmen Boullosa, or another undetermined narrative voice? Once again all is unclear but the multiple allusions to real dates and personas cannot be dismissed.

As a result there exists a constant play of narrator/implied author/Carmen Boullosa as author. Within this framework the narrator/author constantly addresses the reader within the text and does so in the attempt to establish a truth-claim about what she is writing and thereby achieving some degree of credibility. This, in turn, causes the active reader to be a critical reader of the text so as not to miss or skip any details, a characteristic which is, ironically, one of the criticisms of the narrator’s/author’s own work. It is the awareness of a reader’s consciousness that seems to also influence the narrator’s attempt at establishing an overall pattern to the fragments and “papeles irresponsables” that constitute the text. Analogous to the fictionalized reader in *Água Viva*, one cannot ignore the significance of the reader experience in *Papeles irresponsables*. It is the reader who must attempt to construct a sense of configurative
meaning by grouping together all his/her perceptions and interpretations of the text, he/she is able to do so by assembling together the fragmented texts to construct one meaning while at the same time keeping in mind the writer’s manipulations of the same texts.

In the fourteenth section the narrator/author delves into an exploration of erotic literature as detailed by a selection of writing by Candita Amor. In one of the more extensive selections in Papeles irresponsables, there is an analysis of the concept of female empowerment and the marginalization aspect of voyeurism (84), as well as a list of sexual rules in the “Decálogo de Candita” (88). In the sub-section entitled “Recomendaciones de Candita a los censores” the reader actually has a direct insight into the narrator’s/author’s own opinion of sexuality: “De donde se sabe que los objetos sí pueden ser obscenos, mientras que no lo puede ser un cuerpo” (90). Ironically, the narrator/author admits that this is an incomplete text that: “Me siento incapaz de acabarlo” (91). But why transcribe a text that she feels unable to complete?

In closing this section, it is discovered that this discussion of erotic literature is the preparation for a course syllabus on “arte y sexualidad” (91) in which la literatura erótica se muestra como un resultado perverso del arte, un trabajo siempre truncado, con carácter de eterno apunte, incapaz de madurar o de cobrar la forma necesaria para tener el carácter autónomo imprescindible del texto literario. . . . La literatura erótica o pornográfica, aquella que busca transmitir exclusivamente el impulso sexual es, en sí,
un arte perverso. . . el arte debe desprenderse del cuerpo del artista para
funcionar como arte. . . (92)

The author/narrator thinks that art must detach itself from the artist's body in order to
function as art. On another level, one could think that language too must distance itself
from the artist so that it may truly embody an authentic shared reality. But, paradoxically,
writing is likened to the sexual impulse, thereby attributing to the writing exercise an
obvious libidinal economy not conducive to the need for professional distance.

One cannot ignore that the readers' perceptions and expectations are constantly
being manipulated, not only by the narrative voice but by the readers' own prefigurative
repertoire. Since the readers feel that they become participants in the text itself, there
also exists a sense of being caught up in the very same thing that they are producing via
their reading experience (Iser 127). The narrative text of Papeles irresponsables is self-
reflective regarding the reading experience and expands on this theory in the transcribed
text, "Condiciones en la lectura," in the fifteenth section (95):

tropiezo con la palabra gato, y la violencia con que respondo a ella nunca
 pudo haber sido considerada por ese escritor. El texto adquiere un relieve
 que jamás nadie imaginó, impregnándolo para siempre con la
desagradable experiencia de mi necia gatita en aullentoso celo. . . Las
posibilidades son infinitas: para cualquier otro lector otro será el gato de
la soledad del escritor y, por ende, otra la soledad y otro el escritor que
la suscribe. (96)
Although camouflaged as one of the selections transcribed in the compilation, the attentive reader is able to decode the intertext, retrieve the hidden message and relate it to his/her own reading experience. That is to say, in the fragment entitled “Condiciones en la lectura,” the narrator/author is once again insinuating, by way of this transcribed text, the theoretical basis for the collection itself. Consequently, not only will each reader have his/her own interpretation of the work, but the work itself is a pre-conditioned collection of fragments reflecting the narrator’s/author’s own underlying prerogative. The narrator/author herself is part of the reading equation, not to mention that she also was a reader before deciding to become the compiler.

In addition to the various subverted truth-claims and the narrator’s/author’s unreliability as a narrator because of her own prefigurative experience as a reader, it is also important to note that memory also plays a major role in the creation of this text. Similar to Lispector’s narrator in Água Viva, memory is an prominent component of the writing process and is also a factor that can undermine any truth-claim:

Ejercicio de memoria, más que ejercicio de escritura, en este diez y nueve trataré de recrear lo que leí en una aparición momentánea. . . No sé quién habrá sido su autor. Lo escribo como intentando tener de nuevo el dibujo con el cual el texto aparentemente no guardaba relación alguna. Lo escribo para encontrar en él lo que no le correspondía, en una nostalgia perversa, que busca la memoria donde no hay memoria. . . (119)

Reading, just as writing, becomes an exercise of memory in which the reader must attempt to cope with the narrator’s/author’s design without having any reliable clues
except those that are inscribed in the text itself. In conjunction with memory there is a
“cadena de acontecimientos de tejer y destejer el sentido de la lectura” (Valdés,
“Paradigma” 395), Boullosa’s text states: “No sé si todas las lei o alguna (por
considerarla igualmente inverosímil) también la inventé. . .” (Papeles 120). Within this
case context there are no absolutes, and meanings are polysemic and diverse depending on
each reader’s prefigurative repertoire and level of participation in unravelling the puzzle
presented in the construction of the collection of “papeles irresponsables.” The
narrator/author/Boullosa has provided an open paradigm for the interpretation of Papeles
irresponsables. As previously stated, there is a dialectic of explanation and understanding
which is then followed by commentary serving as a glossary to the very text (Valdés,
“Paradigma” 408). The last section of Papeles irresponsables demonstrates the possibility
of telling the same story in two distinct ways. The narrator/author now blatantly
illustrates the dichotomy of interpretations and the possibility of different versions:

¿Para qué contar dos veces lo mismo? Si la libreta fue a dar al bote de
basura para formar parte de los papeles irresponsables, fue porque ni
aislados ni juntos sirvieron para atrapar lo que el escritor perseguía: o un
recuerdo, o una sensación, o una fantasía. . . ¿Qué sería lo que se le
escapó entre las líneas, lo que no pudo tener, lo que para él en su propia
escritura no tuvo respuesta y esperará (inútilmente) en los siglos
desenlace? (133)

One can draw the conclusion that the narrator’s/author’s design in compiling Papeles
irresponsables incorporates not only memory and fantasy but also the sensation of
writing, and by extension, the reading process. As in the case of *Agua Viva*, reading becomes the art of reading in between the lines in order to attain comprehension of the text.

Even with the relative freedom of reading in between the lines the reader cannot escape being manipulated by the narrator/author. In the “Nota del editor” (135) the reader discovers that the entire text of *Papeles irresponsables* was found in the publisher’s mailbox and “Carmen Boullosa dice no haber dado a publicar este libro. Incluso alega que no puede ser publicado con su firma puesto que ella no lo escribió...” (135). Until the very end the narrator/author/Carmen Boullosa continues to play with the issue of authorship and, in this note, it is directly linked to the possibility that Carmen Boullosa has played the role of the narrator/author throughout the narrative text. Nevertheless, even this note from the publisher is undermined by the note from the lawyer that follows it. The lawyer, Luis René Aubery, now takes responsibility for the publication of the text:

> asumo toda la responsabilidad en la publicación del libro titulado *Papeles irresponsables*, incluyendo la firma de Carmen Boullosa, misma que, negando la autoría, ha entablado pleito contra el suscrito, acusándose de abuso de confianza... manjeo una demanda en contra de Carmen Boullosa por difamación, provocada en anterior publicación de uno de los capítulos de los llamados *Papeles irresponsables* que ahora ella niega y por los que me demandó para que la defendiera... (137)
As a result, a dialectic of illusion-making and illusion-breaking within the reading process (Iser 127) is produced not only for the reader of *Papeles irresponsables* but also for the narrator/author in her own initial role as reader. Consistency is only achieved by the “emergence of a third dimension” (Iser 128) which incorporates the reader’s constant oscillation between participation and observation. Just as the narrator in *Água Viva* searched for her “cuarta dimensão” for a language that would best serve her self-expression, in *Papeles irresponsables* language is also deemed as ambiguous and suggestive and warranting close reading for any claim to an accurate meaning.

Consequently, *Água Viva* and *Papeles irresponsables* are examples of literature in which there is an integration of language into the configurative process. This same characteristic permits the reader to draw from his/her prefigurative repertoire while also restructuring the textual prefigurative in the attempt to attain meaning in the overall configurative grasping of the text.

Reading, for both the narrator/author and the reader of *Papeles irresponsables*, is the quest for understanding. This comprehension is finally achieved in the aesthetic experience which is the essence of the refigurative dimension one shares. The consciousness of the reading experience and the understanding of the conditions that gave rise to it constitutes refiguration (Iser 133). It is only in becoming detached from one’s own response and participation in the text that one can escape the manipulations of the narrative text and reflect on it. Overall, as a reader, one not only participates in the construction of the text, but paradigmatically, is also aware of being involved in the text. Such is the paradox presented by both Lispector in *Água Viva* and Boullosa in *Papeles*...
irresponsables: the reader is not only an observer but also an active fictionalized element in the formation of textual identity and meaning.
CHAPTER 2:

The Feminine Condition in Clarice Lispector

Although Clarice Lispector did not like to give interviews, she tended to reveal intimate details about herself in her writing. Consequently, many critics have seen in her literary works a way of gaining access to the author's private world of deep psychological complexities. Lispector, in a rare interview, admits that: “Eu não tenho enredo. Sou inopinadamente fragmentária. Sou aos poucos. Minha história é viver. E eu só sei viver as coisas quando já as vivi. Não sei viver, só sei lembrar-me” (Waldman, Clarice 15).

On examining Lispector's focus on the protagonist's position with respect to the narrator one notices that she tends to insinuate a comparison between her writing and her own living experiences. This characteristic is similar to what Lacan terms the unconscious “discourse” of the narration which intrinsically exists within the bounds of the “discourse of the Other” (Davis 848).

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1To be found on the back cover of the cited edition of A Hora da Estrela.
From her short stories to her novels, Lispector often bases her writing on a momentary experience or minor incident that, as an isolated occurrence, seems quite insignificant but that within her experience ultimately takes on a deeper and more complex meaning. She bases her stories on commonplace situations of daily life, and has a tendency of merging the realistic quotidien with a dreamlike fantastical existence. Her writing intermingles poetic prose with details of a realistic observation. It is within this dreamlike text that the unconscious discourse is revealed. Through Lispector’s narrative and linguistic manipulations she communicates the unconscious discourse of her protagonists and at the same time also creates new “opportunities for linguistic substitution and (re)combination” (Davis 853). Lispector’s language is replete with unusual words and neologisms used beyond their lexical level. The conventional meaning of words and concepts is further disrupted by the syntactical and semantic manipulations and odd juxtapositions that are also well known features of Lispector’s prose.

In addition to the lexical innovations of Lispector’s narrative one must also bear in mind that the narrative style is complex. Lispector’s narrative style seems to encompass the Lacanian precept that narration is structured much like a subject immersed in language, and that unconscious discourse is both the precondition and site of narration. Nevertheless, the subject of narration will not always be completely signifiable within the narration. As examined in Água Viva there are narrative gaps, inconsistencies, breakdown of speech patterns and other obstacles that may hinder communication. Similar to Ricoeur’s tripartite process of mimesis, Lacan’s concept of
narration also consists of three key components when dealing with the unconscious discourse with the Other. They are: (1) the manifest text; (2) the unconscious discourse that enables the manifest text to exist; and (3) the reconstituted or repositioned manifest text which shapes the new interpretation. A heightened sense of alterity characterizes Lispector’s narrative prose. There is not only a splitting of the public from the private self in the narrator but in the character as well. By extension, her narrative text, similar to other authors’, also gets caught up in a dialectic between the prefigurative (unconscious discourse that is the precondition) and the configuration (Ricoeur, or Lacan’s manifest text), concluding with the refiguration that constitutes the reconstituted manifest text which shapes interpretation.

Since the quotidian underlies both the preconditioned and encountered text, it is the principal means by which Lispector moves her characters into the existential crisis that they experience. In each of their respective journeys of self-discovery and self-realization what seems to be the most mundane occurrence has the impetus to lead to a moment of revelation in which time seems to stand still. On such occasions the character is left solitary with only her conscience and personality to protect her within a context that seems to have been stripped of its comforting superficial conventions. However, the journey does not end here. Lispector takes it a step further, one in which the protagonist, upon realizing the limitations of her existence, attempts to find some way to escape it even though she recognizes that there is no escape, she must try. In the end, the
protagonist realizes that what she must eventually do is sacrifice her new sense of self in order to assimilate herself to her predestined role in society.²

In constructing the personal self of her characters, Lispector tends to focus on the links between intimate human relationships and the stratagems that one uses to adjust reality in order to camouflage one's personal sense of vulnerability. Lispector exposes the most intimate aspects of self which characters wish to conceal: the fears and apprehensions; the interior voices which must be silenced; the sense of pettiness of betrayal; the cruelty of hypocrisy; the truths that dare not be confided to another and often not even to ourselves; and the silent arguments individuals construct in their effort to justify their passions and desires. In addition, there is also a disturbing uncovering of the nature of human motives: our insatiable hunger to possess and to be possessed; the dark disorders behind the masks convention obliges us to wear; the bitter sense of alienation experienced even when we are with those bound to us by blood and kinship; the fears and doubts which daily consume us in the trap of existence; and the supreme

²In her examination of "The Daydreams of a Drunken Housewife," "Love," and "Imitation of the Rose" from Family Ties, Debra Castillo comes to a similar conclusion:

These are moments of incoherence consciously suppressed by the protagonists in these narratives in favor of an ordered life, an idealization of existence in which incongruous elements are flattened out, smoothed over, or ignored so that conventions can be maintained. These women are well aware of the intolerable constrictions of the role that society wanted for them, that they have accepted and even now desire, but they are not forceful enough to break down the overarching pattern of small coherences. Thus, the orders of housekeeping provide the structure for a civilization now recognizable also as coercive, indestructible, and irrelevant. (200)
moments of crisis which we are condemned to face alone.\(^3\) Above all, Lispector maintains a keen interest in her protagonists not just as individuals with their own private contexts, but also in the passions that dominate and usually defeat them. Consequently, the emergence of the subject comes about as a reaction to the primordial interrelation of identity, gender, and socio-cultural preconceptions.

Discourse becomes a significant characteristic in this process of self-identification and self-realization. Lispector’s protagonists are at times empowered with the ability to enunciate their desire that, while allowing them to enter into dialogue with their Other, also, ironically, places them in a position as object. Ronald Schleifer adds that: “[d]esire cannot be fulfilled because, inscribed within the Imaginary, it erases its object—it ‘murders’ the thing—in its articulation” (882). The resulting journey towards an authentic sense of self-consciousness consists firstly of the object’s desire to be recognized by the Other, followed by the desire to be articulated by the Other, and culminates with the desire for representation of one’s own experience.

A Paixão Segundo G. H. (1964) and A Hora da Estrela (1977) are two remarkable texts that give us ample material to examine the problem of alterity not only as an inherent need to fill the void between the individual and the Other, but also as an influential part of attaining a sense of selfhood. In order to do so, it is implicit to recognize that one’s own perception of self is essentially dictated from one’s

\(^3\)In *Laços de família* (1960), entitled *Family Ties* in the English translation, Lispector uses the word *laços* ("ties") not only in reference to the social chains of conformity which link each human to his fellow man but also to describe the bonds of solitude and alienation inherent in our humanity.
predetermined position in public space. That is to say, one's position in society has the potential of moving toward respect or contempt, between pride or shame. For this reason, the female protagonists of the aforementioned novels find it necessary to undertake a quest for selfhood and consciousness, while Lispector, as author, undertakes a quest for sense and meaning in her literary creations and in herself.⁴

In today's philosophical climate one cannot discuss the quest for selfhood without recognizing the importance of language within this process. In Sources of the Self Charles Taylor refers to a language community in which "one is a self only among other selves [and that] a self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (35). Both A Hora da Estrela and A Paixão Segundo G.H. offer distinct perspectives on the process of self-realization and identity which answers the fundamental question of "Who am I?". In these novels Lispector develops a prose of self-retrospection. Each character, in his or her own way, achieves a sense of individuality by becoming part of the dialogue between self and Other, be it within the socio-cultural context or as an inherent part of the exchange between writer and creation.⁵ Hence, in order to attain this sense of individuality one must recognize the social and familial context in which the self is constructed.

⁴Ferreira-Pinto finds another level to Lispector's style of writing in which: "a luta pelo domínio da auto-expressão oral (que equivale ao domínio/conhecimento do Eu) corre paralelo ao domínio/aperfeiçoamento/plenitude da expressão escrita" (19).

⁵For the purpose of this chapter, it is important to expand on Taylor's concept of "being brought into an ongoing conversation by those who bring us up" (35). In A Paixão Segundo G.H. it refers to the traditional socio-cultural referentiality of family and social status, whereas in A Hora da Estrela it takes on a more metaphorical label when dealing with the relationship between narrator/author and subject/creation.
Although in distinct ways, both G.H. and Macabéa are depicted as struggling within their socio-cultural limitations in the attempt to come to not only to a recognition of the self, but also an understanding of their own individuality. At times Lispector situates these inter-personal struggles in contact with a higher impersonal mystic force of "reality" or "God," and sometimes this contact is not voluntary but fraught with violence. Lispector, in various interviews, revealed her personal skepticism about the existence of a traditional concept of God, a characteristic which would later become evident in the subtext of A Paixão Segundo G.H.:

Deus é o que o dicionário não explica. Deus dificulta demais o nosso amor por ele. Como perdoá-lo se tudo nos é tirado? Um Deus que nos faz triste. Devo amar esse Deus que talvez não passe de um “deus.” Isto é, nada. Tenho que amar o Nada. É difícil esse diálogo entre surdos. Como te amar, Deus, se fizeste de mim um simple “isto.” Também não sou nada. Tu és com letra maiúscula, NADA. A tua dor deve ser grande demais e Tua solidão—bem tua solidão eu não vejo. Mas pelo que sinto de solidão final, imagino a Tua. Tua vida na terra deu errado. Simplesmente não funcionou, que fazer então? Será que Deus também reza? e o que pede ele? que peço eu? peço a palavra. A palavra dita. A única palavra por que se espera. Eu condenada a viver. (Varin 148)

With its differing religious and spiritual connotations one may interpret such an experience as another possible interaction between the self and Other. Within this
Lispector's protagonists tend to question the limits between themselves and this greater power and how much control God exercises over their lives.6

Ironically, the sought after answer to the question "Who am I?" is innately wrought with socio-cultural prejudices and preconceptions. Taylor's observations are appropriate here:

I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (35)

In discussing the development and characterization of each protagonist it becomes evident that they are specific examples of different types of Brazilian women. Whereas G.H. is representative of the privileged higher class, Macabéa is her antithesis: a poor and inarticulate nordestina. Although the social status and cultural-geographical standing are unique to each woman, Lispector has emphasized that, despite such differences, both protagonists are women and thus, both are still susceptible to the same moral and spiritual restrictions within the socio-cultural matrix (Ricoeur: prefigurative, Lacan: unconscious discourse).

6 Various critics, such as Krabbenhoft, Patai, and Sant'Anna have written on the concept of God in Lispector's works as a mystical and/or ritualistic experience. Where Jones focuses on the dichotomy of heretic versus saint as constructed by G.H. as part of her quest, Sá examines the biblical parallels and paradoxes inherent in A Paixão Segundo G.H. ("Paródia" 223-24). On the other hand, Oliveira tends to emphasize the role of the cockroach as the medium by which G.H. begins her metaphysical journey involving both a personal and social reflection (71).
Nevertheless, in order to truly know the self one must recognize and know the Other:

This is the sense in which one cannot be self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding—and, of course, these classes may overlap. A self exists only within what I [Taylor] call 'webs of interlocution.' (Taylor 36)

Consequently, it becomes clear that language plays a key role in the quest for self-realization. Since self-definition is part of identity attained through dialogue with one's Other, it also becomes an integral component in achieving self-identification. It is important to emphasize that such “webs of interlocution” refer not only to the dialectic exchange with one's Other but also with one's own sense of consciousness throughout the quest for identity.

Nevertheless, Lispector seems to take this concept of identity based on one's interaction with the Other to a more intimate level: first as a woman, but also as a writer and as a mother:

Há três coisas para as quais nasci e para as quais eu dou minha vida. Nasci para amar os outros, nasci para escrever, e nasci para criar meus filhos. O "amar os outros" é tão vasto que inclui também o perdão
It is interesting to note that the same feelings of identity, self-sacrifice, and guilt that Lispector reveals as part of her own character are at times mirrored in her female protagonists. In her writing Lispector depicts as laden with obstacles the need for salvation and the hope that in loving the Other one is loved in return. It is this feeling of not-belonging that Lispector feels she can only conquer through writing. This central motivating force in Lispector helps us recognize and understand how her biographical concerns can infiltrate the characterization of her fictional characters.

It becomes manifest that Lispector exploits language, not only in manipulating the conventional meaning of words and concepts but also in denouncing the very act of writing. She is constantly alerting her readers that they are reading what Lispector has written and it is a writing which is literature, with its own "universe of words" (Sá, Travessia 20). In A Paixão Segundo G.H. Lispector provides a foreword to her "possible readers," specifying that:

Este livro é como um livro qualquer. Mas eu ficaria contente se fosse lido apenas por pessoas de alma já formada. Aquelas que sabem que aproximação, do que quer que seja, se faz gradualmente e penosamente
-atravessando inclusive o oposto daquilo de que se vai aproximar.

Aquelas pessoas que, só elas, entenderão bem devagar que este livro nada tira de ninguém. A mim, por exemplo, o personagem G.H. foi dando pouco a pouco uma alegria difícil; mas chama-se alegria. (13)

It is within an active reading experience that the reader will experience the protagonist’s anguish with the obstacles and sacrifices inherent in the struggle for self-identity and realization that is the crux of the text in both *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* and *A Hora da Estrela*. However Lispector makes it clear that at times such a quest for consciousness can have an opposite outcome to that which was originally planned.

In *Água Viva*, both the act of writing and the act of reading are constantly being questioned in relation to the agonizing feeling of "being" and "living": “Só porque viver não é relatável. Viver não é vivível. Terei que criar sobre a vida. E sem mentir. Criar sim, mentir não. Criar não é imaginação, é correr grande risco de se ter a realidade” (*Paixão* 25). As its title implies, *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* explores an internal plurality in which the passion so ardently awaited by G.H., which is assumed to be erotic, can also be interpreted as mystical. On the other hand, *A Hora da Estrela* is often interpreted as the hour of death in which the protagonist finally enjoys the epitome of fame a movie star is purported to experience. In both these novels Lispector utilizes a sensorial and accessible language while also, paradoxically, creating esoteric images and symbols.
II. Retrieving the Primordial Sense of Being: A Paixão Segundo G.H.

A Paixão Segundo G.H. (1964) was written during a time in Lispector’s life that was trying for her both personally and socially, and many critics have commented on the possible links between this novel and Lispector’s own emotional and psychological state at the time it was written. Aside from the possibilities of such biographical undertones, the novel primarily explores the idea that only in disposing of all knowledge and ideologies that society has given us can a sense of an authentic self be achieved. Moreover, if this process is not followed, the self merely becomes a reflection of an external existence, in which reality stems principally from the intercourse of oneself with society and its conventions, thereby resulting in a distorted image of the inner self. Therefore, identity is achieved through a relationship with the external world based on separation and distinction, in which the external is used to identify the internal in a process of elimination. G.H. recognizes that: “Também para minha chamada vida interior eu adotara sem sentir a minha reputação: eu me trato como as pessoas me tratam, sou aquilo que de mim os outros vêem” (30). The construction of self becomes therefore

7However, in an interview with João Salgueiro, Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna, and Marina Colasanti, Lispector dismisses such possibilities:

É curioso, porque eu estava na pior das situações, tanto sentimental, quanto familiar, tudo complicado. E escrevi A Paixão... que não tem nada a ver com isso. E não reflete a minha vida por que eu não escrevo como catarse, para desabafar, não. Eu nunca desabafo num livro. Pra isso servem os amigos. Eu quero a coisa em si. (Lispector, “Entrevista” 305)

Lispector’s personal friend, Olga Borelli also adds that the genesis of A Paixão Segundo G.H. did not come from her personal hardships at the time, but that after eight years of not writing a single line she was inspired by “algu muito especial e que nem sempre a visitava” to write A Paixão Segundo G.H. “de um só folego” (Borelli xxiii).
unavoidably influenced by the socio-cultural conventions the individual has adopted, over time, as her own.

**A Paixão Segundo G.H.** was the first novel that Lispector wrote in the first person and is one that delves into the suffering necessary to achieve a sense of identity characterized by a state of depersonalization and silence. In the Christian sense, one may interpret "passion" in the title as alluding to Christ's suffering and crucifixion. The title, in its polysemy, insinuates the painful truth of self-discovery and the confrontation between one's self and one's world and the suffering related to the narrating of such experiences. It can be an allusion to G.H.'s spiritual transformation in her movement from personal ignorance to self-awareness. To live this experience is indeed passion in the Christian meaning of the word. Passion and pain are not accidents of existence, but rather an innate part of being human. **A Paixão Segundo G.H.** is more than a text about a woman's search for herself—it is an ontology of the self with the purpose of revealing a being in language transcending all her socio-cultural limits. Lispector considers language as constituent of one's ability to change or create one's identity, but she also indicates that language forms a part of that link with consciousness that so often obscures the truth that one must confront about one's existence.

In **Água Viva**, language is a medium by which the protagonist attempts to attain a sense of inner awareness. But when language fails, only silence ensues. Consequently, to attain a sense of self-awareness the Lispectorian protagonist must struggle against the inadequacies of language to surpass the silence and find an enunciation of the self. Although Fitz believes that, within the postmodernist context, Lispector's narrative
“silence becomes a metaphor for non-communication, for the failure of language”
(“Discourse” 422) it is important to add that, at times, this silence is not one of a total failure of language but the protagonist’s own choice not to use it. It is not necessarily that language fails, but, due to its prefigurative subtext, is incapable of authentically encompassing the female experience. Instead, in an act of self preservation, the character may choose to keep her discovery a secret and remain in silence. But my point is that this is a choice, not an inevitable conclusion. Although Lispector’s protagonists may achieve a non-predetermined independent sense of identity, it is difficult to communicate this new sense of self awareness without suffering the consequence of social isolation. It is important, however, to note that the solitude of silence is not only a negative force but, since its meaning is that of a hiatus in articulation, can also be the venue for a personal sense of respite before moving into the sought after authentic reality (Sá, “Paródia” 234).

The narrative text of *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* is characterized by a circularity in which the last line of each section is repeated as the first line of the following section. This style lends an oratory nature to the text itself. Since the text tends to focus principally on the consciousness of the narrator, it functions in part as a stream of consciousness (Jones 616) in which the narrator describes and reflects on the experience she had the previous day. It is within this personal meditation that the narrator tends to

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8 Fitz adds: “the silence of isolation, the silence born of the realization that whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not, in this world we are alone” (“Discourse” 425).

