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ARTICLES

The "voices of childhood" in Clarice Lispector's literature

Vozes da infância em Clarice Lispector

Zacharias, Pamela [i]

[i] Universidade de São Paulo – USP, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas – FFLCH, Departamento de Letras Clássicas e Vernáculas, São Paulo, SP, Brasil. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0797-6906, pamelaz@usp.br / zach.pamela@gmail.com.

Abstract

Many "voices of childhood" echo in Clarice Lispector's literature. They range from the countless child characters who star in her texts to the books dedicated to children, including the chronicles that illustrate the interaction between the writer and her children. This article focuses, firstly, on some short stories in which child characters face events and encounters that shatter their fantasies, triggering a process in which childhood begins to come to an end. Next, we will analyze chronicles in which the writer describes moments of interaction with her children. This analysis will be based on the understanding that a child's worldview produces an effect in language similar to that of poetry, serving as a powerful foundation for literary creation. Finally, it discusses how children, as well as animals, are characters with significant effect in Clarice's writing, bringing it closer to her leitmotif: the shapeless and unrepresentable.

Keywords: *Clarice Lispector, Childhood, Creation, Gilles Deleuze.*

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Resumo
São muitas as "vozes da infância" que ecoam na literatura de Clarice Lispector. Elas vão desde as inúmeras personagens crianças que protagonizam seus textos até os livros dedicados ao público infantil, passando pelas crônicas que ilustram a interação da cronista com seus filhos. Este artigo busca focar-se, primeiramente, em alguns contos cujas personagens infantis se deparam com acontecimentos e encontros que lhes suscitam uma quebra na fantasia, desencadeando nelas um processo no qual a infância começa a findar-se. Em seguida, serão analisadas crônicas nas quais a escritora descreve momentos de interação com seus filhos crianças. Essa análise se fará a partir de uma leitura que demonstra o quanto o olhar infantil para o mundo produz na linguagem um efeito similar ao da poesia e serve de grande substrato para a criação literária. Por fim, discute-se o fato de as crianças serem, assim como os bichos, personagens com grande efeito na escritura clariceana, aproximando-a do seu *leitmotiv*: o informe e irrepresentável.
Palavras-chave: Clarice Lispector, Infância, Criação, Gilles Deleuze.

Presentation

Nada posso fazer: parece que há em mim um lado infantil que não cresce jamais.
(Lispector, 1999a, p. 114)

Childhood is a central theme in literature, strongly represented in modern texts. In Brazil, several authors approach the world through the eyes and voices of children: José Lins do Rego, Graciliano Ramos, Guimarães Rosa, Jorge Amado, Manuel Bandeira, and Manuel de Barros, to name a few classic authors. Each one approaches the theme in a very particular manner, in dialogue with broader characteristics of their literature. In this article, I present how the voices of childhood echo in Clarice Lispector's texts. Although Claricean critics had already explored this topic, the intention here is, besides resuming how the theme is approached, to present a comparative analysis between some of her stories and chronicles and demonstrate how childhood is shown in a particular way in texts from these two genres.

Hence, in the first part, we explore some stories with child protagonists that, in a way, refer to the writer's childhood, without being limited to a particular story. When building plots that illustrate lonely and needy children, who seek to belong, Clarice shows how the adult world, with its demands and hardships, tends to imprison children's "unleashed fantasy", making them

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an oppressed being under the wills of others. In this sense, "growing up" seem freeing and ends up being desired by these characters. When analyzing Clarice's work, Sousa (2000) states: "we can exemplify some ways through which the characters shape this malleable matter, a space that allows building an identity" (p. 412). Thus, many Claricean narratives highlight characters in a transition phase – from childhood to teenagerhood, from teenagerhood to adult life –who see themselves compelled to fit socially imposed standards and cover themselves with constructs that gradually distance them from the world of sensations and unleashed fantasy.

After analyzing chronicles that portray interaction moments between the narrator and her children, the creative power from a childhood perspective over the world stands out. In this section, I dialogue with Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy, mobilizing what these authors offer about childhood. In this moment, I use the idea of child- becoming as a core element in Claricean writings, closely tied to the role that animals, formless elements, and nature play in her literature.

Thus, I aim to highlight how the childhood theme is presented in the writer's stories featuring child protagonists, primarily those published in *Felicidade clandestina* [Covert Joy] (Lispector, 1971) and her chronicles, particularly those that depict moments of interaction between the writer and her children. In the stories and chronicles, the idea of unleashed fantasy, that is, childhood as a moment of creative power in life and the connection with desires, emerges. This is when an insurgent look that attributes new meanings to the world appears. However, in the stories, these characteristics tend to be constrained by the surroundings of the child protagonists, while they are explored literally in her chronicles. Finally, the children's voices in Clarice Lispector's texts are multiple and open to multiple interpretations. In this text, I highlight two ways they echo, sometimes composing a dissonant choir with how criticism were previously approached them .

The impossible childhood

In a well-known interview given to journalist Júlio Lerner for the program "*Panorama*" on TV Cultura in February 1977, Clarice Lispector discusses her communication with children. Amidst a difficult dialogue, in which the interviewer tries hard to take her away from her long and countless silent moments, he questions the writer:

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– Is it harder for you to communicate with adults or with children?