9 Sant’Anna specifies that the term “oratório” appears at various times throughout the text and concludes that, within the ritual context, it gives “ainda mais solenidade à epifania” (254).
shift between being object and subject at the same time that her soliloquies begin to function both as self-reflective pauses and catalysts for self-definition. As part of this quest, G.H. attempts to reconcile the dichotomies of being and doing, knowing and doubting. In spite of purportedly trying to achieve a new sense of being by undergoing an intimate process of change, a close reading of the text reveals that, within the metaphorical structure of the ritual, G.H. is actually rejecting her existence. She does so in the attempt, within her reality, to experience a “Oneness of Being” (Patai 133, 134). It is, therefore, within these social and religious contexts that G.H. struggles through language to define herself.

If interpreted as the narrative flux of a stream of consciousness, A Paixão Segundo G.H. also reflects the textual flux in search of narrative form within the dichotomy of language/existence (Abdala Júnior and Campedelli 206). Within this self-reflective discourse each of G.H.’s descriptions is accompanied by multiple self reflections. First, there is the actual experience which is followed by a reflection on it, concluding with a reflection on the experience of writing it. For example, in the second section of the novel G.H. describes her apartment now that the maid has left and makes the following philosophical commentaries: “Ao olhar o retrato eu via o mistério. . . . viver não é coragem, saber que se vive é coragem” (28); “Esse—aquela esse—foi o meu maior contato comigo mesma?” (29); and “eu me trato como as pessoas me tratam, sou aquilo que de mim os outros veêm” (30). These personal reflections are then followed by her impressions about her writing: “Não minto para formar verdades falsas. Mas usei
demais as verdades como pretexto. A verdade como pretexto para mentir? Eu poderia relatar a mim mesma o que me lisonjeasse, e também fazer o relato da sordidez” (31).

Just as in Água Viva, the reader follows the narrator’s gradual process of gaining understanding as she writes about her previous experiences. Once more, the truth claims expressed in the text are brought into question because of the confessional tone of the first-person narrator. The narrative voice seems to reveal more than intended while expressing the idea that language is inadequate to enunciate her experience.

Since language is inadequate to encompass her experience, silence becomes an articulation of those limits. Silence is established as a recourse that emphasizes the need to speak and, by extension, that establishes narrative not as an option but as a requirement to live. It becomes evident that, for Lispector, silence is developed in the interval between words that are incapable of embodying the meaning she desires. Sá adds that: “O ser é a raiz da voz e da linguagem e esta, a raiz do silêncio. O silêncio final recupera a realidade como um pensamento que não se pensa” (“Paródia” 218). Just as her texts are not structured by narrative plot but are instead self-reflective, Lispector’s use of language is a response to a desire to capture the undescribable. Although silence is presented at times as the limits of conventional understanding, beyond which lies an unarticulated being, for G.H. silence also functions as an allusion to the unconscious, be it God or the unnameable or unattainable. Yet, aside from marking the personal hiatus of the protagonist, silence also tends to add a melancholic tone to the text that goes beyond frustration and borders on an acceptance of futility. Waldman describes this underlying tone as: “a sensação, para aquele que lê, de alguém que segue por uma ponte que, de
repente, interrompe, e deixa o caminhante suspenso no ar, sem a lembrança dos passos já realizados" ("Retórica" 9).

But what aim can one discern in this novel? Let us recall that the novel opens with: "estou procurando, estou procurando. Estou tentando entender. Tentando dar a alguém o que vivi e não sei quem, mais não quero ficar com o que vivi" (15). The novel changes into an ontology of self-discovery describing being not only beyond language but also in language. For Lispector language is itself a paradox in which: “A palavra é proibida, porque sempre se vai além da coisa. Porém, jamais se poderá atingir a coisa se não se passar pela proibição da palavra—esta a incumbência do escritor” (Sá, “Paródia” 235). This ontological process may also be construed as the protagonist versus the rational paradigm which predefines her, and this same protagonist’s will-to-be versus a collective transcendency which the narrator believes she can attain through writing. Nevertheless, it is through narration that the narrator proposes to reconstruct her self, and it is within this same narrative space that G.H. experiences both the loss and recovery of self.

Taking this into account, some critics10 have examined A Paixão Segundo G.H. as a mystical text or at least a text within the mystical tradition.11 Whereas Patai defines the

10Namely, Krabbenhoft, Sá (Travessia), Patai, and Santos.

11Nunes adds that before G.H. becomes a mystic, G.H.’s vision belongs to the “misticismo da escrita” (“Introdução” xxviii). Nunes believes A Paixão Segundo G.H. as the culmination of Lispector’s introspective writing style first initiated in Perto do Coração Selvagem, her first novel to break away from the dominant modernist literary patterns existing in Brazil in 1922 (“Introdução” xxviii).
text as mystical because it uses language to speak of the transcendental world (136) and its structure as ritual, Sá focuses on the novel as mystic experience in reverse, since G.H. is moving from a state of personhood to a material belonging, from articulation to disarticulation. Therefore, G.H. must first be able to attain a sense of being before attempting to find her identity, which is necessary to live fully (Sá, Travessia 134). This being in the world is quite removed from the traditional Christian concept of being one with God. In this approach being is a state of participation wherein individual love and emotions are absent, where life is an amalgam of physical and material reality that is the womb in which the self must make and find his/her plenitude. It is within this context

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12Patai links this statement to the contradiction that exists between the "noncommunicable ‘inner life’ and the need to express it within the limits of language” while also keeping in mind “the paradoxical language characteristic of experiences known as mystical” (136).

13Patai deems A Paixão Segundo G.H. to have the structure of a ritual since the text tends to focus on the narrator’s expression of consciousness while at the same time comparing it to Christ’s passion (134). On the other hand, Santos develops the idea of G.H. as a “hero” on a “mystical-mythical quest” (506). Santos then adds that the heroic model used presents the hero (G.H.) as facing a private ritual of initiation which entails a devaluation of her social class and culture for the promise of a more authentic and natural reality (507).

14For a detailed study of A Paixão Segundo G.H. as both a mystical and sacramental experience see Kenneth Krabbenhoff’s article "From Mysticism to Sacrament in A Paixão Segundo G.H."

15Santos examines this negation of the emotional component to the individual from the perspective of the heroic tradition. Within this context not only did the hero have to be strong enough to take on the challenge but also had to distance him/herself from his/her surroundings before undertaking the endeavour.
of the neuter\textsuperscript{16}, characterized by an absence of beauty and love, that one can achieve an epitome of \textit{being} by existing within the simplicity of just being.\textsuperscript{17} In essence, the process is "uma desaprendizagem das coisas humanas" (Waldman, \textit{Clarice} 67),\textsuperscript{18} in that the narrator abandons the social confines of her life and rejects the cultural paradigms of her world for the chance of gaining a more authentic inner self.

But who is G.H.? G.H. is not merely the two initials\textsuperscript{19} found on the protagonist’s briefcase, but a person, a financially independent woman with no children, who, when the reader first encounters her, has not only lost her maid but also her most recent lover. G.H. is also a woman who appreciates her beauty and fears the ugly and non-aesthetic.

\textsuperscript{16}"Neuter" in the sense of being free of a sexual denomination and its restrictive connotations.

\textsuperscript{17}In his article, Krabbenhoft makes an interesting revelation of the organization of the novel reflecting the steps involved in the mystical experience:

In mystical practice, the tripartite scheme describes the progression from purgation to illumination to union . . . Basically purgation is the process through which the contemplative gains control of his physical self so as to eliminate the distractions of the flesh, the emotions and the physical imagination; illumination is the moment when the soul realizes its full potential independent of attachments to the created world; and union is the direct meeting with or experience of God. (53)

\textsuperscript{18}In making this statement Waldman is alluding to another novel by Lispector, \textit{Uma aprendizagem ou O livro dos prazeres} (1969), as the text with the answers to G.H.’s questions. Here the main character, Lóri, actually courageously recuperates her individual existence. Whereas G.H. loses her humanity, Lóri undergoes a reaffirmation of humanity (Waldman, \textit{Clarice} 67).

\textsuperscript{19}The fact that G.H.’s full name is never revealed enforces the neutral quality of the character herself while, at the same time, not allowing the name to become an implicit character indicator. That is to say, by not giving her protagonist a proper name, Lispector liberates G.H. from any stereotypical classification. Thus, from the beginning of the text the narrator’s identity is unclear not only for the reader but for the narrator herself.
But she has a mystery: "na minha fotografia eu via O Mistério... é que nos olhos sorridentes havia um silêncio como só vi em lagos, e como só ouvi no silêncio mesmo" (28-29). The smiling eyes of her photographs are in masked contrast to the expressionless face. This contrast between the eyes and the face indicates deeper issues. G.H. lives in the comfortable surroundings of her high-rise apartment but because she cannot recognize herself in this person she is also unable to understand or possess this world. The point of entry into the text is the first time G.H. is actually able to really see herself, not as a projection of the perception of others, but as what she herself wishes to be. Yet, what she is able to see is only the result of her organizational skills and not what truly lies behind those smiling eyes.

Further on G.H. admits that:

\[\ldots \text{minha moralidade era o desejo de entender e, como eu não entendia, eu arrumava as coisas, foi só ontem e agora que descobri que sempre fora profundamente moral: eu só admitia a finalidade – para a minha profunda moralidade anterior, eu ter descoberto que estou tão cruelmente viva quanto essa crua luz que ontem aprendi... (26)}\]

It is this same obsession with organizing her life that ultimately leads G.H. to plunge into chaos of both the room and her life even though she believed that "Ordenando as coisas, eu crio e entendo ao mesmo tempo" (37). This breakdown in the organization of her surroundings is necessary in order to undertake the reconstruction of an identity which has been lost behind the orderly arrangement of things. The quest for identity begins to develop slowly, characterized by both a deep sense of suffering and a deep sense of
pleasure. On a metaphorical level, the dichotomy of order/chaos can be related to the creative process of writing. That is to say, G.H.'s loss and rejection of order in her life is mirrored in the chaotic sequence of enunciations in the text that exist in marked contrast to the conventional structure of the novel.20

It is this experience of reading and writing which constitutes the passion according to G.H.; is inherently linked to the pursuit of self-esteem as well as to a stronger sense of identity: “... a explicação de um enigma é a repetição do enigma. O que És e a resposta é: És. O que existe? e a resposta é: o que existe. Eu tinha a capacidade da pergunta, mas não a de ouvir a resposta” (137). In the end, G.H. is impelled by a mystical state of inner awareness beyond the limits of the language of patriarchy and into an all-encompassing state of silence. A silence that not only reflects her own lack of words but also manifests her deafness towards the answers uttered in response to her questions.

G.H. first comes to recognize that "o apartamento me reflete" (34) and that it was a comfortable place to live, where language could express both her private and public identity:

Como eu, o apartamento tem penumbras e luzes úmidas, nada aqui é brusco; um aposento precede e promete o outro . . . . Tudo aqui é a réplica elegante, irônica e espiritousoa de uma vida que nunca existiu em parte alguma: minha casa é apenas uma criação artística. (34)

20 Frizzi speaks of an “antithesis between organization and disorganization” within Lispector’s non-conventional development of discourse in the construction of meaning (25).
It is in narrating her experience that G.H. recognizes that she had not really understood or possessed the world she lived in. Instead she confesses to being a mere copy of what was expected of her, and that in reality: “... o mundo não era meu: eu podia usufruir-o. Assim como também aos homens eu não os havia feito meus, e podia então admirá-los, como se ama sem egoísmos, como se ama uma ideia, eu nunca os torturava” (35). One may say that her failure to recognize her lovers as her sexual Other prevented her from recognizing her own identity and her own inner direction in life:

Eu era a imagem do que não era, e essa imagem do não-ser me cumulava toda: um dos modos mais fortes é ser negativamente... E vivendo o meu "mal", eu vivia o lado avesso daquilo que nem sequer eu conseguiria querer ou tentar... Só agora sei que eu já tinha tudo, embora de modo contrário: eu me dedicava a cada detalhe do não. Detalhadamente não sendo, eu me provava que—que eu era. (36)

It becomes clear that G.H. has lived a superficial life: she lived six months with the same maid and she cannot even remember what she looks like, and admits to ending her most recent love affair out of tediousness and boredom. In this section of the novel G.H. also reveals the loss of her "third leg," a metaphor for her former dependence on both social convention and her appropriation of its structures, all of which gave her an initial sense of equilibrium. The compartmentalizing of all her surroundings and experiences that formed part of her immediate reality ultimately leads G.H. to form barriers which prevent her from participating in her world. It is this failure to associate with her surroundings that compels G.H. to go within herself to seek her true identity.
Similar to the structure of the short stories in *Laços de Família*, Linspector has created *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* from a momentary experience or minor episode that, as an isolated incident, seemed insignificant at first glance, since action is virtually non-existent, but that takes on dramatic proportions as the psychological level unfolds. In *A Paixão Segundo G.H.*, the reader becomes aware that the dramatic intensity of the novel is centred on the discourse rather than plot or action. *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* is a psychological narrative in which a reader's main focus becomes the psychological reflections and development of the protagonist within the overall construct of the narrative. A sense of generalization and indeterminacy seems to dominate the text and in avoiding closure and definiteness both the role of the reader and the number of textual interpretations become open-ended.

Yet the biblical parallel, insinuated by the title and by the repetitive cyclical nature of the narrative, gives the novel a discourse similar to orality. This attribute then acts as a structuring device in G.H.'s monologue to the imaginary "you" she constantly calls upon. The repetition of an identical thought with the identical words at some distance between one and the other enunciation creates a sense of intense accumulation and continuous refiguration of G.H.'s thoughts. Meanwhile, it also creates a distinct sound effect within the narrative text as it develops a unique line of argumentation. In the

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21Let us recall that Linspector's *Água Viva* (1973) is a monologue directed towards an imaginary "you" in which the silent interlocutor is only revealed in the discursive mode of the novel. In *Água Viva*, the narrator also attempts to make herself understood by describing, painting, and sculpting: "Por enquanto há diálogo contigo. Depois será monólogo. Depois o silêncio. Sei que haverá uma ordem" (51). What becomes prevalent in both *Água Viva* and *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* is the inability to identify with the interlocutor because one is, at times, unable to grasp the aim of the narrating subject.
end, the novel reads as a long stream of consciousness through which the protagonist describes her continual quest for identity (Jones 616).

But what initiates this chain reaction of questioning the self that ultimately leads to an entire process of self-discovery? Let us recall that this is the first novel in which Lispector utilizes a first-person narrative voice who, at the same time, addresses an imaginary interlocutor. Although this is typical in a monologue, in this case it serves as a technique which sustains the narration since there is never any dialogue in the novel. Moreover, this implicit second person addressee is reiterated in the author's foreword to her readers. It can be said, therefore, that G.H.'s journey is a quest as both an author and a narrator who chooses her audience and develops a relationship with them. The start of this journey has certain biblical undertones expressed in the polarization of body and spirit: a sense of conflict between Church dogma, as a restrictive component of the patriarchy, and the human psyche's need for a sense of authenticity.

On entering the maid's room G.H. is confronted by the sensation of an empty stomach, a necessary emptiness in order to undertake her journey. Some critics have drawn a symbolic parallel between the relationship of G.H., as employer, with her maid in the apartment to the social hierarchy in Brazil and the inherent barrier of communication between the distinct social classes. G.H. refers to Janair as "a representante de um silêncio como se representasse um país, a rainha africana" (47), thereby setting her both socially and racially apart from herself. What shocks G.H. is that

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22Waldman adds that: "Todo este intróito visa a apontar para um recorte social que Clarice faz da sociedade Brasileira" (Clarice 73).
Janair has broken with convention by leaving her a message: a drawing of a naked man and woman accompanied by a dog: "três figuras soltas como três aparições de múmias" (43). But it was not just a drawing: "o desenho não era um ornamento: era uma escrita" (43). Only when G.H. finds herself depicted in the drawing as the male figure, is she really inside the room. Also, the fact that the drawing is of a man and woman suggests a return to the genesis of identity and meaning which then serves as "an emblematic beginning of all human and spiritual comprehension" (Jones 616). Interestingly, the fact that G.H. sees herself represented in the male figure suggests her desire to redefine herself by abandoning the socio-culturally imposed restrictions attached to her own gender.

Not only does G.H. become enclosed in the maid's room in the present time but the room also becomes, metaphorically, an imprisoning desert in which she no longer has a point of reference. Therefore, one may say that it is this "social" confrontation with the absent maid that leads G.H. to situate herself as a subject:

Havia anos que eu só tinha sido julgada pelos meus pares e pelo meu próprio ambiente que eram, em suma, feitos de mim mesma e para mim mesma. Janair era a primeira pessoa realmente exterior de cujo olhar eu tomava consciência. (44)

Brought to the surface by her confrontation with the absent Other, and the feeling of emptiness this gives her, G.H. asks:

O que me acontecia? Nunca saberei entender mas há de haver quem entenda. E é em mim que tenho de criar esse alguém que entenderá.
Moreover, it is this not knowing together with her need to understand that results in the
development of a complex web of tensions.  

At this point G.H. discovers a cockroach and the social tensions now give way to
a recognition of the struggle to survive. Lispector recognizes that the cockroach dates
back to prehistoric time and has survived until the present by its ability to undergo a
series of adaptations, a process similar to that which G.H. is about to undertake in order
to guarantee her own survival.  

Before she makes the decision to kill the cockroach,
G.H. experiences a sense of empowerment in which:

Até então eu nunca fora dona de meus poderes—poderes que eu não
entendia nem queria entender, mas a vida em mim os havia retido para
que um dia enfim desabrochasse essa matéria desconhecida e feliz e
inconsciente que era finalmente: eu! eu, o que quer que seja. (57)

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23 In an interview Clarice revealed her secret fascination with "bugs":
Não ter nascido bicho é uma minha secreta nostalgia. Os bichos me
fantasticam. Eles são o tempo que não se conta. Pareço ter certo horror
daquela criatura viva que não é humana e que tem meus próprios instintos
embora livres e indomáveis. Às vezes eletrizo-me ao ver bicho. Estou
agora ouvindo o grito ancestral de mim: parece que não sei quem é mais a
criatura, se eu ou o bicho. (Waldman, Clarice 19)

24 Sant'Anna goes as far as to state that the relationship between G.H. and the cockroach
is that of: "Uma mulher e uma barata que são a mesma criatura....Essa barata é o duplo
dessa mulher" (241).
G.H. then slams the armoire door on the half exposed body of the cockroach, consequently only half killing it. It is this act of "murder" that leads to the unfolding of a psychoanalytical perspective in which G.H. sees herself totally emptied of her personal life: "Que fizera eu? Já então eu talvez soubesse que não me referia ao que eu fizera a barata mas sim a: que fizera eu de mim?" (57) and:

Como de 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. (61)

The sight of the half killed cockroach incites G.H. to question the social system in which she lives and that has created the impersonal reality she has been accustomed to living in. Now she must choose between integrating herself with the exterior living matter or totally losing herself in the ambiguity of materiality. As previously discussed with Água Viva, the regression to a "matéria-prima" and "plasma seco" is viewed as an implicit step in the effort to recapture the roots of one’s identity. It is both a psychological as well as an emotional reversal that spans centuries back to the genesis of what Lispector terms the "living mud."

This process of self-realization does not only occur within the quotidian but also through personal revelation. G.H. attempts to acquire this revelation by using a language which is in constant flux and that reveals a series of transitory verbal realities that only
provoke new truths. Mattos also links this personal sense of revelation to self-knowledge while adding that: “a revelação objetiva-se em autoconhecimento; caracterizando a criação, torna-se texto poético” (76). As part of the poetic text she creates, G.H. uses language to apprehend her reality and manipulate it to better describe her present consciousness of being:

É que por enquanto a metamorfose de mim em mim mesma não faz nenhum sentido. É uma metamorfose em que perco tudo o que eu tinha, e o que eu tinha era eu–só tenho o que sou. E agora o que sou? Sou: estar de pé diante um susto. Sou: o que vi. Não entendo e tenho medo de entender, o material do mundo me assusta, com os seus planetas e baratas. (71)

By enunciating herself, G.H. takes the first step in redefining herself through an enigmatic discourse which “desnarr[a] para narrar a sua impossibilidade intrínseca” (Tasca 289).

Still, G.H. fears this mindless state25 because it means an abandoning of her defining prefigurative repertoire: “É que eu olhara a barata viva e nela descobria a identidade de minha vida mais profunda. Em derrocada difícil, abriam-se dentro de mim passagens duras e estreitas” (61). By rejecting the familiarity of her socially defined role G.H. would risk no longer being recognized by her society, losing therefore the social

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25In his article "A Return Passage to Non-Intelligence in Clarice Lispector's A Paixão Segundo G.H." Anthony Soares refers to a state of "non-intelligence" as an intermediary step in G.H.'s process of abandoning the old conventions for the possibility of a new sense of self-identity and awareness.
component to the definition of her self-identity. Yet, G.H. attempts to cling to these rules and the order of her social life:

Eu não queria reabrir os olhos, não queria continuar a ver. Os regulamentos e as leis, era preciso não esquecê-los, é preciso não esquecer que sem os regulamentos e as leis também não haverá a ordem, era preciso não esquecê-los e defendê-los para me defender. (63)

In her endeavour to comprehend her experience and make it "socially" compatible G.H. ritualizes her experiences, thereby imposing on her emotional experience of self-enlightenment what is essentially an alien coherent structure. Yet, in the attempt to discover the core of her individuality G.H. recognizes that "eu estava saindo do meu mundo e entrando no mundo" (67). In order to cope with these changes G.H. searches to establish a common point of union between her and the cockroach:

É que por enquanto a metamorfose de mim em mim mesma não faz nenhum sentido. É uma metamorfose em que perco tudo o que eu tinha e o que eu tinha era eu – só tenho o que sou. E agora o que sou? Sou: estar de pé diante de um susto. Sou: o que vi. Não entendo e tenho medo de entender, o material do mundo me assusta, com os seus planetas e baratas.

(71)

26 Patai defines *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* as a “constricting novel” which “provides a powerful portrait of a character suffering from spiritual impoverishment and thirsting for ‘reality’ in some absolute sense” (144). She also defines G.H.’s narrative as one of an “alienated subjectivity” since G.H. fails to unite the personal and social order. Contrary to Patai’s comments, I believe that there tends to be a focus on G.H.’s personal framework of her self awareness because of, in part, the restrictions traditionally placed on woman by her position within the patriarchal hierarchy.
The ritualization of her self-realization culminates in G.H. eating the white matter coming from the wound she inflicted on the cockroach. This single event seems to take on the proportion of a sacred communion in which horror and attraction seem to paradoxically exist on equal planes.²⁷ It is at this point in the narrative text that G.H. reveals that she has entered a stage of dehumanization in which she now searches for the true roots to her "self." At this point she no longer has anything to articulate or to ask for, and is supported only by the ruins of an unknown world. However, she does attain a sense of joy but "era uma alegria sem redenção, não sei te explicar, mas era uma alegria sem a esperança" (77).

Having eaten the cockroach, G.H. experiences a strong sense of nausea. Not only as a strong physical revulsion for having ingested the white matter, but on a metaphorical level, as the nauseating angst of struggling against a rigid patriarchal language system. In order to overcome this sense of physical and metaphorical nausea G.H. ingests the very substance of her nausea.²⁸ In this process G.H. has attained a significant sense of consciousness in which instead of being preoccupied with the world around her, she now concentrates more on her own personal reality of the present moment. The cockroach is the culmination of the primeval past with her own personal past and thereby creates a

²⁷Krabbenhoft defines this dehumanized state from a mystical perspective in which: ...this ritual ingestion functions at least symbolically to seal and confirm G.H.'s initiation into a realm of higher being and spiritual insight, in the same way that the sacrament of the Eucharist is a stepping-stone in the Christian progress toward virtue. (54-55)

²⁸Gonçalves adds that such a sense of nausea can also be a physical manifestation of the protagonist's indecision at rebelling against or acquiescing to the rules established by her society (44).
moment of pure actuality. Nevertheless, it also brings to light feelings of both solitude and isolation. The reality of her new present now exists in opposition to the socially acceptable and, in the eyes of the world around her, it is destined only for personal failure. 29

At this point in the development of G.H.'s quest, she comes to realize that it is now time to live the moment, without the use of words and without retreating from herself. Yet, G.H. cannot help but revert to the prefigurative repertoire she was familiar with and whose limits she previously transgressed. It is interesting to note that since G.H.'s revelation of her nature can be interpreted as one of transcending the human condition, some critics have chosen to expand on the Biblical undertones of the text and compare it to the passion of Christ. But, on the socio-cultural level, G.H. realizes a new perspective of her limits, in which the incident becomes defined as an experience based on suffering in order to achieve the freedom of the inexpressible state of being. G.H. also resists this process of depersonalization, not only hoping to be able to reorganize things again but also because "o neutro era a vida que eu antes chamava de o nada. O neutro era o inferno" (89). It is in organizing her apartment and her life that she could conquer this fear because "fazer seria transcender, transcender é uma saída" (89).

Nonetheless, it is in reaching the point of neutrality that G.H. is able to reaffirm her identity. At this stage the difference between object and subject has now been

29 On this topic Patai affirms that: "To portray human beings as the victims of an ineffable gulf that can only be overcome through a surrender of reason is to use literature for purposes of mystification" (147).
nullified and both have instead become integrated into a reciprocal vision without transcendence:

O neutro é inexplicável e vivo, procura me entender: assim como o protoplasta e o sêmen e a proteína são de um neutro vivo. E eu estava toda nova, como uma recém-iniciada...com a perda da humanidade eu passava orgiacamente a sentir o gosto da identidade das coisas. (106-107) It is also at this stage that G.H. is for herself the same that she sees mirrored in her Other’s eyes. And as long as she views herself through the gaze of the Other G.H. will continue to be manipulated within this pre-established site of ontological definition (Feldstein 167).

In order to explain "to be" and "to exist" as part of alterity G.H. draws a parallel with the verb "to look":

E nesse mundo que eu estava conhecendo, há vários modos que significam ver: um olhar o outro sem vê-lo, um possui o outro, um comer o outro um apenas estar num canto e o outro estar ali também: tudo isso também significa ver. A barata não me via diretamente ela estava comigo. A barata não me via com os olhos mas com o corpo. (80)

In this case, the Other is perceived as an unfolding of the self in its emptiness, in which there is an oblique existence of the "I" and its reflexiveness. It is the reflexive "I," in Portuguese mim, which is the place of identification for both G.H. and the Other. This sense of "neutrality" is characterized by a lack of attributes: without the power to scream, without smell, and without good or bad morality. And it is at the very moment that G.H.
"se deseroíza" that she understands the extent of her superficiality and finds the true roots of her identity.