– When I communicate with children, it is easier because I'm very maternal. When I communicate with adults, I'm communicating with the most secret of myself.

– Are adults always lonely?

– Adults are sad and lonely.

– And the child?

– Children have an unleashed fantasy.

– Since when, according to the writer, do human beings become sad and lonely?

– This is a secret. I won't answer.

[After a long pause, she says] – At any moment of life. All that is needed is an unexpected shock and this happens. (Sebo Labirinto, 2015)

First, let us focus on the phrase "children have an unleashed fantasy". She strongly resonates with the story *Restos de Carnaval [Remnants of Carnival*], published in the book *Felicidade clandestin*a [Covert Joy] from 1971. In the first-person narrative, the character starts the story alluding to the title, saying that the "remnants" are not from the last Carnival she lived, but those from further away, from a childhood carnival in Recife, which imprints on her such deep marks that they are still little understandable.

The girl, who anxiously waits for the Carnival every year, does not participate in any children's ball and, especially, was never dressed up in costumes. But she could sit on the steps in front of her house with "two precious things" she received every year, some party spray and a bag of confetti. These elements approximate her from the party and the fantasy and allowed her to be a child. After all, the narrator, now an adult, perceives that "even barely joining in on the merriment, I thirsted so much that even next to nothing made me a happy little girl." (Lispector, 2016, p. 397[1]). In a way, this character goes against the writer's declaration in the interview. Instead of having an unleashed fantasy, it is constrained or is constantly hidden, in some way repressed by the hard family environment she lives in: "They didn't dress me up: with

[1] Translation note (T.N.): Whenever possible, the excerpts from Lispector's texts are from the translated versions of her books. We used the following books as sources: Lispector, C., Dodson, K., & Moser, B. (2015). Complete stories. New Directions. and Lispector, C., Costa, M. J., Patterson, R., & Valente, P. G. (2022). Too much of life: the complete chronicles. Penguin Classics. However, the paging refers to the Brazilian versions presented in the bibliographical references.

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all the worry about my sick mother, no one at home could spare a thought for a child's Carnival" (p. 398). Throughout the story, the sick mother represents the guilt the character carries, which hides her capacity to feel pleasure, minimally surfacing during Carnival when she could allow herself playfulness and pleasure, as everyone else in the streets was allowed the same.

Perhaps for this reason, she anxiously expected this moment every year. "And when the celebration was fast approaching, what could explain the inner tumult that came over me?" (Lispector, 2016, p. 397). However, despite being taken over by a certain euphoria when faced with the party approaching, the narrator tells us that she took little part in it: I had never been to a children's ball, they'd never dressed me up in costume. To make up for it, they'd let me stay up until eleven in the front stairwell of the house where we lived, eagerly watching others have fun." (p. 397). She was pleased to be the spectator of other people's fun, seeing a world in which it was apparently possible to be free and light, far from the concerns imposed by her harsh reality. "As if human voices were finally singing the capacity for pleasure that was kept secret in me. Carnival was mine, mine." (p. 397).

The festive event appears in the excerpt as a synecdoche of joy itself. A joy that lived on her and that, though secret and covert, considering the need of repression imposed by her guilt, as we will discuss later, also established herself as a child: a being of wish and creativity. The Carnival allowed her a glimpse of how to unleash her fantasy; thus, it was like a toy (maybe that is why it was hers), through which she experiences a foreign reality. An invented reality as children do when playing[2]. As well as adults do when, at this annual party, they dress up, pretend to be others, play, have fun, and allow themselves to be open to encounters, expressing their desires.

In Carnival, the girl kept a distance every year, staying on the sidelines of the party, on the sidewalk, on the margins of all the joy, and not immersed in its insides. Nonetheless, the remnants that occupied the narrator's memory were different from those of others. On them lay the perspective that she could, finally, participate in the celebration, belonging, being possessed by the event instead of secretly possessing it:

[2] See Freud (1996).

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> But there was one Carnival that was different from the rest. So miraculous that I couldn't quite believe so much had been granted me, I, who had long since learned to ask for little. What happened was that a friend's mother had decided to dress up her daughter and the costume pattern was named the Rose. To make it she bought sheets and sheets of pink crepe paper, from which, I suppose, she planned to imitate the petals of a flower. Mouth agape, I watched the costume gradually taking shape and being created. Though the crepe paper didn't remotely resemble petals, I solemnly believed it was one of the most beautiful costumes I had ever seen.
>
> That's when simply by chance the unexpected happened: there was leftover crepe paper, and quite a bit. And my friend's mother—perhaps heeding my mute appeal, the mute despair of my envy, or perhaps out of sheer kindness, since there was leftover paper—decided to make me a rose costume too with the remaining materials. So for that Carnival, for the first time in my life I would get what I had always wanted: I would be something other than myself. (Lispector, 2016, pp. 398–399)

In this excerpt, the possibility of experiencing fantasy in its completeness emerges through the goodness of others and the care of a mother. After all, being dressed as a rose would allow her to mingle with the others, to be part of the party, to belong to Carnival[3]. However, here the remnants of Carnival reemerge: the costume is made from the leftovers of a friend's clothes and the leftovers of affection, time, and care from a mother that is not her own. Regarding this, the narrator comments: "As for the fact that my costume existed solely thanks to the other girl's leftovers, I swallowed, with some pain, my pride, which had always been fierce, and I humbly accepted the handout destiny was offering me" (Lispector, 2016, p. 399). From these leftovers, she could experience her greatest fantasy – to be someone else than herself, maybe, a childhood closer to that of her friend. However, there is another element echoed in this excerpt: the fantasy[4] of being a rose, which she could dress up.

The rose metaphor is present since the beginning of the story, in which the narrative voice compares the proximity of Carnival with the opening of the world "As if the budding world were finally opening into a big scarlet rose." (Lispector, 2016, p. 397). For the character,

[3] Still in the concept field of "belonging/not-belonging", the psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970) publishes in 1954 the book *Motivation and personality*, in which he presents a theory of human needs hierarchy – the Maslow pyramid–, showing that, without the feeling of "belonging", the human being cannot build self-esteem, which leads to the development of neuroses and not reaching the last stage of human needs, that is, personal realization, summing up, what we could call happiness (Ribeiro-de-Sousa, 2021).

[4] T.N.: In Portuguese, the word *fantasia* can refer both to fantasy and to costume.

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being a flower represents blossoming[5]. Escaping from a childhood in which she is not seen to be finally seeing and occupying a place in the world. Maybe for this reason, she anxiously waited for Carnival every year, because the world, opening up as a great rose, allowed her to glimpse an escape for her "the capacity for pleasure that was kept secret in me" (p. 397). As the protagonist tells us, despite never dressing up in costume, her sister applied makeup on her, which kindled her "intense dream of being a young lady" (p. 398), and then with a bright lipstick and rouge on her cheeks, she "felt pretty and feminine" and "no longer a kid" (p. 398).

However, in that Carnival, in which her costumes/fantasy could be complete, the day is crossed by a bad even and the rose withers still as a bud still:

> Many things much worse than these have happened to me, that I've forgiven. Yet I still can't even understand this one now: is a toss of the dice for a destiny irrational? It's merciless. When I was all dressed in the crepe paper and ready, with my hair still in curlers and not yet wearing lipstick or rouge —my mother's health suddenly took a turn for the worse, an abrupt upheaval broke out at home, and they sent me quickly to buy medicine at the pharmacy. I ran off dressed as a rose—but my still-bare face wasn't wearing the young-lady mask that would have covered my utterly exposed childish life —I ran and ran, bewildered, alarmed, amid streamers, confetti and shouts of Carnival. Other people's merriment stunned me (Lispector, 2016, p. 399)

The worsening of her mother's health caused the fantasy to be lost, the girl is no longer enchanted by her state as a rose– "I was no longer a rose, I was once again just a little girl" (Lispector, 2016, p. 400) – she is once again sent back to her harsh reality, having to deal with the lack of importance of a child towards the serious problems of the adult world. Thus, once more, she is faced with the remorse of her "hunger to feel ecstasy" (p. 400) when reminding herself of her mother's illnesses, stopping her own joy from flourishing, and forcing her to live only with the thorns, with no color, and the flower perfume.

The blame the character feels regarding her mother's health resonates in Clarice Lispector's[6] childhood. As shared in her chronicle "*Pertencer*" [Belonging] (Lispector, 1999a, pp. 110-112), she was born to a sick mother and was conceived to cure her. However, when she

[5] According to Sousa (2000), a large part of Clarice's stories involving children or teenagers are "initiation stories. In the girls' perspectives, they see themselves growing as roses" (p. 114).

[6] Gotlib (2003), in the book *Clarice: uma vida que se conta*, shows how some of Lispector's narratives have a hybrid tone between confession and fiction, incorporating materials that are, at first, non-literary.

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was around 9 years old, her mother dies. Clarice lives with the burden of having "failed to cure my mother": "But I have not forgiven myself or forgotten. I wanted to work a miracle: to be born and cure my mother. Then I should truly have belonged to my father and mother" (Lispector, 1999a, p. 111).

The book *Felicidade clandestina* [Covert Joy] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-434), which contains *Restos do carnaval* [Remnants of Carnival] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 397-401), has other narratives that seem inspired by the writer's childhood[7]. The story that names the work, for example, presents the saga of a girl who loves books and has the chance to hold the most coveted one: *Reinações de Narizinho* [The Shenanigans of Little Miss Snub-Nose]. To do so, she goes every day to the house of the bookshop owner's daughter, who promised to loan her the book. However, she is always faced with an excuse from the other girl, who denies her the object of desire. One day, the owner of the house, noticing something strange in the blonde girl's daily presence at her doorstep, intervenes in her daughter's cruelty and lends her the book, revealing that it had always been there. Mainly, she allows the protagonist to be with the book for as long as she wants.

We must point out that "Covert Joy" could adequately be the title for "Remnants of Carnival", in which the character's joy, as seen, was something constantly restrained, forbidden. Some aspects of the protagonists and plots of both stories are comparable: they live in two-store houses in the city of Recife and have their desires answered by a "good mother" that is not their own.