Even though G.H. wishes to return and recuperate her previous superficiality in order to reintegrate herself into what is human, she cannot negate her experience because it has been too radical. In the end not only does she contact reality through symbols but she eats it. What could be an epiphany\footnote{It is important to note that one can define two types of epiphany: the mystical religious experience and the epiphany in the literary sense. In the mystical religious sense epiphany connotes the appearance of a spiritual manifestation or the revelation of the Christ-child to the Magi. On the other hand, the literary definition tends to refer to the description of an experience, be it in narrative or lyric poetry, which at first seems to be uneventful only to lead to an unexpected revelation. Sant’Anna provides a detailed study of a tripartite concept of epiphany consisting of “pré-epifania, epifânia, pós-epifania” (245), a process comparable to Ricoeur’s own tripartite concept of mimesis.} of sight is actually a ritual of eating, in which the cockroach is not only an icon of life but live mass in itself and part of a larger reality (Sá, Travessia 153). Therefore, one can conclude that, in order to discover its identity the "I" must dislocate itself and depersonalize itself in order to define itself outside the predetermined social precepts that had originally limited it. In essence, the self must abandon all the multiple social paradigms that structure the prefigurative for a new set of values born out of a neutral state and not found in the preconceived prejudices of one's environment but within oneself.

Throughout this journey of self-discovery\footnote{In an interview Lispector remarked ironically that: "Encontra-se apenas o que se acha e não o que se procura" (Waldman, Clarice 19). And when asked to describe her life, she answered: "Vivo no quase, no nunca e no sempre. Quase vivo, quase morro . . . . Sou o quê? um quase tudo" (Waldman, Clarice 20).} one cannot help but notice that Lispector is constantly questioning the individual in the here and now, in the reality that
hides itself and which language pursues "desvestindo-se, despojando-se, desgastando-se até a paixão do silêncio total . . . Que recomeça, paradoxalmente, na paixão de escrever . . ." (Sá, Travessia 22). Hence, in A Paixão Segundo G.H, writing is seen as an approach towards life and not merely a description of a thought or emotion. Similar to the individual's situatedness in the present, language must also be located in the present, meaning it must have "humility" and courage to improvise. It is this openness and orality which testifies to being in the true essence and meaning of the word.32 Ironically, there is also a unique appeal of silence since it is in the pause of silence that all the possible definitions come into being.32 G.H. understands that in order to reach the inexpressable fullness of being itself, the self must first enter a state of utter depersonalization. It is this neutral state that becomes a form of unexplained ecstasy of freedom in the impersonal prefigurative. The voice that searches for identity is real and its language is one of liminal silence that is always an in-between state of mind:

32 Waldman also remarks that:

. . . a mais significativa contribuição de Clarice a nossa língua [brasileira] mais afinada mais flexível, mais expressiva.

A lado dessa contribuição, alinharam-se muitas outras: a diluição dos gêneros, a quebra do tempo linear e do espaço físico, o desnudamento contínuo do processo narrativo e dos problemas da ficção. (Clarice 103)

33 The blank spaces between each fragment of the text also provide a "silence" or pause within the narrative. As discussed with Água Viva, these spaces between fragments should not be interpreted as negative ruptures in the text as insinuated by the traditional definition of a plot-orientated novel. Instead, these pauses link each section, more so in A Paixão Segundo G.H, because of the repetition of the last sentence in the first sentence of the following section. As for the reader, it provides him/her with a moment to pause and reflect on the development of the narrative as well as on the protagonist.
Eu tenho à medida que desempenho – e este é o esplendor de se ter uma linguagem. Mas eu tenho muito mais à medida que não consigo designar. A realidade é a matéria-prima, a linguagem é o modo como vou buscá-la – e como não acho. Mas é do buscar e não achar que nasce o que eu não conhecia, e que instantaneamente reconheço. 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. (180)

Silence has its start in reality and it is silence that passes through the mediation of language in which the act of naming things is a privilege that belongs to reality. When G.H. renounces her personal life, she does so through the destruction of the language of the voice-that-searches-to-be: “O grande vazio em mim será o meu lugar de existir; minha pobreza extrema será uma grande vontade . . . . Como cegos que tateiam, nós pressentimos o intenso prazer de viver” (154-55). “Thus G.H. is at the same time the architect of the [text’s linguistic] labyrinth and the victim of her own creation” (Frizzi 29).
III: Writing through the Mask of the Other: A Hora da Estrela

In 1977, just two months after she died from cancer, Lispector’s novel A Hora da Estrela was published posthumously. Similar to A Paixão Segundo G.H., A Hora da Estrela deals with the challenge of learning to live with the social paradigm of language and of understanding how this paradigm of values and judgments structures identity.

Whereas in A Paixão Segundo G.H. this concept was explored in the first person narrative, in A Hora da Estrela it is expressed through the mediation of a third person narrative voice who attempts to gain a sense of individuality in relation to the Other. In A Hora da Estrela the narrator guides the reader through Macabéa’s search for individuality and it is the narrator who strives for "plenitude of being." Unlike the protagonists of Água Viva and A Paixão Segundo G.H., in A Hora da Estrela, Macabéa is not eloquent.

In her article, "Receiving the Other: The Feminine Economy of Clarice Lispector’s The Hour of the Star," Deborah J. Archer makes the following statement:

...as Lispector wrote about this impoverished woman [Macabéa] with a diseased body who was simply a victim of fate, she was coming to grips with her own diseased body, for she knew that she was dying from cancer. She, too, was the victim of absurd fate. (258)

But death is not the end. From reading Lispector’s literary work, especially Água Viva, one is aware that death is seen as the next step to a different plane of existence. In this respect, Alvaríñó draws the following conclusion: “Y para Clari[c]e Lispector, la oportunidad de morir vicariamente a través de Macabéa y a la vez, sobrevivir por medio de un perpetuo suicidio, el de la escritura” (29).

In reading Lispector one comes to notice that not only do certain philosophical reflections dominate her work but that certain phrases and even paragraphs tend to be repeated. Consequently, critics have commented that Lispector’s writing tends to take on the characteristic of a work in progress in which she is constantly rethinking key ideas. Taking this into consideration, Aréas adds that: “A paixão segundo G.H. funciona como la vuelta de tuerca más apretada, aproximándose a la reducción o al deshojamiento de las grandes preguntas sobre el vivir/escibir. Podemos decir que A hora da estrela es el punto
Interior monologue is not used to express Macabéa’s experiences. Instead, Lispector adopts the persona of Rodrigo S.M. to write Macabéa’s story.

It is important to mention that *A Hora da Estrela* has been cited as one of Lispector’s more overt socio-political texts (Barbosa “Reinforced,” 236). It is through Rodrigo S.M.’s narration of Macabéa’s life and his own personal reflections on his world that the social criticism is conveyed. Aside from his reflections on writing, Rodrigo draws attention to the implications of Macabéa’s poverty while also providing the traditional Lispectorian reflections on life and death. At times Rodrigo’s narration even seems to be coloured by a sense of culpability for Macabéa’s poverty which obliges him to speak of it. Arêas has criticized these confessions as interruptions which punctuate the narration as a whole “convirtiéndola en un discurso gago, titubeante, o que avanza sólo con visible dificultad” (412). However, this multi-levelled narration does not “stutter” per se but rather incorporates the diversity of the narrative voice into a textual experience of the writer Rodrigo as narrator and also Lispector herself as the implied author.\(^{36}\) Each of the narrative voices is not only distinct, but provides a specific perspective in the narration, while also inter-mixing with others at times to create a stronger truth-claim of verisimilitude in the text as a whole. As a result, the multiplicity of narrative voices also

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It is important to note that the “Dedicatória do Autor,” at the beginning of *A Hora da Estrela*, is clarified with “(Na verdade Clarice Lispector),” a technique which accentuates the multiple levels of “authorship” in the novel (21). Barbosa adds that these truth claims of author versus implied author (Clarice Lispector) can also directly affect the “several layers of ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’ presented in the text” (“Tangible” 380).
influences the plurality of significations of the text, albeit in a fragmentary way, but still creating a multi-levelled truth-claim system for the reader.

Similar to G.H., who finds the point of departure for her journey to self-discovery in Janair’s message, Rodrigo attempts to capture Macabéa’s essence in his own narrative. As Arêas points out, A Hora da Estrela, aside from being the continuation of A Paixão Segundo G.H., is a continuation in reverse, since Macabéa does not possess the necessary power of articulation. Inasmuch as it is this contact with the Other that acts as the catalyst to this journey of self-realization, one may interpret this quest as one essentially based on the idea of an "authenticity based on the body."

Hélène Cixous has been both an avid reader and critic of Lispector’s work and in one of her writings she examines the idea of learning to live expressed in this novel. Cixous proceeds to link her reading of A Hora da Estrela to her own study of the question of sexual difference in connection with what she terms libidinal economies: the ways the body is engaged in exchanging with and finding its limits in a social world. It is also related to what Cixous calls écriture féminine, a term she describes as a style of writing that is based on an encounter with another in body be it a piece of writing, a social dilemma, or a moment of passion which consequently leads to the undoing of the hierarchies and oppositions that determine the limits of most conscious life. Yet, this écriture féminine is fraught with the existential and historical position of the female in the world that marginalizes the human subject who may only be redeemed through a

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37Cixous discovered Lispector's work in 1970, a stagnant period in her own career. She consequently attributes her own rejuvenation to this discovery.
living relation with both language and experience. Like G.H., and the narrator in Água Viva, freedom is achieved through language, interpreted by both Cixous and Lispector many times as a freeing, a rebirth: “Estou me fazendo. Eu me faço até chegar ao caroço” (Água Viva 45) and in A Paixão Segundo G.H.: “o primeiro grito ao nascer desencadeia uma vida ... Se eu gritasse desencadearia a existência ... eu estava saindo do meu mundo e entrando no mundo” (67). Hence, in A Hora da Estrela, Macabéas lack of identity is the result of her inability to articulate her self to others (“E Macabéa lutava muda” [100]).

Implicit in this search for the self is also the recognition of the existence of the Other and the ability of alterity to speak as alterity. This in itself implies an acceptance, a tolerance, and yet, the non-comprehension of the Other. If we accept the view expressed by Ricoeur and, to a certain extent Taylor, that language is never neutral and is always contaminated with socio-cultural prejudices and with a predetermined value and moral system, then we can understand that language in itself forces us to attempt to overcome such limitations in order to achieve a sense of individuality outside the socio-cultural context. Yet, in doing so one is essentially distancing oneself from the existentialist perspective. It is actually somewhere between these two poles that one acquires the plenitude and true self-awareness to establish oneself as an individual (“selfhood”) without negating one’s "sameness."

In her probing of the Other-self relationship, Lispector examines reading and writing as those aspects of language which provide us with a catalyst to self-awareness.

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38Both Cixous and Lispector draw parallels between giving birth and writing as well as reverting to the womb and placenta for the true beginning of a primordial sense of being.
because of the reflective possibility. But in A Hora da Estrela one is presented with a narrator writing a text even as it is being read and in which the writing is seen as a form of apprenticeship, and not necessarily leading to a mastery. That is to say, the narrator demonstrates that he has both the prefiguration (the narrativity and language) and the configuration (the educated imagination to focus on the literary act of reading and writing). But the capability of refiguration depends on the opportunity or ability to have a dialectic exchange of the experience of the literary text, a factor which rests not only on his text but, more importantly, on the quality of reader participation. Taking this into consideration, one is not born knowing how to live; one learns to live: and a book consequently does not serve as an intellectual exercise of aesthetic enjoyment but as a lesson and nourishment. Therefore, the writing aspect can also be seen as a means of coming to a better understanding of the self, in which one speaks the truth about one's

39 In her article, Alvarino surmises that: “Tanto el lenguaje como el ser humano, comparten el mismo destino de no poder llegar a su totalidad, el absoluto” (25).

40 Speaking of levels of parody, Sá also makes a clear distinction between the factors involved in the reception of the written text:

A paródia não é, portanto, só um fato de escritura, mas é também um fato de leitura. A análise de um texto e sua descrição retórica não são suficientes para revelar seu caráter paródico. As condições de recepção das obras determinam, em cada grupo social a sensibilidade do público. A eficácia paródica engaja a situação do texto como espaço de uma convivência entre sujeitos que participam de uma mesma cultura. (Travessia 25)
feelings. But in speaking for the Other, the author must maintain a proper distance in order to allow the Other to exist in his/her entirety and to have his/her own voice.

As previously noted in A Paixão Segundo G.H., and now recurrent also in A Hora da Estrela, Lispector focuses on the questioning of the idea of knowledge as appropriation. Both she and Cixous tend to insist on the total experience of the body and mind as well as the distinction between intellectual and bodily knowledge. Lispector’s writings are predisposed to grasp the sensory world through an existential commitment to language in which the real experience leads to a sense of reevaluating both life and living. Why then did Lispector chose a male narrator to tell the story of an insignificant nordestina?42

In the opening “Dedicatória” Lispector informs the reader that: “Esta história acontece em estado de emergência e de calamidade pública. Trata-se de livro inacabado porque lhe falta a resposta” (22). Yet, this quest for knowledge is undermined by the multiplicity of titles that Lispector offers for her novel (23) of which “A Hora da Estrela” is the second option of thirteen. All the titles are organized on the page in the form of a

41 In a rare interview Lispector explained the reason why she wrote:

De um lado, porque escrever é um modo de não mentir o sentimento (a transfiguração da imaginação é apenas um modo de chegar); de outro lado, escrevo pela incapacidade de entender se não usar o processo de escrever. Escrever é compreender melhor. (Waldman, Clarice 22-23)

42 Macabéa comes from the Northeast of Brazil, a region of tortured landscape and the harsh reality of droughts and severe economic ills which has attracted the imagination of many Brazilian writers. Much nordestino literature deals with similar themes of starvation and abandonment, Euclides da Cunha’s (1866-1909) Os Sertões (1901) and Graciliano Ramos’ (1892-1953) Vidas Secas (first published in 1938 and later adapted cinematographically by the director Pereira dos Santos) being key examples.
pyramid with Lispector’s signature centrally located on the page after the fourth title.

Once again the reader must enter Lispector’s game. Each title subconsciously influences the reading of the novel, emphasizing the possibilities of multiple readings and interpretations. By addressing the reader from the beginning of the text, Rodrigo makes the reader well aware that:

Como que estou escrevendo na hora mesma em que sou lido. Só não
início pelo fim que justificaria o começo—como a morte parece dizer sobre
a vida—porque preciso registrar os fatos antecedentes.... é claro que a
história é verdadeira embora inventada.... Proponho-me a que não seja
complexo o que escreverei, embora obrigado a usar as palavras que vos
sustentam. A história —determino com falso livre arbitrio —vai ter uns sete
personagens e eu sou um dos mais importantes deles, é claro. (26-27)

Could this actually be Lispector herself reflecting on her career as a writer in what she knew to be the last few months of her life? This sort of parallel becomes more complex and revealing when the narrator declares that "há direito ao grito. Então eu grito" (27), repeating one of the many titles to be found at the beginning of the novel. More importantly, the narrator reveals that: “Aliás –descubro eu agora –também eu não faço a menor falta, e até o que escrevo um outro escreveria. Um outro escritor, sim, mas teria que ser homem porque escritora mulher pode lacrimejar piegas”⁴³ (28). From this perspective, one can grasp the ironic patriarchal rationalization of choosing the male narrator. Speaking from the patriarchal perspective, this choice of narrator gives the text

⁴³Another title given to the text is: “História Lacrimogênica de Cordel” (23).
a sense of credibility because it is being written from a distanced point of view, thus not risking being “melodramatic” as it would be if written from the sympathetic point of view of a woman.

Moreover, one also becomes aware, just as in A Paixão Segundo G.H., that the role of the narrator, through a form of commentary, also affects the delineation of the other characters. Rodrigo provides an interpretation which presents information not only about Macabéa but also about himself. He also discloses to the reader a series of judgements that, by their very nature, reflect his own moral stand. Overall, as both narrator and writer, Rodrigo presents a narration not always limited to Macabéa but significant to the case of the nordestinos in Brazil. At the same time, Rodrigo’s commentary on writing is not only concerned with the socio-political problems of the represented world but also with the paradox of representing it.

Just as G.H. is the narrator of her own experience and is able to make the ironic connection between language and silence, so does the narrator in A Hora da Estrela with respect to his own literary creation:

Eu não sou um intelectual, escrevo com o corpo. E o que eu escrevo é uma névoa úmida. As palavras são sons transfundidos de sombras que se entrecruzam desiguais, estalactites, renda, música transfigurada de órgão...

Juro que este livro é feito sem palavras. É uma fotografia muda. Este livro é um silêncio. Este livro é uma pregunta.... Mas desconfio que toda essa conversa é feita apenas para adiar a pobreza da história, pois estou com
medo.... E foi quando pensei em escrever sobre a realidade, já que essa me ultrapassa.... Mas acontece que só escrevo o que quero, não sou um profissional – e preciso falar dessa nordestina senão sufoco. Ela me acusa e o meio de me defender é escrever sobre ela. (30-31)

It can be said that the encounter between the narrator and Macabéa parallels the encounter of consciousness experienced by G.H. when she comes to recognize the significance of the matter coming out of the cockroach. Both Rodrigo and G.H. are motivated by passion in their confrontation with their respective nauseous and problematic subjects. Also, in both instances writing with the body is in direct opposition to writing as an intellectual exercise. In both cases the nauseous subject behaves much like a mirror of its Other that it fails or does not wish to recognize as an necessary part of its own existence. Macabéa embodies the poverty implicit in the character of Janair in A Paixão Segundo G.H., but Macabéa is not just a financially poor nordestina but poor of body: “ela é virgem e inócu, não faz falta a ninguém” (28) and “Macabéa tinha ovários murchos” (76) and “Macabéa não tinha força de raça, era subproduto” (76).

Just as G.H. recognized the social difference between herself and Janair, the narrator in A Hora da Estrela makes an aside in his text to address the same problem:

Se o leitor possui alguma riqueza e vida bem acomodada, sairá de si para ver como é às vezes o outro. Se é pobre, não estará me lendo porque lere-me é supérfluo para quem tem uma leve fome permanente. Faço aqui o

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44Let us recall that Lispector knew well this impoverished northeastern region of Brazil.
Yet, he also admitted earlier in the text that, as a writer: “Sim, não tenho classe social, marginalizado que sou. A classe alta me tem como um monstro esquisito, a média com desconfiança de que eu possa desequilibrá-la, a classe baixa nunca vem a mim” (33).45

Both these declarations about the concept and traps of social class are made by the narrator in the attempt to bridge the possible social differences immanent in the reader’s participation in the narrativity of the text, an inevitable factor that can affect his/her ability to understand the narrator’s intended aim. What surfaces in the text are indications of how both economic status and cultural presuppositions can create friction between the self and Other. Prejudice, repugnance, fear, and guilt tend to infiltrate the narrator’s class prejudice and stereotypical depictions of Olimpico and Glória, while his sympathetic tone towards Macabéa is a product of a subconscious sense of guilt.

However, when it comes to writing about his subject, Macabéa, the narrator admits that she represents a reality whose existence does not want to admit much like G.H.’s confession about her own secludedness from the real world: “(Estou passando por um pequeno inferno com esta história.) ... (A moça é a verdade da qual eu não queria saber....)” (Hora 55). Therefore, as Macabéa struggles and suffers just to exist within her economic and sexual poverty, so does Rodrigo struggle in writing her story.

45In an interview where she was asked about her social class Lispector made an almost identical statement to this.
Consequently, the text tends to evolve/revolve around the narrator's dilemma of trying to narrate Macabéa's small and insignificant life, during which he, Rodrigo S. M. Relato, comes to the paradoxical conclusion that although something may at first seem small does not mean that it may not be something larger. At one point in the novel Rodrigo states that:

Só eu a vejo encantadora. Só eu, seu autor, a amo. Sofro por ela.... Essa moça não sabia que ela era o que era, assim como um cachorro não sabe que é cachorro. Daí não se sentir infeliz. A única coisa que queria era viver. Não sabia para que, não se indagava.... Antes de nascer ela era uma idéia? Não tinha aquela coisa [Macabéa] delicada que se chama encanto.

Antes de nascer ela era morta? E depois de nascer ela ia morrer? (42-43)

In the same manner that G.H. sought to abandon the self image that society had predetermined for her, the narrator in this case attempts to find the genesis to Macabéa's own dismal existence. This inquiry into Macabéa's being becomes problematic since she is, in essence, a totally naked being in the sense that she has no roots, both her parents being dead, and she does not even remember their names. She is not able to have children, not by choice as in G.H.'s case, but because her ovaries are shrivelled up. She is

46Some critics have mentioned the sado-masochistic suggestion in Rodrigo's initials S.M. In their book, The Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar point out that: "Male sexuality...is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power [in which] the poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis" (4). Paradoxically, Lispector subverts the ideal of male authorship; she describes Rodrigo as struggling and suffering to be able to express something as "insignificant" as the life of a nordestina. In this case "pen is envy" / "penis envy" is not applicable since Rodrigo is attempting to put into writing what the illiterate Macabéa is unable to do for herself.
a stranger in a city with no friends and her only contact with the exterior world is a radio program on Rádio Relógio that she never truly understands. It becomes evident that Macabéa lives in a personal limbo because she has no socio-cultural ties to her surroundings, unlike G.H., who struggled to overcome the social chains that prevented her from knowing her authentic self.

Although Rodrigo describes Macabéa as a mere "sopro de vida" (55),47 he admits in an aside that he has fallen in love with his creation:

Sim, estou apaixonado por Macabéa, a minha querida Maca, apaixonado pela sua feiúra e anonimato total pois ela não é para ninguém.

Apaixonado por seus pulmões frágeis, a magricela.... (Vejo que tentei dar a Maca uma situação minha: eu preciso de algumas horas de solidão por dia senão "me muero".)

Quanto a mim, só sou verdadeiro quando estou sozinho. (86-87)

What is first proposed as a biography of Macabéa’s life also becomes an account of the birth of the author since the author/narrator is as much part of the text as his protagonists. In the process of trying to convey the oppressive facts about Macabéa’s existence, the narrator also undergoes, through the exercise of language in his writing, a process of not only self-knowledge but also knowledge of his socio-cultural context:

Se esta história não existe, passará a existir. Pensar é um ato. Sentir é um fato. Os dois juntos –sou eu que escrevo o que estou escrevendo .... A

47 Um Sopro de Vida was Lispector’s last novel, published posthumously, and which critics see as the last component in the A Paixão Segundo G.H. and A Hora da Estrela trilogy.
verdade é sempre um contato interior e inexplicável. A minha vida a mais
verdadeira é irreconhecível, extremamente interior e não tem uma só
palavra que a signifique. (25)

As in A Paixão Segundo G.H., there is also an implicit return in A Hora da Estrela to the
freedom of the neutral or the "material básico da palavra" (Hora 28). This concern for the
neutral becomes pivotal to one's effort to attain selfhood by rediscovering the self:
"Desculpai-me mas vou continuar a falar de mim que sou meu desconhecido, e ao
escrever me supreendo um pouco pois descobri que tenho um destino" (Hora 29). It is in
telling Macabéa's story that the narrator comes to realize that: "É paixão minha ser o
outro. No caso a outra. Estremeço esquálido igual a ela" (45). It is this quality that
creates the inherent link not only between Rodrigo and Macabéa but also between the
role of the writer and his creation.

Rodrigo's need to tell the story without lying, a desire also expressed by G.H.,
reflects his need to use simple terms in order to be able to speak of Macabéa's own basic
existence. Language, therefore, must be simple in order to be precise and to be able to
encapsulate the entire body within its living reality:

Tenho então que falar simples para captar a sua [de Macabéa] delicada e
vaga existência. Limite-me a humildemente—mas sem fazer estardalhaço
de minha humildade que já não seria humildade—limite-me a contar as
fracas aventuras de uma moça numa cidade toda feita contra ela. (29)

Therefore, the narrator becomes poor, sleeps little, gets dark circles under his eyes, does
not shave, is naked or dressed in rags, abstains from sexual activity and soccer all in
order to put himself into Macabéa's level of existence. It is in getting closer to Macabéa that Rodrigo becomes sympathetic to her condition and consequently transforms himself into a subject being written about. Hence the narration takes on a parallel plot development in which we have the narrator as subject telling his own story while at the same time still narrating Macabéa's story:

Quanto à moça, ela vive num limbo impessoal, sem alcançar o pior nem o melhor. Ela somente vive, inspirando e expirando, inspirando e expirando.

Na verdade—para que mais que isso? O seu viver é ralo. Sim. Mas por que estou me sentindo culpado? E procurando aliviar-me do peso de nada ter feito de concreto em benefício da moça. (38)

This narration is therefore characterized by a series of direct and indirect discourses which are both continuous and broken, one becoming the shadow of the Other and where one is repeatedly mirrored and identified by the Other.

The mirror metaphor not only symbolizes the duality of the individual but also her fragmentation. While looking at herself in the mirror Macabéa not only sees her own image but her reflection seems to multiply itself into various images. Rodrigo at one point reveals that: "Vejo a nordestina se olhando ao espelho e—um ruflar de tambor—no espelho aparece o meu rosto cansado e barbudo" (37). The fact that the narrator's image is also reflected in the mirror is denotive of Macabéa's own lack of self-image and identity, and also emphasizes the intimacy the writer feels in constructing Macabéa's narrative. On another occasion, while looking at the mirror, Macabéa attempts to establish a dialogue between herself and her image, yet: "Só vagamente tornava
conhecimento da espécie de ausência que tinha de si mesma. Se fosse criatura que se exprimisse diria: O mundo é fora de mim, eu sou fora de mim” (39). But Macabéa is unable to recognize herself or her existence and it is this inability that prevents her not only from being self-aware at the beginning of the novel but also from communicating with those around her. Consequently, the image that she projects is one of silent abandonment.

In order to prevail over Macabéa’s ineptitude to express herself, the narrator takes on the task of giving a verbal structure to her quest. Peixoto goes as far as to say that “if her narrator is a mask, Lispector seems to imply, then so is her autobiographical ‘self’” (91). In his role as narrator Rodrigo, through his own personal story, dramatizes the act of storytelling as a tripartite experience. All three textual interactions are unstable and often aggressive, hinging on identification and rejection, sympathy and repulsion. Firstly, Lispector gives her narrator a male identity and he intrinsically gives her male blood. That is to say, the author is a woman who assumes a male mask; then this blurring of gender is further manipulated when the narrator devises a fictional female as his own mask and his own double. Archer also explores the multi-leveled use of the various narrative masks and concludes that:

The effect is a symbiotic relationship between the novel’s form and content, as well as a correspondence between author, narrator and protagonist: Rodrigo’s (Lispector’s) struggle with language reflects Macabéa’s struggle as an illiterate; Rodrigo’s (Lispector’s) fear and
indecision about writing Macabéa’s existence reflect Macabéa’s own
aimless, dire existence. (258)

The question of the narrator’s gender becomes crucial to the text since he repeatedly
refuses the rhetoric of pity for his own broader repertoire of emotions, including negative
ones towards Macabéa. More importantly, this mask also increases the distance between
the narrator and character, which, in itself, indicates the outrageous presumption that
writing the Other, especially the oppressed Other, implies (Peixoto 92).

Yet this relationship between artist and creation unites both characters at the end
of the novel when the narrator equates Macabéa’s death to his own:

Até tu, Brutus?!

Sim, foi este o modo como eu quis anunciar que –que Macabéa
morreu....