Resuming the issue of belonging, it reappears, in duality with possession, in a story from the same book *Cem anos de perdão* [One Hundred Years of Forgiveness] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 408-411), in which, once more, the narrator recalls her childhood in Recife, clarifying, from the start, the different socioeconomic segments that composed the city. The young character was certainly not part from a wealthy class because one of her favorite games with a friend was to walk around the "rich people's streets" – the way the expression is constructed excludes them from this group–, "lined with mansions set amid extensive gardens" (Lispector, 2016, p. 408); and play pretending to decide to whom each mansion belonged. Thus, they "made believe" that they were also rich.

[7] In this hybridism, these child characters are built more in the role of a child-becoming that takes over the writer than due only to her memories.

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On one of these occasions, the protagonist finds herself in front of a house "that looked like a small castle" (Lispector, 2016, p. 408). In the garden, there is "a single rose, only partway open and bright pink" (p. 408). Faced with that rose, her wish to possess it cannot be satisfied by imagination and needs to be concretely materialized: "I was dumbstruck, staring in admiration at that proud rose that wasn't even a fully formed woman yet. And then it happened: from the bottom of my heart, I wanted that rose for myself. I wanted it, oh how I wanted it." (p. 408). Then, she sneakily enters the garden to have her object of desire – "The time it took to reach the rose was a century of my heart pounding." (p. 409).

It is interesting to notice the rose, a flower that largely populates Clarice's universe, present in more than a story from Covert Joy (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-434). Here, once again, as a metaphor for becoming an adult woman, in this case, the bud that starts to gradually open represents the girl growing up, to the verge of blossoming. Once more, this blossoming seems to be what obsesses the character; she wishes and seeks it; she wants, maybe as a beautiful flower, to be noticed and appreciated. But why possess the rose? The narrator from A menor mulher do mundo [The smallest woman in the world] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 193-201) would answer: "That it was very good to have" (Lispector, 2016, p. 200). In One Hundred Years of Forgiveness (Lispector, 2016, pp. 408-411), the narrator tells us: "What was I doing with the rose? I was doing this: it was mine." (Lispector, 2016, p. 409). However, this wish to possess may carry another need. After all, if the flower symbolizes the protagonist and makes her want to have it, then we can interpret that the girl also seeks to raise this desire in someone else and, then, to belong[8].

In the story Tentação [*Temptatio*n] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 304-316), another one with traces that remind us of a young Clarice, the issue of possession is also present. Unlike the others, in this story there is no protagonist narrator exposing her memories, but a fluctuating narrator, between an observer and omniscient perspective, who witnesses the meeting between a girl and a basset hound. There are some aspects similar to the narratives mentioned before, for example: a girl sitting on the front stairs of her house. Here, she looks at the empty and boring street, without the Carnival joy, under scorching heat. This little girl feels isolated and

[8]So, the feeling of "belonging" carries with it a sense of welcome, offers a collective identity, and reinforces the individual "I" and psychic balance. The "not-belonging" would, by opposition, be a feeling of uprooting, exclusion, rejection, and isolation, which, in extreme cases, hinders the construction and functioning of the ego (Ribeiro-de-Sousa, 2021).

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different because she is red-haired. "What did it matter if one day in the future her emblem would make her insolently hold erect the head of a woman?" (Lispector, 2016, p. 314). Again, the idea of becoming an adult is a solution to this feeling of misplacement and loneliness, which also characterizes the sense of not belonging.

The character, dismayed, does not seem lonelier and sadder (as an adult would be in Clarice's previous words) because "What saved her was an old purse, with a torn strap. She clutched it with a long-familiar conjugal love, pressing it against her knees" (Lispector, 2016, p. 314). What purse would that be? Who did it belong to, as the description indicates that it is older than the girl? What would it symbolize? The story does not give us elements for a deeper analysis, but we can notice that *possessing* such an object is important for the child, who grabs it and is saved by it.

But another, more substantial being joins the story, which could even free her from her solitude: a basset dog, a red dog like her. "Both had short, red hair" (Lispector, 2016, p. 315). On it, she recognizes a similar soul – and, from this state of identification, emerges the wish to have it[9]. "Of all the beings suited to become the owner of another being, there sat the girl who had come into this world to have that dog" (p. 315). However, different from the other characters that unilaterally want the book, the rose, or the costume, the protagonist of this story is also desired by the little dog: "We also know that without speaking they were asking for each other. They were asking for each other urgently, bashfully, surprised." (p. 315). They saw in each other a way out of how they felt and who they were.

> Amid so much vague impossibility and so much sun, here was the solution for the red child. And amid so many streets to be trotted down, so many bigger dogs, so many dry gutters—there sat a little girl, as if she were flesh of his ginger flesh. (Lispector, 2016, p. 315)

However, this mutual belonging could not be fulfilled, it would be enough "Another second and the suspended dream would shatter" (Lispector, 2016, p. 315), because "both were already committed. She to her impossible childhood, the center of the innocence that would only open once she was a woman. He, to his imprisoned nature." (p. 315). This passage sends

[9] The imaginary identification is the identification with a certain look from the Other. The issue is to know to whom the subject plays a certain role when offering oneself to Other as an object of desire. Lacan highlights the imaginary identification, this "image in which we seem to be able to be loved" (Zizek, 1991, p. 105), as dependent on the symbolic identification. It is from this point of symbolic identification that we observe and judge ourselves. It is what determines the image according to which we seem worthy of love (Wendling, 2010).