Qual foi a verdade de minha Maca? Basta descobrir a verdade que
ele logo já não é mais: passou o momento. Pergunto: o que é? Resposta:

não é....

Macabéa me matou.

Ela estava enfim livre de si e de nós. Não vos assusteis, morrer é um

instante, passa logo, eu sei porque acabo de morrer com a moça. (104-5)

Ironically, Macabéa’s death is representative of his own artistic death since the story
which has given him life has now come to its end: in writing Macabéa’s life story,
Rodrigo has undertaken the process of configuration utilizing his own prefigurative
narrativity along with his knowledge of Macabéa’s own life experiences. What is then left
at the end of the text, after Macabéa’s physical death and the narrator’s symbolic death, is the process of refiguration. It is this refigurative process which then restarts the cycle of literary creation by opening up the opportunity for a dialectical exchange, a similar process that the narrator has attempted to maintain throughout his text in the effort to keep alive not only his text but also himself and his protagonists.

However, how does the question of the narrator’s life and existence ultimately affect Macabéa? Even though she is forced to live in very poor conditions and has no knowledge beyond her basic existence she does have a rudimentary sense of self:

"Porque, por pior que fosse sua situação, não queria ser privada de si, ela queria ser ela mesma" (47-48). In the same manner that G.H. and Rodrigo confronted their realities, Macabéa’s naiveté and innocence gives reality a different interpretation:

Pois era muito impressionável [Macabéa] e acreditava em tudo o que existia e no que não existia também. Mas não sabia enfeitar a realidade.

Para ela a realidade era demais para ser acreditada. Aliás a palavra "realidade" não lhe dizia nada. (49)

Ironically, even though the narrator admits that Macabéa is his artistic creation he confesses that he cannot do anything to help her: "Juro que nada posso fazer por ela" (51). Much like G.H., Macabéa must be left to her own devices to come to a sense of self-realization, but with a more limited knowledge and experience than that of her counterpart in A Paixão Segundo G.H.

Interestingly, the narrator does not name his creation but refers to her only by her social label of a nordestina. It is only halfway through the novel (page fifty-nine) that
Macabéa herself reveals her name while speaking with Olimpico. Nevertheless, the power to name herself is diminished when Olimpico declares that her name sounded like an illness. As mentioned in Rodrigo’s case, to write equals to exist in the world, a concept to which Macabéa represents the antithesis:

Acho [Macabéa] que não preciso vencer na vida.

Foi a única vez que falou de si própria para Olimpico de Jesus.

Estava habituada a se esquecer de si mesma. Nunca quebrava seus hábitos, tinha medo de inventar. (66)

In addition to not eating properly because she believed that to live one had to suffer, Macabéa does not expect that she has to get anything out of life. Her attitude is not surprising, since her abusive aunt broke her spirit as a child; subsequent poverty has weakened her body; the patriarchy neutralizes her sensuality, and foreign stereotypes of beauty such as Marilyn Monroe encourage her to despise her own appearance. In contrast, Gloria represents Macabéa’s antithesis: she fulfills this definition of beauty and is able to conform to the foreign stereotypes of femininity—she dyes her hair blond and wears bright red lipstick and is able to manipulate men by using her own sexuality. Olimpico, on the other hand, represents the stereotypical male who falls for Gloria’s charms and ultimately abandons Macabéa for her.

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48 Lispector uses the name Macabéa as an allusion to the Jewish warrior “Macabeu,” a renowned defender of the Jewish nation who fought in a famous battle only to lose, though he was nonetheless glorified as a warrior. Similarly, one may interpret Macabéa to be the “redeemer” of her own people in representing the common resistance not only of the nordestinos but of women in general.
For Macabéa, living as she does is all that she needs and the narrator even comments that "a sua voz [Macabéa's] era crua e tão desafinada como ela mesma era" (67) and that "[ela] não se preocupava com o próprio futuro: ter futuro era luxo" (75). Unlike G.H. in A Paixão Segundo G.H., Macabéa does not have to abandon the mask of an old self in order to be able to attain the freedom of a genuine identity based on one's interior and not on the exterior which surrounds the self.49 What Macabéa needs to do in order to realize her sense of self is to value herself, not only as a human being, but as an individual with feelings and a future.

Moreover, in the same manner that she believed a future to be a luxury for her, Macabéa also declares that "tristeza também era coisa de rico, era para quem podia, para quem não tinha o que fazer. Tristeza [também] era luxo" (79). Yet she suffers the pain and sadness of existing as a sensual being who is both unsatisfied and hungry, practising kissing a wall as a child and never being understood and appreciated as an adult:

"Quando ela era pequena, como não tinha a quem beijar, beijava a parede. Ao acariciar ela se acariciava a si própria." (97). Interestingly Macabéa reveals that she does have a concept of herself and, similar to G.H., it is a sense of identity based on the knowledge of both a sexual and social status: "Quando acordava não sabia mais quem era. Só depois é

49Once again it is interesting to acknowledge Lispector’s own personal reflection revealed in an interview:

Luto por conquistar mais profundamente a minha liberdade de sensações e pensamentos, sem nenhum sentido utilitário: sou sozinha, eu e minha liberdade.... Sou limitada apenas pela minha identidade.... Minha essência é inconsciente de si própria e é por isso que cegamente me obedeco.

Estou tão perdida. Más é assim mesmo que se vive: perdida no tempo e no espaço. (Waldman, Clarice 25)
que pensava com satisfação: sou datilógrafa e virgem, e gosto de coca-cola. Só então vestia-se de si mesma, passava o resto do dia representando com obediência o papel de ser" (52). As previously discussed in A Paixão Segundo G.H., G.H. finds it necessary to enter a meditative phase in order to achieve a state of the neutral implicit in attaining that enlightened state of being, in Macabéa's case the reader is told that she:

Não sabia que meditava pois não sabia o que queria dizer a palavra. Mas parece-me [the narrator] que sua vida era uma longa meditação sobre o nada. Só que precisava dos outros para crer em si mesma, senão se perderia nos sucessivos e redondos vácuos que havia nela. (54)

The aim of meditating is to empty oneself, as G.H. has said, but in Macabéa's case she cannot do this because she is already empty. Unlike G.H., there is nothing she needs to void herself of in order to attain her selfhood. It is this inner emptiness sought by G.H. and innate in Macabéa that approaches the state of grace before achieving selfhood. It is Macabéa's simplemindedness which attenuates anguish and self-division whereas it is G.H.'s self-reflection which causes her pain and suffering. One may say that Macabéa is ideally open to existence as the quintessential vulnerable being while at the same time she possesses an unsought and unconscious wisdom.50

50Peixoto adds that:

Macabéa's position as a victim transcends motivations of gender, class, and what might be loosely called race, factors that nevertheless contribute to her oppression. This hyperbolically naïve, unprotected bewildered young woman...signifies the shared human helplessness of beings engulfed in the brutality of life... (97)
Nevertheless, it is during one of the conversations between Olímpico and Macabéa that the reader comes to fully realize the extent of Macabéa’s lack of perception of herself:

Ele: –Pois é.
Ela: –Pois é o quê?
Ele: –Eu só disse pois é!
Ela: –Mas "pois é" o quê?
Ele: –Melhor mudar de conversa porque você não me entende.
Ela: –Entender o quê?
Ele: –Santa Virgem, Macabéa, vamos mudar de assunto e já!
Ela: –Falar então de quê?
Ele: –Por exemplo, de você.
Ela: –Eu?!
Ele: –Por que esse espanto? Você não é gente? Gente fala de gente.
Ela: –Desculpe mas não acho que sou muito gente.
Ele: –Mas todo mundo é gente, meu Deus!
Ela: –É que não me habituei. (64)

This conversation is a crucial illustration of the importance of a dialectic exchange in the process of establishing Macabéa’s sense of her own identity. The fact that Macabéa admits to not knowing who she is and believing that she is not worth anything is not corrected by other characters in the novel. Instead it is reiterated by Olímpico’s constant
insults and ultimately abandoning her for her friend Glória, not to mention this following comment:

...Escuta aqui: você está fingindo que é idiota ou é idiota mesmo?

–Não sei bem o que sou, me acho um pouco... de quê?... Quer dizer não sei bem quem eu sou.

–Mas você sabe que se chama Macabéa, pelo menos isso?

–É verdade. Mas não sei o que está dentro do meu nome. Só sei que eu nunca fui importante. (73)

What emerges is the associating of a social worth with the ability to attain a sense of self. That is to say, since Macabéa's Other is unable to value her, this same indifference is then reflected in her own inability to give herself a sense of identity. Yet, it is the narrator who then intervenes and attempts to give her some sense of being in saying that "seu sexo era a única marca veemente de sua existência" (88).

In the same manner that G.H.'s search for a true self climaxes in her attainment of a self-expression more representational of her reality and not that of the plastic reality imposed by society's preconceptions, Macabéa also achieves a sense of empowerment through the mediation of language. In Macabéa’s case, she visits a fortune teller to find

51In this case one may interpret Macabéa’s Other not only with respect to the theory of alterity but also as referring to Olimpico, a fellow nordestino struggling within the same socio-economic context as herself.

52In his article about witchcraft and spiritism in Brazil, Nelson Vieira discusses Lispector’s *A Hora da Estrela* as identifying with the popular classes because of its underlying “supernatural” components of popular culture. Central to his argument is the depiction of the fortune teller known to practice *macumba* (voodoo) and breaking *feitiços* (spells) (Vieira 184-85).
out her future, something she termed earlier as a luxury, to receive the wonderful news that she is about to have a change of fortune and is to meet a rich foreigner who will ask her to marry him. Needless to say Macabéa leaves the fortune teller's home with a different perception of her life:

Macabéa ficou um pouco aturdida sem saber se atravessaria a rua pois sua vida já estava mudada. E mudada por palavras . . . Até para atravessar a rua ela já era outra pessoa. Uma pessoa grávida de futuro. Sentia em si uma esperança tão violenta como jamais sentira tamanho desespero. Se ela não era mais ela mesma, isso significava uma perda que valia por um ganho. (98)

Macabéa’s sense of self is changed by the power of words, the rebirth insinuated by Cixous’ concept of the freeing quality of words in écriture féminine. In Macabéa’s “hour of the star” the narrator reveals:

Tanta estava viva que se mexeu devagar e acomodou o corpo em posição fetal. Grotesca como sempre fora. Aquela relutância em ceder, mas aquela vontade do grande abraço. Ela se abraçava a si mesma com vontade do doce nada . . . Agarrava-se a um fiapo de consciência e repetia mentalmente sem cessar: eu sou, eu sou, eu sou. Quem era, é que não sabia. Fora buscar no próprio profundo e negro âmago de si mesma o sopro de vida que Deus nos dá. (103)

Ironically, it is at the moment of her death that Macabéa not only comes to love herself and fight to live but also affirm her own identity.
Whereas G.H. only experienced an emotional and psychological death so that the new sense of self could be born, Macabéa literally dies. Just as for G.H., the moment of death is a time of silence in which "Macabéa lutava muda" (100) and for the first time people noticed her "só que agora pelo menos a espíram, o que lhe dava uma existência" (100). The narrator also brings to the reader's attention that "Macabéa no chão parecia se tornar cada vez mais uma Macabéa como se chegasse a si mesma" (101), thereby attaining "o ápice da sua vida" (101). It is at this moment that the reader discovers that to reach "a hora da estrela" means to die. The "hour of the star" is the moment in which one achieves recognition in the Other's eyes and for Macabéa this comes only in her death. It is as she lies dying that she finally expresses herself as a being:

Era uma maldita e não sabia. Agarrava-se a um fiapo de consciência e repetia mentalmente sem cessar: eu sou, eu sou, eu sou. Quem era, é que não sabia. Fora buscar no próprio profundo e negro âmago de si mesma o sopro de vida que Deus nos dá. (103)

It is in this final moment before death that Macabéa achieves insight into being an individual, but without the theatricality or fame that "the hour of the star" tends to imply.

In A Hora da Estrela, her last novel before her death, Lispector removes the narrator's mask as novelist when she identifies herself with the narrator. In the end, Lispector sees literature as an art along with the artifices used to create it. Nevertheless, this unmasking of literature does not eliminate its capacity as representational art, mimesis, and a vicarious space of reality. Both A Paixão Segundo G.H. and A Hora da Estrela explore the idea that a full awareness of the use made of self-expression and
writing can lead to an authentic sense of self. Implicit to this search for identity is the requirement that language must achieve a sense of "neutrality," void itself of its socio-cultural prejudices, so that it may actually lead one to the state of self-realization. It is in this journey towards a sense of self that one truly experiences the pain of existing, of living, and for the author, the pain of writing.

IV: Suzana Amaral’s Cinematographic Interpretation of Lispector’s A Hora da Estrela

Pois na hora da morte a pessoa se torna brilhante estrela de cinema, é o instante de glória de cada um e é quando como no canto coral se ouvem agudos sibilantes.

(A Hora da Estrela 44)

There is no doubt that the interface between fiction and cinema is one of the most developed in current cinema studies, yet in the case of the unique texture of Lispector’s text this relationship is almost unexplored. All I can do here is indicate some of the issues that have yet to be considered by Lispector criticism. To put it in its most basic terms: the fiction film is a double representation. First, the setting and the actors represent a pre-existing fictional situation; and second, the film itself, in the form of juxtaposed images and the interplay of the visual and the verbal, depicts the first
representation. In other words the filmic representation of Lispector offers us an entirely new, yet deeply related aesthetic configuration of the self.

In 1985 the Brazilian director, Suzana Amaral, wrote the script to film Lispector's *A Hora da Estrela*, for which she won the *Urso de Prata* award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1986. Filmic adaptations form part of new forms of narration which have emerged as an appropriation of stories from older art forms. These variations in telling the same story embody both the social and cultural changes of the specific time period. To this effect, Henry Bacon ascertains that art, in general, "arises from the interplay of past, present and even future, is the most sophisticated product of expression of this dialectics of events and structures" (10). What occurs is an adopting and appropriating of traditional stories in which the stories are not altered completely, but appropriated into one's own cultural imaginary. Furthermore, when discussing a film adaptation of a literary work it is assumed that certain changes to the literary work are necessary for the

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53Jacques Aumont expands on the idea of every film as a fiction film in his chapter entitled "The Fiction Film" in *Aesthetics of Film*.

54This section of the chapter will be focusing more on the comparison of the film and novel as narrative media and not necessarily on the specifics of cinematography. As background to Brazilian film the *cinema novo* period begins in Brazil during the 1950's, followed later by the Tropicalist movement in the 1960's. Both movements seem to have influenced Amaral in this film. Thematically, Amaral has adopted not only Lispector's focus but also the focus of the *cinema novo* movement on an acute national problem. Some critics have commented that although Lispector mentions the conflicts in rural areas translating to human problems in the larger cities in her literary work there is a sense of a lack of commitment to the Brazilian social reality (Castillo 188). However, it is Lispector's social commentary that becomes a salient characteristic of the film adaptation.
filming process, but that does not consist an adaptation necessarily of a rewriting of the novel.

Time is an intricate part in cinematographic adaptations of literature. Works of art offer a privileged view of the past and intimate a constant rethinking and renewing of the individual’s relationship to them. They do so by entering into a dialogue with the past, thereby allowing the past to become an influence on the future. This same concept of redefinition is embodied in Ricoeur’s tripartite process of mimesis. In A Hora da Estrela the narrator reveals an awareness of the prefigurative: "Ainda bem que o que eu vou escrever já deve estar na certa de algum modo escrito em mim" (35). As part of the configurative present the reader becomes aware that: "É que de repente o figurativo me fascinou [S.M. Rodrigo]: crio a ação humana e estremeço" (37). After this configurative reflection on the past, the narrator admits, in the refigurative, that: "A ação desta história terá como resultado minha transfiguração em outrem e minha materialização enfim em objecto" (35).

Film becomes a medium through which the cultural imaginary is voiced, encompassing the ever changing socio-cultural ideologies and concerns. As a means of offering new insights and interpretation, the adaptation tends to focus on those features that are perceived as important or interesting in the existing work. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that:

A narrative is about human concerns in changing situations, and the most resonant among them are those that relate to the most basic problems of life and death, love and hate, being an individual in a society and an
existential creature in the world. They are expressed in narratives
involving elements such as self-sacrifice, divided loyalties, unattainable
love, thirst for power, knowledge, peace... (Bacon 11)

As already discussed, Lispector's A Hora da Estrela is a narrative with certain existential
questions regarding the individual and her place within a society that alienates her. In an
interview Amaral described Lispector's literary text as "extremely difficult, hermetic,
complicated, abstract. In her work events and facts are self-evident, but amongst the facts
there exists a 'murmur.' So, in my film I didn't merely present the story of Macabéa, I
also attempted to capture the murmur behind facts and events" (West 45). As previously
commented, Lispector attempts to overcome the temporality in which humans are
condemned to live by rearticulating certain life experiences in her literature, a
characteristic which is connected to both the socio-cultural tradition and history of
Brazil. By adapting the written text for a cinematic representation, Amaral illustrates the
theory that "adapting is above all a question of taking into possession a cultural heritage,
working on it and passing it to the future" (Bacon 13). It is through both a "canonical and
avant-garde plot structuring" (Martin 37) that Amaral chooses to convey the image of
female subjectivity within the socio-cultural restrictions of Macabéa's environment as
she struggles for self-consciousness and selfhood.

In discussing Amaral's film and Lispector's text it is important to note that there.exist key differences in how each of these narrative arts convey their respective "text."
Whereas the novel may be indeterminate with respect to its visual components, the film
usually cannot; and whereas the film can at times suggest the expression of the
character's thoughts, in the novel it is more difficult to do so. It must also be taken into account that each narrative medium implies a specific mode of reception, a factor that affects its configurative phase. For instance, cinema tends to offer the viewer concentrated visual information thereby not demanding much viewer participation, whereas a written discourse may not provide the same visual data. For this reason, especially when dealing with Lispector's literature, the reading experience demands the reader's involved participation.

Some critics have also commented that the novel tends to resemble film more than drama but, by comparing the novel *A Hora da Estrela* to its cinematographic adaptation a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each narrative art can be revealed. Firstly, it can be said that the reception of the novel is similar to that of the film since both art forms usually tell a story. In the film the narration tends to be presented through a controlled point of view established by the eye of the camera, which, in turn, can either blur or focus, provide close-ups or panoramic shots. These shots can also be supported by a sound track which can be both a sporadic or a continuous commentary on the action and/or dialogue of the characters.

In filming *A Hora da Estrela* Suzana Amaral wrote a script which, although obviously based on the novel by Clarice Lispector, ends up developing a different story. One of the key differences which sets the film narration apart from the novel is the very concept of the reception of each narrative art. In the novel, the main character is the narrator Rodrigo S. M. who, having seen the nordestina on a street in Rio de Janeiro, becomes mesmerized with the young woman from the Northeast and takes it upon
himself to write her story, even though she "não faz falta a ninguém" (28). In the novel the narrator uses the character of Macabéa essentially to talk about himself and the importance of writing and the obligations it places on the writer: "Proponho-me a que não seja complexo o que escreverei, embora obrigado a usar as palavras que vos sustentam. A história –determino com falso livre arbítrio –vai ter uns sete personagens e eu sou um dos mais importantes deles, é claro" (26-27). This dichotomy of the narrator’s function as both a character in the text and its writer results in Rodrigo establishing a dual relationship with the protagonist and the reader. Consequently, Rodrigo complicates his initial role as omniscient narrator by becoming an unreliable narrative voice. The presence of this male narrative voice and his concerns and obsessions about writing not only become crucial to the structuring of the novel, but central to its overall meaning and interpretation by the reader. As the novel proceeds one begins to notice that the authorial commentary actually becomes a leitmotif of the novel itself because of its extensive use. Although the narrator’s role is eliminated in the film, Amaral is able to manipulate her own interpretation of the novel into a script that focuses more on the internal construction of character. Amaral reveals that she is concerned with developing her plots as "centered on the building up of emotions of a character" (West 45). Therefore, the narrator’s pervasive role within the structure of the book as the principal manner in which the elements of the story as a whole fit together, is not a medium applied in the film.

Instead one might say that the narrator in the novel seems to function as an individual whose perspective is subconsciously ruled by a camera and stage directions. In
some instances the narrator himself provides commentaries to his own narration within brackets:

Há poucos fatos a narrar e eu mesmo não sei ainda o que estou denunciando.

Agora (explosão) em rapidíssimos traços desenharei a vida pregressa da moça até o momento do espelho do banheiro. (43)

In deleting the character and role of the narrator from her movie script, Amaral has instead utilized the cinematographic techniques of light imagery along with a unique soundtrack in order to set the emotional tone in the film, a role previously fulfilled by the narrator in the novel. As soon as the initial credits begin to appear the viewer hears the background track of a radio transmission of Rádio Relógio mixed with the sound of a clock ticking. The trivial bits of information expressed in this transmission actually outline key thematic concerns of the film and the social backdrop in which they are perpetuated. In addition, Amaral capitalizes on the voyeur aspect of the camera movements in order to convey the sense of limitation and frustration in Macabéa’s ability to grasp the reality outside her own existence that Rádio Relógio proposes. For example, the item about the fly symbolically represents the minuscule importance of Macabéa within her social context, whereas the selection about make-up emphasizes the materiality of her society in over-valuing physical beauty, and the statistic about how much a human eats introduces the theme of consumption.

55Although more emphasized in the initial 2 minutes of the film before any other images are revealed, similar excerpts of the soundtrack of Rádio Relógio are repeated later at 13:00, 21:40, and at 48:13, among others.
Food and eating become recurring themes throughout both the novel and film as components of Macabéa’s problems with food. At one point her problems with food and eating are attributed to her experience as a child of having eaten a fried cat (*Hora 55*). On a metaphorical level her apprehensions about food reflect her own physical isolation from society, her sexual frustration, and her naivety as well as her overall inability to express herself within an obviously consumer society. In his article “Life Eating Life: Food, Drink, and Catharsis in *Hora da Estrela*” Thomas Waldemer discusses how “Eating and drinking free and facilitate human speech and eliminate the artificial isolation of individuals from each other” (63). In both the novel and film Macabéa constantly suffers from a nervous and queasy stomach because she considers food a luxury while those around her all have a healthy appetite. For this reason, not only is Macabéa unable to enter into a dialogue with her Other: her inability to consume food is also emblematic of her “unarticulated sexual frustration” (Waldemer 65). Yet, the few times that Macabéa attempts to consume food she is unable to digest it and vomits. Hence, in the same way that she is unable to appropriate language, she is also unable to assimilate the “food” of her consumerist society.

Both the novel and the film are characterized as narrative arts in their dramatic construction. Unlike the short story, which can be read at a single sitting and convey an impression of unity (Poe 1536), both the novel and film tend to move freely both

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56Similarly, G.H.’s own self-reflection and questioning commences with her ritualistic eating of the cockroach.

57Waldemer explains that “In Brazil ‘comer’ means both to eat and to have sexual relations, to experience carnal pleasure with someone” (65).
temporally and spatially. For this reason the narrative strategies in the novel and the film often tend to mirror one another. In both narrative arts there is an effect of "a totality of objects" in which the individual is presented as a central part of a physical and a social environment inextricably intertwined. That is to say that both the novel and the film are especially effective in representing Brazil's cultural imaginary, while at the same time encompassing Macabéa's own specific levels of existence. Due to this characteristic, Martin classifies Amaral's film as an exposition, since it obviously has a "feminist/political project [in denouncing] indirectly, secretly, voicelessly, a situation of poverty, dominance, abuse and exploitation" (38).

Both the novel and film of A Hora da Estrela present themselves (although for different reasons) as the quintessential example of both the social and physical realities of an individual's existence. As both a cinematic and novelistic example of what Hélène Cixous terms écriture féminine, both genres show a preoccupation with the existential and historical position of the female in a world that marginalizes them as a human subject, only to be redeemed through a living relation with language and experience. Yet, this freedom achieved through language and experience is set up clearly in both the novel and film as the via crucis of Macabéa's self-realization as an individual. One can see this epitomized in the final scene, in both the film and the novel, where Macabéa visits the psychic:

Eu uso essa palavra [caftina] porque nunca tive medo de palavras.
Tem gente que se assusta com o nome das coisas. Vezinha [Macabéa] tem medo de palavras, benzinho?
In both the film and the novel there is an attempt to represent a dialogue of alterity. This dialogue implies not only an acceptance and tolerance of the Other but also, at times, a non-comprehension of the Other. Amaral best captures this problematic on two distinct occasions when Macabéa interprets the actions of men—first a subway employee (22:00) and then a blind man at a coffee shop (23:20)—as an interest in her. Contrary to her perception, the first is simply preoccupied with her being so close to the subway platform, while the other is obviously blind and unaware of her presence.

As previously alluded to, language forms an integral part in the structure of both the novel and the film and is charged with both socio-cultural prejudices and predetermined value and moral systems. The individual’s attempt at narrativity becomes an attempt to overcome such limitations in order to achieve a sense of individuality outside the socio-cultural context. Yet, in neither depiction is Macabéa able to overcome her ineptness at expressing herself or, for that matter, being able to understand her Other. In one instance, in both the novel and the film, Olímpico becomes annoyed not only with Macabéa’s obsession with the information from the Rádio Relógio and her inability to truly comprehend what it is saying. Exasperated, he blurs:

Você não vai entender mas eu vou lhe dizer uma coisa: ainda se encontra mulher barata. Você me custou pouco, um cafezinho. Não vou gastar mais nada com você, está bem?

Ela pensou: eu não mereço que ele me pague nada porque me mije. (72)
Interestingly, the film does not include any indication of what is revealed in Macabéa's interior monologue of her not deserving anything because she wet herself; instead Amaral has placed this conversation between Olimpico and Macabéa while they are spending some time together at the zoo (1:10:57). Consequently, what occurs in the film is a lack of emphasis on the libidinal economies of the body, the medium by which, according to Hélène Cixous, the body is engaged in exchanging with and finding its limits in a social world.

Aside from the focus on the female condition in both the novel and film as part of the physical and social realities depicted in each, one cannot ignore that each narrative art also embodies the social reality of the nordestino. Whereas the novel utilizes the narrative voice to explain the symbolic value of the nordestino as the embodiment of the "two Brazils"—the rich and healthy Brazil as compared to the poor and sickly Brazil—the film tends to depend more on the viewer's own prefigurative knowledge of Brazilian sociology and history until it is later articulated by Olimpico well into the film (46:58-47:55). Yet, the film has remained true to the social issues depicted in the novel by Lispector, the chronic plight of the nordestino seeking a better life in the city while leaving behind the harsh and tragic reality of life in the Northeast.

It is this nordestino heritage58 which is blamed as the cause of Macabéa's

58 Although an underlying theme, the plight of the nordestino is an important historical fact of the Brazilian cultural imaginary in which the term baiano (a Northeastern migrant who leaves the North for the South of Brazil) is weighted with prejudice, discrimination, and segregation. After living outside Brazil, Amaral admits in an interview that she "discovered that Brazilians are anti-heroes. They are anti-heroes in the sense that heroes are those who make history, and Brazilians don't make history, Brazilians suffer history" (West 45).
"backwardness" and lack of experience, unlike the other more experienced and "street smart" girls she shares her room with in the boarding house.