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us to the Remnants of Carnival (Lispector, 2016, pp. 397-401), as an "impossible childhood" seems to be one in which one cannot be a child and have "an unleashed fantasy". Guimarães (2017) analyzes that these child characters inhabit "an environment marked by a lack in which stand out the will to reach adult life and be part of something bigger" (p. 16). Thus, the need to "bloom". In this way, fantasy could be established in the literary and/or sexual scope.

> Both are elements that, in the narratives, lead to the transformation of the young girl protagonists into women, which opens the way for them to flirt with adult life, getting rid, at least in part, of their condition as children and recognizing another way of escaping and finding liberation. (Guimarães, 2017, p. 16)

In these stories, we perceive childhood as a place of vulnerability, in which the child is exposed, with no masks: "but my still-bare face wasn't wearing the young-lady mask that would have covered my utterly exposed childish life" (Lispector, 2016, p. 400). The costume would then provide a safe and protective space that would free these characters from their loneliness and sense of not belonging. However, living a fantasy is, often, something forbidden by the harsh reality of the children characters who live with different deprivations[10], socioeconomic, visible in the stories "One Hundred Years of Forgiveness" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 408-411), "Covert Joy" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-397)[11] and even "Remnants of Carnival" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 397-401)[12], as well as affective ones, marked in the latter story by the lack of care in a home where the mother, instead of caring, demands care, or the ghost of guilt that ravages this character due to her impotence regarding the mother's health. The girl in "Temptation" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 314-316) also expresses this deprivation, considering her loneliness on a hot afternoon.

This fantasy, thus, overflows through the contact with literature – in the case of "Covert Joy" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-397) – or the carnival party at "Remnants of Carnival" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 397-401). But also, mainly by escaping children's life, whose pathway is established in these stories, with children as protagonists, through the discovery of sexuality. In this process,

[10] Guimarães (2017) reminds us that "the children who inhabit these stories are mostly oppressed by a surrounding that does not understand them, but have a notable appetite for fantasy, a universe in which they, in fact, seem to belong, becoming helpless, foreign, when moving along the harsh territory of real life" (p. 142).

[11] The book, the protagonist's object of desire, was, she tells us: "completely beyond my means" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-394).

[12] The passage "I'd get two precious things that I saved up greedily, so they'd last all three days: some party spray and a bag of confetti" (Lispector, 2016, p. 397) shows that the character is in a context of limited financial resources.

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these characters see themselves as able to be desired by another. After all, in the family environment, they feel misplaced, alone, and like failures. Hence, they live an "impossible childhood". The exit is to grow and be desired by her womanly attributes. Through this means, the girl from "Remnants of carnival", after a traumatic event that crosses her euphoria, can, finally, become a rose.

> Only hours later did salvation come. And if I quickly clung to it, that's because I so badly needed to be saved. A boy of twelve or so, which for me meant a young man, this very handsome boy stopped before me and, in a combination of tenderness, crudeness, playfulness and sensuality, he covered my hair, straight by now, with confetti: for an instant we stood face to face, smiling, without speaking. And then I, a little woman of eight, felt for the rest of the night that someone had finally recognized me: I was, indeed, a rose. (Lispector, 2016, p. 400)

In this scene, which finishes the story, she feels seen and admired by another, as a dazzling and scented rose. It is the beginning of blossoming, and the bud starts to open itself into a flower. Other stories also have the end marked by elements that refer to the discovery of sexuality or eroticism. In "Covert Joy" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-397), for example, we find this passage: "Sometimes I'd sit in the hammock, swinging with the book open on my lap, not touching it, in the purest ecstasy" (Lispector, 2016, p. 396). Being in a hammock with her object of desire and reaching pure ecstasy are scene components that can refer to an erotic moment. This interpretation is reinforced by the final phrase of the narrative: "I was no longer a girl with a book: I was a woman with her lover" (p. 396).

In 'One Hundred Years of Forgiveness' (Lispector, 2016, pp. 408-411), after the rapture she feels when stealing the rose, the protagonist starts to steal *pitangas*. When analyzing this end, Guimarães (2017) notices that the sexual connotations are evident in the end of the story and are reinforced by the last phrase: "It's the *pitangas* themselves, for example, that beg to be picked, instead of ripening and dying on the branch, virgins" (Lispector, 2016, p. 410). About this, Guimarães (2017) also affirms that:

> Therefore, instead of "of ripening and dying on the branch, virgins", both, the *pitanga* and the girl finally meet a vital part of their reason to exist, and this recognition is key to integrating the collective and getting away from the covertness that, in Clarice's stories, seems to ravage childhood. (p. 53)

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Hence, at the ends of these stories from *Felicidade Clandestina* [Covert Joy] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-434), there is the reaffirmation of the end of childhood not as a "happy end" but as an impossible exit for the possible. This resonates Deleuze's (2010) phrase: "Give me the possible, or else I'll suffocate" (p. 135). The pathway, however, that the characters of these stories follow, perhaps are not exits, in the Kafkian sense[13], but the entrance to a formatted world, in which creativity is restrained, and fantasy is tamed[14]. As we will see later, in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari (1997, 2003, 2004) and based on some of Clarice's chronicles, childhood is the time of shapeless, insurgent, escape lines.

Child-becoming, minoritarian beings, creation

A glimpse of childhood present in Clarice Lispector's literature, as we could see, corresponds to the voices of these child characters built from aspects that echo her own life as a child. Another refers to her relationship with her children, which seems to reverberate with the childhood fantasy that she sees and with which she identifies, in contrast to the restrained fantasy of the characters mentioned before. The writer, in countless chronicles, – two of them in the *Felicidade clandestina* [Covert Joy](Lispector, 2016, pp. 393-434): *Come, meu filho* [Eat Up, My Son] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 401-403); and *Uma esperança* [A Hope] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 411-414) –, retells interaction moments with her young sons, highlighting the poetry of children's look at the world.

In the first chronicle, we find this dialogue:

[13] As Kafka says, it is not a problem of freedom, but of exit (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003).

[14] Thus, it makes sense that every libido is destined towards sexuality.

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> Don't cucumbers seem inreal?
>
> – Unreal.
>
> – Why do you think?
>
> – That's how you say it.
>
> – No, why did you also think that cucumbers seem inreal? Me too. You look at them and you can see part of the other side, it's got the exact same pattern all over, it's cold in your mouth, it sounds kind of like glass when you chew it. Don't you think it seems like someone invented cucumbers?"
>
> – It does. (Lispector, 2016, pp. 401-402)

Clarice transforms the conversation with her son into a chronicle, probably because she notices the poetic power of a child's view of the world. Sobral and Viana (2014) observed that "children's word, as that of the poet, creates another reality in the place of the existing one, an imagined reality with elements not admitted in the concrete reality" (p. 442). The child does it because they are still free from social and institutional constructions that determine our outlook on things and guide our opinions. Poets can free themselves from these constructions, they can *unpeel the ink with which their feelings were painted and unbox their true emotions*[15], to give new meanings to the surroundings.

About this, Clarice develops a reflection in her chronicle "*O artista perfeito*"[16] [The perfect artist] (Lispector, 1999a, pp. 228-229). On it, she writes not only about poetic creation, but also artistic one, establishing a comparison between the latter and children's creativity. This, at first, the writer, from a Bergsonian proposal that the artist "would have not one but all his senses unshackled from utilitarianism " (Lispector, 1999a, p. 228), raises the hypothesis that:

> Suppose we could educate, or not educate, a child, taking as a basis the decision to keep all his senses alert and pure. Suppose we gave him no facts, but allowed him to acquire facts only through his own immediate experience. So that the child did not become habituated. (Lispector, 1999a, p. 228),

[15] Based on poems from Alberto Caeiro (Pessoa, 2020).

[16] About this chronicle, see more in Rufinoni (2021).

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so we would have the perfect artist. However, later, this hypothesis is deconstructed based on the thought that this person, raised in this way, would not be an artist but an innocent. "And art, I imagine, is not innocence itself, it is becoming innocent" (Lispector, 1999a, p. 229). Nonetheless, maybe this reflection led her to understand that the innocent view of a child could help the artist (be it a writer or not) to also become innocent. That is, could teach them to *strip oneself to what was learned, forget how to remember what was taught*[17].

This view of childhood clearly alludes to the Deleuze-Guattarian thought about this phase of life, which is not seen by the authors as simply a phase that is overcome, but a fundamental moment of development and possibilities and resistances against forms of control. Children's views, who see and perceive things for the first time, are not yet connected to the referential chains of recognition[18] and, thus, can give new meanings to the world. This is what occurs with the character from the short chronicle "*Menino*" [Boy] (Lispector, 1999a, p. 287), also published with the title "*Futuro de uma delicadeza*" [Future of tenderness] (Lispector, 1999b, p. 16). He says: "Mom, I just saw a baby hurricane, but it was so small, so tiny, that all it did was make three little leaves on the street corner whirl about." (Lispector, 1999a, p. 287). This beautiful image shows us the grandiose present in the little boy and in the banal. A wind that whirls about a few leaves is elevated to a hurricane and something mundane becomes a special event through the admirative years of a child that also expresses affection for the scene through the endearing choices of the terms "baby" and "tiny". As the writer affirms, these "are what we can expect from a child: transparency and purity and creativity and affection and naturalness" (p. 372).

Deleuze, in an interview given to Parnet (2015), states, "Becoming a child through the act of writing, goes towards childhood in the world and restores this childhood. These are the tasks of literature". Restoring this childhood would be restoring the lost freedom, spontaneity, and creativity. Reestablishing, in life, the wisdom of the innocent. In the chronicle "*O que Pedro Bloch me disse*" [Things Pedro Bloch told me] (Lispector, 1999a, pp. 472-474), Clarice writes: "To capture all the wonderful things said by children, you just need to have your ears attuned to

[17] Based on poems from Alberto Caeiro (Pessoa, 2020).

[18] Deleuze (1988) affirms that "the recognition that defines itself through the concordant exercise of all faculties about a supposed object as being the same: the same object can be seeing, touched, remembered, imagined, conceived" (p. 221).