In addition to the notions of reception and dramatic construction, it is also important to note that Lispector's novels tend to concentrate more on the inner states of their protagonists at the expense sometimes of the description of the external world. Bacon concludes in his study that the modern writer's tendency to paradoxically explore the verbal limitations of nonverbal experience is, in itself, indicative of "a culture where art forms constantly aspire to each other's condition" (Bacon 41). In this aspect cinema seems to have an advantage over the novel in that its narrative and description are conveyed simultaneously. This is true since when reading a novelistic description there is more of a likelihood that description be limited whereas in the cinematic adaptation the number of details perceived visually is infinite.

Taking this into consideration, it becomes obvious that it would be difficult to create the feeling of stasis in a film—even with establishing shots there is a sensation of time passing and a furthering of the character development within the plot. However, Bacon does make the distinction that the establishing shot can also display the "story world in all its temporality" (42). This may also apply to other shots and sequences which, at first may appear to be purely descriptive as cinematic images which present a diegetic space while also generating a sense of temporality within the cinematographic structure. Such shots and sequences attain their full effect and meaning when juxtaposed to both the story and discourse time. Aside from providing a medium by which one can contemplate their individual appearance as objects both in space and in a specific time,
the sequence or individual shot, depending on its context, can also provide a contrasting point of view or an elaboration of a metaphor.59

When dealing with the cinematic adaptation of *A Hora da Estrela* one notices that Amaral opted to use the flexibility of the montage to imitate the temporal and spatial manipulations constructed by the narrative voice in the novel.60 The scene in which this technique becomes obvious is the last sequence of the film in which Macabéa visits the psychic (1:21:26). Here, in a series of short shots, at times with the psychic’s voice over, the dissolution of the relationship between Olimpico and Glória (1:21:40) is depicted while also foreshadowing the ironic reality of Macabéa’s ”prince in shining armour” as foretold by the psychic (1:29:02). Whereas the novel explains the ironic turn of events in Macabéa’s life as the psychic’s mistake of having switched Macabéa’s fortune with that of the previous client, Amaral opts to utilize the freedom of montage editing to present the

59Bacon also notes that action sequences can be defined as purely descriptive in nature since there is usually little narrative or thematic interest in them. This then results in a predictable sequence of events in which presentation becomes the main concern.

60Monaco states in his book *How to Read a Film* that:

. . . cinematic metaphors based on the literary model tend to be crude and static and forced. The Indexical sign may offer a way out of this dilemma. It is here that film discovers its own unique metaphorical power, which it owes to the flexibility of the frame, its ability to say many things at once. (134)

It is this same Indexical sign that “measures a quality not because it is identical to it but because it has an inherent relationship to it” (Monaco 133). Consequently, one may compare the use of Indexical signs in film to the use of metonymy (a detail or notion representing an object or invoking an idea) and synecdoche (a part representing the whole or the whole representing part) in literature. Moreover, Monaco concludes that: “much of the connotative power of film depends on devices that are Indexical; that is they are not arbitrary signs, but neither are they identical” (134).
same ironic change of events. Amaral does so by using the series of short shots to show all the forces which have brought Macabéa to this stage in her life (1:21:26-1:27:42).

A morbid sense of destiny becomes a salient quality of both the novel and the film and is accentuated in both narrative arts when Macabéa is hit by a Mercedes (1:31:20). Her "hour of the star" is ironically when she becomes the focus of a rich man's attention solely because of his feelings of culpability. Ironically, the last shot of the film comes at the end of this sequence and depicts a happy Macabéa running in slow motion, in what seems to be a dream sequence, towards an also running and smiling blonde "gringo," fading then into black with a waltz playing in the background.

Whereas Amaral’s film works with perception moving towards signification, that is, from external to interior motivations and consequences, in Lispector's novel, the reader has to construct the diegetic world for him/herself. That is to say that in writing, the novel attempts to externalize human motives and values through language which then incites the reader’s creation of the diegetic world. In contrast, Amaral’s film provides a more easily interpreted diegetic world in which the viewer deduces the thoughts, feelings, and mental states of the protagonists from their speech, action, and facial expressions and not from a written text. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook that both narrative arts are further enriched through a productive intersection between thought and language.

Just as language and Macabéa's inability to master it is central to constructing the pervasive sense of isolation and frustration in the novel, the film utilizes the same theme but accentuates it with the visual images of Macabéa's awkwardness. In both instances
language is an obstacle which not only interferes with Macabéa's ability to express herself but also hinders her potential to realize herself as an individual and to establish herself as such within her social context. It is this same relationship between language, consciousness, and identity implicit in the connotative and denotative meaning of the written text that Amaral is able to capture in her visual juxtapositions between not only Macabéa and Glória, but also between Macabéa and her roommates. In the end the degree of interpretation achieved depends primarily on the viewer's own prefigurative repertoire, especially that related to the Brazilian cultural imaginary.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, the scene in both the novel and the film which best illustrates Macabéa's lack of a sense of self and her ineptness with language occurs during one of her dates with Olímpico in which they sit chatting\(^6\):

Ele: - Pois é.

Ela: - Pois é o quê?

Ele: - Eu só disse pois é.

Ela: - Mas "pois é" o quê?

Ele: - Melhor mudar de conversa porque você não me entende.

Ela: - Entender o quê?

Ele: - Santa Virgem, Macabéa, vamos mudar de assunto e já!

\(^6\)Monaco concludes that: "our sense of the cultural connotations depends upon understood comparisons of the part with the whole (synecdoche) and associated details with ideas (metonymy)" (136).

\(^6\)Although previously quoted in this chapter, this dialogue is one of the few selections from the novel maintained in its entirety in the film version, and is pivotal to the discussion of both narrative arts.
Ela: - Falar então de quê?
Ele: - Por exemplo, de você.
Ela: - Eu?!
Ele: - Por que esse espanto? Você não é gente? Gente fala de gente.
Ela: - Desculpe mas não acho que sou muito gente.
Ele: - Mas todo mundo é gente, meu Deus!
Ela: - É que não me habituei.
Ele: - Não se habituou com quê?
Ela: - Ah, não sei explicar. (64-65)

This scene is depicted in the same way in both the novel and the film. As a result, this emphasizes the degree of importance placed on self-expression in developing the theme of Macabéa's struggle for self-realization against the silence of her linguistic failure. It is Macabéa's limited vocabulary which emphasizes her isolation and also insinuates another of Luspector's important themes: that whether one knows it or not, one is essentially alone in the world. Unlike Macabéa, who has an interest in increasing her knowledge by listening to Rádio Relógio and is unable to express this thirst for knowledge to others, Olímpico is able to both interpret and use language to his advantage. For this reason he is the more aggressive of the two in the relationship, and in the end, his linguistic abilities allow him to exercise more control over his life. Yet, what is highlighted in both the film and novel is the pathos of Macabéa's existence, because not even Olímpico is willing to listen her and take part in her linguistic discoveries.
Implicit to the discussion of the role of language in constructing the diegetic world is the role of imagination in both the viewing and reading experience and how each differs in its interpretation of imagery. Whereas in literature the significant may at times be difficult to perceive, in film the paradox of attempting to make what is perceivable significant exists. Just as in the novel, to grasp the meaning of a film or of a scene requires mental participation by the spectator and it is when the visible becomes significant that the role of interpretation falls into play. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that in the configurative process of reading one is essentially influenced by one's own prefigurative conditioning. However, in viewing a film what one is watching is, in reality, the refigurative product of the director's own configurative experience of the same but influenced by his/her own unique prefigurative prejudices.

It is in the spectator's process of interpretation of these cinematographic images that leads one to discuss the difference in the use of point of view in these specific narrative arts. Even though both tend to expound ideas in similar ways, in cinema the camera can only provide one single point of view at times and not the several and often conflicting states of consciousness explored in fiction. Secondly, the camera concentrates on one point of view in order to establish and maintain a coherent sense and structural unity, whereas the novel and the reading experience is more open to a variety of interpretations and perspectives. It is the film's dependence on the visual image which prevents abstract levels of point of view from emerging as they do in the novel. Once again, it is important to keep in mind that with the cinematographic adaptation what one is watching is in reality from the point of view, or the refiguration, of another individual
whereas the novel allows the reader to formulate the various points of view for him/herself.

When analysing the importance of point of view in the novel Bacon refers to four specific variables: (1) the slant being similar to the narrator's prefigurative background as part of the function of discourse; (2) the filter being the overall prefigurative of the characters: perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, memories, and fantasies; (3) the importance of the character in the narration, irrespective of whether one has access to his/her consciousness; (4) and lastly the reader's own interest focus, or in Ricoeurian terms, the influence of the readers own prefigurative in the configurative process of reading (45). In *A Hora da Estrela* Lispector grasps this complex system of the structural interrelationships by focusing on the question of the narrator's/author's creativity, the actions of the characters and how these components affect the overall reading experience. This level of reader involvement, coloured by the four variables stated by Bacon, enables the reader not only to enter the mind of the protagonist but also to understand the social commentary real to her situation in life. Overall, the different points of view established by Lispector in the novel unite in the reading experience, forming not only the psychoanalytic ideology of the novel, but also indicating the differences between understanding and interpreting.

This same artful manipulation of perspective can be seen in the Amaral's cinematographic interpretation of *A Hora da Estrela*. Keeping in mind that when one

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63 Although Bacon draws his variables in point of view in the novel from his reading of other critics, I have drawn the similarities to the three stages of mimesis as expressed by Ricoeur when considering the process of interpretation and assimilation of the text.
speaks of the use of point of view in cinema there are different categories to consider: (1) the position of the camera; (2) how the point of view is captured by the specific positioning of the camera; (3) the narrative point of view which consists primarily of the gaze from the perspective of the character, auteur, and the spectator; (4) what could be termed as the narrator's own intellectual, moral, and political prefigurative and how it influences the point of view of a specific event or person (Bacon 45). The result, therefore, is that even though there are similarities in the category of point of view between Lispector's novel and Amaral's cinematic counterpart, a combined study of both uses is necessary. It is important not only to compare the novel and its cinematographic adaptation, but also to attempt to understand the expressive qualities of each and their effect on the overall reading or viewing experience, whichever the case may be.

In the novel the characters tend to be depicted as emotional, subjective individuals and there exists an interiorization of each character in the attempt to establish their link with their world. Amaral takes this same concept of describing the social self of each character but exteriorizes this characterization visually. Where the reader encounters an aside in the novel by the narrative voice, Amaral has allowed the actors to reveal what the narrative voice has revealed in the novel by the manner in which they are physically presented, how they speak and by their gestures. For example, when Macabéa and Olimpico are out on one of their first dates, the following conversation occurs in the novel:

--- Olhe, Macabéa . . .

--- Olhe o quê?
- Não, meu Deus, não é "olhe" de ver, é "olhe" como quando se quer que uma pessoa escute! Está me escutando?

- Tucinho, tudinho!

- Tucinho o quê, meu Deus, pois se eu ainda não falei! Pois olhe vou lhe pagar um cafezinho no botequim. Quer?

- Pode ser pingado com leite?

- Pode, é o mesmo preço, se for mais, o resto você paga. (71)

In the film, Amaral actually eliminates a few words and uses the actor's gestures to accentuate the differences in "olhe" (41:36-42:34). Also, in the film Olimpico says "not 'look' when you 'look,' but 'look' when it's 'look' you want someone to listen," emphasizing the different meanings of the word by intonating it differently each time. A similar cinematographic technique can be seen with the roommate who constantly looks at the cover of her book because she needs to look at images in order to be able to read the book. Let us recall that the novel itself calls attention to the importance of images in the construction of meaning: "Juro que este livro é feito sem palavras. É uma fotografia muda. Este livro é um silencio. Este livro é uma pergunta" (31).

Having compared Lispector's A Hora da Estrela to the cinematic adaptation by Suzana Amaral one notices that whereas in cinema the artist's choice in imagery tends to be limitless, in literature it is somewhat more circumscribed. However, as one can deduce from this comparison, the same cannot be said for the observer or reader. In this case, it is the reading experience which tends to offer a more diverse experience and not the film per se. Nevertheless, in both cases one is asked to read and interpret a series of
images, but whereas the reader invents the image from his/her reading, the viewer does not, thereby limiting somewhat the overall cinematic experience. It becomes apparent that, just as Lispector subverted the canonical definition of plot, so does Amaral chose to develop a film that does not call attention to itself as such. Contrary to the novel, the film follows a linear emplotment to cover the same themes of power, sexuality, language, and poverty. Ironically, all that Macabéa wished for in life was to be a movie star (A Hora 70) and Amaral has fulfilled this desire in her film, but with the same unfortunate tragic ending Lispector gave her in the novel.
CHAPTER 3:
The Feminine Condition in Carmen Boullosa

La lengua en la que nacemos a la vida
inteligentemente es el arreglo al cual
estructuramos nuestra forma de
aprehender la realidad.
(Fernández Poncela 209)

1. Enunciating the Self in Writing

In her essay entitled “La destrucción en la escritura” Boullosa defines literature as
a complex three dimensional mirror with an inherent “instinct” for destruction.1 As the
first component of the three dimensions, Boullosa distinguishes words as the active
element in what she terms a process of “destruction” in literature. She adds that this
occurs especially in the case of poetry, where words are invested with new significations.

Boullosa’s reflections on the power of words curiously resound with Lispectorian
undertones, particularly when she states that:

Cada palabra deja de ser su significado para convertirse en materia viva,
en materia carnal, con corazón propio, palpitante, y es entonces cuando

1The term “destruction” is in reference to the construction of metaphor. That is, one must
first destroy the literal meaning of a word so that a metaphor may be created in its place.
Ricoeur further interprets this paradigm in The Rule of Metaphor as:
The meaning of a word is the double unity of the name and the sense. In
order to give the reciprocity of positions of speaker and hearer its due, the
reciprocity and reversibility of the name-sense relation will be included
withing the definition of meaning. (112)
vuelve a significar, con pureza mayor que cualquier palabra pronunciada en el lenguaje coloquial, bañada de la tensión poética que permite admirar el misterio del lenguaje, su sorpresa. Pero esta mecánica de separación implica una destrucción, la mayor de todas las destrucciones, el desvestimiento de la palabra, su expulsión. ("Destrucción" 215)

In divesting language of its predetermined definitions and connotations the poet is able to break away from convention by responding to the "tirantes leyes del lenguaje" (Boullosa, "Destrucción" 216). In order to do so the poet uses words that truly express and communicate poetic reality. Both Boullosa and Lispector utilize a creative discourse in their narrative as a method of surpassing the literary limitations of prescribed literature. This same narrative technique also enables each writer to approach the topic of female identity with a more distanced and authentic language. In her discussion of the novel Boullosa makes a point of stipulating that: "Narrar no es decir con palabras inertes. La novela . . . trabaja también con la palabra poética, la necesita para conseguir la verdad literaria de sus páginas, su capacidad de vida propia" ("Destrucción" 216). Aside from using poetic language to better represent reality, Boullosa also affirms that, by erroneously identifying the writer as "una especie de albañil de sí mismo. O un capellán de su propio culto. O un conquistador de sus tierras nuevas" ("Destrucción" 216), one sacrifices the true potential of literature. In addition to this complex first dimension Boullosa succinctly defines the second dimension of this three dimensional mirror as the construction of the characters as verisimilar "personas." Later, it is these same characters
who eventually become actantes in the reality of the third dimension—that reality which exists in between the lines in the reading experience.

After having examined a selection of Boullosa’s narratives, Jean Franco concludes that: “Se puede deducir que para Boullosa, la literatura es una suerte de conjuro, una forma de exorcizar esta suciedad fantasmal que tiene su origen en las instituciones, en la escuela, en la familia, en la iglesia” (24). The focus of this chapter will be to examine how Boullosa overcomes the “ghostlike dirtiness” of social discourse, to apply Franco’s term, in her writing from the perspective of a woman. Boullosa chooses to give a subversive dialectic shape to her writing by rewriting two traditional narrative genres dominated by male writers: the traditional fairy tale and the modern vampire narrative. Traditionally, both genres have demonstrated a male-oriented point of view in which female protagonists are either depicted as silent victims or as idealized and etherealized figures of purity and innocence. In both cases a depersonalization of the female character has dominated the greater part of the literary works of these genres. In “Blancanieves” and Isabel Boullosa’s rewriting not only consists of providing a new perspective but, more importantly, renders a revision of the underlying patriarchal system implicit in the typical characterization of female protagonists. It is in her attempt to invest her writing with a more feminine reality that Boullosa encounters the limitations of the same patriarchally hierarchized language system she wants to avoid. Thus, not only does Boullosa find it necessary to modify the basic characteristics of each literary genre but she does so through the use of an innovative narrative structure that better presents the feminine condition and experience. For this reason language takes on a
flexibility of signification normally only found in poetry, while also being paired up with
a newly defined feminine narrative perspective.

Not only is a search in the past for an explanation of the present portrayal of
women characteristic of Boullosa’s redefining of the Snow White fairy tale and vampire
literature but, more importantly, to the creation of what is perceived as a better future. Consequently, discourse is the medium by which Boullosa approaches this redefinition of
the self without losing sight of the influence of the Other. It is interesting to note that in
her essay “La violencia del lenguaje o el lenguaje que violenta” Anna Maria Fernández
Poncela makes the following distinction:

. . . hombres y mujeres no hablan de forma idéntica, pero tampoco utilizan
dos lenguajes diferentes—aunque a veces parece que no se entienden—. . .
más que diferencias hay «preferencias» en cuanto a su empleo. Por otra
parte, hay que cuestionar las posibilidad de expresión plena de la
subjetividad femenina en su seno y los sistemas simbólicos que
representan a las mujeres. (211)

In analysing Boullosa’s Isabel and “Blancanieves” one comes to notice that in order to
best describe and authenticate the female experience Boullosa adapts a discourse that

In Cielos en la tierra (1997) Boullosa uses a tripartite narrative voice to narrate the
Indian past, the present in the twentieth century, and a futuristic community in which
language has become obsolete. For this reason Carlos Rincón calls this novel a product of “la creatividad de una contracultura de la imaginación...[que busca] la revisión y
reapropiación de determinadas alegorías y figuras de la nación mexicana” (16).
Nevertheless, narrative unity is not sacrificed since all three narratives are linked by their
desire to recuperate, through language, that which has been lost. Unfortunately, all three
narrative perspectives end in frustration, since, at the end of the novel, the use of
language is totally suppressed.
does not relegate her female protagonists to a secondary position. On the contrary, the female protagonists use language not only in their own defence and but also to establish a reality that is authentic to them as individuals outside their accepted and socially circumscribed role. For both the Queen and Isabel part of this process incorporates a new identification with their sexuality, a distinction of which Fernández Poncela makes the following commentary:

> Las mujeres son fácilmente relacionadas con su cuerpo y con la sexualidad, y más usualmente reprimidas y sancionadas por su transgresión…El lenguaje se funda en el cuerpo y sexualidad de la mujer y a la vez presiona y controla socialmente su sexualidad. (220)

It becomes apparent that although purporting neutrality language is, in essence, masculine. As a result, authentic female experience tends to become a subculture since it refuses to follow the established gender specifications. In “Blancanieves” and Isabel Boullosa chooses to explore the fantastical worlds of fairy tales and vampires as symbolic representations of possible feminine realities. In both texts Boullosa insinuates a realistic and critical subtext in her attempt to infuse these two worlds with a female consciousness. But, as previously mentioned and reiterated here by Fernández Poncela: “el sexismo más que en la lengua está inscrito en el modelo cultural de la sociedad, en la mentalidad de las personas, en el hablante y el oyente” (227). I would go further and argue that, in the end, it is not only sexism but both women’s relationships with others and the social order that affects the overall perception of women not only by their Others but also by themselves.
Sexuality is another theme that is linked to identity in Boullosa’s works. For example, in Son vacas, somos puercos (1991) the narrative voice admits a feeling of alienation from his own body: “[soy] el esclavo que perdió su cuerpo” whereas in Duerme (1994) the protagonist is a woman who has spent the majority of her life disguised as a man. Boullosa herself explains that, in some cases, her protagonists sexuality can be:

... una abominación, es literalmente un pecado, en el verdadero sentido de la palabra ‘pecado.’ En el sentido en que atenta contra su propia identidad y contra sus propias personas, y su sexualidad no es sino su horca y su cruz, su cadalso—pero no lo que debiera ser la sexualidad. Para descubrir al otro y para gozar y para disfrutar, esto no pasa .... (Ibsen 61)

In Mejor desaparece (1987) Boullosa admits using words that are “sucias como es la historia, son violentas como es la historia” (Ibsen 56) to describe the restricting patriarchal conditions imposed on the sisters by their father. In La Milagrosa (1993) the

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3Located in the epigraph of the novel.

4Interestingly, the protagonist takes on the male role of a warrior and is only discovered to be a woman when she is injured in battle and the Indian woman who rescues her disrobes her in order to treat her wounds. When her secret is revealed she exclaims: Sí, soy mujer, ya lo viste. Yo me siento humillada así expuesta. Creí que ya lo había vencido, que nunca más volvería a ser esta mi desgracia, el cuerpo expuesto, ofrecido (como si él fuera mi persona) al mundo. ¿¡Yo no soy lo que ves!?, quiero gritarle. No puedo, y no me serviría de nada. Ella ve que no soy lo que quiero ser. Y que, total, sólo esto heredé de mi madre. Por más que lo rehúya será siempre mi condenación. (19)
protagonist destroys her own identity as the milagrosa\(^5\) when she has sexual relations with a corrupt writer posing as a detective. In most cases female sexual identity is presented as both unacceptable and ultimately punishable.

It is, however, in “Cocinar hombres” (1987) that Boullosa displays a more overt criticism of the socio-cultural prejudices against female sexuality. The two protagonists, Ufe and Wine, are newly converted witches that explore the advantages and disadvantages of abandoning the constraints of their previous lives for that of their newly liberated status of witches.\(^6\) Historically, witches have been depicted as old, ugly, and monstrous because they symbolize a strong sense of female power and sexuality. Boullosa adopts this witch mythology but rewrites it in such a manner that the witches are seen now as strong positive female characters. Since she has no memory of her previous life, Wine readily accepts the new role of witch she has been invited to adopt, thereby allowing herself to explore the sexual desire that is disallowed in the established social role for women. However, in the other protagonist, Ufe, Boullosa presents the other side of the coin—Ufe remembers being engaged at one time and all that she desires is love and fidelity from the perfect man. For Ufe, having children would justify her

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\(^5\)La milagrosa’s unique ability to attain other people’s desires and wishes in her dreams rests on her virginity. On losing her virginity to the detective she sacrifices all her miraculous powers, thereby losing her privileged status as milagrosa.

\(^6\)In her essay “Carmen Boullosa’s Obligingly Heretic Art: New Challenges for Criticism” Roselyn Constantino explores in more detail the play’s fantastical presentation of the two girls’ violent encounter with the changes that their bodily development implies within their society. Constantino goes on to say that there exist “social myths and realities that construct and impinge upon the very personal experience” (191). Once more, one can view such social myths and realities as components of the gendered language system.
existence as a woman. However, what is manifest in both cases is that neither Ufe nor Wine has the possibility of realizing their personal desires, since the role they are to play has been predetermined from the beginning.7

In this chapter I examine Boullosa’s depiction of her female characters within two unique roles: one is the evil Queen in “Blancanieves” and the other is the vampire, Isabel. In both cases Boullosa explores the concept of female sexuality and the space allotted to the feminine within each protagonist’s socio-cultural environment. As a result, the careful reader will notice how Boullosa’s critical view of the social space allotted to women is foregrounded in these texts. The reader will find his/her prefigurative knowledge of each literary genre not only tested but his/her innate prejudices revealed throughout the reading experience. Just as the characters undergo a metamorphosis in Boullosa’s subversion of the fairy tale and vampire genre, the same can be said about the reader’s interpretation of the text in the refigurative stage.

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7In her article, “Cocinar hombres: Radical Feminist Discourse,” Susan Wehling comments that: “The play Cocinar hombres concentrates on the deconstruction of patriarchal mythology concerning witches through a radical feminist dramatic structure” (51). Interestingly, Wehling qualifies that by “radical feminist” she refers to four main points: one, a lack of male characters except when impersonated by women; two, a focus on female breasts and sexual desire separate from men; three, pregnancy as part of the female body; and, four, the woman’s decision to live outside the established patriarchal society.
II. Why is the Queen so Evil?: Feminine Sexuality in “Blancanieves”

In 1992 Boullosa published “Blancanieves” as part of the collection of poetry and short stories entitled Soledumbre. In “Blancanieves” Boullosa revisits the literary tradition of the fairy tale in her rewriting of “Snow White.” In the past, fairy tales have been traditionally viewed principally as children’s literature or as folklore, but now, within the postmodern context, fairy tales have not only been opened up to a wider audience of readers but also to a wider range of differing interpretations. In her book, Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies, Cristina Bacchilega states that the fairy tale genre “magically grants writers/tellers and readers/listeners access to the collective, if fictionalized past of social communing, an access that allows for an apparently limitless, highly idiosyncratic re-creation of that ‘once there was’” (5). Yet, Marina Warner expands on the purpose of the fairy tale in that: “[the] fairy tale offers a case where the very contempt for women opened an opportunity for them to exercise their wit and communicate their ideas” (xxiii). It is within this postmodernist context that Boullosa looks to rewrite “Blancanieves” not from the conventional point of view of Snow White as the innocent protagonist, but from the previously ignored perspectives of the Queen and the forester. Even though Boullosa gives voice to these previously silenced elements she does not give the reader the happy ending of the traditional fairy tale.

*The title Soledumbre sets the tone for the collection by insinuating not only a state of solitude and loneliness but also a state of grieving, mourning and even uncertainty.*
tale. Instead of this sense of closure the reader is left with “promises [and] prophecies” (Warner xx).

Before discussing Boullosa’s rewriting of “Snow White” it would be fruitful to elaborate on the underlying theme of female sexuality that prevails in Boullosa’s version. From the feminist perspective sexuality can be interpreted as “a social construct of male power: defined by men forced on women, and constitutive of the meaning of gender” (MacKinnon 258). By extension, sexual meaning is not only made up of words and texts but also through the social relations of power in a world which tends to be predominantly patriarchal (MacKinnon 259). It is important to think of sexuality as an innate component to identity and in denying sexual expression there is also a reneging of identity. Consequently, in her re-writing of “Snow White” Boullosa is not only giving voice to the Queen and the forester but is also allowing them to be identified as sexual beings.

Taking this into consideration, one notes that Boullosa’s “Blancanieves” has an implied feminine dialectic which explores a narrative of desire lacking in the traditional version of the fairy tale. In “Blancanieves” Boullosa focuses on the relationship between the forester and the Queen through the mediation of a third-person narrator. This narrator is then able to present to the reader a discourse representative of both sexes. Forming part of this narrative in the fairy tale is the characteristic depiction of certain “sites of competing, historically and socially framed desires [in which] woman and women, face and reflect (on) each other” (Bacchilega 10). Apart from giving expression to both the forester and the Queen, it becomes obvious that the focus does not equally expand the characterization of both protagonists. The text becomes a written testimony of the events
surrounding the original plot of "Snow White" as a method by which both the forester and the Queen not only explain their side of the story but do so in an attempt to free themselves from any sense of culpability. Even though the short story is entitled "Blancanieves," the character herself never appears in the narrative. Ironically, the only information revealed about her is that which is divulged by the Queen and the forester. Yet, the short story carries her name alone—an indication of the important influence she exerts on the characterization of both the forester and the Queen.

In both the traditional version and in Boullosa’s rendition the Queen is identified with her mirror. Not only does the mirror symbolize a concentration of her magical power but is also the instrument which initially incites the rivalry between step-mother and step-daughter. Let us recall that Jacques Lacan identified the mirror as the site of production of the self (see Reading Seminar). Bacchilega then expands on this same theory but within the specific context of the fairy tale, stipulating that "it [the mirror] conflates mimesis (reflection), refraction (varying desires), and framing (artifice)" (10). Although the mirror belongs to the Queen, it is interesting to note that both the Queen and Blancanieves find themselves defined and limited by the image reflected in the mirror. As long as the Queen projects herself into the mirror she will continue to be entrapped by the reflected gaze and desire of her Other.

Aware of the reader’s own prefigurative repertoire and knowledge of the original fairy tale, Boullosa shatters these preconceptions in revealing that: "guardados en un sobre lacrado llegaron a mi puerta estos papeles: distintas versiones de la historia de
Blancanieves. Asombrosas versiones... (37). Aside from negating authorial authority, this statement prepares the reader for a new configurative experience of the traditional fairy tale. In place of the original plot of the Brothers Grimm, the reader is presented with “tres personajes [que] se pelean en el espacio de un solo personaje” (37). From the beginning the narrator alludes to a narrative circularity of the text in the repeated juxtaposition of the multiple renderings presented by the Queen and the forester. At one point the narrator admits that: “si yo contara la historia, mi versión no tendría que ver con ninguna de las que aquí transcribo” (37). As a result, one notices that the mirror metaphor also extends to affect the overall interpretation of the text. It does so by further emphasizing the concept of alterity—one looks at the mirror not only to see how one looks to others but also to assess how one may be judged by the prejudices and preconceptions of others (Walker 80-81).

The first version with which the reader is presented is the forester’s, in which he presents himself as the Queen’s victim. In the first section of his story the forester describes himself as predestined, because not only did the Queen choose him but “también está enferma mi carne. Tampoco elegí mi enfermedad. También es mi destino ser guardabosques, cumplido sólo porque la reina me eligió” (38). The forester claims to have fallen victim not only to his destiny but to one of the basic precepts of the fairy tale world: the tendency of seeing the world and what happens in it without objectivity and

*Coincidentally, this is the same manner in which the texts that construct Papeles irresponsables arrived at the narrator’s house.

10 The concept of undermining authorial authority was discussed in more detail in relation to Boullosa’s Papeles irresponsables in chapter one.
through a hero's limited point of view from his state of constant development (Bettelheim 203). Because of his failure to accept responsibility for his actions, the forester excuses himself by blaming the notion of predestination while also laying blame on the Queen for having converted him into “algo más desecho que el lodo que el viento nos deja” (39). Since the forester sees himself as the Queen’s helpless victim and fails to recognize his own culpability in the sequence of events, he is unsuccessful in developing as a three-dimensional character in this section of “Blancanieves.” Most importantly, his purported victimization at the hands of the Queen suggests to the reader the possibility of her being evil.

In the second section of the forester’s first version, he reinforces the idea of his victimization by revealing that the Queen would force him to drink a magical potion so that:

...[su] cuerpo posée entonces al suyo como si un feroz animal lo habitara y ella de mi posesión se goza, y ella goza y ella rie y toca con todos sus dedos viejos todo mi cuerpo mientras, desde el quicio de la ventana, yo observo en qué vergüenza terminó el cuerpo que mi madre trajo al mundo para otros designios. (39)

Although the forester is the traditional symbol of protection in fairy tales11 Boullosa discards this stereotype and chooses to develop the underlying theme of sexuality present in the “love” triangle between the forester, the Queen, and Blancanieves. In both his

11The forester’s role in traditional fairy tales is that of protecting children from the fear they have of animals.
 personas as protector and as lover, the forester occupies a role in which he dominates, controls, and tames not only wild animals but also the Queen's fierce sexuality.  

Whereas Boullosa's rewriting depicts the forester's sexuality as a weakness, it is important to note that in the traditional fairy tale this identifying characteristic is absent. However, a point is made even in the original version of "Snow White" that it is the stepmother who is given a sexual identity as opposed to the real mother since, in the fairy tale world, there is no way of being both "good" and a sexual being (Lundell 35).

Historically women have not always freely expressed themselves, let alone their sexuality. MacKinnon adds that "[w]omen's 'resistance' to sex is an imposed cultural stereotype, not a form of political struggle" (263). Taking this into account, one notes that the Queen in "Blancanieves" is dehumanized to an animal state for having a sense of sexual identity and for displaying sexual aggressivity in her relationship with the forester.12 Within the patriarchal code the Queen becomes a "freak of nature" that, because of her unacceptable behaviour, deserves any punishment that may come her way. On the other hand, the forester attempts to blame his sexual weakness on the magical potion that the Queen forces him to ingest. It is this magical potion that makes him lose

12Bettelheim concludes that: "Hence the hunter of fairy tales is not a figure who kills friendly creatures, but one who dominates, controls, and subdues wild, ferocious beasts" (205).

13MacKinnon also stipulates that:

Sexual freedom means women are allowed to behave as freely as men to express this sexuality, to have it allowed, that is (hopingly) shamelessly and without social constraints to initiate genital drive satisfaction through heterosexual intercourse. Hence, the liberated woman. Hence, the sexual revolution. (262)
control of his own body ("desde el quicio de la ventana, yo observo") and become the Queen's pawn. Contrary to what the forester wishes the reader to believe, it is not he who is sexually objectified. In reality, it is the Queen who is sexually objectified within the forester's narrative. Ultimately, it is the Queen who has a social meaning imposed on her and is defined as a being to be sexually used by others.

It is undeniable that the Queen is presented by the forester as a negative figure who is competing with her step-daughter for the forester's attention. However, this "war between generations" is not explicit in "Blancanieves," but developed instead as an underlying tension in the narrative (Lundell 35). One can interpret this motif of sexual tension as a by-product of both the preconceptions and morality of the patriarchal society in which the original Brothers Grimm' fairy tale was published. In this respect, let us recall that female sexuality tends to "remain constructed under conditions of male supremacy; women remain socially defined as women in relation to men" (MacKinnon 269). It is within this cultural context that feminine beauty is given greater value than feminine identity. It is this social ideal that subsequently becomes the destructive

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14Warner adds that: "in many fairy tales the tyrants are women and they struggle against their often young rivals to retain the security that their husbands or their fathers afford them" (217).

15Although the this quotation seems to be a generalization, MacKinnon clarifies that: The general theory of sexuality emerging from this feminist critique does not consider sexuality to be an inborn force inherent in individuals, nor cultural in the Freudian sense, in which sexuality exists in a cultural context but in universally invariant stages and psychic representations. It appears instead to be culturally specific, even if so far largely invariant because male supremacy is largely universal, if always in specific forms. (275)
component in the relationship between step-mother and step-daughter, since, as MacKinnon points out, "the definition of women as men's inferior remains sexual if not heterosexual, whether men are present at the time or not" (269). As a result, the relationship between step-mother and step-daughter becomes infused with a dominating sense of disassociation on the Queen's part.

What began in the original "Snow White" as the Queen's narcissistic desire to prolong her beauty (by living vicariously through her step-daughter) eventually develops into a rivalry between step-mother and step-daughter. Instead of being happy to see her step-daughter's beauty flourish as hers withers, the Queen, in an act of self-preservation, refuses to accept her imminent aging. Not only is the Queen seen as less attractive because of her age but, by having an objectionable sexual identity she is under the constant threat of humiliation and of being seen as an undesirable object.16

In the first edition of "Snow White" (1808, "Schneewittchen") written by the Brothers Grimm17 it is the father that saves Snow White and not the forester; and it is the mother, not the step-mother who sees herself as her daughter's rival for the father and not for the forester. As can be imagined, this implied incest was very polemic for its society and thus was quickly eliminated in the 1819 edition, when the Brothers Grimm replaced the character of the mother with the step-mother so as not to offend their audience (Lundell 35).

Because of his love for Blancanieves and in order to protect her, the forester admits to having disobeyed and tricked the Queen. Once more, he propagates the

16For a more detailed discussion on this point see page 275 in MacKinnon's article.

17Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859).
stereotype of the evil Queen in revealing to the reader that the Queen has forced him to kill Blancaieves out of jealousy:

Ahora ella me ha encargado que le arrebate a la princesa sus vísceras, que le arranque el hígado y sus pulmones y se los traiga como prenda. ¡Porque tiene celos, la reina, tiene celos! Puede ser dueña de todo, de todo y de todos, de mi cuerpo incluso, de mi cuerpo de varón que ella ha convertido en algo que no sé qué es pero que carne no es, que no sabe entregarse al deseo, pero de mi corazón ella no puede, de mi corazón ella no puede, de mi corazón... (40-41)

The forester further stresses the Queen’s cruelty so that he may free himself from his own culpability. In turn, the Queen’s desire to eat the princess’s entrails symbolizes her hope of capturing the very essence of what she is eating—Blancanieve’s youth and beauty. However, the forester is unable to comply with his murderous task. Even though he saves Blancanieve’s life by not complying with the Queen’s orders, he is still unable to fulfill his role as Blancanieve’s protector. Although he does not kill her, he lacks the courage to save her and instead abandons her in the woods to be eaten by the wild animals.

The second section of Boullosa’s “Blancanieves” is a second version from the forester’s perspective, but this time with a distinct change in tone from the first version. In this instance not only does he present himself as disloyal to the Queen but also disloyal to the love that she had always given him. The forester admits that he presented himself as “el que ama la reina” (41) but quickly contradicts himself when he reveals that:
Así solía explicar mi vida.

Estaba equivocado.

¿Acaso estaba equivocado?

Puede ser que tuviera razón.

¿Ahora cómo me presento?: No sé quien soy.... Creo que he perdido la vida que podría yo defender.... Éste es mi pecado: a pesar de ser el amante de la reina, me he enamorado de otra mujer.

Ya que lo confesé, cualquiera puede correr a denunciarme. Yo no lo culparía. Tendría razón: soy sujeto sin perdón. Actúo deslealmente: ella me ha dado todo lo que tengo, me ha vuelto lo que yo era antes de ser quien soy. (42)

First and foremost, this second forester version takes on a more sympathetic and understanding tone. Yet, the forester finds himself split between his mind and spirit: his body refuses to love the Queen because he is not in love with her and at the same time he feels culpable because of his disloyalty towards her. Nevertheless he admits that: “[su] afecto no regresará a ella [a la reina]. Ya tiene dueña [Blancanieves]” (43). Unlike the forester’s first version, this second version takes into account the Queen’s own emotional state and does not entrap her in the predetermined and unsympathetic role of the “wicked step-mother.”

By juxtaposing the forester’s two versions one is struck by the importance of discourse in constructing the Queen’s personality through her Other. From a feminine perspective, one could say that the structures of language and its various codes can be
just as oppressive, if not more so, than the social structures that mediate a woman’s awareness of her self, body, and sexuality (Dallery 289). In the forester’s first version his criticism of the Queen’s aggressive sexuality as unnatural disassociated her from her own body. Now, in the second version, the Queen is attacked and demeaned under the forester’s guise of pity:

Como no la deseo, admiro con humor, casi lleno de risa, el cómico animal que forma la mujer con las faldas alzadas. Cuando se acerca a mi, ya sé a lo que viene: quiere que yo la ame, que le devuelva lo que le he dado veces incontables y con tanto gusto.

No puedo dárselo: ya no lo tengo.

Por otra parte, el animal que forma con tanta comidad, el de la mujer de piernas abiertas, faldas alzadas y segunda boca golosa no puede apetecer a nadie, ni al que yo fui. (43)

Similar to the first version, the forester again degrades the Queen to a demoralized state. She is not perceived as an individual who has suffered but is instead dehumanized to a comical state—that of an “animal” defined by and mocked for her sexual appetite. Although he says that he feels sorry for her, from his constant vacillations one can deduce that the forester is not being entirely truthful. In his series of revelations the forester has basically relegated the Queen to the status of an object that no longer serves its purpose.

In both versions the forester demonstrates a conditioned response to feminine beauty as a specular image determined by both socio-cultural perceptions and prejudices.
Metaphorically, the mirror is the element that condemns the Queen because “authority remains vested in the (male) voice [or also the male desire] of approval in the mirror; the standard by which both mother and daughter are judged resides outside themselves, so that neither can claim true authorship” (Walker 54). In one version the forester is sympathetic towards the Queen and feels sorry that she should suffer because he has fallen in love with another: “Actúo deslealmente: ella me ha dado todo lo que tengo, me ha vuelto lo que yo era antes de ser quien soy” (42). However, in the other version he dehumanizes and objectifies her as a comical “animal” that no longer interests him: “el cómico animal que forma la mujer . . . no puede apetecer a nadie, ni al que yo fui” (43).

For the Queen, telling her story becomes an exercise in self-realization in which recounting her story allows her to inscribe her own sense of identity without negating her female body. The mirror, as a symbol of the socio-cultural constraints, of a patriarchal society, does not allow for a free interpretation of the feminine psyche. Instead, this same mirror, and all it represents, limits the definition of a feminine self to the pre-established restrictions of the socio-cultural prefigurative. It is only in denouncing these prejudices and asserting herself as an independent individual that the Queen can attempt to recuperate a sense of dignity, even though this self-affirmation can result in her exile from society. After having read two versions of the events from the forester’s two distinct perspectives the reader is finally presented with the Queen’s version of the events. This section begins with a quote from the Grimm text in which the queen asks the mirror if

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18Walker also adds that: “Only in cracking ‘the Queen’s looking glass,’... can women writers break the power of the voice of authority that issues from it” (55).
there exists anyone more beautiful than she. This quote establishes from the onset the idea that there exists a prescribed role that the Queen finds herself predestined to fulfill. She is to exist as the contrast to Blancañieves, even though both are entrapped by the same restrictive concept of idealized feminine beauty. But the key factor here is that she is expressing herself and telling her own story. In enunciating her own perspective of her experiences with the forester the Queen is not only validating herself as a human being but also undermining the phallocratic coding of her personal self. In articulating her point of view the Queen seeks to set herself apart as an individual who has been both betrayed and tricked by the man she loves: "¿Qué más puede pedir una mujer? ¿Hay otra bendición mayor que estar elegida por los besos del que uno ama? ¡Nada más puede querer una mujer!" (44). Contrary to the forester, who uses the concept of predestination as an excuse for his behaviour, the Queen is truly predestined. For the Queen, within the traditional patriarchal context of the fairy tale, there is no other conclusion for feminine sexuality other than death or perversity (Lundell 35).

Contradictory to the forester’s first version, in this section it is disclosed how, through his gaze, the forester propagated the same patriarchal preconceptions which could possibly be the cause for the present chain of events. For that reason the Queen, in self-defence against the forester’s accusations of her having had various lovers, finds that she must emphasize that she only accepted him as her lover (39). Nevertheless, the recurrent reality is that the Queen now finds herself replaced by someone much younger because she herself no longer reflects the feminine ideal: “No hay justicia en tu
abandono. He dejado de ser la más hermosa, la mejor, la más deseada..." (45). In order to make the Queen fit the established socio-cultural norm, she is de-eroticized and circumscribed within the role of the older woman.

In addition, the narrative voice in this section discloses that: “cuando habla la reina, sus palabras nada tienen que ver con las que los otros tres hubieran puesto en sus labios” (37). In relating her experiences in her own words and in her own voice the Queen uses this opportunity to recount to the reader her own victimization at the hands of her Other:

Ahora tú dices que no estuviste enamorado de mí, que la historia que yo he vivido ha sido fantástica, imaginaria...¡Puede que sea verdad! Pero tú también corríste conmigo en esos campos fantásticos y recorríste conmigo esas calles fantásticas y participaste en la imaginaria plática que bebía yo de ti...(45)

Whereas both of the forester's versions lay all the blame on the Queen and emphasize how she ordered the forester to kill Blanca nieves out of jealousy, in this version, the reader can now visualize the Queen as a woman who has also suffered. Acquainted now with the events from the Queen's perspective, the reader can draw a more informed

19Lundell adds the following about the importance of Snow White's wedding in relation to the Queen:

Snow White's maturation, signified by the wedding in its symbolic union of female and male qualities, follows the destruction of the mother figure as if her only way to liberation of self from mother power is to destroy this power. As long as this power is defined negatively by a patriarchal society, this liberation will force her to choose a patriarchally defined life and perpetuate the alienation between women promoted by such a society. (38)
picture of the events. This feeling of sympathy is emphasized when the Queen, in a moment of total panic, exclaims:

Te [al guardabosques] ordeno y debes obedecerme, soy la reina, te ordeno que dejes la razón y dejes la realidad y te unas de nuevo conmigo en el mundo de los sueños... Mata ese cuerpo que dice ahora amar. Mátala y sé mio en el asesinato, en el dolor, en el territorio que tú me has dado a habitar con tu abandono. (46)

When she realizes that she can no longer compete with Blanca nieves, the Queen attempts to impose her power as queen and order the forester to stay with her. But the Queen comprehends that her wishes do not reflect reality but are an alternative that only exists in “un mundo de sueños.” Not only can she and the forester still be together in this fantasy, but she is still superior to Blanca nieves and the forester still loves her. Realizing that she has lost the forester’s love to Blanca nieves, the Queen asserts her power as queen once again by ordering the forester to kill Blanca nieves—his true love and the Queen’s source of turmoil—and love her instead. Where she was denigrated for her sexual appetite in the forester’s previous two versions of the tale, in her own version the Queen disgraces herself by revealing her weakness for love. However, contrary to the forester’s third person characterization of the Queen, this version allows the reader to get a more intimate knowledge of her both emotionally and psychologically.

Boullosa closes “Blanca nieves” with a third and final version from the forester’s point of view. At the beginning of this section the reader’s attention is drawn to the question of authorial authority. At this point in the narration a fourth and distinctive
narrative voice appears to remind the reader that these “papers” that he or she has been reading had appeared mysteriously, a fact which puts into question their authorial source. In merely four lines the author of this section is able to call into question all that has been previously said by declaring: “¿Quién les dijo que fui guardabosques? Yo soy leñador. La reina me pidió que matara a su hijastra porque le tenia celos. Yo no la pude matar porque no tuve valor. Ésa es la verdadera historia” (46). What was previously established as both the prefigurative and configurative for both the forester (now a mere woodcutter) and the Queen are now dismissed and negated by the new narrative voice of the fourth section. This brings into question not only the truth claims of the first, second, and third sections but also affects the reader’s overall refigurative experience of the text.

Which is the true version of Blancanieves story? The original version written by the Brothers Grimm? Or is it the versions transcribed in Boullosa’s “Blancanieves,” in which the silenced voices in the original are now allowed to speak? This is the paradox of writing and interpretation that Boullosa wishes to exploit. Not only does this influence the reader in his/her subsequent readings of the Grimm version but is also self-reflexive in that its own meaning and message are brought into play. Reading, therefore, must be an active exercise and in a constant state of configuration. As a result, the reader must be an active component in uniting the narrated fragments in his/her personal refiguration of the text.
III. “I Love You to Death”: Boullosa’s Interview with a Vampire in Isabel

Subtitled “roja noveleta rosa en que se cuenta lo que ocurrió a un vampiro,” Boullosa’s Isabel was first published as excerpts in 1992 in the Mexican literary supplement Uno más uno. Boullosa describes Isabel as follows: “esta mujer es una erotónoma, es mujer, es una novela erótica, pero es otra vez también lo mismo, es también un mundo en que toda la sexualidad está pervertida” (Ibsen 61). Isabel, both the novel and the main character, symbolizes a distinctive perspective on female sexuality as a constitutive element of feminine identity. Moreover, it is important to note from the beginning that Boullosa’s vampire has a unique genesis: Isabel did not become a vampire in the traditional manner of by being bitten by one. Instead, she spontaneously transforms herself into one. Boullosa explains that this fantastic metamorphosis occurred because of Isabel’s disillusionment with love after her husband divorced her. Although separated from Jaime, Isabel is still obsessed with him and it is this obsessive unrequited love that ultimately turns her into the vamperic monster. Where the Queen in “Blancanieves” was simply perceived by others as psychologically monstrous and evil, Isabel actually undergoes a physiological change that physically mirrors the psychological and emotional “monster” that she has manifested herself to be.

Historically, vampire literature is said to have come from a mixture of folklore, superstition, and even early medical literature. The term “vampire” itself is a neologism from the eighteenth century that referred to certain walking cadavers that purportedly left...

20 All quotes are from the author’s unpublished manuscript, forthcoming in 2001.
their graves to torment the living and to suck their blood. But as a phenomenon of popular culture, vampire literature in the present day is more a part of fantastical literature. The growing interest in the vampire lore in today's popular culture can be best illustrated by the wide success of Anne Rice's (1941-) *"Vampire Chronicles."* On the other hand, even those publications that have deemed themselves as non-fiction lack the scientific investigation to substantiate their claims. Consequently, what remains are two basic approaches to the vampire archetype: first, an approach that offers social explanations to otherwise inexplicable events; and the second option approaches the topic from the psychological perspective in its attempt to explain the existence of vampires within the inner psychological landscape of the individual. But, as in the case of Boullosa's *Isabel,* both approaches are not exclusive of one another.

Although vampires have their roots in folktales from countries all over the world, it was the vampire figures of nineteenth century literature that best depicted these creatures as the personification of the darker side of human nature. These first literary vampires were presented more as parasitic beings who possessed very few endearing characteristics. However, with the success of various film adaptations this vampire figure was further transformed, this time into a more human figure with feelings and with some admirable traits. More importantly, these new vampires brought to the surface the

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22 See, for example, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).
strong erotic and sexual qualities of the vampire. Two more recent movies that portray the sexuality of the vampire's attack on its victims are the renowned performances of Frank Langella in *Dracula* (1979) and Gary Oldman in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992).

Interestingly, in modern day vampire lore the majority of vampires tend to be male (one need only recall the depictions of Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee) and not female. Historically, the original vampires were female but, as vampire mythology became more related with death than with the original connections to the problems in childbirth and errant young men, the female vampire gave way to its male counterpart. One of the most famous female vampires can be linked to the historical figure of the Countess Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614), better known as the Blood Countess. It is documented that the Countess Bathory would drain the blood of her servant girls as well as virgin aristocratic girls in order to bathe in it in the hopes of maintaining her youthful appearance. Although she was not accused of being a traditional blood-drinking vampire, her obsession with bathing in blood made her, at the very least, a vampire by association.

23One of the first vampires can be traced to the Malaysian *langsuyar*—a woman who became a vampire when she bore a stillborn child. Distraught over her loss she flew into the trees and became the plague of pregnant women and their children (Melton 691).

24Argentina's Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-1972) wrote her own account of the Countess in her short story “La Condesa Sangrienta” (1965). Pizarnik footnotes historical information for her short story to a French source entitled *Erzébet Báthory. La comtesse sanglante* (1963) written by Valentine Penrose. Similar to Boulosa's own warning about Isabel's "perversion sexual," in “La Condesa Sangrienta” Pizarnik also brings attention to “La perversion sexual y la demencia de la condesa Báthory” (99). However, unlike Boulosa's Isabel, la condesa Báthory experiences extreme pleasure in systematically torturing her victims and withdrawing their blood for her beauty rituals.
As previously alluded to, Isabel does not become a vampire by traditional means. Instead, she spontaneously mutates into a vampire after suffering a broken heart.

Interestingly, as an epigraph to the manuscript, Boulosa quotes Clarice Lispector: “Y consideró la crueldad de la necesidad de amar. Consideró la malignidad de nuestro deseo de ser felices. Consideró la ferocidad con que queremos jugar. Y el número de veces en que mataremos por amor” (1). It is this idea of killing out of love that forms the impetus not only for the narrative but also for Isabel’s characterization. In the first scene of the novel the reader is introduced to Isabel waking up one morning aware that her actions are now mysteriously influenced by “una voluntad involuntaria o que no parece ser de ella” (1). The third person narrative voice describes how Isabel awakens to find: “los dientes todos llenos de sangre...La sangre adentro de la boca estaba encostrada, casi seca, desincorporada, hecha trocitos. Le dio tanto asco su imagen que volvió el estómago” (2).

Only after a phone call from her girlfriend, Tere, does Isabel find out that Jaime had been run over by a car and killed in the early morning hours. It is then that it is disclosed that: “Siempre, desde que tenía memoria, Isabel amaba a Jaime. Aunque Jaime ya no correspondiera, Isabel amaba a Jaime, estaba enamorada, lo necesitaba para vivir” (2).

Keeping in mind the quote from Lispector, this declaration of dependency on the love of the Other echoes a leitmotif of vampire tradition: one of the ways that vampires came to be was the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one due to an accident, suicide, or unknown illness. This unexpected death leaves the living relative or friend with an unfinished agenda with the dead person. In turn, this sometimes causes the dead to come back to exact revenge from those against whom they may have a grievance. In Boulosa’s
literary creation, one finds that this legend is somewhat reversed: it is Isabel, the abandoned lover, who undergoes the vampiric change and ultimately attacks the cause of her unhappiness.

At this point the narrator intervenes directly in the narration to address the readers and explain to them the extent of the compulsive nature of Isabel’s love for Jaime:

“lector, lectora, Isabel amaba con locura a Jaime, con vigor sin contención, pudor o júbilo, sin pizca de este último que la distrajera de su obsesión, endiosándolo” (3). The same literary technique is used to enforce the truth claim of the narrative voice by emphasizing its verisimilitude:

No te asustes, lector, lectora. Aunque esta novela no hubiera sido posible sin el amor ciego de Isabel por Jaime, tiene una trama distinta. Y no hubiera sido posible, lector, lectora, porque esta novela es cierta, esta novela cuenta algo que fue verdad y que no lo hubiera podido ser si Isabel no amara de manera tan loca a Jaime. (3)

Similar to their participation in Papeles irresponsables, in Isabel the readers are placed once again into an active role in the overall communication process of Isabel’s story. The third person narrative voice in this text will repeatedly address the readers within the text, thereby fictionalizing the readers’ role in the very process of the dialogic nature of the text. As a result, the readers can feel not only part of the text but also in closer proximity to the subject matter and the act of production and narration.

But is there a link between Jaime’s untimely death and the fact that Isabel woke up that very morning with traces of blood in her mouth? The narrative voice does not
openly impart a connection but insinuates that: “¿Qué importancia podía tener para ella la sangre en la boca si Jaime había muerto, si nada le importaba cosa alguna, si cuanto había en la tierra llevaba Jaime escrito en pequeñas letras, si todo era Jaime?” (3). The narrative voice then relates another odd piece of information regarding Jaime’s death: it seems that the driver who had hit him noticed that Jaime was already “half ravaged” when he threw himself in front of his car. The reader becomes even more suspicious when the narrator chooses to further accentuate other strange events: “Por qué iba a andar Jaime caminando por la calle con el cuerpo destrozado y, encima de eso, por qué se iba a aventar contra un automóvil en marcha?” (4). It becomes clear that although the narrator purports a textual verisimilitude, the reader quickly becomes suspicious not only of Isabel’s behaviour but also of the narrator’s constant interruptions and self-reflexive commentaries.