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what children say" (Lispector, 1999a, p. 472). And: "With children I learn everything that the wise men still don't know" (p. 472).

This last phrase once more sends us to Caeiro's poem (Pessoa, 2020), which reminds us of the importance of unlearning, of breaking away from the layers and constructions that were built on us throughout life and, most especially, during childhood, through education, and not only in school. Learning what the wise ones still do not know is to let go of already known forms of knowledge; it is to seek a previous moment before understanding anything else, connecting with the pure and non-mediated sensation of a thought that is still not formed.

In "*Lição de filho*" [A lesson from my son"(Lispector, 1999a, pp. 138-139) the writer praises one of these learnings with children and tells us that, when she saw on the television a young woman she likes playing the piano, she started to weep – and, so, she says: "I noticed my son, almost a child, had noticed it, I explained: I'm emotional, I'll take a sedative. And he said: - Can't you differentiate between emotion and nervousness? You're having an emotion." I realized that my son, who was still almost a child at the time, had noticed I was crying, and so I said: "It's all right, I'm just a bit upset, I'm going to take a tranquilizer." And he said: "Don't you know the difference between being upset and being moved? You're just very moved by the music." (Lispector, 999a, p. 138). The writer finishes the text in the following way: "I understood, I agreed, and said: 'I won't take a tranquilizer then.' And I experienced what was there to be experienced. " (pp. 138-139). This excerpt makes us consider adults' difficulties in dealing with their pure sensations, without giving them a meaning or seeking to soften them. That is, respecting the truth of one' own emotions, not hiding them, seems to be one of the things that Clarice tries to absorb from children's universe. To do so, we can affirm that she, herself, and her writing are taken as child-becoming[19].

We should remember that, for Deleuze and Guattari (2004), becoming is always a minoritarian[20] because becoming is necessarily insurgent; it does not define the norm, on the

[19] "Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man? First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 369).

[20] According to Deleuze and Guattari (2003), becoming is a field of indiscernment between two beings. The one that is becoming is affected by another, always minoritarian, making one's own limits to be blurred and unrecognizable. In this sense, child-becoming does not refer to an imitation of childhood, but rather to being affected by the molecular forces that inhabit childhood.

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contrary, it questions it, it violates it. Thus, it makes sense that there is a child-becoming and, hence, it is also coherent that this becoming takes over Clarice's writing[21].

Dinis (2023) analyzes that,

> In the Claricean universe *becoming a child* is seeking to write with the feeling of pure warnings, breaking away from the domestication of the view that civilized the adult. Writing with the feelings free from utilitarianism so that one can see and experience the world in a way that is always new and unusual. But *becoming a child* is a way that allows the Claricean narrator to move away from the hegemony of the adult phase, creating an art of rupture, *becoming an animal* is also a device that allows distancing from the hegemony of a rational human world. And trying to get closer to life in a more direct and instinctive way. (pp. 150-151)

Therefore, the writer's attention is always captured by these more instinctive existences, and her writing is deeply connected to her animals and children, to whom she dedicates and inspires numerous pages of her texts. In "*Lembrança de filho pequeno*" [Memory of a small son] (Lispector, 1999a, p. 139), she describes a scene in which she observes her son having an ice cream. Focused, delighting himself with that pleasure, the boy "doesn't mind being observed in this intimate act, which is both vital and delicate" (Lispector, 1999a, p. 139). The image of avid desire contrasts with the mother who observes and describes as someone "heavy", "impenetrable", "rough-hewn", "foreigner", "empty gaze", with a heart that is "heavy, stubborn, inexpressive, closed off to all suggestions." (p. 139). This image sends up to someone motionless, with no eagerness, and "in retreat. In retreat from so much feeling." (p. 139). It is a scene that contrasts the adult stuck and limited with that of the unlimited and free child.

This image of something free from limits, forms, and conventions is recurrent in Clarice's literature and present through signs that usually allude to the shapeless – as the insides of an egg, the mass of a cockroach, the living water –, but is also present in minor characters that populate her work. Characters as Little Flower, from '*A menor mulher do mundo*" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 193-201) [The Smallest Woman in the World' , whose wild nature is detached from institutionalized knowledge, language, and reason, and gets closer to instinct, sensorial, and pre-rational. Children are also inserted in Clarice's texts in this semantic field, a conventional unknowing open to creation, to new and unexpected looks and meanings.

[21] "Writing is inseparable from becoming" (Deleuze, 2011, p. 11).

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> Children populate Clarice Lispector's work, inviting deintellectualization: a return path to the living and authentic reality of men. An invitation to the *deep I*. Because they have not entered the age of reason, did not yet tame the rational instruments of defense. And are much more spontaneous and almost only esthesia; open eyes to the world there. Discovering, understanding, and unveiling. (Pessanha, 1989, p. 187)

This world here is equivalent to a world of more "pure" sensations, not mediated by reason and by its consequent interpretations. Children fabulate more than interpret. And, when fabulating, they build new, not generalized, knowledge. Pessanha (1989) tells us: "because they did not train the discursive reason, children look closer at the world" (p. 187). According to the author, as in childhood we do not yet have an intellectual highlight, there is almost no distance from the world, and everything is perceived as a singular and absorbent presence. It is the view of someone who sees for the first time and, enchanted, absorbs and creates meanings that escape the usual ones. Again, it is *to learn what wise men still don't know*.[22]

Hence, we can say that the child-becoming in Clarice Lispector (among so many other becomings that inhabit her writing) is quite present. Exactly because the writer lets herself be affected by the force that emanates from these little beings that, as "innocent" ones, stray away from the usual paths, from solutions given in advance, and build worlds apart, even if fantasy ones, worlds that show possibilities for the one we live. After all, as Deleuze (2011) says, "children never stop talking about what they are doing or trying to do: exploring milieus, by means of dynamic trajectories, and drawing up maps of them" (p. 73). That is, the child continues to find exits and draws escape lines. Regardless of how disparate Deleuzian and Freudian reflections on childhood may seem, we could also allude to Freud (1996) in *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*: "Every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own" (p. 327).

However, Clarice is astute and knows how the world seeks to imprison children's unleashed fantasy. Shaping and formatting are important power mechanisms. Thus, the glimpses of childhood she provides in her work encompass both the free, unlimited, and

[22] "The central issue of an alternative understanding in Clarice Lispector goes through building a non-place of a non-understanding. The wisest way of understanding is found in animals, children, those poor in the spirits, or in a God that welcomes the madness of the world as in the phrase quoted by Derrida when talking about the unnamable place of God" (Sousa, 2000, p. 206).

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innovative being, as well as the one who is subjugated, needy, not belonging, and being shaped into what it is not.

In the chronicle "*A nossa natureza, meu bem*" [Our nature, my dear](Lispector, 1999b, p. 31), the writer records another statement from a son: "It's so funny, mom, I found out that nature is not dirty. Can you see this tree? It's full of barks and pieces, and it's not dirty. But this car, just because it's dusty, it is really dirty"[23] (Lispector, 1999b, p. 31). It is interesting to notice that the child's gaze is watchful of the details, the small things that go unnoticed to us[24]. This clarity of details is also noticed by Ana, in the story "Amor" [Love] (Lispector, 2016, pp. 145-156), when entering the Botanic Garden in Rio de Janeiro and finds herself raptured by the "secret labor" that lives there. This secret labor is related to nature and its cycle, the rotting fruits, the smell of flowers, the convolutions of the pits, the spider's limbs. The story's narrator calls these elements "cruelty of the world" (Lispector, 2016, p. 151), from which the adult character runs away scared and returns to her normal life, at home, with her husband and children. This cruelty sends us to the world-there, natural, wild, and not rational.

This world, as children well know, is not dirty because it is in its spring-like, natural state. However, man-made things, as the car, "get dirty" when touched by nature – land, dust. Perhaps we can find in this image a powerful metaphor for what children do: they make them "mass produced" adults, like a car, who, when crossed by something "raw", not mediated, feel "dirty" and quickly seek to clean themselves. That is, they seek framing within what is known, an attribution of meaning that frees them from the embarrassing sensation that overlaps reason.

Final remarks

When comparing the voices of childhood that echo in some of Clarice's stories to the voices of childhood that appear in the chronicles, mainly those in which the writer presents interaction moments with her son, we perceive that in the stories prevail children that try to get rid of the life phase in which they are, because they feel at the mercy of adults' rules that restrain

[23] T.N.: We could not find the translation of this text. Thus, the translation here is ours.
[24] Mello and Souza (2009) affirm that Clarice's literature acquires a "myope view", because "very near things have a luminous contours' sharpness"" (p. 97).

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fantasy and creativity. On the other hand, the chronicles highlight the child's view of the surroundings, an inventive look that gives new meanings to the world. As poets, the characters of these chronicles subvert language, re-dimension events, and perceive being the usual and banalized looks.

The stories and the chronicles recover elements of the writer's life, as pointed out by Gotlib (2013), when researching the "character Clarice". However, we perceive that, though there is memorial evidence in these texts, the striking point is the child-becoming that elevates childhood to an impersonal power, thus, restoring the literary art, the creative power, and the insurgence of the look and the childhood experience. After all, as Deleuze (2011) affirms, "To write is not to recount one's memories" (p. 14), but, first, transform them, in writing, the possibility of creating a future.

The child, as a minoritarian force, is perceptible in all the analyzed texts, be it due to their poetic observations, or by their subversive actions, as stealing a rose in ""One Hundred Years of Forgiveness" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 408-411); the connection with the animals, as in Temptation (Lispector, 2016, pp. 314-316); or even on how a party like Carnival – in which desires are freed – affects the girl in the story "Remnants of Carnival" (Lispector, 2016, pp. 397-401). Through the analysis, we perceive that children, as do animals and minoritarian characters, assume in Clarice's writing a revealing and creative role that builds escape lines and points out possible exits to paved and predictable pathways. From children's views, the literate and the poet can *learn what the wise men still don't know* or strip from what they learn, become again a *human animal produced by nature*[25] and, thus, help restoring childhood in the world and "freeing life whenever it is imprisoned" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1997, p. 222).

[25] Once again, referring to the poems from Alberto Caeiro (Pessoa, 2020).

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Corresponding author:

Zacharias, Pamela – Rua do Lago, 717 - Cidade Universitária, São Paulo - SP, CEP 05508-080.

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