Up until this point in the narration the reader has read what seem to be two distinct emplotments: that of Isabel’s bizarre experience waking up one morning, and the mysterious events surrounding Jaime’s death the previous night. Even though the narrator has insinuated a link between the two, it is Isabel’s reaction to Tere reading Jaime’s obituary that divulges a more pronounced connection between them:

Al escuchar la lectura de Tere, la boca de Isabel se ensalivó, y las tripas se le revolvieron....De inmediato entendió que sus tripas se revolvían por otro motivo, que su boca respondía a otro estímulo. Sus tripas se revolvían porque recordaban el sabor de la carne abierta de Jaime, su boca se estimulaba ante el recuerdo del flujo de su sangre tibia y buena. (4)
According to vampire mythology one who unexpectedly loses a loved one can run the risk of spontaneously turning into a vampire. This seems to be the case with Isabel. When Jaime left her she became extremely obsessed with him and would not let him go. Because of her distraught state and shock at his unresponsiveness and indifference, Isabel changes into a vampire. Ironically, in an attempt to regain Jaime's love and attention, Isabel, now a vampire, ultimately kills him. With his death he can now be hers forever just as she had always wanted "eso de acoplarse debía ser siempre en y para siempre jamás" (4). Throughout her relationship with Jaime Isabel associated her sense of self to her union with Jaime. That is to say, Isabel saw herself defined by the love Jaime gave her. When Jaime denies his love for her, Isabel not only loses her lover but, more importantly, her own sense of self. What then ensues, as a reaction to her abandonment, is a new sense of self (symbolized by her transformation into a vampire) which is now linked to a new-found hypersexuality.

As a newly born vampire Isabel's memory has become clouded and she admits, through the narrator's revelation, that she recalls being with Jaime the night of his death but that she does not remember any of the details since she admits to having felt "drunk." Although she attempts to reconstruct the previous night, the task becomes fruitless and Isabel: "Dejó de tratar de reconstruir pacientemente la noche de la muerte de Jaime en el momento en que, ya sin ropa y sobre la cama, sintió la nube oscura de la excitación nublándole el resto de la vida" (5).

In five short pages the narrator has bombarded the reader with a series of confusing and, at times, conflicting events. This in turn causes the reader to suffer a
similar disorientation, as endured by the protagonist herself. The narrative's self-reflexivity also lends itself to the narrator's own disclaiming of narrative veracity. That is to say, the third person narrator, after presenting the circumstances leading up to Isabel's metamorphosis, rescinds his previous narration:

¡Ah! Lector, lectora! Todo lo he ido contando mal. Lector, lo he hecho mal. Empecé por un yo que no era el mío y lo abandoné de inmediato.

Luego me fui corriendo a un tiempo que volviera mi historia en pasado.

¡Pero la historia no ha ocurrido aún! ¡Todavía está en tiempo presente! (5)

Not only has the narrator called into question previous truth claims but, with the prior admission, the reader's interpretation of the narrator's focalization is also suspect. The discerning reader becomes aware of the angle of vision through which the third person narrator filters and verbally formulates the narration. As a result, this same reader finds it necessary to compose a narrative time of his/her own which unites both the text's language as the means of representation, and the incidents of the story as the object presented. The narrator goes on to indicate that: "¿En qué tiempo puedo contarla? ¿Con qué voz? Debo aclararle que si carraspeo y no sé por dónde ir, es sobre todo porque la historia es verdad, está ocurriendo ahora mismo" (5). Accordingly, reading Isabel becomes a dynamic process in which the text not only presupposes reader participation but also induces him/her to refigure his/her textual interpretation throughout the reading exercise. One cannot ignore that within this process not only the narrator, but the text itself, controls the reader's comprehension and attitudes by chronologically positioning certain items within the text before others. That is to say, the information and attitudes
presented early on in the text influences the reader to interpret everything in their light. What occurs as a result is a continuous forming of hypotheses, reinforcing them, developing them, modifying them, and sometimes replacing them with new ones. Keeping in mind, however, that even abandoned hypotheses may still continue to exercise influence on the reader's overall interpretation of the text.

Besides being paradigmatic, the narrator also admits to not being totally omniscient, even though alleging to be narrating events as they happen. In order to do so the narrator takes on a voyeuristic role, especially when describing all of Isabel's sexual encounters, while also confessing that: "ella [Isabel] le [a su amante] decía palabras que no alcancé a oír" (6). Overall, the reader must be an active participant in the construction of narrative meaning, as well as a fictionalized element of the story itself. It is within this collaborative role that the reader ties up the loose ends left by the third person narrator. Ironically, at the end of this first chapter, the same narrator informs the reader to:

Ata cabos tú, lector, y comprende que no es fácil entender, o decir, o repetir, la historia de Isabel. Ya te diste cuenta de lo que Isabel no comprende bien a bien: ella no es entera una mujer. Si han de llenarse de cadáveres las páginas de este libro, será porque Isabel es la protagonista de esta historia. (6)

Not only is the construction of meaning a significant component to the reading experience, but also for the characterization of the main protagonist, Isabel. The reader must construct Isabel's character by assembling various character indicators distributed throughout the text, and, when necessary, inferring certain character traits from them,
while also maintaining, through the narrator’s own admissions, that not all character traits revealed by the narrative voice are completely trustworthy or true. What will most influence the readers in their interpretation of Isabel and her actions will be the impression achieved through a series of definitions—both from concrete details and those implied by her own behaviour—all gradually emerging throughout the text.

Having established in the first chapter an unreliable and paradoxical third person narration, in the second chapter Boullosa reverts to a first person narrative voice—that of the protagonist herself. In a somewhat confessional tone, Isabel admits in this section that she did not want to accept Jaime’s excuse that he wanted to leave her simply because he wanted to be able to live life more fully without her. The narrator’s claims of Isabel’s obsession with Jaime are collaborated by the protagonist herself when she exclaims:

Sé que está muerto. Pero te venero tanto que te sacaría de la tumba y te llevaría a mi cama aunque en mis narices te pudrieras, aunque olieras a carne corrupta, aunque las moscas y los gusanos te habitaran. ¿No me importaría, Jaime! Con mi lengua te espantaría los gusanos. Te chuparía yo tanto que terminaría por hacerte incorruptible. (6)

The sexual undertones in Boullosa’s text are undeniable. Similar motifs of forbidden sexual longing are iterated in other examples of vampire mythology in their representation of the vampire and the mysterious power of human blood. One should recall that in Dracula Bram Stoker (1847-1912) was strictly limited by social conventions of the Victorian age in his development of the sexual undertones of this ground-breaking
novel. However, in *Isabel* the twenty-first century reader is not faced with such concerns. Bouillosa does not ignore Isabel’s strong sexual identity, even though in depicting her as a sexually aggressive and promiscuous woman she leaves her open to criticism from more conservative members of society. One may say that in depicting her as a vampire, Bouillosa makes Isabel an exception from the more restrictive predetermined role for women in society. As a vampire she is an exception, therefore she is free to live out what tend to be repressed fantasies and wishes for most women. In a sense, Isabel represents what has been suppressed in the socially determined role for the female but nevertheless exists on a subconscious level and in her sexual fantasy. Thus, what is hidden in most living women becomes an natural characteristic of Isabel’s newly liberated vampiric nature. J. Gordon Melton points out that: “the image of the vampire in popular culture serves us as a useful scapegoat since—through the mechanism of projection—the vampire allows us to disown the negative aspects of our personalities” (494). I would clarify that, in Isabel’s case, it is not so much a question of the “negative aspects of our personalities” but rather innate sexual desires whose manifestation by a woman is not socially acceptable. Thus, when released, these sexual desires are often expressed as female promiscuity and sexual aggressiveness. The vampire metaphor becomes an outward expression of the protagonist’s inner reality and turmoil and, for Isabel, the way to fill this new emptiness is by keeping her bed occupied with various sexual conquests. In doing so she admits that: “Mi cuerpo será una cosa minúscula en comparación con el esplendor oculto de mi vagina” (7).
Although she is unable to remember the exact events of the previous night there is something inside Isabel that tells her that Jaime is not really dead: “Es absurdo pensararlo, pero pronto despertarás. ¿No vendrás por mí: me habrás olvidado? ¿Me recordarás y tendrás conmigo, en tu repugnante y destruida apariencia, comercio carnal?” (7). Life for Isabel becomes no more than a series of sexual adventures in which she possesses her lovers and exploits them to satisfy her own needs: “Me voy a acostar con aquellos en los que sienta el verdadero gusto por el placer carnal. El gusto por el gusto de la carne” (7). By becoming a vampire not only does Isabel need to quench her thirst for blood, but in her case, the need to satisfy her sexual desires is another implicit characteristic of her vampiric state. These narcissistic tendencies are, in essence, a self-defence mechanism through which Isabel searches to fill the feeling of inner emptiness and abandonment from which she suffers. Isabel, in a sense, is the modern day vamp—she represents what is socially perceived as immoral: a powerful and dark feminine sexuality. As a vamp, Isabel is able to release in her lovers, both male and female, strong sexual energies that at times go beyond the socio-culturally accepted norms.25

At this point in the novel the narrator interrupts Isabel’s narration: “¡Vaya, vaya, vaya! Estamos perdidos tú y yo, lector. Parece que estamos perdidos. Más nos vale arrebatarle la palabra a Isabel, porque no parece muy dispuesta a compartir con nosotros su historia. Aunque yo no tenga voz y no encuentre el tono, he de contarla” (8). As previously alluded to, the narrator expresses a unique perspective on Isabel’s story in

25Early in chapter one the narrator describes one of Isabel’s sexual encounters: “y él entonces la volteó de lado y clavándole la verga en el culo se zangoloteó y se vació ahí, sudando, muerto de gusto…” (6).
which he/she both witnesses Isabel’s behaviour and also narrates it. But once the narrator puts into words what he/she sees, it becomes inevitably coloured by his/her own perception and value systems, since it is impossible to speak without betraying one’s own personal point of view. With the changing of narrative voice from first person to third person, the reader notices that the third person narration tends to focus mainly on narrating Isabel’s story. Whereas the focalization in Isabel’s first person narration is not so much on herself as it is on her present situation and those around her. That is to say, Isabel’s personal narration combines both the consciousness of the narrating self with the experiencing self and it is only here that the reader is able to penetrate Isabel’s real feelings and thoughts.

Whereas Isabel does not find it necessary to explain her promiscuous behaviour in her own narration, the third person narrative voice is constantly attempting to interpret not only Isabel’s actions but also what motivates her lovers. For instance:

   Este muchacho, no especialmente hermoso, no especialmente abierto a la belleza extraña y radiante de Isabel, parece masturbarse con el cuerpo de esta mujer, joven para nosotros, mayor para él...No levanta el torso mientras se la coge (ya lo dije, parece masturbarse, no coger)...Pero parece que desprecia el cuerpo de Isabel....¡Isabel sólo es vieja para él!!

Aside from wanting to understand Isabel, the narrator also demonstrates a more emotional concern for her. Although the narrator wishes to provide the reader with a neutral and uninvolved narration, it becomes clear that at times he/she also tends to be
attentive to the fact that Isabel not be depicted too harshly or one-dimensionally. For this reason the narrator, in spite of attempting to restrict the narration to the observation of external actions and behaviour, also tends to attribute certain emotional attributes and reactions to the protagonist as well as other characters. In an aside at the end of the same aforementioned sexual encounter the narrator contemplates: “...¿qué hará Isabel, la toda carne, al lado de un hombre que la ignora? Cerrará los ojos y todo será un tormento...)” (9). In a manner of speaking, the third person narrative voice looks to penetrate the consciousness of his subject in the attempt to best narrate her experiences.

Another example of the narrator’s attachment to his/her subject is revealed in his/her generalization that: “A los hombres se les enseña a despreciar la carne y a las mujeres a contener su gusto hasta donde la carne aguante. La mayoría de los varones no saben lo que es gozar, y no les interesa. Un pequeño meneo y un océano de semen. Pura aburricion carnal” (9). Consequently, what the narrator has done is provide the reader with a general remark on the socio-cultural context in which Isabel exists and within which she is subsequently defined. By doing so the reader is given information that allows him/her to better interpret not only Isabel’s actions but also the orientation that the narrator gives the narration. Up until this point the third person narrator has provided a traditional distanced point of view, however, this changes later in the novel: at this point in the narrative the dialogue used in the narration will be the only true indicator of the narrator’s stance with respect to the subject being narrated.

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26 A similar concern is expressed by S. M. Rodrigo, the narrator in Lispector’s *A Hora da Estrela*, for his protagonist.
The deciding factor in defining Isabel as a true vampire occurs when she has a short-lived love affair with a fellow worker. During their first rendez-vous, Isabel’s sucking on her lover’s wound has a miraculous curing effect. In their second meeting, Isabel is unable to demonstrate the same self-control and this time she sucks his blood and kills him.\footnote{27}

Se besaron, él la penetró y cuando estaban los dos perdidos, sin el lugar, sin el tiempo, como si aquello no fuera a acabar nunca, y casi sin ellos mismos, Isabel le encajó los comillos y chupó, succionó, mamó...con decisión y fuerza....; Y tanto lo adormiló que para siempre lo durmió! (11)

Not only is biting linked to vampiric behaviour, some psychologists have also described it as a trait of human sexual aggression.\footnote{28} However, in the animal kingdom the male tends to bite the female’s neck as a method of controlling her. It becomes clear at this

\footnote{27}{In her poem “Loba comida” Boullosa writes of a female werewolf that devours men in a similar manner:}

¿Cuántos cuerpos me he comido?  
¿He devorado más de un ciento?  
Nunca he querido contarios...  
Cada que la luna abre su ojo en la oscuridad del cielo,  
veo el brillo en los ojos pares de un cuerpo que necesito,  
**deseo, amo...**  
Si en sus ojos brilla la llama de su carne, tengo que destrozar...  
Los confundo con palabras dulces, los llevo al lecho  
y ahí, bajo la luz de la luna que inunda mi alcoba,  
a los cuerpos que amo  
los devoro,  
como ya lo expliqué. (**La Delirios** 54-55)

\footnote{28}{An emerging element in present day popular culture is the growth of a “goth” culture in which some of its members follow a vampiric lifestyle. In addition to taking on the physical characteristics of vampires (pale complexion, fangs for teeth, and a nocturnal lifestyle) some also practice blood-sucking.}
point in the narration that Isabel, if not a vampire, is definitely behaving in a vampiric manner.

Another vampiric quality that Isabel exhibits is her lack of remorse at the death of her victims:

Isabel se vio a sí misma pensando en estos términos en el asesinato de Carlos, y sintió miedo de su propio corazón. Lo había matado, y en lo único en que pensaba era en que no la culparan de su muerte. No sentía la culpabilidad, la responsabilidad de la muerte de Carlos….Carlos estaba muerto y Carlos vivía adentro de ella: sus dos sangres venían revueltas.

(12)

In her new condition Isabel not only replaces food with the blood of her lovers but the narrator also reveals that: “Isabel no quería ternura” (13). With her transformation Isabel has been dehumanized and other than the physicality of sexual relations, she shies away from human contact. One need not go further than the description of her sexual encounters as merely physical exercises without the intimacy of human emotional contact. Ironically, in this respect, her sexuality has dehumanized her.

At the end of the third chapter the reader discovers that not only does Isabel have an affinity for women but that she also uses the services of a male prostitute named Luzbel. During her first encounter with Luzbel, the latter makes it clear to Isabel that he does not want “No sados, no masocas” (13) when Isabel attempts to bite him. When Isabel tells him that all she wanted to do is taste his blood, Luzbel adds “Entonces también debo decir ‘ni vampiros’” (14). This is the first time in the novel that the word
“vampiro” is mentioned in relation to Isabel’s behaviour and, interestingly, it is done in jest. At this pivotal point in the story the narrator interjects the following commentary:

“Lector, parece que Isabel ya ató cabos. Ella sabe ya quién es. Quienes la rodean no se han dado cuenta, en cambio” (14). Ironically, it is only at this moment that Isabel herself ties together all the events of the last few days and realizes what she has become. But, those around her have yet to come to the same realization. Unlike her previous socially-imposed identity, Isabel’s new identity is one that exists in opposition to the socially acceptable, and who better to perceive it than Luzbel—a social outcast himself.

The fourth chapter picks up on this significant self-revelation by exploring the psychological and emotional aftermath. In order to do so Isabel takes over the narration at this time in the style of interior monologue so that she herself may better understand her present state. Even so, life seems to go on without her and she forgets the simplest tasks (such as paying her telephone bill):

No sé cuándo empezó todo, y si lo sé. Mi amor por Jaime, eso fue lo que me trastornó, me enloqueció. Que no me correspondiera me dejó fuera de jugar, fuera de foco, agarrada de una brocha casi inexistente. ¡Me hubiera muerto, mejor, mejor me hubiera muerto! Me volví puro escape doloroso. Ahora no me duele ser lo que soy. Ahora soy feliz. No estoy en mis cabales, no he vuelto a mí, no me importa. (15)

Not only has Isabel come to the realization that she is no longer “normal” but she also feels somewhat “out of focus.” In his study entitled Los vampiros a la luz de la medicina Juan Gómez-Alonso, a Spanish neurologist, scientifically investigates vampirism as a
possible socio-cultural, as well as psychological, manifestation of: rabies, the plague, schizophrenia, and even of a mental breakdown. In light of Gómez-Alonso’s theories, Isabel’s vampirism seems to have been “contracted” due to an emotional and mental breakdown, that, aside from its painful changes, has left her with a new identity. Where before everything and everyone mattered, now only she matters.

Isabel’s confrontation with reality is emotionally equivalent to her facing her own destructibility: be it by AIDS or even the plague which made its presence felt in her city. But her destruction has not been caused by diseases or even her self-inflicted isolation. Her desolation is rooted in her past with Jaime, and Tere makes Isabel see this as much as she wishes to deny it: “Jaime ya había muerto para ti. Era una relación que sólo te dañaba, no te daba nada. Desde que no vivian juntos, tal vez desde antes, él sólo era tu mal. Al rechazarte, te destruía” (16). Interestingly, it is her relationship with another female that allows Isabel to come to a sense of self-knowledge and, for the first time, to confess not only to Tere, but to herself, that:

Es que yo tengo que ver con esa muerte, con que haya ocurrido esa muerte.... No lo quería incondicionalmente. Lo amaba para mí. Si no era mio, lo prefería muerto.... Sí, la invoqué con desesperación. Para conseguirla, trastroqué mi naturaleza. Ya no soy mujer, mujer, mujer. Soy otra cosa. (16)

In spite of being able to acknowledge her metamorphosis, Isabel is still haunted by the implications of what she has become. She now confesses to the reader that she is able to fly and she is unable to see herself in the mirror—all traditional characteristics of a
fly and she is unable to see herself in the mirror—all traditional characteristics of a vampire.

Later in chapter five the third person narrator assumes the narration once again in order to relate to the reader the effects of the plague on the city. In both folklore and superstition, the plague has also been linked to vampirism in that not only was it believed that those who died from the plague had a higher risk of becoming vampires, but that vampires themselves could cause the plague. For this reason the narrator warns the reader in an aside entitled “descripción de la enfermedad” that:

Si algo te pica a ti lector, ten cuidado...Ahora, vampiros (porque estos, a no dudarlo, tienen relación con la peste) hay pocos en la ciudad. Hay sólo cuatro, y dos están enterrados en vida. Pero un vampiro basta para diseminar la peste. Es más, sin pulgas, sin ratas, sin Pasteurella pestis, un vampiro trae peste a toda una ciudad. (20)

The reason for the link between vampirism and the plague is not that the symptoms of the plague are similar to that of vampirism but the fact that the plague is also principally transmitted by animal bites (Gómez-Alonso 83-84).

As the quote from Lispector at the beginning of the text suggested, love takes on a cruel quality, for it becomes apparent that Isabel kills out of love. She did so with Jaime and Carlos in order to keep them forever at her side, and in her moment of intimacy with Tere Isabel also bites her and transforms her into a vampire. Isabel severs all connections with both Carlos and Tere once she converts them into vampires—a feeling of disconnectedness similar to that she experiences with her numerous lovers: “Isabel no
quería pensar en Tere. No pensó ni un momento en Tere....Ni siquiera en la peste que por su culpa coría por la ciudad que la cobijaba” (21). After spending three days in a death-like state Tere finally awakens to discover the reality of what she has become. In her own self-discovery Tere deduces, for the first time in the text, that the same thing had happened to Jaime–Isabel had also bitten him and in his struggle to escape her he was then hit by a car. Tere then takes it upon herself to find Jaime and to put him out of his misery, a care and concern expected more of Isabel than of her.

The narration at this point takes on a more fantastical characteristic reminiscent of traditional vampire stories. The land of the dead takes on more peaceful and organized qualities, whereas the city, attacked by the plague, is in total chaos. The narrator recognizes that the reader at this point in his/her reading will question the extraordinary elements that the narrative has taken on in depicting the upside down world of the undead. In order to reclaim textual veracity, the narrator mediates the relationship between text and reader by reaffirming the truth claim of this vampire story:

El aspecto del panteón era mucho más ordenado que el de la ciudad. De hecho, era lo único vivo en la ciudad, lo único que conservaba orden y apariencia. El panteón, si en otros tiempos dibujaba el límite entre los muertos y los vivos, ahora lo desdibujaba. ¿Quién está vivo en esta ciudad? El territorio de los muertos es lo que está vivo en esta historia. Porque es una historia de Vampiros....;Ah, lector! ¡Lo prometo! ¡Ocurrió!
In order to enforce the previous truth claim the third person narrative voice includes another aside in the text to explain to the reader, in clearer scientific terms, what is involved in being a vampire. The attributes described here have their source in both the literary and folkloric vein of vampire lore: the vampire is a member of the undead that needs blood in order to live; they bring death, disease and chaos wherever they go; they manifest a strong sense of sexuality; and to be destroyed vampires must have a wooden stake driven through their hearts.

To further highlight the narrative's credibility a fourth narrative voice is introduced in the section subtitled “el pensamiento de Jaime.” It is here that a third distinct experience of being a vampire is narrated: one of a childhood utopia recuperated. But Isabel’s kindred, Tere and Jaime, are unable to communicate with each other. Tere remarks the following about Jaime’s condition: “Feo, feo, feo, el asunto está muy feo. Y no ve, es un vampiro ciego. Y habla haciendo ruidos, la lengua le quedó mal restaurada” (26). After driving the stake through Jaime’s heart Tere flees, naked, only to die herself moments later. Nevertheless, there is one other vampire left and that is Carlos. Unlike Jaime and Tere, Carlos has become a member of a disembodied chorus of voices that the narrator hears chanting the following:

–Somos los incorruptos,

somos, somos, somos los incorruptos.

Nuestros cuerpos van intactos, no viajan a la muerte

no se pudren nuestros cuerpos intactos. (27)
Out of the three fledglings Isabel has created Carlos seems to be the most well adapted to his new condition. Unlike Jaime and Tere who were left alone to despair, Carlos has assimilated himself into a larger group; therefore he is given a sense of belonging that the other two, and even Isabel, do not have.

Surrounded by death caused by the plague, Isabel does not stop looking for victims of her own. Similar to her indifference to her previous victims, Isabel is also detached from the sight of the decay of human life brought about by the plague. Until, however, she comes across a group of dead bodies being devoured by wild dogs, in which Isabel finds her lover, Luzbel. With neither Jaime, Carlos, or Tere did Isabel demonstrate any interest in reviving them, but seeing Luzbel near death she scares away the dogs and taking Luzbel in her arms she attempts to resurrect him: “le abre la boca, separa sus dientes, jala su lengua, hacia atrás y hacia adelante, imitando el movimiento de la respiración, con los dedos cubiertos por un extremo de la blusa para que la lengua no resbale….Claro que no se ve hermoso mientras Isabel intenta su resurrección” (29).

And she succeeds, “Ella que ha traído la muerte a todos, le ha dado vida a Luzbel!” (29). But Isabel’s actions are not without an ulterior motive—after spending passionate nights together, the narrator reveals that: “Luzbelito el revivido se muere en la cama de Isabel, cuarenta y ocho horas después de haber despertado entre los muertos” (29). This time Isabel takes the time to drain her victim of all his blood so that he does not turn into a vampire as Jaime, Carlos, and Tere did before him. Although her actions in reviving Luzbel are selfish, so that she may drink of him, Isabel realizes that one of the results of
her actions is that of turning others into involuntary vampires. For this reason she now takes extra care not to do so to any other victim.

The narrator at this point interrupts the narration to further explain another detail of Isabel’s vampiric existence: “los vampiros contargan la muerte con el contacto carnal” (29). From the onset of the novel the sexual component to Isabel’s vampiric behaviour has been obvious; however, it has never been addressed directly, until now. Only the narrator, perhaps voicing the reader’s own incredulity, cannot understand the paradox: “Estoy de acuerdo con que succionar sangre ajena es arrebatar vida, pero me parece mal que ese ser portador de muerte sea tan cercano a la pasión carnal” (29). But more shocking than this revelation of Isabel’s sexuality is the disclosure of the implied author’s identity as none other than Carmen Boullosa herself. The third person narrator chastises herself for allowing herself to have been tricked: “Carmen....Claro como la ves [a Isabel] desde tu lugar, desde tu sillita, neutral, no la has comprendido casi nada de nada...Míra, inocente palomita, te has dejado engañar...” (30). Interestingly, the implied author’s voice is not silent in the face of such criticism: “¡Lo sé! ;Sé que me he dejado engañar con la historia de las tracciones rítmicas de la lengua del Doctor Laborde!...Sé que si desear es tocar el fuego del infierno y su violencia, satisfacer el deseo es palpar la muerte...No la muerte aparente...La REAL...” (30). In the end, who is the one fooled by the myriad of narrative voices and each of their claims to telling the true version of the story?

The apparent link to the multiple narrative voices is the desire to define Isabel’s new identity. But if this in itself is paradoxical to Isabel, how can these external narrative
voices propose to explain her experiences as a self-created vampire? Just as her image cannot be captured in any mirror or reflective surface, neither can her unnatural experiences be circumscribed within the accepted realm of feminine experience:

Voy al espejo.

Tampoco aparezco.

Tengo miedo....

Corroboro que no estoy en la ventana, que tampoco–enciendo la luz–, que tampoco estoy en el espejo.

Ahora no tengo miedo. Sé que mi cuerpo está en la recámara.

¿Para qué quiero mi imagen en el espejo? (30)

Psychologically, Isabel has lost her self. In abandoning the safer, yet constrictive, role she was accustomed to fulfilling as Jaime’s partner, she loses the main element that gave her a sense of identity. As a self-defensive act she redefines herself completely outside the social norm, divorcing herself from humanity and preying on it just as she herself had felt preyed upon before her liberating transformation. Only this new identity has left her empty and disconnected from the same humanity that had victimized her and the only way she feels alive is through sexual contact and pleasure, since this is the only element in her that has remained human. Still, her new found sexual identity is one of hypersexuality and aggressiveness, two characteristics in women frowned upon both socially and culturally, although they have been accepted as part of the make-up of the young male.
The plague also becomes symbolic of the estrangement Isabel feels from others: 

"Atormentada veía que todos morirían y que su cuerpo seguiría deseándolos" (31). It is Jaime’s second and true death that has a more lasting affect on Isabel: “Isabel se sabía eterna y no deseaba morir, pero atacada por el alma de la verdadera muerte de Jaime, deseó no desear más, desesperadamente . . . El deseo es lo que la atormentaba” (31).

While Jaime still existed as a vampire Isabel had felt whole, since in death she still had him as part of her new world, but when Tere kills him Isabel finally feels that part of her has finally died. Even in her new independent state Isabel continues to intertwine her sense of self with Jaime’s presence in her life and it is another woman’s actions that force her to accept herself for what she is and not what she has wanted others to think she is.

Finally the plague comes to an end in her city and Isabel is given permission to travel outside of Mexico. She first travels to San Francisco after being invited as a guest lecturer;29 days later the city is contaminated with the plague. Once quarantine has been lifted, she leaves for Rome, only to have the same happen there. Isabel is the contagion that carries the plague with her wherever she goes. With the use of modern technology authorities discover Isabel to be the link in all the outbreaks of the plague and she is hospitalized in order to undergo testing. It is during this incarceration that the narrator has an open dialogue with her—transcribed in the text as direct discourse and no longer the indirect discourse that has characterized the text until now.

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29It is mentioned that Isabel “Tiene buen curriculum, era investigadora del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, ha publicado un sinnúmero de artículos, un par de libros, y eso no es poca cosa” (32).
Held prisoner Isabel is unable to fulfill her sexual needs and confesses to the narrator that:

> Esto no tiene fin: no hay más fin que la muerte para el cuerpo....se hace
> triste piedra dura por las muertes de los cuerpos que puede desear, triste
> piedra dura encerrada en el tormento del deseo insatisfecho....en Isabel la
> ausencia del medio de la satisfacción y del gusto se vuelve ira y el deseo
> de destrucción de su coño, el ansia de convertirse en estatua. (35)

But there is something that has prevented her from taking on the form of a statue, frozen in time—and that is the narration of her story—that has kept her alive all this time.

Ironically, it has not been the first person narration that has done so, but the enigmatic third person narrator. Not only did Isabel know that her story was being narrated, she also knew the identity of the narrator—Carmen Boullosa (a piece of information hidden from the reader for the first half of the novel). In Isabel’s moment of need she accuses Carmen—her narrator—of not having done enough to help her: “Todo hubiera sido posible para ti. Tú escribías la novela” (35). Yet, Carmen—as the implied author—does not believe that she has been in total control of the story: “No es verdad. Yo anotaba lo que iba pasando” (35). Similar to the narrator/Carmen Boullosa in *Papeles irresponsables*, the narrator/Carmen in *Isabel* also denounces authorial authority in stating that she merely transcribes what is occurring and is not the author of such textual experiences. All that she can offer Isabel as protection is her own name, Carmen, but what she needs is *carne*. Although the words sound similar, they are two completely different things. But are they
really different? Has the narrator not been, metaphorically, sucking the life out of Isabel as part of the creative process of writing her story?\

In an attempt to alleviate some of her pain Isabel seduces one of the orderlies, but in the process suffers a humiliating denigration: “¡De nada me había servido humillarme, suplicarle que me quitara la tortura!” (36). In a moment of pure frustration Isabel exclaims: “¡Hasta cuándo, Carmen, hasta cuando me vas a tener encerrada aquí!” (36). Not only has the narrator existed as a parasite on Isabel’s life, but Isabel also accuses her of imprisoning her in her own narrative. As part of this conflict between narrator and literary creation, the narrator gives Isabel a series of escapes, all of which belittle her condition as a vampire. This in turn causes the reader to question the third person narrative voice and her intentions up until this point. Now, Isabel seems to take on the appearance of the victim and it is the narrator who is depicted with vampiric qualities.

In the end Isabel is found innocent of having spread the plague virus and is freed by her capturers. At this time there is another confrontation between Boullosa/implied author and Isabel:

30While delivering a paper entitled “Historiar–novelas” Boullosa makes the following commentary about the nature of the novel:

Burla el tiempo en la lectura, es el vampiro que, saciado de la sangre del lector, revive a costas de su cuerpo. Los ojos del lector la vitalizan. Vive a su costa. Pero para ser ese cadáver que de nuevo cobra vida, para ser el cuerpo falsamente muerto (nadie transpone las puertas de la muerte y vuelve a la vida), para ser esa simulación de materia inerte. (5-6)

31Just as in Papeles irresponsables one can draw a parallel to Unamuno’s use of the narrator/implied author in Niebla. However, it is interesting to point out that Boullosa’s appropriation of this literary technique is unique in that the implied author actually goes by the name of Carmen Boullosa.
¿Viste, Isabel, que no era yo la que te tenía así?

—Sí eras tú.
—No era yo.
—Sí eras tú.
—No era yo.

¡Basta!...Isabel, cállate. Déjame seguir con la historia.

—Sí eras tú.
—Está bien. Si quieres, digo que sí era yo, aunque yo no lo fui.
—Así no vale.
—Sí vale.
—No vale.

¡Otra vez! Era yo, acepto que era yo para poder seguir con la historia. Era yo, y cuando salí de ahí la pusieron bajo vigilancia. (37)

As a result, the narrator’s credibility is called into question and the reader begins to disregard the personal commentaries that she tends to make. The narrator does not help in her own case since she openly admits at one point that she has lied to the reader about Isabel being followed by a detective because: “Estoy cansada de narrar lo que voy viendo, lo que acaba de ocurrir, lo que pasó hace unos días. Tuve la tentación de inventar algo” (38). Furthermore, she also admits that she is the one who pursues Isabel, watching her every move and yet unable to fully understand the complexities of her personality.

While in New York Isabel meets an Argentinian and becomes amorously involved with him. At this point Isabel begins to exercise more control over her narrative
and the narrator is excluded from telling her story: “empecé a ser expulsada de esta historia. Se hicieron cómplices. Me cerraron la puerta. No tuve acceso a ellos porque de inmediato se entabló entre ellos INTIMIDAD” (39). Intimacy, the very thing that has been missing from Isabel’s life all this time, finally brings her closer to humanity by temporarily silencing her vampirism. For the moment Isabel has found a man who returns her love and it is at this point that the narrator wishes to end the story—with a happy ending. Once again the narrator’s authority is undermined; this time a different third person narrative voice takes control of the narration, discrediting what was previously narrated as the “happy ending.” Instead, the new narrator reveals that this Argentinian is just like all the other men before him and that just as all the other cities, New York is suffering from the plague.

Surrounded for the fourth time by the desolation of the plague Isabel finally comprehends what she is and the feelings of culpability that this entails:

Isabel se dio cuenta entonces de su monstruosidad abyecta.

Conoció el remordimiento. Supo quién era. Se comparó, se midió, se catalogó, se puso adjetivos.

(“Soy la muerte. Soy la destrucción. Mi cuerpo es el fuego, el incendio, el terremoto, el eclipse que anuncia los desastres, la aparición de los desastres...Mi sudor trae hambrunas. Mi sangre menstrual la enfermedad incurable...Yo soy quien lleva la peste. (40)

In a moment of truthful self-reflection Isabel equates herself to death, in both her role in spreading the plague and in killing many to satisfy her need for blood. Now that she has a
truthful consciousness of self she feels caged in by feelings of guilt. Surprisingly, Isabel awakens from this dream state to find herself sleeping beside the man she loves, but in an act of fear of what she might do to him, she leaves. With a safe distance between them she calls him, but when he asks her to come back the narrative text provides a series of “professional recommendations” of what she should do. Again the third person narrative voice enters the text as a controlling element: as the first expert, under the guise of the “author,” and the second and third experts. As part of the discussion whether or not Isabel should return to her lover there is a point made by the first expert that clearly asserts the separation that there should be between the author and subject. Nevertheless, it is the second expert who draws attention to the veracity of the title of this novel: “Me gustaría que la matara él, su amado. Me parece suficientemente rosa el acto, y suficientemente rojo como para entrar en esta novela” (42).

The topic of authorial authority and the truth claim system is revisited when the third expert just asks that the author recount what truly happened, to which the author paradigmatically replies: “usted se equivoca, tercer experto, yo no he inventado nada....He sido testigo, solamente, de una historia en la que en nada participo, una historia que no tiene que ver conmigo, que no se parece a mi fantasía, ni a mi sensibilidad, que es ajena a mi mundo” (42). Aside from admitting to the reader that she has not been a participant in the novel, the reader knows from his/her reading experience that this is untrue. Interestingly, the author finds it necessary to include a “paréntesis de la autora, que no viene a cuento” (42) at this point in the attempt to reattribute a sense of reliability to the author: “Si me apasiona es porque contar, repetir lo que veo, romperlo
de la vida real y pegarlo en mi orden a la página de un libro, es una actividad irresistible.

Yo no hubiera elegido nunca escribir esta historia de vampiros” (42-43). Comparable to the narrator of Papeles irresponsables, the narrative voice of Isabel looks to negate any sense of authorial responsibility by emphasizing that as a writer she was essentially powerless before the act of writing. That is to say that in both novels the implied author enforces the idea that the subject matter had a life of its own and the implied author’s role in it was simply to give it its written form in transposing it into writing. With such a paradoxical series of admissions and confessions from the implied author, how is the reader to trust her? As a result, another aside in the text is needed in order to describe what truly happened to Isabel. What is then recounted is Isabel’s desperation and her subsequent attempt at suicide by decapitating herself after adornning herself with crucifixes, garlic, and incense.

But before such allegations and claims at textual verisimilitude get out of control, the implied author gains control of the narrative by denouncing as false the revelations of the aforementioned three experts. Although she regains narrative control in order to finish the book, the implied author is unable to find Isabel: “Pero no encuentro a Isabel, no sé dónde está, y como esto no es asunto de mi fantasía, no sé qué hacer. No puedo rastrearlá...” (43-44). The implied author also admits that she had lied about Isabel having left her Argentine lover, for all she knows she continues living with him in New York. One day the implied author comes across Isabel in a café and notices that she has changed: “Voy hasta sus ojos y ahí pregunto: el amor por él la había hecho sentir la responsabilidad de ser ella la Muerte. Sintió la inmoralidad, la culpabilidad. Deseó ser
oûa, no ser ella. Estallaba. ¡Y ni así se quería morir! Pero quería dejar de ser lo que era” (44). By experiencing true love Isabel finally recognizes the implications of her past actions, and instead of the feelings of feverish sexual aggression coursing through her veins, Isabel is now haunted by the blame of all those she killed. Even though Isabel wishes that her story had been different, in reality it is not logical since: “No tenía vuelta el ser vampiro, no tenía regreso, no tenía marcha atrás, no se podía dejar de ser vampiro” (44). Desperate and hopeless, Isabel chooses to end her life by beheading herself. In doing so “Su cabeza era la cabeza que correspondía a un vampiro. Su cuerpo, en cambio, hermoso, noble, era el cuerpo de una mujer” (45).

Even with Isabel’s death and the end of the novel in sight, the narrator intrudes into Isabel’s story to give her own impressions on the matter. The implied author articulates that she has told this story so that it may serve not only as a warning to all but also function as an example for the “eliminación del imperio de la cabeza sobre la claridad de los sentidos corporales. El fin de la lujuria guiada por la torva oscuridad de la inteligencia. El sagrado temor a lo terrible. El respeto a la restricción y a los castigos, al sometimiento de lo incontrolable” (45). For the reader it is not so much the fantastical topic of the novel that is “uncontrollable” but the overall reading exercise. Botullosa’s text places her reader within a discourse that is both representative of a fragmented consciousness as well as being in a state of constant refiguration. Consequently, the reader finds himself/herself trying to manage a reading that refuses to articulate a fixed meaning but that instead promotes a multiplicity of versions.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to demonstrate that both Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa exemplify in their narratives a unique achievement in articulating the liberation of women, one that brings together both a feminine experience and a feminine point of view. Moreover, they do so without necessarily encumbering themselves within any specific ideology. Having worked through traditional genres both authors recognize that language in itself can be constraining. Such restrictions have been associated with language's deep-seated socio-cultural undertones that, aside from characterizing it, also affect the overall meaning of any utterance. Even though language should be perceived as plagued by certain contradictions and ambiguities, neither author denies that it is still a constitutive factor of the narrative text. By recognizing these external influences both Lispector and Boullosa artistically manipulate narrative structure by manoeuvring it away from being unidirectional to a more fluid and multidirectional narrative.

In neither author's work should language simply be interpreted as a system of grammatical structures, but rather as a tool that gives expression to the individual. What becomes evident is that discourse, although mediated by each author's own manipulations, remains a restrictive construct because of its natural connection to the socio-political and cultural repertoires of the enunciator's environment. In Dialogic Imagination Bakhtin expands on this same idea of a prefigurative laden with
predetermined prejudices and value judgements in his description of a "linguistic consciousness" as "the perception of language borders--borders created by history and society" (323). In describing the process of conscientization of their protagonists, both Lispector and Boullosa insinuate this inexistence of "an unconditional language" (324), in Baktin's terms, or in Ricoeur's terms, of a non-gendered prefigurative discourse. By identifying this inherent prejudgement in language both Lispector and Boullosa opt, on certain occasions, for the freedom of a fragmented narrative structure so as to better articulate non-prescribed thoughts and images. Let us also recall that this use of a more fluid narrative framework is the key element that characterizes both authors' use of an innovative narrative structure. One could add that in the same way that the narrative structure encourages a multiplicity of interpretations, the innovative use of discourse promotes a variety of different meanings. By combining these two elements Lispector and Boullosa are able to present the reader with an unconditional text that does not claim to have only one specific intention. In a manner of speaking, both Lispector and Boullosa work at self-expression within the fragmented narrative structure to the extent that at times both authors seem to undergo "agonies of the word," to borrow Bakhtin's term (286).

This unique questioning of language's prejudices also leads Lispector and Boullosa to develop an innovative narrative structure with characteristics not typical to the traditional narrative form. In both cases the authors sometimes choose to write in a fragmented style in order to best convey their protagonist's quest for self-consciousness and self-expression. Due to this fragmented style reader participation becomes an active
element within the reading exercise. For this reason the active reader, with his/her own prefigurative, not only interacts with the text and its other fictionalized elements (e.g. author, narrator and characters) within the configurative stage but also constructs his/her own aesthetic response to the text in the refigurative stage.

As mentioned above, the protagonists are not the only fictionalized characters in the texts. At times the reader encounters not only himself/herself fictionalized within the narrative text, but also the narrator and author. Both Lispector and Boullosa use their fictionalized narrators as a linguistic medium through which they can, on occasion, voice their own personal authorial intentions if so desired. Keeping in mind however that:

The words of the author that represent and frame another’s speech create a perspective for it; they separate light from shadow, create the situation and conditions necessary for it to sound; finally, they penetrate into the interior of the other’s speech, carrying into it their own accents and their own expressions, creating for it a dialogizing background. (Bakhtin 358)

Although Boullosa is more blatant in the fictionalization of her own persona in her novels (as examined in Papelles irresponsables and Isabel for example) one cannot disregard the auto-biographical subtleties in Lispector’s work (see Água Viva). In both cases each author manifests herself in her work by creating, through the language of another, a point of view that the attentive reader can perceive as differing from the narrator’s. Consequently, the reader is able to distinguish two stories occurring simultaneously: that of the narrator telling his/her story; and that of the author who is
speaking, in an indirect manner, through the story. These underlying authorial intentions not only constitute the critical message of the manifest text but that also affect the reader in the refigurative stage of the overall reading experience.

It is important to clarify, however, that even though the authorial intentions of Lispector and Boullosa are found fictionalized within their work, they do not simply use the narrator as their medium. These authorial intentions form a more esoteric component of the text. That is, each author manipulates the narrative as to code her own personal dialogue so that a sense of authorial neutrality will not be completely sacrificed. As a result, it is in the reading experience that the reader must attempt to decipher the hidden messages and meanings of the text. It is clear that both Lispector and Boullosa choose to emphasize the multiplicity of not only the text’s intended messages but of its subsequent interpretation by the reader.

It is significant to reiterate that the use of a fragmentary narrative structure by both Lispector and Boullosa should not be interpreted as an abandonment of the traditional writing style but rather an innovative appropriation and adaptation of it. It is a conscious choice to introduce a narrative style that does not share the traditional prefigurative that has historically silenced and subjugated the expression of a female identity.\(^1\) Consequently, the fragments are introduced as a method of best articulating individual thoughts and reflections within the process of each protagonist’s journey to

\(^1\)Although the focus of this study has been the conscientization of a feminine identity in specific narrative works by Lispector and Boullosa it is important to accentuate that the overall literary corpus of both writers is one that is focus on the universal human, and not exclusively feminine, condition.
self-realization and enunciation. That is to say, by re-writing pre-established narrative formulas both Lispector and Boulllosa adapt a more introspective and multi-dimensional narrative style. Thus, a more active reader participation is demanded since the reader must now respond, throughout the reading exercise, to the various multi-dimensional and multi-linear narrative trajectories. This active reader participation enriches the overall discourse of the novel in that it senses and reacts to the resistances and manipulations in each author’s narrative style.

By combining their use of discourse with a fragmented narrative structure, Lispector and Boulllosa achieve an expression of individuality which is not limited by time. Instead, in order to attain an all-encompassing sense of self, narrative time includes past, present, and future and all time is ultimately united in the journey of self-affirmation. Thus, it is this personal experience across time that becomes the unifying factor in the narrative fragments of life experience. Most importantly, it is the focus on the growth of the self in relation to the Other and not in opposition to the Other that completes the articulation of this experience of consciousness. It should be clear that neither Lispector or Boulllosa would subscribe to the ideological position known as feminist essentialism. Both writers believe that the prison of socio-cultural values and norms intrinsic to language can be transcended through language. After all, it is through dialogue with one’s Other that not only is communication born, but also an ability to self-interpret and self-evaluate. It is this ability of self-interpretation and self-evaluation that can ultimately lead to the expression of an identity. As a result, one cannot ignore the
psychological and emotional importance of what one's Others think and say and how it can affect one's personal understanding and interpreting of one's self.

Within this paradigm of alterity one notices that words need to be carefully chosen in order to best express each individual experience since every word "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" and that "the word in language is half someone else's" (Bakhtin 293). As an important part of dialogue, each word not only anticipates other words as its answer but it can also be influenced not only by what has not been said but also by what is anticipated. What results is an obvious gap between the authoritative word of one's socio-cultural environment and the internal word of personal expression that has been denied all privilege and authority. It is the struggle between these two extremes that foregrounds the quest for an individual consciousness: the endeavour not only to be able to speak but, more importantly, the necessity of being heard by one's Other. These are the unique characteristics that make narrative by both Lispector and Boullosa a truly living dialogue that does not ignore its prefigurative repertoire but that revivifies it to a new level. Similarly, writing is equated at times to a total freedom of living, but it is a freedom that can be both temporary and precarious since it sometimes exists in opposition to the predetermined socio-cultural norm. It is in opposition to this authoritative discourse that both Lispector and Boullosa choose to put into question the overall authoritativeness of tradition (be it in political or social institutions). However, neither author denies the pervasiveness of this prefigurative in liberating the enunciation of an independent feminine consciousness from "the
traditional objectification of women as the [silenced] collective other” (Valdés, *Hermeneutics* 105).

In addition, it is also important to recapitulate how both Lispector and Boullosa intermingle in their narrative structure a discourse of feminine reality. It is within this context that each of their narratives symbolically represents a previously silenced and ignored feminine consciousness. These same characteristics both challenge and question not only culture’s influence on the feminine but also the reader’s own prefigurative repertoire that he/she brings to the reading experience of the text. Needless to say, both authors call upon an active reader participation in order to decipher these narrative paradoxes; keeping in mind, however, that the subject of narration may not always be completely, or even clearly, definable within the narration. That is to say, the conflict between another’s word and the personal lived experience is not always completely resolved. Thus, the reader is at times left with a sense of open-endedness to the text. However, it is through this sense of open-endedness that both Lispector and Boullosa emphasize the universality and not exclusivity of the subject matter of their writing.

The universality of the narrative’s message is due in part to the text’s exploration of the quotidian through the links of human relationships. One is able to note that both authors expand on this theme by further developing the idea that to truly know oneself one must also know one’s Other. Bakhtin also develops this same idea in stating:

What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own horizon within someone else’s horizon. There takes place
within the novel an ideological translation of another's language, and an
overcoming of its otherness . . . (365)

Neither Lispector nor Boullosa ignores these intimate aspects to identity. On the
contrary, they specifically explore the internal voices of feminine sexuality previously
repressed and restricted by socio-cultural norms. Inherent to this journey of self-
discovery through alterity is a recognition of certain truths that one does not admit to
oneself let alone to others. Each author, in her unique way, delves into a dialectic of
passion and desire that constitutes an innate part to self-identity and consciousness.
Inherent to enunciating these desires is the disturbing recognition of certain
characteristics of human nature, such as: the desire of possessing or being possessed; the
various masks that convention obliges one to wear; the alienation one feels even when
surrounded by others; and the prejudices and fears that restrict one to a base existence of
life. That is to say, both Lispector and Boullosa combine their perception of the concept
of alterity with a dialectic of feminine desire as their method of expressing a more
authentic and all-encompassing sense of the feminine identity of their protagonists.

Although this discourse of desire is recognized by both authors as a fundamental
component to enunciating a self-realized identity neither author ignores that one of the
results of entering into such a dialogue with one's Other is that one can be placed in the
position of subject. That is to say, by attempting to inscribe themselves into their socio-
cultural surroundings, Lispector's and Boullosa's protagonists sometimes can suffer a
disarticulation of what they had previously established as their identity. Even though the
protagonists are empowered with an ability to articulate their desire having undergone a
process of self-conscientization, in some cases they revert to silencing this new sense of self to avoid being alienated or marginalized from their cultural imaginary.

It becomes evident that not only do both Lispector and Boullosa work away at the conventional use of narrative structure but they also denounce the very act of writing. Both authors repeatedly alert the reader that what he/she is reading is literature and that it is an extension of his/her own imagination. At times Boullosa even fictionalizes herself as a character in her own works as a method to draw even more attention to the concept of reading as an active role of puzzle solving. On the other hand, Lispector is not so forward; instead she tends to insinuate in her narrative certain biographical coincidences between her own life and her literary work. Not only are the protagonists’ quests for identity plagued with obstacles, but the reading exercise is also laden with hidden meanings and interpretations that must be deciphered by the reader in his/her reading in between the lines. Aside from using innovative narrative techniques to surpass the limitations of prescribed literature (both in its structure and subject matter) both authors also tend to emphasize and even demand reader participation in the construction of textual meaning. Not only do both Lispector and Boullosa present the topic of female identity, but the narrative itself is established in such an enigmatic manner that the reader must read between the lines in order to be able to configure the manifest text.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{Let us recall earlier discussions of Lispector’s } \textit{Agua Viva} \text{ and Boullosa’s } \textit{Papeles irresponsables} \text{ in which the reader is responsible for synthesizing the information given in each fragment in order to be able to construct a complete interpretation of the text.}\]
The focus of this thesis has also been philosophical: how Lispector's and Boullosa's exploration of a feminine consciousness and its expression is achieved in relation to and not in negation of the Other. Both authors enforce the theory that one cannot know oneself without knowing one's Other, in addition to knowing and understanding one's socio-cultural environment. At the end of the twentieth century feminist scholarship has made considerable headway in bringing attention to the work of women writers, however it has sometimes been achieved at a certain expense. For example, the labelling of certain literary works as "feminist texts" has often led to a reductive and limited study and/or criticism of the work. It is important in present scholarship, as noted in my study of works by Lispector and Boullosa, to avoid such generalizing classifications. Lest I be accused of eclecticism because of my openness to other critics, or of being opposed to feminism because I consider the ideology of essentialist feminism to be reductive, I want to reiterate what the attentive reader already knows: that my position in literary criticism is not grounded in an essentialist method or ideology; it is my appropriation of the philosophy of Charles Taylor and the phenomenological hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and Mario J. Valdés. For Lispector and Boullosa the realization and expression of a feminine consciousness, although existing in opposition to established literary and socio-cultural precepts, forms an important part of the emerging voices of the previously marginalized cultures in the Latin American literary canon.\(^3\)

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\(^3\)Literature by indigenous peoples, and by gays and lesbians are other examples of marginalized literatures previously excluded from the traditional literary canon but that are now being actively researched by scholars.
Just as enclosing Lispector and Boullosa within a feminist ideology would be sacrificing the true potential of their literature, it is also restrictive to classify both authors by the dates of their works. Although Lispector began her career earlier than Boullosa, both women's writing transcends categorization of not only language but also of nation. Both Lispector and Boullosa demonstrate a common quest for the individual voice. They do so independently; it is not a case of one imitating the other. It becomes clear that both writers, although one writing in Portuguese and the other in Spanish, are both forces in the literary canon of modern Latin American literature and cannot be ignored.

In addition, one cannot overlook the significant role that translation has played in the dissemination of Latin American literature in both Spanish and Portuguese. Let us recall that Lispector has been well known in Spanish speaking Latin America since the mid-twentieth century due in part to successful translations of her literary corpus. It is due to translation that the linguistic barriers previously identified as the separator between Brazilian and Spanish American literature are broken. In present day scholarship one cannot ignore the multi-lingual status of Latin American literature as well as the common historical and cultural events shared by both the Spanish and Portuguese speaking sectors of Latin America.  

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4 Let us recall that Boullosa was first published in 1978 (El hilo olvida and La memoria vacía) the same year that Lispector’s _Um sopro de vida_ was published posthumously.

5 I have chosen here the term "multi-lingual" instead of simple "bilingual" since Latin American literary culture not only includes literature written in Spanish and Portuguese but also the oral literature transmitted in a wide variety of indigenous languages.
In the end both Lispector and Boullosa succeed in transforming narrative fiction structurally so that it continuously exists in the refigurative present. During a round table discussion at the 1998 conference meeting of LASA Boullosa commented on the "vampiresco cadáver del texto" and how she believes that literature puts something into play that can triumph over death. Similar sentiments are revealed by Lispector's narrator in Água Viva. As a result, the idea of the novel as "un laboratorio moral de nuestras obsesiones" becomes a salient characteristic in the writing of both authors—irrespective of the language and chronological differences of their corpus. In the end both authors have accentuated the importance of giving expression to human nature by allowing a freedom of interpretation.

In present day Latin America there exists a group of women writers who have much to offer to the rewriting of a new all-inclusive Latin American cultural imaginary. They do not form a specific school or generation per se but do share a commonality of interests and a sense of liberation that they impart to women. This new body of work not only induces a higher reader response factor but also initiates a process of the liberalization of the previous socio-cultural repertoire. As scholars at the beginning of the twenty-first century it is part of our task to foreground through investigation and criticism what has been previously marginalized and excluded from the Latin American cultural imaginary and its literary canon. By doing so one would be giving voice to cultures, be it feminine or otherwise, that have been previously ignored or forgotten but that form an

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6 Another comment by Boullosa during the same roundtable discussion at the 1998 LASA meeting.
important component to Latin American identity.
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